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FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

12 CFR Part 201

[Regulation A]

Extensions of Credit by Federal Reserve Banks; Change in Discount Rate

AGENCY: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Board of Governors has amended its Regulation A on Extensions of Credit by Federal Reserve Banks to reflect its approval of a decrease in the basic discount rate at each Federal Reserve Bank. The Board acted on requests submitted by the Boards of Directors of the twelve Federal Reserve Banks.

DATES: The amendments to part 201 (Regulation A) were effective May 15, 2001. The rate changes for adjustment credit were effective on the dates specified in 12 CFR 201.51.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer J. Johnson, Secretary of the Board, at (202) 452-3259, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 20th and C Streets NW., Washington, DC 20551.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to the authority of sections 10(b), 13, 14, 19, et al., of the Federal Reserve Act, the Board has amended its Regulation A (12 CFR part 201) to incorporate changes in discount rates on Federal Reserve Bank extensions of credit. The discount rates are the interest rates charged to depository institutions when they borrow from their district Reserve Banks.

The “basic discount rate” is a fixed rate charged by Reserve Banks for adjustment credit and, at the Reserve Banks’ discretion, for extended credit for up to 30 days. In decreasing the basic discount rate from 4.0 percent to

3.5 percent, the Board acted on requests submitted by the Boards of Directors of the twelve Federal Reserve Banks. The new rates were effective on the dates specified below. The 50-basis-point decrease in the discount rate was associated with a similar decrease in the federal funds rate approved by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) and announced at the same time.

In a joint press release announcing these actions, the FOMC and the Board of Governors noted that a significant reduction in excess inventories seems well advanced. Consumption and housing expenditures have held up reasonably well, though activity in these areas has flattened recently.

Investment in capital equipment, however, has continued to decline. The erosion in current and prospective profitability, in combination with considerable uncertainty about the business outlook, seems likely to hold down capital spending going forward. This potential restraint, together with the possible effects of earlier reductions in equity wealth on consumption and the risk of slower growth abroad, continues to weigh on the economy.

With pressures on labor and product markets easing, inflation is expected to remain contained. Although measured productivity growth stalled in the first quarter, the impressive underlying rate of increase that developed in recent years appears to be largely intact, supporting longer-term prospects.

The FOMC continues to believe that against the background of its long-run goals of price stability and sustainable economic growth and of the information currently available, the risks are weighted mainly toward conditions that may generate economic weakness in the foreseeable future.

Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification

Pursuant to section 605(b) of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 605(b)), the Board certifies that the change in the basic discount rate will not have a significant adverse economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The rule does not impose any additional requirements on entities affected by the regulation.

Administrative Procedure Act

The provisions of 5 U.S.C. 553(b) relating to notice and public participation were not followed in

connection with the adoption of the amendment because the Board for good cause finds that delaying the change in the basic discount rate in order to allow notice and public comment on the change is impracticable, unnecessary, and contrary to the public interest in fostering price stability and sustainable economic growth.

The provisions of 5 U.S.C. 553(d) that prescribe 30 days prior notice of the effective date of a rule have not been followed because section 553(d) provides that such prior notice is not necessary whenever there is good cause for finding that such notice is contrary to the public interest. As previously stated, the Board determined that delaying the changes in the basic discount rate is contrary to the public interest.

List of Subjects in 12 CFR Part 201

Banks, banking, Credit, Federal Reserve System.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 12 CFR part 201 is amended as set forth below:

PART 201—EXTENSIONS OF CREDIT BY FEDERAL RESERVE BANKS (REGULATION A)

1. The authority citation for 12 CFR part 201 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 12 U.S.C. 343 *et seq.*, 347a, 347b, 347c, 347d, 348 *et seq.*, 357, 374, 374a and 461.

2. Section 201.51 is revised to read as follows:

§ 201.51 Adjustment credit for depository institutions.

The rates for adjustment credit provided to depository institutions under § 201.3(a) are:

Federal Reserve Bank	Rate	Effective
Boston	3.5	May 16, 2001.
New York	3.5	May 15, 2001.
Philadelphia	3.5	May 17, 2001.
Cleveland	3.5	May 17, 2001.
Richmond	3.5	May 15, 2001.
Atlanta	3.5	May 16, 2001.
Chicago	3.5	May 15, 2001.
St. Louis	3.5	May 16, 2001.
Minneapolis	3.5	May 17, 2001.
Kansas City	3.5	May 16, 2001.
Dallas	3.5	May 16, 2001.
San Francisco	3.5	May 15, 2001.

By order of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, May 22, 2001.

Jennifer J. Johnson,

Secretary of the Board.

[FR Doc. 01-13373 Filed 5-25-01; 8:45 am]

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SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

13 CFR Part 119

RIN 3245-AE52

PRIME Act Grants

AGENCY: Small Business Administration.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule adds new regulations to set up the Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs Act ("PRIME" or "the Act"), created by Title VII of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, enacted November 12, 1999. This rule sets forth the Act's grant requirements for qualified Microenterprise Development Organizations ("MDOs") to: train and provide technical assistance to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs; build MDO's capacity to give disadvantaged microentrepreneurs such training and technical assistance; research and develop best practices for training and technical assistance programs for disadvantaged microentrepreneurs, and perform such other activities as the Administrator or designee determines are consistent with the Act.

PRIME grants will enable MDOs to reach more disadvantaged microentrepreneurs with training and technical assistance, which will make a difference in their ability to start, grow, and sustain microenterprises in economically distressed, high unemployment areas. SBA will award a minimum of 75 percent of available funds to MDOs to use for training and technical assistance to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs. At a minimum, another 15 percent will be used to build MDOs' capacity to give more training and technical assistance. SBA will use the remaining funds to make grants for research and development on best practices or other purposes to improve MDOs' services to PRIME's ultimate beneficiaries—disadvantaged microentrepreneurs.

DATES: This rule is effective on June 28, 2001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jody Raskind, Chief, Microenterprise Development Branch, 202-205-6497.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

Congress recognized that many disadvantaged microentrepreneurs lack sufficient training and education to gain access to capital and to conduct other activities necessary to establish, maintain, and expand their businesses. It enacted the Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs Act ("PRIME" or "the Act") to augment training and technical assistance under the Small Business Act and other legislation. PRIME grants to qualified Microenterprise Development Organizations ("MDOs") will help meet training and technical assistance needs for disadvantaged microentrepreneurs, thereby encouraging entrepreneurship and capital formation at the community level.

The congressional mandate to provide cognitive support to the target market through the Act is recognition that many low income and very low-income entrepreneurs need training and technical assistance to start, operate, strengthen, or expand their businesses. In order to achieve measurable success, technical assistance providers must be accessible, consistent and committed to the entrepreneur's progress over extended periods of time. The competency and capacity of these providers must also be measured. Research into the outcomes of support, its long-term effect, and how best to continue assistance is essential in determining the value of support over the long run.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Characteristics of Business Ownership shows that in 1987, approximately 17 percent (2.3 million) of businesses in the United States were operated by low-income and very low-income microentrepreneurs. Since then a variety of economic developments, including corporate downsizing, declining availability of lower skilled manufacturing jobs and expanded opportunities in the technology field, have combined to make microenterprise an increasingly more viable option in the U.S. economy.

The Aspen Institute estimated that during 1997 microlenders nationwide provided business assistance to 172,000 microentrepreneurs, a mere fraction of low- and very-low income individuals involved in microenterprise. The Institute further estimated that of that number, about 57,000 actively pursued and benefited from sustained business-based training and technical assistance. Of those, approximately 6,000 received loans.

One of the major constraints is the cost of providing this training and

technical assistance. Current private sector sources simply are not meeting the need. The Act, therefore, focuses on expanding the cultivation, support and motivation of these low- and very-low income microentrepreneurs. It will also help build the capacity of the microenterprise industry in order to deliver vital services to a much greater segment of the 2.3 million or more low income and very low income microentrepreneurs. One of the goals of the PRIME program is to be a resource for MDOs as they grow and develop and ultimately become self-sustaining.

The Act authorizes the U.S. Small Business Administration ("SBA") to make grants to "qualified organizations" to fund training and technical assistance for disadvantaged microentrepreneurs. It also authorizes SBA to make grants to increase the training and technical assistance capacities of MDOs. Further, it authorizes funding for grants for research and development, and other undertakings deemed by the Administrator or designee to be consistent with the purposes of the Act. The PRIME program requires that grants made by SBA be matched by grantees from non-Federal sources. These regulations set up four categories of Technical Assistance Grants targeted to these purposes.

Grants made either for the purpose of providing technical assistance to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs or for capacity building purposes initially will be awarded, on a competitive basis, in amounts not less than \$50,000. Such grants may be renewable, annually, for up to four additional years. Renewal of an existing grant will take place at the discretion of the SBA and will be based on the availability of funds and the individual grantee's performance in terms of goals met, milestones achieved, and demonstrated results.

Grants for research and development will also be awarded on a competitive basis, though not subject to a minimum award. These grants may also be renewed based on the appropriateness of extended funding periods, availability of funds, and appropriation and performance.

PRIME will be implemented with a clear focus on the applicants' abilities to meet the purposes of the Act. Accountability and outcomes will be an ongoing consideration during the grant period. Applicants for funding for technical assistance to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs will be evaluated based on such items as technical capabilities; market penetration potential; ability to meet stated goals; historical performance; key personnel; resource management; community