

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Consumer Service

Food Stamp Program: Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request—Collection Methods for Food Stamp Program Recipient Claims

AGENCY: Food and Consumer Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 this notice announces the Food and Consumer Service's (FCS's) intention to request Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review of a proposed revision to an information collection. The revision adds additional information requirements based on the Federal Income Tax Refund Offset Program (FTROP) and the Federal Salary Offset Program (Salary Offset).

DATES: Comments and recommendations on the proposed revision must be received by June 10, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Comments are invited on:

- Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;
- the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;
- ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments should be sent to James I. Porter, Issuance and Accountability Section, State Administration Branch, Program Accountability Division, Food and Consumer Service, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 905, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. Copies of the estimate of the information collection can be obtained by contacting Mr. Porter.

All comments will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the information collection. All comments will become a matter of public record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Porter at the above address or at (703) 305-2385 during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The following is provided pursuant to 5 CFR 1320.5(a)(1)(iv):

Title: Federal Collection Methods for Food Stamp Program Recipient Claims. (This is a new title for the collection. The current title is: Expansion of Test of Offsetting Federal Income Tax Refunds, Recipient Claims Collection.)

OMB Number: 0584-0446.

Expiration Date: September 27, 1996.

Type of Request: Revision of a currently approved collection.

Abstract: Substantially all FTROP and Salary Offset procedures are exchanges of information, and substantially all the procedures are required by statute or regulation, as follows: 31 U.S.C. 2653(a), in the case of FTROP; 5 U.S.C. 5514, in the case of Salary Offset; IRS regulations at 26 CFR 301.6402-6, relating to both programs; and by USDA regulations at 7 CFR 3.51-3.68 for Salary Offset.

FTROP and Salary Offset have proved to be effective methods for collection action on a substantial portion of approximately \$900 million in outstanding debt for certain food stamp overissuances for which other collection methods have not been successful. The information exchanged under the programs is used to meet due process requirements, provide lists of debts for collection from Federal income tax refunds and Federal salaries, and to report on collections and related actions.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 450 hours for State agencies and 8 minutes for debtors.

Respondents: The collection impacts two groups, State agencies which

administer the Food Stamp Program, and certain individuals who are liable for overissued food stamp benefits. State agencies which choose to participate in FTROP and Salary Offset are required to produce certain notices of intent to collect claims for overissued food stamp benefits, respond to informal inquiries about them and in the case of FTROP, if timely requests are received from debtors, to conduct limited reviews of the intended debt collection. State agencies are also required to provide automated data files of debts and among other things, to process reports on the collection of the debts and to report those debt collections. While debtors are not required to read or otherwise act on notices of the intended collection actions, we expect that most debtors do at least read the notices. Many debtors make informal inquiries and a small percentage request reviews or hearings.

Estimated Number of Respondents: State agency participation in the programs is approaching 52. Debtor respondents are estimated at 370,000 based on 320,000 FTROP due process notices; 40,000 informal inquiries and 2,000 requests for review; 5,000 Salary Offset due process notices from State agencies; 2,500 due process notices from FCS, and 500 informal inquiries and requests for hearings.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: For State agencies the number of responses varies from once for such activities as certifying files to FCS to 320,000 for mailing out FTROP due process notices. For debtors the number of responses varies from once for such things as due process notices to three or four in the case of debtors making informal inquiries and requesting reviews.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: The annual reporting and recordkeeping burden is estimated at 72,862 hours; 23,423 hours for State agencies, approximately 2,200 hours of which is recordkeeping; 49,439 hours for debtors, approximately 5,000 hours of which is recordkeeping.

Dated: March 30, 1996.

William E. Ludwig,

Administrator, Food and Consumer Service.

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