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existence at the time a contractor is suspended or excluded.

(b) Any contract not rescinded or terminated shall continue in force in accordance with the terms thereof.

(c) The right to rescind or terminate a contract in existence is cumulative and in addition to any other remedies or rights the FDIC may have under the terms of the contract, at law, or otherwise.

§ 367.19 Exceptions to suspensions and exclusions.

(a) Exceptions to the effects of suspensions and exclusions may be available in unique circumstances, where there are compelling reasons to utilize a particular contractor for a specific task. Requests for such exceptions may be submitted only by the FDIC program office requesting the contract services.

(b) In the case of the modification or extension of an existing contract, the Ethics Counselor may except such a contracting action from the effects of suspension and/or exclusion upon a determination, in writing, that a compelling reason exists for utilization of the contractor in the particular instance. The Ethics Counselor's authority under this section shall not be delegated to any lower official.

(c) In the case of new contracts, the Corporation Ethics Committee may except a particular new contract from the effects of suspension and/or exclusion upon a determination in writing that a compelling reason exists for utilization of the contractor in the particular instance.

§ 367.20 Review and reconsideration of Ethics Counselor decisions.

(a) *Review.* (1) A suspended and/or excluded contractor may appeal the exclusion decision to the Corporation Ethics Committee.

(2) In order to avail itself of the right to appeal, a suspended and/or excluded contractor must file a written notice of intent to appeal within 5 days of the Ethics Counselor's decision.

(3) The appeal shall be filed in writing within 30 days of the decision.

(4) The Corporation Ethics Committee, at its discretion and after determining that it is in the best interests of the FDIC, may stay the effect of the suspension and/or exclusion pending conclusion of its review of the matter.

(b) *Reconsideration.* (1) A suspended and/or excluded contractor may submit a request to the Ethics Counselor to reconsider the suspension and/or exclusion decision, reduce the period of exclusion or terminate the suspension and/or exclusion.

(2) Such requests shall be in writing and supported by documentation that the requested action is justified by:

(i) Reversal of the conviction or civil judgment upon which the suspension and/or exclusion was based;

(ii) Newly discovered material evidence;

(iii) Bona fide change in ownership or management;

(iv) Elimination of other causes for which the suspension and/or exclusion was imposed; or

(v) Other reasons the FDIC Ethics Counselor deems appropriate.

(3) A request for reconsideration based on the reversal of the conviction or civil judgment may be filed at any time.

(4) Requests for reconsideration based on other grounds may only be filed during the period commencing 60 days after the Ethics Counselor's decision imposing the suspension and/or exclusion. Only one such request may be filed in any twelve month period.

(5) The Ethics Counselor's decision on a request for reconsideration is subject to the review procedure set forth in paragraph (a) of this section.

PART 368—GOVERNMENT SECURITIES SALES PRACTICES

Sec.

368.1 Scope.
368.2 Definitions.
368.3 Business conduct.
368.4 Recommendations to customers.
368.5 Customer information.
368.100 Obligations concerning institutional customers.

AUTHORITY: 15 U.S.C. 78o–5.

SOURCE: 62 FR 13287, Mar. 19, 1997, unless otherwise noted.

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§ 368.1 Scope.

This part is applicable to state nonmember banks and insured state branches of foreign banks that have filed notice as, or are required to file notice as, government securities brokers or dealers pursuant to section 15C of the Securities Exchange Act (15 U.S.C. 78o–5) and Department of the Treasury rules under section 15C (17 CFR 400.1(d) and part 401).

§ 368.2 Definitions.

(a) *Bank that is a government securities broker or dealer* means a state nonmember bank or an insured state branch of a foreign bank that has filed notice, or is required to file notice, as a government securities broker or dealer pursuant to section 15C of the Securities Exchange Act (15 U.S.C. 78o–5) and Department of the Treasury rules under section 15C (17 CFR 400.1(d) and part 401).

(b) *Customer* does not include a broker or dealer or a government securities broker or dealer.

(c) *Government security* has the same meaning as this term has in section 3(a)(42) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78c(a)(42)).

(d) *Non-institutional customer* means any customer other than:

(1) A bank, savings association, insurance company, or registered investment company;

(2) An investment adviser registered under section 203 of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 (15 U.S.C. 80b–3); or

(3) Any entity (whether a natural person, corporation, partnership, trust, or otherwise) with total assets of at least $50 million.

§ 368.3 Business conduct.

A bank that is a government securities broker or dealer shall observe high standards of commercial honor and just and equitable principles of trade in the conduct of its business as a government securities broker or dealer.

§ 368.4 Recommendations to customers.

In recommending to a customer the purchase, sale or exchange of a government security, a bank that is a government securities broker or dealer shall have reasonable grounds for believing that the recommendation is suitable for the customer upon the basis of the facts, if any, disclosed by the customer as to the customer's other security holdings and as to the customer's financial situation and needs.

§ 368.5 Customer information.

Prior to the execution of a transaction recommended to a non-institutional customer, a bank that is a government securities broker or dealer shall make reasonable efforts to obtain information concerning:

(a) The customer's financial status;

(b) The customer's tax status;

(c) The customer's investment objectives; and

(d) Such other information used or considered to be reasonable by such bank in making recommendations to the customer.

§ 368.100 Obligations concerning institutional customers.

(a) As a result of broadened authority provided by the Government Securities Act Amendments of 1993 (15 U.S.C. 78o–3 and 78o–5), the FDIC is adopting sales practice rules for the government securities market, a market with a particularly broad institutional component. Accordingly, the FDIC believes it is appropriate to provide further guidance to banks on their suitability obligations when making recommendations to institutional customers.

(b) The FDIC's suitability rule (§ 368.4) is fundamental to fair dealing and is intended to promote ethical sales practices and high standards of professional conduct. Banks' responsibilities include having a reasonable basis for recommending a particular security or strategy, as well as having reasonable grounds for believing the recommendation is suitable for the customer to whom it is made. Banks are expected to meet the same high standards of competence, professionalism, and good faith regardless of the financial circumstances of the customer.

(c) In recommending to a customer the purchase, sale, or exchange of any government security, the bank shall have reasonable grounds for believing that the recommendation is suitable for the customer upon the basis of the

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facts, if any, disclosed by the customer as to the customer's other security holdings and financial situation and needs.

(d) The interpretation in this section concerns only the manner in which a bank determines that a recommendation is suitable for a particular institutional customer. The manner in which a bank fulfills this suitability obligation will vary, depending on the nature of the customer and the specific transaction. Accordingly, the interpretation in this section deals only with guidance regarding how a bank may fulfill customer-specific suitability obligations under § 368.4.[1]

(e) While it is difficult to define in advance the scope of a bank's suitability obligation with respect to a specific institutional customer transaction recommended by a bank, the FDIC has identified certain factors that may be relevant when considering compliance with § 368.4. These factors are not intended to be requirements or the only factors to be considered but are offered merely as guidance in determining the scope of a bank's suitability obligations.

(f) The two most important considerations in determining the scope of a bank's suitability obligations in making recommendations to an institutional customer are the customer's capability to evaluate investment risk independently and the extent to which the customer is exercising independent judgement in evaluating a bank's recommendation. A bank must determine, based on the information available to it, the customer's capability to evaluate investment risk. In some cases, the bank may conclude that the customer is not capable of making independent investment decisions in general. In other cases, the institutional customer may have general capability, but may not be able to understand a particular type of instrument or its risk. This is more likely to arise with relatively new types of instruments, or those with significantly different risk or volatility characteristics than other investments generally made by the institution. If a customer is either generally not capable of evaluating investment risk or lacks sufficient capability to evaluate the particular product, the scope of a bank's customer-specific obligations under § 368.4 would not be diminished by the fact that the bank was dealing with an institutional customer. On the other hand, the fact that a customer initially needed help understanding a potential investment need not necessarily imply that the customer did not ultimately develop an understanding and make an independent investment decision.

(g) A bank may conclude that a customer is exercising independent judgement if the customer's investment decision will be based on its own independent assessment of the opportunities and risks presented by a potential investment, market factors and other investment considerations. Where the bank has reasonable grounds for concluding that the institutional customer is making independent investment decisions and is capable of independently evaluating investment risk, then a bank's obligations under § 368.4 for a particular customer are fulfilled.[2] Where a customer has delegated decision-making authority to an agent, such as an investment advisor or a bank trust department, the interpretation in this section shall be applied to the agent.

(h) A determination of capability to evaluate investment risk independently will depend on an examination of the customer's capability to make its own investment decisions, including the resources available to the customer to make informed decisions. Relevant considerations could include:

(1) The use of one or more consultants, investment advisers, or bank trust departments;

(2) The general level of experience of the institutional customer in financial markets and specific experience with

[1] The interpretation in this section does not address the obligation related to suitability that requires that a bank have '' * * * a 'reasonable basis' to believe that the recommendation could be suitable for at least some customers.'' *In the Matter of the Application of F.J. Kaufman and Company of Virginia and Frederick J. Kaufman, Jr.*, 50 SEC 164 (1989).

[2] See footnote 1 in paragraph (d) of this section.

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the type of instruments under consideration;

(3) The customer's ability to understand the economic features of the security involved;

(4) The customer's ability to independently evaluate how market developments would affect the security; and

(5) The complexity of the security or securities involved.

(i) A determination that a customer is making independent investment decisions will depend on the nature of the relationship that exists between the bank and the customer. Relevant considerations could include:

(1) Any written or oral understanding that exists between the bank and the customer regarding the nature of the relationship between the bank and the customer and the services to be rendered by the bank;

(2) The presence or absence of a pattern of acceptance of the bank's recommendations;

(3) The use by the customer of ideas, suggestions, market views and information obtained from other government securities brokers or dealers or market professionals, particularly those relating to the same type of securities; and

(4) The extent to which the bank has received from the customer current comprehensive portfolio information in connection with discussing recommended transactions or has not been provided important information regarding its portfolio or investment objectives.

(j) Banks are reminded that these factors are merely guidelines that will be utilized to determine whether a bank has fulfilled its suitability obligation with respect to a specific institutional customer transaction and that the inclusion or absence of any of these factors is not dispositive of the determination of suitability. Such a determination can only be made on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration all the facts and circumstances of a particular bank/customer relationship, assessed in the context of a particular transaction.

(k) For purposes of the interpretation in this section, an institutional customer shall be any entity other than a natural person. In determining the applicability of the interpretation in this section to an institutional customer, the FDIC will consider the dollar value of the securities that the institutional customer has in its portfolio and/or under management. While the interpretation in this section is potentially applicable to any institutional customer, the guidance contained in this section is more appropriately applied to an institutional customer with at least $10 million invested in securities in the aggregate in its portfolio and/or under management.

PART 369—PROHIBITION AGAINST USE OF INTERSTATE BRANCHES PRIMARILY FOR DEPOSIT PRODUCTION

Sec.

369.1 Purpose and scope.
369.2 Definitions.
369.3 Loan-to-deposit ratio screen.
369.4 Credit needs determination.
369.5 Sanctions.

AUTHORITY: 12 U.S.C. 1819 (Tenth) and 1835a.

SOURCE: 62 FR 47737, Sept. 10, 1997, unless otherwise noted.

§ 369.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) *Purpose.* The purpose of this part is to implement section 109 (12 U.S.C. 1835a) of the Riegle-Neal Interstate Banking and Branching Efficiency Act of 1994 (Interstate Act).

(b) *Scope.* (1) This part applies to any State nonmember bank that has operated a covered interstate branch for a period of at least one year.

(2) This part describes the requirements imposed under 12 U.S.C. 1835a, which requires the appropriate Federal banking agencies (the FDIC, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System) to prescribe uniform rules that prohibit a bank from using any authority to engage in interstate branching pursuant to the Interstate Act, or any amendment made by the Interstate Act to any other provision of law, primarily for the purpose of deposit production.

§ 369.2 Definitions.

For purposes of this part, the following definitions apply:

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