

plan and the related account do not constitute an association having an existence independent of Z Corporation and therefore do not constitute a voluntary employees' beneficiary association.

*Example 3.* A, an individual, is the incorporator and chief operating officer of Lawyers' Beneficiary Association (LBA). LBA is engaged in the business of providing medical benefits to members of the Association and their families. Membership is open only to practicing lawyers located in a particular metropolitan area who are neither self-employed nor partners in a law firm. Membership in LBA is solicited by insurance agents under the control of X Corporation (owned by A) which, by contract with LBA, is the exclusive sales agent. Medical benefits are paid from a trust account containing periodic contributions paid by the members, together with proceeds from the investment of those contributions. Contribution and benefit levels are set by LBA. The members of LBA do not hold meetings, have no right to elect officers or directors of the Association, and no right to replace trustees. Collectively, the subscribers for medical benefits from LBA cannot be said to control the association and membership is neither more than nor different from the purchase of an insurance policy from a stock insurance company. LBA is not a voluntary employees' beneficiary association.

*Example 4.* U corporation unilaterally established a plan to provide benefits to its employees. In accordance with the provisions of the plan, each employee may secure insurance or benefit coverage by making an election under which the employee agrees to contribute to the plan an amount which is determined solely by whether the employee elects a high option coverage or a low option coverage and on whether the employee elects self only or self and family coverage. The difference between the amount contributed by employees electing the various coverages and the actual cost of the coverage is made up through contributions by U to the plan. To fund the plan, U established an arrangement in the nature of a trust under applicable local law and contributed all employee contributions, and all amounts which by the term of the plan it was required to provide to the plan, to the trust. The trust constitutes an *employee welfare benefit plan* within the meaning of, and subject to relevant requirements of, ERISA. It will be considered to meet the requirements of § 1.501(c)(9)-2(c)(3).

[T.D. 7750, 46 FR 1723, Jan. 7, 1981]

**§ 1.501(c)(9)-3 Voluntary employees' beneficiary associations; life, sick, accident, or other benefits.**

(a) *In general.* The life, sick, accident, or other benefits provided by a vol-

untary employees' beneficiary association must be payable to its members, their dependents, or their designated beneficiaries. For purposes of section 501(c)(9), *dependent* means the member's spouse; any child of the member or the member's spouse who is a minor or a student (within the meaning of section 151(e)(4)); any other minor child residing with the member; and any other individual who an association, relying on information furnished to it by a member, in good faith believes is a person described in section 152(a). Life, sick, accident, or other benefits may take the form of cash or noncash benefits. A voluntary employees' beneficiary association is not operated for the purpose of providing life, sick, accident, or other benefits unless substantially all of its operations are in furtherance of the provision of such benefits. Further, an organization is not described in this section if it systematically and knowingly provides benefits (of more than a *de minimis* amount) that are not permitted by paragraphs (b), (c), (d), or (e) of this section.

(b) *Life benefits.* The term *life benefits* means a benefit (including a burial benefit or a wreath) payable by reason of the death of a member or dependent. A *life benefit* may be provided directly or through insurance. It generally must consist of current protection, but also may include a right to convert to individual coverage on termination of eligibility for coverage through the association, or a permanent benefit as defined in, and subject to the conditions in, the regulations under section 79. A *life benefit* also includes the benefit provided under any life insurance contract purchased directly from an employee-funded association by a member or provided by such an association to a member. The term *life benefit* does not include a pension, annuity or similar benefit, except that a benefit payable by reason of the death of an insured may be settled in the form of an annuity to the beneficiary in lieu of a lump-sum death benefit (whether or not the contract provides for settlement in a lump sum).

(c) *Sick and accident benefits.* The term *sick and accident benefits* means amounts furnished to or on behalf of a member or a member's dependents in

the event of illness or personal injury to a member or dependent. Such benefits may be provided through reimbursement to a member or a member's dependents for amounts expended because of illness or personal injury, or through the payment of premiums to a medical benefit or health insurance program. Similarly, a sick and accident benefit includes an amount paid to a member in lieu of income during a period in which the member is unable to work due to sickness or injury. Sick benefits also include benefits designed to safeguard or improve the health of members and their dependents. Sick and accident benefits may be provided directly by an association to or on behalf of members and their dependents, or may be provided indirectly by an association through the payment of premiums or fees to an insurance company, medical clinic, or other program under which members and their dependents are entitled to medical services or to other sick and accident benefits. Sick and accident benefits may also be furnished in noncash form, such as, for example, benefits in the nature of clinical care services by visiting nurses, and transportation furnished for medical care.

(d) *Other benefits.* The term *other benefits* includes only benefits that are similar to life, sick, or accident benefits. A benefit is similar to a life, sick, or accident benefit if:

(1) It is intended to safeguard or improve the health of a member or a member's dependents, or

(2) It protects against a contingency that interrupts or impairs a member's earning power.

(e) *Examples of other benefits.* Paying vacation benefits, providing vacation facilities, reimbursing vacation expenses, and subsidizing recreational activities such as athletic leagues are considered *other benefits*. The provision of child-care facilities for preschool and school-age dependents are also considered *other benefits*. The provision of job readjustment allowances, income maintenance payments in the event of economic dislocation, temporary living expense loans and grants at times of disaster (such as fire or flood), supplemental unemployment compensation benefits (as defined in section

501(c)(17)(D)(i) of the Code), severance benefits (under a severance pay plan within the meaning of 29 CFR 2510.3-2(b)) and education or training benefits or courses (such as apprentice training programs) for members, are considered *other benefits* because they protect against a contingency that interrupts earning power. Personal legal service benefits which consist of payments or credits to one or more organizations or trusts described in section 501(c)(20) are considered *other benefits*. Except to the extent otherwise provided in these regulations, as amended from time to time, *other benefits* also include any benefit provided in the manner permitted by paragraphs (5) *et seq.* of section 302(c) of the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947, 61 Stat. 136, as amended, 29 U.S.C. 186(c) (1979).

(f) *Examples of nonqualifying benefits.* Benefits that are not described in paragraphs (d) or (e) of this section are not *other benefits*. Thus, *other benefits* do not include the payment of commuting expenses, such as bridge tolls or train fares, the provision of accident or homeowner's insurance benefits for damage to property, the provision of malpractice insurance, or the provision of loans to members except in times of distress (as permitted by §1.501(c)(9)-3(e)). *Other benefits* also do not include the provision of savings facilities for members. The term *other benefits* does not include any benefit that is similar to a pension or annuity payable at the time of mandatory or voluntary retirement, or a benefit that is similar to the benefit provided under a stock bonus or profit-sharing plan. For purposes of section 501(c)(9) and these regulations, a benefit will be considered similar to that provided under a pension, annuity, stock bonus or profit-sharing plan if it provides for deferred compensation that becomes payable by reason of the passage of time, rather than as the result of an unanticipated event. Thus, for example, supplemental unemployment benefits, which generally become payable by reason of unanticipated lay-off, are not, for purposes of these regulations, considered similar to the benefit provided under a pension, annuity, stock bonus or profit-sharing plan.

(g) *Examples.* The provisions of this section may be further illustrated by the following examples:

*Example 1.* V was organized in connection with a vacation plan created pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement between M, a labor union, which represents certain hourly paid employees of T corporation, and T. The agreement calls for the payment by T to V of a specified sum per hour worked by T employees who are covered by the collective bargaining agreement. T includes the amounts in the covered employees' wages and withholds income and FICA taxes. The amounts are paid by T to V to provide vacation benefits provided under the collective bargaining agreement. Generally, each covered employee receives a check in payment of his or her vacation benefit during the year following the year in which contributions were made by T to V. The amount of the vacation benefit is determined by reference to the contributions during the prior year to V by T on behalf of each employee, and is distributed in cash to each such employee. If the earnings on investments by V during the year preceding distribution are sufficient after deducting the expenses of administering the plan, each recipient of a vacation benefit is paid an amount, in addition to the contributions on his or her behalf, equal to his/her ratable share of the net earnings of V during such year. The plan provides a vacation benefit that constitutes an eligible *other benefit* described in section 501(c)(9) and § 1.501(c)(9)-3(e).

*Example 2.* The facts are the same as in Example 1, except that each covered employee of T is entitled, at his or her discretion, to contribute up to an additional \$1,000 each year to V, which agrees in respect of such sum to pay interest at a stated rate from the time of contribution until the time at which the contributing employee's vacation benefit is distributed. In addition, each employee may elect to leave all or a portion of his/her distributable benefit on deposit past the time of distribution, in which case interest will continue to accrue. Because the plan more closely resembles a savings arrangement than a vacation plan, the benefit payable to the covered employees of T is not a *vacation benefit* and is not an eligible *other benefit* described in section 501(c)(9) and § 1.501(c)(9)-3 (d) or (e).

[T.D. 7750, 46 FR 1724, Jan. 7, 1981]

**§ 1.501(c)(9)-4 Voluntary employees' beneficiary associations; inurement.**

(a) *General rule.* No part of the net earnings of an employees' association may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual other than through the payment of benefits per-

mitted by § 1.501(c)(9)-3. The disposition of property to, or the performance of services for, a person for less than the greater of fair market value or cost (including indirect costs) to the association, other than as a life, sick, accident or other permissible benefit, constitutes prohibited inurement. Generally, the payment of unreasonable compensation to the trustees or employees of the association, or the purchase of insurance or services for amounts in excess of their fair market value from a company in which one or more of the association's trustees, officers or fiduciaries has an interest, will constitute prohibited inurement. Whether prohibited inurement has occurred is a question to be determined with regard to all of the facts and circumstances, taking into account the guidelines set forth in this section. The guidelines and examples contained in this section are not an exhaustive list of the activities that may constitute prohibited inurement, or the persons to whom the association's earnings could impermissibly inure. See § 1.501(a)-1(c).

(b) *Disproportionate benefits.* For purposes of subsection (a), the payment to any member of disproportionate benefits, where such payment is not pursuant to objective and nondiscriminatory standards, will not be considered a benefit within the meaning of § 1.501(c)(9)-3 even though the benefit otherwise is one of the type permitted by that section. For example, the payment to highly compensated personnel of benefits that are disproportionate in relation to benefits received by other members of the association will constitute prohibited inurement. Also, the payment to similarly situated employees of benefits that differ in kind or amount will constitute prohibited inurement unless the difference can be justified on the basis of objective and reasonable standards adopted by the association or on the basis of standards adopted pursuant to the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. In general, benefits paid pursuant to standards or subject to conditions that do not provide for disproportionate benefits to officers, shareholders, or highly compensated employees will not be considered disproportionate. See § 1.501(c)(9)-2(a) (2) and (3).