(d) *Effective date.* This section applies to taxable years of a qualified pension or annuity plan beginning after October 23, 1962.

[T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5072, Apr. 14, 1964]

§ 1.401(a)–1 Post-ERISA qualified plans and qualified trusts; in general.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *In general.* This section and the following regulation sections under section 401 reflect the provisions of section 401 after amendment by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93–406) (''ERISA'').

(2) [Reserved]

(b) *Requirements for pension plans*—(1) *Definitely determinable benefits.* (i) In order for a pension plan to be a qualified plan under section 401(a), the plan must be established and maintained by an employer primarily to provide systematically for the payment of definitely determinable benefits to its employees over a period of years, usually for life, after retirement or attainment of normal retirement age (subject to paragraph (b)(2) of this section). A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(1)(i) merely because the plan provides, in accordance with section 401(a)(36), that a distribution may be made from the plan to an employee who has attained age 62 and who is not separated from employment at the time of such distribution.

(ii) Section 1.401–1(b)(1)(i), a pre-ERISA regulation, provides rules applicable to this requirement, and that regulation is applicable except as otherwise provided.

(iii) The use of the type of plan provision described in §1.415(a)–1(d)(1) which automatically freezes or reduces the rate of benefit accrual or the annual addition to insure that the limitations of section 415 will not be exceeded, will not be considered to violate the requirements of this subparagraph provided that the operation of such provision precludes discretion by the employer.

(2) *Normal retirement age*—(i) *General rule.* The normal retirement age under a plan must be an age that is not earlier than the earliest age that is reasonably representative of the typical retirement age for the industry in which the covered workforce is employed.

(ii) *Age 62 safe harbor.* A normal retirement age under a plan that is age 62 or later is deemed to be not earlier than the earliest age that is reasonably representative of the typical retirement age for the industry in which the covered workforce is employed.

(iii) *Age 55 to age 62.* In the case of a normal retirement age that is not earlier than age 55 and is earlier than age 62, whether the age is not earlier than the earliest age that is reasonably representative of the typical retirement age for the industry in which the covered workforce is employed is based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances.

(iv) *Under age 55.* A normal retirement age that is lower than age 55 is presumed to be earlier than the earliest age that is reasonably representative of the typical retirement age for the industry in which the covered workforce is employed, unless the Commissioner determines that under the facts and circumstances the normal retirement age is not earlier than the earliest age that is reasonably representative of the typical retirement age for the industry in which the covered workforce is employed.

(v) *Age 50 safe harbor for qualified public safety employees.* A normal retirement age under a plan that is age 50 or later is deemed to be not earlier than the earliest age that is reasonably representative of the typical retirement age for the industry in which the covered workforce is employed if substantially all of the participants in the plan are qualified public safety employees (within the meaning of section 72(t)(10)(B)).

(3) *Benefit distribution prior to retirement.* For purposes of paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, retirement does not include a mere reduction in the number of hours that an employee works. Accordingly, benefits may not be distributed prior to normal retirement age solely due to a reduction in the number of hours that an employee works.

(4) *Effective date.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (b)(4), paragraphs (b)(2) and (3) of this section are effective May 22, 2007. In the case of a

governmental plan (as defined in section 414(d)), paragraphs (b)(2) and (3) of this section are effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 2009. In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements that have been ratified and are in effect on May 22, 2007, paragraphs (b)(2) and (3) of this section do not apply before the first plan year that begins after the last of such agreements terminate determined without regard to any extension thereof (or, if earlier, May 24, 2010. See §1.411(d)–4, A–12, for a special transition rule in the case of a plan amendment that increases a plan's normal retirement age pursuant to paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1695, Jan. 7, 1981, as amended by T.D. 9319, 72 FR 16894, Apr. 5, 2007; T.D. 9325, 72 FR 28606, May 22, 2007]

§1.401(a)–2 Impossibility of diversion under qualified plan or trust.

(a) *General rule.* Section 401(a)(2) requires that in order for a trust to be qualified, it must be impossible under the trust instrument (in the taxable year and at any time thereafter before the satisfaction of all liabilities to employees or their beneficiaries covered by the trust) for any part of the trust corpus or income to be used for, or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of those employees or their beneficiaries. Section 1.401–2, a pre-ERISA regulation, provides rules under section 401(a)(2) and that regulation is applicable except as otherwise provided.

(b) *Section 415 suspense account.* Notwithstanding paragraph (a) of this section, a plan, or trust forming part of a plan, may provide for the reversion to the employer, upon termination of the plan, of amounts contributed to the plan that exceed the limitations imposed under section 415(c), to the extent set forth in rules prescribed by the Commissioner in revenue rulings, notices, or other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin (see §601.601(d)(2) of this chapter).

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1696, Jan. 7, 1981, as amended by T.D. 9319, 72 FR 16894, Apr. 5, 2007]

§1.401(a)–4 Optional forms of benefit (before 1994).

Q–1: How does section 401(a)(4) apply to optional forms of benefits?

A–1: (a) *In general*—(1) *Scope.* The nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) apply to the amount of contributions or benefits, optional forms of benefit, and other benefits, rights and features (e.g., actuarial assumptions, methods of benefit calculation, loans, social security supplements, and disability benefits) under a plan. This section addresses the application of section 401(a)(4) only to optional forms of benefit under a plan. Generally, the determination of whether an optional form is nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) is made by reference to the availability of such optional form, and not by reference to the utilization or actual receipt of such optional form. See Q&A–2 of this section. Even though an optional form of benefit under a plan may be nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) and this §1.401(a)–4 because the availability of such optional form does not impermissibly favor employees in the highly compensated group, such plan may fail to satisfy section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits or with respect to other benefits, rights and features if, for example, the method of calculation or the amount or value of benefits payable under such optional form impermissibly favors the highly compensated group. See §1.411(d)–4, Q&A–1 for the definition of ''optional form of benefit.''

(2) *Nondiscrimination requirements.* Each optional form of benefit provided under a plan is subject to the nondiscrimination requirement of section 401(a)(4) and thus the availability of each optional form of benefit must not discriminate in favor of the employees described in section 401(a)(4) in whose favor discrimination is prohibited (the ''highly compensated group''). See paragraph (b) of this Q&A–1 for a description of the employees included in such group. This is true without regard to whether a particular optional form of benefit is the actuarial equivalent of any other optional form of benefit under the plan. Thus, for example, a plan may not condition, or otherwise