

701—7.18(17A) Contested case procedures.

7.18(1) Evidentiary hearing. Unless the parties to a contested case proceeding have, by written stipulation representing an informed mutual consent, waived the provisions of the Act relating to such proceedings, contested cases shall culminate in an evidentiary hearing open to the public.

a. Evidentiary hearings in which the presiding officer is an administrative law judge employed by the division of administrative hearings shall be held at the location designated in the notice of evidentiary hearing.

b. If the director retains a contested case, the location for the evidentiary hearing will generally be at the main office of the department at the Hoover State Office Building, First Floor, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. However, the department retains the discretion to change the location of the evidentiary hearing if necessary. The location of the evidentiary hearing will be designated in the notice of hearing issued by the director.

7.18(2) Determination of presiding officer. If the director retains a contested case for evidentiary hearing and the department is a party, the initial presiding officer will be the director. Upon determining that a case will be retained and not transferred to the division of administrative hearings, the director shall issue to the parties a written notification of the determination that states the basis for retaining the case for evidentiary hearing.

a. The director may determine to retain a contested case for evidentiary hearing and decision upon the filing by the department of its answer under rule 701—7.13(17A). If the answer failed to allege that the case should be retained by the director and the case was transferred to the division of administrative hearings for contested case proceedings, either party may, within a reasonable time after the issuance of the hearing notice provided in rule 701—7.15(17A), make application to the director to recall and retain the case for hearing and decision. Any such application shall be served upon the assigned administrative law judge or presiding officer.

b. A taxpayer may file a written objection to the director's determination to retain the case for evidentiary hearing and may request that the contested case be heard by an administrative law judge or presiding officer and request a hearing on the objection. Such an objection must be filed with the clerk by email to the address provided in paragraph 7.3(1)"*b*," by mail via the United States Postal Service or common carrier by ordinary, certified, or registered mail in care of the clerk to the address listed in paragraph 7.3(1)"*c*," or by personal service to the department's customer service desk as described in paragraph 7.3(1)"*d*" within 20 days of the notice issued by the director of the director's determination to retain the case.

c. The director may retain the case only upon a finding that one or more of the following apply:

(1) One of the reasons listed in Iowa Code section 17A.11(1)"*a*."

(2) The case involves an issue or issues the resolution of which would create important precedent;

(3) The case involves complex or extraordinary questions of law or fact;

(4) The case involves issues or questions of law or fact that, based on the director's discretion, should be retained by the director;

(5) The request is not consistent with a specified statute; or

(6) Assignment of an administrative law judge will result in lengthening the time for issuance of a proposed decision, after the case is submitted, beyond a reasonable time as provided in subrule 7.18(8). In making this determination, the director shall consider whether the assigned administrative law judge has a current backlog of submitted cases for which decisions have not been issued for one year after submission.

d. The director shall issue a written order specifying the grounds for the decision within 20 days after a request for an administrative law judge is filed. If a party objects to the director's determination to retain a case for evidentiary hearing, transfer of the appeal file, if any, will be made after the director makes a final determination on the objection. If the ruling is contingent upon the availability of a qualified administrative law judge, the parties shall be notified at least ten days prior to the hearing whether a qualified administrative law judge will be available.

e. If there is no factual conflict or credibility of evidence offered in issue, either party, after the contested case has been heard and a proposed decision is pending with a presiding officer other than the director for at least one year, may make application to the director to transfer the case to the director for

decision. In addition, if one or more criteria listed in paragraph 7.18(2)“c” exist, the director, on the director’s own motion, may issue a notice to the parties of the director’s intention to transfer the case to the director for decision. The opposing party may file, within 20 days after service of such application or notice by the director, a resistance setting forth in detail why the case should not be transferred. If the director approves the transfer of the case, the director shall issue a final contested case decision. The director or a party may request that the parties be allowed to submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law.

f. The director has the right to require that any presiding officer, other than the director, be a licensed attorney in the state of Iowa unless the contested case only involves licensing. In addition, any presiding officer must possess, upon determination by the director, sufficient technical expertise and experience in the areas of taxation and presiding over proceedings to effectively determine the issues involved in the proceeding.

g. Except as provided otherwise by another provision of law, all rulings by an administrative law judge acting as presiding officer are subject to appeal to the director.

7.18(3) Conduct of proceedings.

a. A proceeding shall be conducted by a presiding officer who shall:

- (1) Open the record and receive appearances;
- (2) Administer oaths and issue subpoenas;
- (3) Enter the notice of hearing into the record;
- (4) Receive testimony and exhibits presented by the parties;
- (5) In the presiding officer’s discretion, interrogate witnesses;
- (6) Rule on objections and motions;
- (7) Close the hearing; and
- (8) Issue an order containing findings of fact and conclusions of law.

b. The presiding officer may resolve preliminary procedural motions by telephone or videoconference in which all parties have an opportunity to participate. Other telephone or video proceedings may be held with the consent of all parties. The presiding officer will determine the location of the parties and witnesses for telephone or video hearing. The convenience of the witnesses or parties, as well as the nature of the case, will be considered when location is chosen. Parties shall be notified at least 30 days in advance of the date and place of the hearing.

c. Evidentiary proceedings shall be oral, open to the public, and recorded either by electronic means or by certified shorthand reporters. Parties requesting that the hearing be recorded by certified shorthand reporters bear the costs of reporting. The record of the oral proceedings or the transcription thereof shall be filed with and maintained by the department for at least five years from the date of the decision. An opportunity shall be afforded to the parties to respond and present evidence and argument on all issues involved and to be represented by counsel at their own expense. Unless otherwise directed by the presiding officer, evidence will be received in the following order:

- (1) Taxpayer,
- (2) Intervenor (if applicable),
- (3) Department,
- (4) Rebuttal by taxpayer,
- (5) Oral argument by parties (if necessary).

d. If the taxpayer or the department appears without counsel or other representative who can reasonably be expected to be familiar with these rules, the presiding officer shall explain to the parties the rules of practice and procedure and generally conduct a hearing in a less formal manner than that used when the parties have counsel or representation. It should be the purpose of the presiding officer to assist any party appearing without such representative to the extent necessary to allow the party to present evidence, testimony, and argument on the issues. The presiding officer shall take whatever steps may be necessary and proper to ensure that all evidence having probative value is presented and that each party is accorded a fair hearing.

e. If the parties have mutually agreed to waive the provisions of the Act in regard to contested case proceedings, the hearing will be conducted in a less formal manner than when an evidentiary hearing is conducted.

- f. The presiding officer may enter a default decision as described in subrule 7.18(7).
- g. Contemptuous conduct by any person appearing at a hearing shall be grounds for the person's exclusion from the hearing by the presiding officer.

7.18(4) Rules of evidence.

a. *Oath.* All testimony presented before the presiding officer shall be given under oath, which the presiding officer has authority to administer.

b. *Production of evidence and testimony.* The presiding officer may issue subpoenas to a party on request, as permitted by law, compelling the attendance of witnesses and the production of books, papers, records, or other real evidence.

c. *Subpoena.* When a subpoena is desired after the commencement of a contested case proceeding, the proper party shall indicate to the presiding officer the name of the case, the docket number, and the last-known mailing addresses of the witnesses to be called. If evidence other than oral testimony is required, each item to be produced must be adequately described. When properly prepared by the presiding officer, the subpoena will be returned to the requesting party for service. Service may be made in any manner allowed by law before the hearing date of the case that the witness is required to attend. No costs for serving a subpoena will be allowed if the subpoena is served by any person other than the sheriff. Subpoenas requested for discovery purposes shall be issued by the presiding officer.

d. *Admissibility of evidence.*

(1) Evidence having probative value.

1. Although the presiding officer is not bound to follow the technical common law rules of evidence, a finding shall be based upon the kind of evidence on which a reasonably prudent person would rely for the conduct of the person's serious affairs and may be based upon such evidence even if it would be inadmissible in a jury trial. Therefore, the presiding officer may admit and give probative effect to evidence on which a reasonably prudent person would rely for the conduct of the person's serious affairs. Irrelevant, immaterial, or unduly repetitious evidence shall be excluded. The presiding officer shall give effect to the rules of privilege recognized by law. Evidence not provided to a requesting party through discovery shall not be admissible at the hearing. Subject to these requirements, when a hearing will be expedited and the interests of the parties will not be prejudiced, substantially any part of the evidence may be required to be submitted in verified written form by the presiding officer.

2. Objections to evidentiary offers may be made at the hearing, and the presiding officer's ruling thereon shall be noted in the record.

(2) Evidence of a federal determination of the taxpayer's liability. Evidence of a federal determination of the taxpayer's liability such as a treasury department ruling, regulation or determination letter issued to the taxpayer; a taxpayer's federal court decision; or an Internal Revenue Service assessment issued to the taxpayer relating to issues raised in the proceeding are admissible, and the taxpayer is presumed to have conceded the accuracy of the federal determination unless the taxpayer specifically states wherein it is erroneous.

(3) Copies of evidence. A copy of any book, record, paper or document may be offered directly in evidence in lieu of the original if the original is not readily available or if there is no objection. Upon request, the parties shall be given an opportunity to compare the copy with the original, if available.

(4) Stipulations. Approval of the presiding officer is not required for stipulations of fact to be used in contested case proceedings. In the event the parties file stipulations of fact in the proceedings, the stipulation is binding on the parties and the presiding officer.

e. *Identification of exhibits.* Exhibits that are offered by taxpayers and attached to a stipulation or entered in evidence shall be numbered serially, e.g., 1, 2, 3; exhibits offered by the department shall be lettered serially, e.g., A, B, C; and those offered jointly shall be numbered and lettered, e.g., 1-A, 2-B, 3-C.

f. *Official notice.* The official notice provisions of Iowa Code section 17A.14(4) apply to contested cases of the department.

g. *Evidence outside the record.* Except as provided by these rules, the presiding officer shall not consider factual information or evidence in the determination of any proceeding unless the same shall have been offered and made a part of the record in the proceeding.

h. Presentation of evidence and testimony. In any hearing, each party in attendance shall have the right to present evidence and testimony of witnesses and to cross-examine any witness who testifies on behalf of an adverse party. A person whose testimony has been submitted in written form shall, if available, also be subject to cross-examination by an adverse party. Opportunity shall be afforded each party for re-direct examination and re-cross-examination and to present evidence and testimony as rebuttal to evidence presented by another party, except that unduly repetitious evidence shall be excluded.

i. Offer of proof. An offer of proof may be made through the witness or by statement of counsel. The party objecting may cross-examine the witness without waiving any objection.

7.18(5) Motions.

a. Filing of motions after commencement of contested case proceedings. After commencement of contested case proceedings, appropriate motions may be filed with the presiding officer by any party when facts requiring such motion come to the knowledge of the party. All motions shall state the relief sought and the grounds upon which the motions are based.

b. Service, rulings. Motions made prior to a hearing shall be in writing and a copy thereof served on all parties and attorneys of record. The presiding officer will rule on such motions by issuing a written order. A copy of the order containing the ruling on the motion shall be served on the parties and authorized representatives. A motion may be made orally during the course of a hearing; however, the presiding officer may request that the motion be reduced to writing and filed with the presiding officer.

c. Consent of the opposing party, burden. To avoid a hearing on a motion, it is advisable to secure the consent of the opposing party prior to filing the motion. If consent of the opposing party to the motion is not obtained, a hearing on the motion may be scheduled and the parties notified. The burden will be on the party filing the motion to show good cause as to why the motion should be granted.

d. Affidavits. The party making the motion may affix thereto such affidavits as are deemed essential to the disposition of the motion, which shall be served with the motion and to which the opposing party may reply with counter affidavits.

e. Resistance. The party opposing a motion, except in the case of motions for summary judgment, must file its resistance within ten days of the date of filing of the motion unless a presiding officer otherwise orders a different deadline to file the resistance.

f. Reply. The movant may file a reply within seven days of the date of filing of the resistance to the motion.

g. Types of motions. Types of motions include but are not limited to:

(1) Motion for continuance. Motions for continuance should be filed no later than ten days before the scheduled date of the contested case hearing unless the grounds for the motion are first known to the moving party within ten days of the hearing, in which case the motion shall be promptly filed and shall set forth why it could not be filed at least ten days prior to the hearing. Grounds for motion for continuance include, but are not limited to, the unavailability of a party, a party's representative, or a witness; the incompleteness of discovery; and the possibility of settlement of the case.

(2) Motion for dismissal.

(3) Motion for summary judgment.

(4) Motion for redaction of identifying details in the decision. More information is contained in rule 701—7.7(17A).

(5) Motion for default.

(6) Motion to vacate default.

h. Summary judgment procedure. Summary judgment may be obtained under the following conditions and circumstances:

(1) A party may move, with or without supporting affidavits, for summary judgment in the party's favor upon all or any part of a party's claim or defense.

(2) The motion shall be filed not less than 60 days prior to the date set for the contested case hearing unless otherwise ordered by the presiding officer. Any party resisting the motion shall file the following within 30 days of the date of filing of the motion: a resistance; a statement of disputed facts, if any; and a memorandum of authorities supporting the resistance. If affidavits supporting the resistance are filed, they

must be filed with the resistance. The movant may reply to the resistance within 15 days of the date of filing of the resistance.

(3) Upon any motion for summary judgment pursuant to this rule, there shall be affixed to the motion a separate, short, and concise statement of the material facts as to which the moving party contends there is no genuine issue to be tried, including specific reference to those parts of the pleadings, depositions, answers to interrogatories, admissions on file, and affidavits that support such contentions and a memorandum of authorities.

(4) Supporting and opposing affidavits shall set forth such facts as would be admissible in evidence and shall show affirmatively that the affiant is competent to testify to the matters stated therein. The presiding officer may permit affidavits to be supplemented or opposed by depositions, answers to interrogatories, further affidavits, or oral testimony. When a motion for summary judgment is made and supported as provided in this rule, an adverse party may not rest upon the mere allegations or denials of the party's pleading but the party's response must set forth specific facts, by affidavits or as otherwise provided in this rule, showing that there is a genuine issue for hearing. If the party does not so respond, summary judgment, if appropriate, shall be entered against the party.

(5) If, on motion under this rule, judgment is not rendered upon the whole case or for all the relief asked and a hearing is necessary, the presiding officer at the hearing of the motion, by examining the pleadings and the evidence before the presiding officer and by interrogating counsel, shall, if practicable, ascertain what material facts exist without substantial controversy and what material facts are actually and in good faith controverted. The presiding officer shall thereupon make an order specifying the facts that appear without substantial controversy, including the extent to which the amount or other relief is not in controversy, and directing such further proceedings in the action as are just. Upon the hearing of the contested case, the facts so specified shall be deemed established, and the hearing shall be conducted accordingly.

(6) Should it appear from the affidavits of a party opposing the motion that the party cannot present, by affidavit, facts essential to justify the party's opposition, the presiding officer may refuse the application for judgment, may order a continuance to permit affidavits to be obtained, may order depositions be taken or discovery be completed, or may make any other order appropriate.

(7) An order on summary judgment that disposes of less than the entire case is appealable to the director at the same time that the proposed order is appealable pursuant to subrule 7.18(8).

7.18(6) Briefs and oral argument.

a. At any time, upon the request of any party or in the presiding officer's discretion, the presiding officer may require the filing of briefs on any of the issues before the presiding officer prior to or at the time of hearing, or at a subsequent time. At the conclusion of hearing, the parties should be prepared to make oral arguments as to the facts and law if directed by the presiding officer.

b. A copy of all briefs shall be filed. Filed briefs shall conform to the requirements of subrules 7.5(1) and 7.5(2).

c. The parties may agree to a briefing schedule. If the parties agree to a briefing schedule and if the presiding officer adopts the agreed-upon briefing schedule by issuing an order to that effect, the schedule is binding on the parties and the presiding officer except that, for good cause shown, the time may be extended upon application of a party.

7.18(7) Defaults. If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and render a decision in the absence of the party.

a. Where appropriate and not contrary to law, any party may move for default against a party who has failed to file a required pleading or has failed to appear after proper service.

b. A default decision or a decision rendered on the merits after a party failed to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding becomes a final department action unless, within 15 days after the date of notification or mailing of the decision, a motion to vacate is filed and served on all parties or an appeal of a decision on the merits is timely initiated within the time provided in subrule 7.18(8). A motion to vacate must state all facts relied upon by the moving party that establish that good cause existed for that party's failure to appear or participate at the contested case proceeding. Each fact so stated must be substantiated

by at least one sworn affidavit of a person with personal knowledge of each such fact, and such affidavit(s) must be attached to the motion.

c. The time for further appeal of a decision for which a timely motion to vacate has been filed is stayed pending a decision on the motion to vacate.

d. Properly substantiated and timely filed motions to vacate shall be granted only for good cause shown. The burden of proof as to good cause is on the moving party. Adverse parties have ten days to respond to a motion to vacate. Adverse parties shall be allowed to conduct discovery as to the issue of good cause and to present evidence on the issue prior to a decision on the motion, if a request to do so is included in that party's response.

e. For purposes of this rule, "good cause" means the same as "good cause" in Iowa Rule of Civil Procedure 1.977.

f. A decision denying a motion to vacate is subject to further appeal within the time limit allowed for further appeal of a decision on the merits in the contested case proceeding. A decision granting a motion to vacate is subject to interlocutory appeal by the adversely affected party as provided in subrule 7.18(11).

g. If a motion to vacate is granted and no timely interlocutory appeal has been taken, the presiding officer shall issue another notice of hearing and the contested case shall proceed accordingly.

h. A default decision may award any relief consistent with the request for relief by the party in whose favor the default decision is made and embraced in the contested case issues, but unless the defaulting party has appeared, the relief awarded cannot exceed the relief demanded.

i. A default decision may provide either that the default decision is to be stayed pending a timely motion to vacate or that the default decision is to take effect immediately, subject to a request for a stay.

7.18(8) Orders.

a. *Proposed decisions submitted by parties.* At the conclusion of the hearing, the presiding officer, in the presiding officer's discretion, may request the parties to submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. Upon the request of any party, the presiding officer shall allow the parties an opportunity to submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. In addition to or in lieu of the filing of briefs, upon the request of all of the parties waiving any contrary contested case provisions of law or of these rules, the presiding officer shall allow the parties to submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law, and the presiding officer may sign and adopt as the decision or proposed decision one of such proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law without any changes or with such changes that are supported by the record and law.

b. *Preparing the proposed decision.* The decision in a contested case is an order that shall be in writing or stated in the record. The order shall include findings of fact prepared by the presiding officer, unless the presiding officer is unavailable, and based solely on the evidence in the record and on matters officially noticed in the record and shall include conclusions of law. The findings of fact and conclusions of law shall be separately stated. If a party has submitted proposed findings of fact, the order shall include a ruling upon each proposed finding. Each conclusion of law shall be supported by cited authority or by a reasoned opinion. The decision must include an explanation of why the relevant evidence in the record supports each material finding of fact. If the issue of reasonable litigation costs was held in abeyance pending the outcome of the substantive issues in the contested case and the proposed order decides substantive issues in favor of the taxpayer, the proposed order shall include a notice of time and place for a hearing on the issue of whether reasonable litigation costs shall be awarded and on the issue of the amount of such award unless the parties agree otherwise. All decisions and orders in a contested case proceeding shall be based solely on the legal bases and arguments presented by the parties. In the event that the presiding officer believes that a legal basis or argument for a decision or order exists, but has not been presented by the parties, the presiding officer shall notify the parties and give them an opportunity to file a brief that addresses such legal basis or argument.

c. *Decision on motions to redact identifying details.* When a motion has been made to redact identifying details in an order on the basis of personal privacy or trade secrets, the justification for such redaction or refusal to redact shall be made by the moving party and shall appear in the order.

d. *Proposed and final decisions.* When the director initially presides at a hearing or considers decisions on appeal from or review of a proposed decision by the presiding officer other than the director,

the order becomes the final order of the department for purposes of judicial review or rehearing unless there is an appeal to or review on motion of a second agency within the time provided by statute or rule. When a presiding officer other than the director presides at the hearing, the order becomes final and not subject to judicial review unless there is an appeal to or review on motion of the director within 30 days of the date of the order, including Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays as defined in Iowa Code section 421.9A, or 10 days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays as defined in Iowa Code section 421.9A, for a revocation order pursuant to rule 701—7.26(17A). However, if the contested case proceeding involves a question of an award of reasonable litigation costs, the proposed order on the substantive issues shall not be appealable to or reviewable by the director on the director's motion until the issuance of a proposed order on the reasonable litigation costs. If there is no such appeal to or review by the director within 30 days or 10 days, whichever is applicable, from the date of the proposed order on reasonable litigation costs, both the proposed order on the substantive issues and the proposed order on the reasonable litigation costs become final and not subject to judicial review. On an appeal from, review of, or application for rehearing concerning the presiding officer's order, the director has all the power which the director would initially have had in making the decision; however, the director will consider only those issues presented at the hearing before the presiding officer or raised independently by the presiding officer, including the propriety of and the authority for raising issues. The parties will be notified of those issues that will be considered by the director.

e. Application to review interlocutory decisions. Notwithstanding this rule, where a presiding officer other than the director issues an interlocutory decision or ruling which does not dispose of all the issues, except reasonable litigation costs, in the contested case proceeding, the party adversely affected by the interlocutory decision or ruling may apply to the director within 20 days (10 days for a revocation proceeding) of the date of issuance of the interlocutory decision or ruling to grant an appeal in advance of the proposed decision. The application shall be served on the parties and the presiding officer. The party opposing the application shall file any resistance within 15 days of the service of the application unless, for good cause, the director extends the time for such filing. The director, in the exercise of discretion, may grant the application on finding that such interlocutory decision or ruling involves substantial rights and will materially affect the proposed decision and that a determination of its correctness before hearing on the merits will better serve the interests of justice. The order of the director granting the appeal may be on terms setting forth the course of proceedings on appeal, including advancing the appeal for prompt submission, and the order shall stay further proceedings below. The presiding officer, at the request of the director, shall promptly forward to the director all or a portion of the file or record in the contested case proceeding.

f. Appeals to and reviews by director—notice to administrative hearings division. In the event of an appeal to or review of the proposed order by the director, the administrative hearings division shall be promptly notified of the appeal or review by the director. The administrative hearings division shall, upon such notice, promptly forward the record of the contested case proceeding and all other papers associated with the case to the director.

g. Director's authority in appeals and review of proposed decisions. On an appeal or review of a proposed decision, the director has all the power that the director would have in initially making the final decision except as it may limit the issues on notice to the parties. A decision by the director may reverse or modify any finding of fact if a preponderance of the evidence will support a determination to reverse or modify such a finding of fact or may reverse or modify any conclusion of law that the director finds to be in error.

h. Issuing orders. Orders will be issued within a reasonable time after termination of the hearing. Parties shall be promptly notified of each order by delivery to them of a copy of the order by personal service, regular mail, certified mail, return receipt requested, AEDMS as described in 481—Chapter 16, or any other method to which the parties may agree. For example, a copy of the order can be submitted by electronic mail if both parties agree.

i. Cross-appeals. A cross-appeal may be taken within the 30-day period for taking an appeal to the director or in any event within 5 days after the appeal to the director is taken. If a cross-appeal is taken from a revocation order pursuant to rule 701—7.26(17A), the cross-appeal may be taken within the ten-day

period for taking an appeal to the director or in any event within five days after the appeal to the director is taken.

j. Transmission of case from administrative hearings division back to the department. Upon issuance of a closing order or the proposed decision by a presiding officer other than the director, such presiding officer no longer has authority over the contested case, except to resolve taxpayer requests for awards of reasonable litigation costs. Thereafter, any further proceedings associated with or related to the contested case must occur before the director.

k. Exhaustion of administrative remedies required. A party may not seek judicial review until the director has issued a final decision of the agency. If a party seeks judicial review of a proposed decision of an administrative law judge without appealing to the director or without review of the proposed decision by the director, the party is deemed to have failed to exhaust adequate administrative remedies.

7.18(9) Stays.

a. During the pendency of judicial review of the final contested case order of the department, the party seeking judicial review may file with the director an application for a stay. The application shall set forth in detail the reasons why the applicant is entitled to a stay and shall specifically address the following four factors:

- (1) The extent to which the applicant is likely to prevail when the court finally disposes of the matter;
- (2) The extent to which the applicant will suffer irreparable injury if the stay is not granted;
- (3) The extent to which the granting of a stay to the applicant will substantially harm the other parties to the proceedings; and
- (4) The extent to which the public interest relied on by the department is sufficient to justify the department's actions in the circumstances.

b. The director shall consider and balance the previously mentioned four factors and may consult with department personnel and the department's representatives in the judicial review proceeding. The director shall expeditiously grant or deny the stay.

7.18(10) Costs.

a. A prevailing taxpayer in a contested case proceeding related to the determination, collection, or refund of a tax, penalty, or interest may be awarded by the department reasonable litigation costs incurred subsequent to the issuance of the notice of assessment or refund denial that are based upon the following:

- (1) The reasonable expenses of expert witnesses.
- (2) The reasonable costs of studies, reports, and tests.
- (3) The reasonable fees of independent attorneys or independent accountants retained by the taxpayer.

No such award is authorized for accountants or attorneys who represent themselves or who are employees of the taxpayer.

b. An award for reasonable litigation costs shall not exceed \$25,000 per case.

c. No award shall be made for any portion of the proceeding which has been unreasonably protracted by the taxpayer.

d. For purposes of this subrule, "prevailing taxpayer" means a taxpayer who establishes that the position of the department in the contested case proceeding was not substantially justified and who has substantially prevailed with respect to the amount in controversy, or has substantially prevailed with respect to the most significant issue or set of issues presented. If the position of the department in issuance of the assessment or refund denial was not substantially justified and if the matter is resolved or conceded before the contested case proceeding is commenced, there cannot be an award for reasonable litigation costs.

e. The definition of "prevailing taxpayer" is taken from the definition of "prevailing party" in 26 U.S.C. §7430. Therefore, federal cases determining whether the Internal Revenue Service's position was substantially justified will be considered in the determination of whether a taxpayer is entitled to an award of reasonable litigation costs to the extent that 26 U.S.C. §7430 is consistent with Iowa Code section 421.60(4).

f. The taxpayer has the burden of establishing the unreasonableness of the department's position.

g. Once a contested case has commenced, a concession by the department of its position or a settlement of the case either prior to the evidentiary hearing or any order issued does not, per se, either authorize an award of reasonable litigation costs or preclude such award.

h. If the department relied upon information provided or action conducted by federal, state, or local officials or law enforcement agencies with respect to the tax imposed by Iowa Code chapter 453B, an award for reasonable litigation costs shall not be made in a contested case proceeding involving the determination, collection, or refund of that tax.

i. The taxpayer who seeks an award of reasonable litigation costs must specifically request such award in the appeal, or the request for award will not be considered.

j. A request for an award of reasonable litigation costs shall be held in abeyance until the concession or settlement of the contested case proceeding, or the issuance of a proposed order in the contested case proceeding, unless the parties agree otherwise.

k. At the hearing held for the purpose of deciding whether an award for reasonable litigation costs should be awarded, consideration shall be given to the following points:

- (1) Whether the department's position was substantially justified;
- (2) Whether the taxpayer is the prevailing taxpayer;
- (3) Whether the taxpayer has established how the alleged reasonable litigation costs were incurred.

The burden is upon the taxpayer to establish how the alleged reasonable litigation costs were incurred. This requires a detailed accounting of the nature of each cost, the amount of each cost, and to whom the cost was paid or owed;

- (4) Whether alleged litigation costs are reasonable or necessary;
- (5) Whether the taxpayer has met the taxpayer's burden of demonstrating all of these points.

7.18(11) *Interlocutory appeals.* Upon written request of a party or on the director's own motion, the director may review an interlocutory order of the presiding officer. In determining whether to do so, the director shall weigh the extent to which granting the interlocutory appeal would expedite final resolution of the case and the extent to which review of that interlocutory order by the director at the time of the review of the proposed decision of the presiding officer would provide an adequate remedy. Any request for interlocutory review must be filed within 14 days of issuance of the challenged order, but no later than the time for compliance with the order or the date of hearing, whichever is first.

7.18(12) *Consolidation and severance.*

a. Consolidation. The presiding officer may consolidate any or all matters at issue in two or more contested case proceedings where:

- (1) The matters at issue involve common parties or common questions of fact or law;
- (2) Consolidation would expedite and simplify consideration of the issues involved; and
- (3) Consolidation would not adversely affect the rights of any of the parties to those proceedings.

b. Severance. On motion by a party, the presiding officer may, for good cause shown, order any contested case or portions thereof severed. If the presiding officer severs one or more issues from the remaining issues in the contested case, the contested case proceeds only on the issues that the presiding officer ordered for resolution. Once the decision on the issues that the presiding officer ordered for resolution becomes final and is not subject to further appeals, the parties may proceed, if necessary, with contested case on the issues that the presiding officer severed.

c. Stipulations. Stipulations of fact are encouraged, but no party can be required to stipulate to any facts. Stipulations as to the law are invalid.

d. Informal disposition. Without the necessity of proceeding to an evidentiary hearing in a contested case, the parties may agree in writing to informally dispose of the case by stipulation, agreed settlement, or consent order or by another method agreed upon. If such informal disposition is utilized, the parties shall so indicate to the presiding officer that the case has been settled. Upon request, the presiding officer shall issue a closing order to reflect such a disposition. The contested case is terminated upon issuance of a closing order.

e. Mutual waivers. Unless otherwise precluded by law, the parties in a contested case proceeding may mutually agree to waive any provision under this rule governing contested case proceedings.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 17A.12, 17A.14, 17A.15, 421.60 and 452A.68.

[ARC 8944C, IAB 2/19/25, effective 3/26/25]