

is to "require that Federal agencies be accountable for violations of antidiscrimination and whistleblower protection laws." Pub. L. 107-174, Summary. In support of this purpose, Congress found that "agencies cannot be run effectively if those agencies practice or tolerate discrimination." Pub. L. 107-74, Title I, General Provisions, section 101(1).

The Act also requires this agency to provide this notice to Federal employees, former Federal employees and applicants for Federal employment to inform you of the rights and protections available to you under Federal antidiscrimination, whistleblower protection and retaliation laws.

Antidiscrimination Laws

A Federal agency cannot discriminate against an employee or applicant with respect to the terms, conditions or privileges of employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status or political affiliation. Discrimination on these bases is prohibited by one or more of the following statutes: 5 U.S.C. 2302(b)(1), 29 U.S.C. 206(d), 29 U.S.C. 631, 29 U.S.C. 633a, 29 U.S.C. 791 and 42 U.S.C. 2000e-16. If you believe that you have been the victim of unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability, you must contact an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor within 45 calendar days of the alleged discriminatory action, or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the action, before you can file a formal complaint of discrimination with your agency. See, *e.g.*, 29 CFR 1614. If you believe that you have been the victim of unlawful discrimination on the basis of age, you must either contact an EEO counselor as noted above or give notice of intent to sue to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory action. If you are alleging discrimination based on marital status or political affiliation, you may file a written complaint with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) (see contact information below). In the alternative (or in some cases, in addition), you may pursue a discrimination complaint by filing a grievance through your agency's administrative or negotiated grievance procedures, if such procedures apply and are available.

Whistleblower Protection Laws

A Federal employee with authority to take, direct others to take, recommend or approve any personnel action must

not use that authority to take or fail to take, or threaten to take, a personnel action against an employee or applicant because of disclosure of information by that individual that is reasonably believed to evidence violations of law, rule or regulation; gross mismanagement; gross waste of funds; an abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, unless disclosure of such information is specifically prohibited by law and such information is specifically required by Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or the conduct of foreign affairs.

Retaliation against an employee or applicant for making a protected disclosure is prohibited by 5 U.S.C. 2302(b)(8). If you believe that you have been the victim of whistleblower retaliation, you may file a written complaint (Form OSC-11) with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel at 1730 M Street NW., Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505 or online through the OSC Web site—<http://www.osc.gov>.

Retaliation for Engaging in Protected Activity

A Federal agency cannot retaliate against an employee or applicant because that individual exercises his or her rights under any of the Federal antidiscrimination or whistleblower protections laws listed above. If you believe that you are the victim of retaliation for engaging in protected activity, you must follow, as appropriate, the procedures described in the Antidiscrimination Laws and Whistleblower Protection Laws sections or, if applicable, the administrative or negotiated grievance procedures in order to pursue any legal remedy.

Disciplinary Actions

Under the existing laws, each agency retains the right, where appropriate, to discipline a Federal employee who has engaged in discriminatory or retaliatory conduct, up to and including removal. If OSC has initiated an investigation under 5 U.S.C. 1214, however, according to 5 U.S.C. 1214(f), agencies must seek approval from the Special Counsel to discipline employees for, among other activities, engaging in prohibited retaliation. Nothing in the No FEAR Act alters existing laws or permits an agency to take unfounded disciplinary action against a Federal employee or to violate the procedural rights of a Federal employee who has been accused of discrimination.

Additional Information

For further information regarding the No FEAR Act regulations, refer to 5 CFR

724, as well as the appropriate offices within your agency (*e.g.*, Center for Equal Employment Opportunity, Center for Human Capital Management Services, or Office of General Counsel). OPM's specific antidiscrimination policies relating to equal employment opportunity and prohibited personnel practices have been physically and electronically posted throughout OPM. Additional information regarding Federal antidiscrimination, whistleblower protection and retaliation laws can be found at the EEOC Web site—<http://www.eeoc.gov> and the OSC Web site—<http://www.osc.gov>.

Existing Rights Unchanged

Pursuant to section 205 of the No FEAR Act, neither the Act nor this notice creates, expands or reduces any rights otherwise available to any employee, former employee or applicant under the laws of the United States, including the provisions of law specified in 5 U.S.C. 2302(d).

U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Linda M. Springer,

Director.

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SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Submissions for OMB Review; Comment Request

Upon written request, copies available from: Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of Filings and Information Services, Washington, DC 20549.

Extensions:

Form F-7, OMB Control No. 3235-0383, SEC File No. 270-331.

Form F-8, OMB Control No. 3235-0378, SEC File No. 270-332.

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*) the Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission") has submitted to the Office of Management and Budget these requests for extension of the previously approved collections of information discussed below.

Form F-7 (17 CFR 239.37) may be used to register under the Securities Act of 1933 (15 U.S.C. 77a *et seq.*) securities offered for cash upon exercise of rights that are granted to its existing shareholders of the registrant to purchase or subscribe such securities. The information collected is intended to ensure that the information required to be filed by the Commission permits

verification of compliance with securities law requirements and assures the public availability of such information. The information provided is mandatory and all information is made available to the public upon request. Form F-7 takes approximately 4 hours per response to prepare and is filed by 5 respondents. We estimate that 25% of 4 hours per response (one hour) is prepared by the company for a total annual reporting burden of 5 hours (one hour per response \times 5 responses).

Form F-8 (17 CFR 239.38) may be used to register under the Securities Act of 1933 (15 U.S.C. 77a *et seq.*) securities of certain Canadian issuers to be used in exchange offers or business combinations. The information collected is intended to ensure that the information required to be filed by the Commission permits verification of compliance with securities law requirements and assures the public availability of such information. The information provided is mandatory and all information is made available to the public upon request. Form F-8 takes approximately one hour per response to prepare and is filed by 10 respondents. We estimate that 25% of one hour per response (15 minutes) is prepared by the company for a total annual reporting burden of 3 hours (15 minutes/60 minutes per response \times 10 responses = 2.5 hours rounded to 3 hours).

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid control number.

Written comments regarding the above information should be directed to the following persons: (i) Desk Officer for the Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Room 10102, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503 or send an e-mail to David_Rostker@omb.eop.gov; and (ii) R. Corey Booth, Director/Chief Information Officer, Securities and Exchange Commission, C/O Shirley Martinson, 6432 General Green Way, Alexandria, VA 22312; or send an e-mail to PRA_Mailbox@sec.gov. Comments must be submitted to OMB within 30 days of this notice.

November 20, 2006.

Nancy M. Morris,
Secretary.

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SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Submission for OMB Review, Comment Request

Upon written request, copies available from: Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of Filings and Information Services, Washington, DC 20549.

Extension: Rule 17Ad-4(b) and (c), SEC File No. 270-264, OMB Control No. 3235-0341.

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*), the Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission") has submitted to the Office of Management and Budget a request for extension of the previously approved collection of information discussed below.

Rule 17Ad-4(b) and (c) (17 CFR 240.17Ad-4) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (17 U.S.C. 78a *et seq.*) is used to document when transfer agents are exempt, or no longer exempt, from the minimum performance standards and certain recordkeeping provisions of the Commission's transfer agent rules. Rule 17Ad-4(c) sets forth the conditions under which a registered transfer agent loses its exempt status. Once the conditions for exemption no longer exist, the transfer agent, to keep the appropriate regulatory authority ("ARA") apprised of its current status, must prepare, and file if the ARA for the transfer agent is the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System ("BGFRS") or the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC"), a notice of loss of exempt status under paragraph (c). The transfer agent then cannot claim exempt status under Rule 17Ad-4(b) again until it remains subject to the minimum performance standards for non-exempt transfer agents for six consecutive months. The ARAs use the information contained in the notice to determine whether a registered transfer agent qualifies for the exemption, to determine when a registered transfer agent no longer qualifies for the exemption, and to determine the extent to which that transfer agent is subject to regulation.

The BGFRS receives approximately twelve notices of exempt status and six notices of loss of exempt status annually. The FDIC receives approximately eighteen notices of exempt status and three notices of loss of exempt status annually. The Commission and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency ("OCC") do not require transfer agents to file a notice of exempt status or loss of

exempt status. Instead, transfer agents whose ARA is the Commission or OCC need only to prepare and maintain these notices. The Commission estimates that approximately sixteen notices of exempt status and loss of exempt status are prepared annually by transfer agents whose ARA is the Commission. Similarly, the OCC estimates that the transfer agents for which it is the ARA prepare and maintain approximately fifteen notices of exempt status and loss of exempt status annually. Thus, a total of approximately seventy notices of exempt status and loss of exempt status are prepared and maintained by transfer agents annually. Of these seventy notices, approximately forty are filed with an ARA. Any additional costs associated with filing such notices would be limited primarily to postage, which would be minimal. Since the Commission estimates that no more than one-half hour is required to prepare each notice, the total annual burden to transfer agents is approximately thirty-five hours. The average cost per hour is approximately \$30. Therefore, the total cost of compliance to the transfer agent community is \$1,050.

A transfer agent should prepare and maintain in its possession or file with its ARA notice of exempt status or loss of exempt status for the period of the exemption or loss of exemption. When the transfer agent's status changes, the transfer agent should file a notice of exempt status or loss of exempt status reflecting that change. The notice requirement is mandatory to determine when a registered transfer agent no longer qualifies for the exemption, and to determine the extent to which that transfer agent is subject to regulation. Notices submitted according to Rule 17Ad-4(b) and (c) will not be kept confidential. Please note that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid control number.

General comments regarding the estimated burden hours should be directed to the following persons: (i) David Rostker, Desk Officer for the Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Room 10102, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503 or by sending an e-mail to: David_Rostker@omb.eop.gov; and (ii) R. Corey Booth, Director/Chief Information Officer, Securities and Exchange Commission, C/O Shirley Martinson, 6432 General Green Way, Alexandria, VA 22312; or by sending an e-mail to: