

SUBCHAPTER B—DEFINITIONS AND COVERAGE UNDER THE EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT INCOME SECURITY ACT OF 1974

PART 2510—DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN SUBCHAPTERS C, D, E, F, G, AND L OF THIS CHAPTER

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AUTHORITY: 29 U.S.C. 1002(1)–(8), 1002(13)–(16), 1002(20), 1002(21), 1002(34), 1002(37), 1002(38), 1002(40)–(44), 1031, and 1135; Div. O, Title I, Sec. 101, Pub. L. 116-94, 133 Stat. 2534 (Dec. 20, 2019); Div. T, Title I, Sec. 105, Pub. L. 117-328, 136 Stat. 4459 (Dec. 29, 2022); Secretary of Labor’s Order 1-2011, 77 FR 1088 (Jan. 9, 2012); Secs. 2510.3-21, 2510.3-101 and 2510.3-102 also issued under Sec. 102 of Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1978, 5 U.S.C. App. 752 (2018) (E.O. 12108, 44 FR 1065 (Jan. 3, 1979)), and 29 U.S.C. 1135 note. Section 2510.3-38 also issued under Sec. 1(b) Pub. L. 105-72, 111 Stat. 1457 (Nov. 10, 1997).

§ 2510.3-1 Employee welfare benefit plan.

(a) *General.* (1) The purpose of this section is to clarify the definition of the terms “employee welfare benefit plan” and “welfare plan” for purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter by identifying certain practices which do not constitute employee welfare benefit plans for those purposes. In addition, the practices listed in this section do not constitute employee pension benefit plans within the meaning of

section 3(2) of the Act, and, therefore, do not constitute employee benefit plans within the meaning of section 3(3). Since under section 4(a) of the Act, only employee benefit plans within the meaning of section 3(3) are subject to title I of the Act, the practices listed in this section are not subject to title I.

(2) The terms “employee welfare benefit plan” and “welfare plan” are defined in section 3(1) of the Act to include plans providing “(i) medical, surgical, or hospital care or benefits, or benefits in the event of sickness, accident, disability, death or unemployment, or vacation benefits, apprenticeship or other training programs, or day care centers, scholarship funds, or prepaid legal services, or (ii) any benefit described in section 302(c) of the Labor Management Relations Act, 1947 (other than pensions on retirement or death, and insurance to provide such pensions).” Under this definition, only plans which provide benefits described in section 3(1)(A) of the Act or in section 302(c) of the Labor-Management Relations Act, 1947 (hereinafter “the LMRA”) (other than pensions on retirement or death) constitute welfare plans. For example, a system of payroll deductions by an employer for deposit in savings accounts owned by its employees is not an employee welfare benefit plan within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Act because it does not provide benefits described in section 3(1)(A) of the Act or section 302(c) of the LMRA. (In addition, if each employee has the right to withdraw the balance in his or her account at any time, such a payroll savings plan does not meet the requirements for a pension plan set forth in section 3(2) of the Act and, therefore, is not an employee benefit plan within the meaning of section 3(3) of the Act).

(3) Section 302(c) of the LMRA lists exceptions to the restrictions contained in subsections (a) and (b) of that section on payments and loans made by an employer to individuals and groups

representing employees of the employer. Of these exceptions, only those contained in paragraphs (5), (6), (7) and (8) describe benefits provided through employee benefit plans. Moreover, only paragraph (6) describes benefits not described in section 3(1)(A) of the Act. The benefits described in section 302(c)(6) of the LMRA but not in section 3(1)(A) of the Act are “* * * holiday, severance or similar benefits”. Thus, the effect of section 3(1)(B) of the Act is to include within the definition of “welfare plan” those plans which provide holiday and severance benefits, and benefits which are similar (for example, benefits which are in substance severance benefits, although not so characterized).

(4) Some of the practices listed in this section as excluded from the definition of “welfare plan” or mentioned as examples of general categories of excluded practices are inserted in response to questions received by the Department of Labor and, in the Department’s judgment, do not represent borderline cases under the definition in section 3(1) of the Act. Therefore, this section should not be read as implicitly indicating the Department’s views on the possible scope of section 3(1).

(b) *Payroll practices.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms “employee welfare benefit plan” and “welfare plan” shall not include—

(1) Payment by an employer of compensation on account of work performed by an employee, including compensation at a rate in excess of the normal rate of compensation on account of performance of duties under other than ordinary circumstances, such as—

- (i) Overtime pay,
- (ii) Shift premiums,
- (iii) Holiday premiums,
- (iv) Weekend premiums;

(2) Payment of an employee’s normal compensation, out of the employer’s general assets, on account of periods of time during which the employee is physically or mentally unable to perform his or her duties, or is otherwise absent for medical reasons (such as pregnancy, a physical examination or psychiatric treatment); and

(3) Payment of compensation, out of the employer’s general assets, on account of periods of time during which

the employee, although physically and mentally able to perform his or her duties and not absent for medical reasons (such as pregnancy, a physical examination or psychiatric treatment) performs no duties; for example—

(i) Payment of compensation while an employee is on vacation or absent on a holiday, including payment of premiums to induce employees to take vacations at a time favorable to the employer for business reasons,

(ii) Payment of compensation to an employee who is absent while on active military duty,

(iii) Payment of compensation while an employee is absent for the purpose of serving as a juror or testifying in official proceedings,

(iv) Payment of compensation on account of periods of time during which an employee performs little or no productive work while engaged in training (whether or not subsidized in whole or in part by Federal, State or local government funds), and

(v) Payment of compensation to an employee who is relieved of duties while on sabbatical leave or while pursuing further education.

(c) *On-premises facilities.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms “employee welfare benefit plan” and “welfare plan” shall not include—

(1) The maintenance on the premises of an employer or of an employee organization of recreation, dining or other facilities (other than day care centers) for use by employees or members; and

(2) The maintenance on the premises of an employer of facilities for the treatment of minor injuries or illness or rendering first aid in case of accidents occurring during working hours.

(d) *Holiday gifts.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter the terms “employee welfare benefit plan” and “welfare plan” shall not include the distribution of gifts such as turkeys or hams by an employer to employees at Christmas and other holiday seasons.

(e) *Sales to employees.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms “employee welfare benefit plan” and “welfare plan” shall not include the sale by an employer to employees of an employer, whether or not at prevailing market prices, of articles or

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commodities of the kind which the employer offers for sale in the regular course of business.

(f) *Hiring halls.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee welfare benefit plan" and "welfare plan" shall not include the maintenance by one or more employers, employee organizations, or both, of a hiring hall facility.

(g) *Remembrance funds.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee welfare benefit plan" and "welfare plan" shall not include a program under which contributions are made to provide remembrances such as flowers, an obituary notice in a newspaper or a small gift on occasions such as the sickness, hospitalization, death or termination of employment of employees, or members of an employee organization, or members of their families.

(h) *Strike funds.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee welfare benefit plan" and "welfare plan" shall not include a fund maintained by an employee organization to provide payments to its members during strikes and for related purposes.

(i) *Industry advancement programs.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee welfare benefit plan" and "welfare plan" shall not include a program maintained by an employer or group or association of employers, which has no employee participants and does not provide benefits to employees or their dependents, regardless of whether the program serves as a conduit through which funds or other assets are channelled to employee benefit plans covered under title I of the Act.

(j) *Certain group or group-type insurance programs.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee welfare benefit plan" and "welfare plan" shall not include a group or group-type insurance program offered by an insurer to employees or members of an employee organization, under which

(1) No contributions are made by an employer or employee organization;

(2) Participation in the program is completely voluntary for employees or members;

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(3) The sole functions of the employer or employee organization with respect to the program are, without endorsing the program, to permit the insurer to publicize the program to employees or members, to collect premiums through payroll deductions or dues checkoffs and to remit them to the insurer; and

(4) The employer or employee organization receives no consideration in the form of cash or otherwise in connection with the program, other than reasonable compensation, excluding any profit, for administrative services actually rendered in connection with payroll deductions or dues checkoffs.

(k) *Unfunded scholarship programs.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee welfare benefit plan" and "welfare plan" shall not include a scholarship program, including a tuition and education expense refund program, under which payments are made solely from the general assets of an employer or employee organization.

(l) *Safe harbor for health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs) and certain other arrangements that reimburse individual health insurance coverage.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee welfare benefit plan" and "welfare plan" shall not include individual health insurance coverage the premiums of which are reimbursed by a health reimbursement arrangement (HRA) (or other account-based group health plan), including an HRA or other account-based group health plan integrated with individual health insurance coverage (as described in § 2590.702-2 of this chapter), an HRA that covers fewer than two current employees (as described in § 2590.732(b) of this chapter) and that reimburses premiums for individual health insurance coverage, a qualified small employer health reimbursement arrangement (QSEHRA), as defined in section 9831(d)(2) of the Code, or an arrangement under which an employer allows employees to pay the portion of the premium for individual health insurance coverage that is not covered by an HRA or other account-based group health plan with which the coverage is integrated by using a salary reduction arrangement in a cafeteria plan under section 125 of the Code (supplemental

salary reduction arrangement), if all the conditions of this paragraph (1) are satisfied.

(1) The purchase of any individual health insurance coverage is completely voluntary for participants and beneficiaries. The fact that a plan sponsor requires such coverage to be purchased as a condition for participation in an HRA or supplemental salary reduction arrangement does not make the purchase involuntary.

(2) The employer, employee organization, or other plan sponsor does not select or endorse any particular issuer or insurance coverage. In contrast, providing general contact information regarding availability of health insurance in a state (such as providing information regarding www.HealthCare.gov or contact information for a state insurance commissioner's office) or providing general health insurance educational information (such as the uniform glossary of health coverage and medical terms available at: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/default/files/ebsa/laws-and-regulations/laws/affordable-care-act-for-employers-and-advisers/sbc-uniform-glossary-of-coverage-and-medical-terms-final.pdf>) is permitted.

(3) Reimbursement for non-group health insurance premiums is limited solely to individual health insurance coverage (as defined in § 2590.701-2 of this chapter) that does not consist solely of excepted benefits (as defined in § 2590.732(c) of this chapter).

(4) The employer, employee organization, or other plan sponsor receives no consideration in the form of cash or otherwise in connection with the employee's selection or renewal of any individual health insurance coverage.

(5) Each plan participant is notified annually that the individual health insurance coverage is not subject to title I of ERISA. For an HRA that is integrated with individual health insurance coverage, the notice must satisfy the notice requirement set forth in § 2590.702-2(c)(6) of this chapter. A QSEHRA or an HRA not subject to the notice requirement set forth in § 2590.702-2(c)(6) of this chapter may use the following language to satisfy this condition: "The individual health insurance coverage that is paid for by this plan, if any, is not subject to the

rules and consumer protections of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act. You should contact your state insurance department for more information regarding your rights and responsibilities if you purchase individual health insurance coverage." A supplemental salary reduction arrangement is not required to provide this notice as the notice will be provided by the HRA that such an arrangement supplements.

[40 FR 34530, Aug. 15, 1975, as amended at 84 FR 29000, June 20, 2019]

§ 2510.3-2 Employee pension benefit plan.

(a) *General.* This section clarifies the limits of the defined terms "employee pension benefit plan" and "pension plan" for purposes of Title I of the Act and this chapter by identifying certain specific plans, funds and programs which do not constitute employee pension benefit plans for those purposes. To the extent that these plans, funds and programs constitute employee welfare benefit plans within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Act and § 2510.3-1, they will be covered under Title I; however, they will not be subject to parts 2 and 3 of Title I of the Act.

(b) *Severance pay plans.* (1) For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, an arrangement shall not be deemed to constitute an employee pension benefit plan or pension plan solely by reason of the payment of severance benefits on account of the termination of an employee's service, provided that:

(i) Such payments are not contingent, directly or indirectly, upon the employee's retiring;

(ii) The total amount of such payments does not exceed the equivalent of twice the employee's annual compensation during the year immediately preceding the termination of his service; and

(iii) All such payments to any employee are completed.

(A) In the case of an employee whose service is terminated in connection with a limited program of terminations, within the later of 24 months after the termination of the employee's service, or 24 months after the employee reaches normal retirement age; and

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(B) In the case of all other employees, within 24 months after the termination of the employee's service.

(2) For purposes of this paragraph (b),

(i) "Annual compensation" means the total of all compensation, including wages, salary, and any other benefit of monetary value, whether paid in the form of cash or otherwise, which was paid as consideration for the employee's service during the year, or which would have been so paid at the employee's usual rate of compensation if the employee had worked a full year.

(ii) "Limited program of terminations" means a program of terminations:

(A) Which, when begun, was scheduled to be completed upon a date certain or upon the occurrence of one or more specified events;

(B) Under which the number, percentage or class or classes of employees whose services are to be terminated is specified in advance; and

(C) Which is described in a written document which is available to the Secretary upon request, and which contains information sufficient to demonstrate that the conditions set forth in paragraphs (b)(2)(ii)(A) and (B) of this section have been met.

(c) *Bonus program.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee pension benefit plan" and "pension plan" shall not include payments made by an employer to some or all of its employees as bonuses for work performed, unless such payments are systematically deferred to the termination of covered employment or beyond, or so as to provide retirement income to employees.

(d) *Individual Retirement Accounts.* (1) For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the terms "employee pension benefit plan" and "pension plan" shall not include an individual retirement account described in section 408(a) of the Code, an individual retirement annuity described in section 408(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (hereinafter "the Code") and an individual retirement bond described in section 409 of the Code, provided that—

(i) No contributions are made by the employer or employee association;

(ii) Participation is completely voluntary for employees or members;

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(iii) The sole involvement of the employer or employee organization is without endorsement to permit the sponsor to publicize the program to employees or members, to collect contributions through payroll deductions or dues checkoffs and to remit them to the sponsor; and

(iv) The employer or employee organization receives no consideration in the form of cash or otherwise, other than reasonable compensation for services actually rendered in connection with payroll deductions or dues checkoffs.

(e) *Gratuitous payments to pre-Act retirees.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter the terms "employee pension benefit plan" and "pension plan" shall not include voluntary, gratuitous payments by an employer to former employees who separated from the service of the employer if:

(1) Payments are made out of the general assets of the employer,

(2) Former employees separated from the service of the employer prior to September 2, 1974,

(3) Payments made to such employees commenced prior to September 2, 1974, and

(4) Each former employee receiving such payments is notified annually that the payments are gratuitous and do not constitute a pension plan.

(f) *Tax sheltered annuities.* For the purpose of title I of the Act and this chapter, a program for the purchase of an annuity contract or the establishment of a custodial account described in section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (the Code), pursuant to salary reduction agreements or agreements to forego an increase in salary, which meets the requirements of 26 CFR 1.403(b)-1(b)(3) shall not be "established or maintained by an employer" as that phrase is used in the definition of the terms "employee pension benefit plan" and "pension plan" if

(1) Participation is completely voluntary for employees;

(2) All rights under the annuity contract or custodial account are enforceable solely by the employee, by a beneficiary of such employee, or by any authorized representative of such employee or beneficiary;

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(3) The sole involvement of the employer, other than pursuant to paragraph (f)(2) of this section, is limited to any of the following:

(i) Permitting annuity contractors (which term shall include any agent or broker who offers annuity contracts or who makes available custodial accounts within the meaning of section 403(b)(7) of the Code) to publicize their products to employees;

(ii) Requesting information concerning proposed funding media, products or annuity contractors;

(iii) Summarizing or otherwise compiling the information provided with respect to the proposed funding media or products which are made available, or the annuity contractors whose services are provided, in order to facilitate review and analysis by the employees;

(iv) Collecting annuity or custodial account considerations as required by salary reduction agreements or by agreements to forego salary increases, remitting such considerations to annuity contractors and maintaining records of such considerations;

(v) Holding in the employer's name one or more group annuity contracts covering its employees;

(vi) Before February 7, 1978, to have limited the funding media or products available to employees, or the annuity contractors who could approach employees, to those which, in the judgment of the employer, afforded employees appropriate investment opportunities; or

(vii) After February 6, 1978, limiting the funding media or products available to employees, or the annuity contractors who may approach employees, to a number and selection which is designed to afford employees a reasonable choice in light of all relevant circumstances. Relevant circumstances may include, but would not necessarily be limited to, the following types of factors:

(A) The number of employees affected;

(B) The number of contractors who have indicated interest in approaching employees;

(C) The variety of available products;

(D) The terms of the available arrangements;

(E) The administrative burdens and costs to the employer, and

(F) The possible interference with employee performance resulting from direct solicitation by contractors; and

(4) The employer receives no direct or indirect consideration or compensation in cash or otherwise other than reasonable compensation to cover expenses properly and actually incurred by such employer in the performance of the employer's duties pursuant to the salary reduction agreements or agreements to forego salary increases described in this paragraph (f) of this section.

(g) *Supplemental payment plans*—(1) *General rule.* Generally, an arrangement by which a payment is made by an employer to supplement retirement income is a pension plan. Supplemental payments made on or after September 26, 1980, shall be treated as being made under a welfare plan rather than a pension plan for purposes of title I of the Act if all of the following conditions are met:

(i) Payment is made for the purpose of supplementing the pension benefits of a participant or his or her beneficiary out of:

(A) The general assets of the employer, or

(B) A separate trust fund established and maintained solely for that purpose.

(ii) The amount payable under the supplemental payment plan to a participant or his or her beneficiary with respect to a month does not exceed the payee's supplemental payment factor ("SPF," as defined in paragraph (g)(3)(i) of this section) for that month, provided however that unpaid monthly amounts may be cumulated and paid in subsequent months to the participant or his or her beneficiary.

(iii) The payment is not made before the last day of the month with respect to which it is computed.

(2) *Safe harbor for arrangements concerning pre-1977 retirees.* (i) Notwithstanding paragraph (g)(1) of this section, effective January 1, 1975 an arrangement by which a payment is made by an employer to supplement the retirement income of a former employee who separated from the service of the employer prior to January 1, 1977 shall be deemed not to have been made

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under an employee benefit plan if all of the following conditions are met:

(A) The employer is not obligated to make the payment or similar payments for more than twelve months at a time.

(B) The payment is made out of the general assets of the employer.

(C) The former employee is notified in writing at least once each year in which a payment is made that the payments are not part of an employee benefit plan subject to the protections of the Act.

(D) The former employee is notified in writing at least once each year in which a payment is made of the extent of the employer's obligation, if any, to continue the payments.

(ii) A person who receives a payment on account of his or her relationship to a former employee who retired prior to January 1, 1977 is considered to be a former employee for purposes of this paragraph (g)(2).

(3) *Definitions and special rules.* For purposes of this paragraph (g)—

(i) The term "supplemental payment factor" (SPF) is, for any particular month, the product of:

(A) The individual's pension benefit amount (as defined in paragraph (g)(3)(ii) of this section), and

(B) The cost of living increase (as defined in paragraph (g)(3)(v) of this section) for that month.

(ii)(A) The term "pension benefit amount" (PBA) means, with regard to a retiree, the amount of pension benefits payable, in the form of the annuity chosen by the retiree, for the first full month that he or she is in pay status under a pension plan (as defined in paragraph (g)(3)(iii) of this section) sponsored by his or her employer or under a multiemployer plan in which his or her employer participates. If the retiree has received a lump-sum distribution from the plan, the PBA for the retiree shall be determined as follows:

(1) If the plan provides an annuity option at the time of the distribution, the PBA shall be computed as if the distribution had been applied on that date to the purchase from the plan of a level straight annuity for the life of the participant if the participant was unmarried at the time of the distribution or a joint and survivor annuity if the par-

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ticipant was married at the time of distribution.

(2) If the plan does not provide an annuity option at the time of the distribution, the PBA shall be computed as if the distribution had been applied on that date to the purchase from an insurance company qualified to do business in a State of a commercially available level straight annuity for the life of the participant if the participant was then single, or a joint and survivor annuity if the participant was then married, based upon the assumption that the participant and beneficiary are standard mortality risks.

(B) If the retiree has received from the plan a series of distributions which do not constitute a lump-sum distribution or an annuity, the PBA for the retiree shall be determined with respect to each distribution according to paragraph (g)(3)(ii)(A) of this section, or in accordance with a reasonably equivalent method.

(C) The term PBA, with regard to the beneficiary of a plan participant, means:

(1) The amount of pension benefits, payable in the form of a survivor annuity to the beneficiary, for the first full month that he or she begins to receive the survivor annuity, reduced by:

(2) Any increases which have been incorporated as part of the survivor annuity under the plan since the participant entered pay status or, if the participant died before the commencement of pension benefits, since the participant's date of death.

(D) Where a plan participant has commenced to receive his or her pension benefits in the form of a straight-life annuity, or another form of an annuity that does not continue after the participant's death in the form of a survivor annuity, no beneficiary of the participant will have a PBA.

(iii) The term "pension plan" means, for purposes of this paragraph (g), a pension plan as defined in section 3(2) of the Act, but not including a plan described in section 4(b), 201(2), or 301(a)(3) of the Act. The term also does not include an arrangement meeting all the conditions of paragraph (g)(1) or (g)(2) of this section or of an arrangement described in § 2510.3-2(e). In the

case of a controlled group of corporations within the meaning of section 407(d)(5) of the Act, all pension plans sponsored by members of the group shall be considered to be one pension plan.

(iv) The term "employer" means, for purposes of paragraph (g) of this section, the former employer making the supplemental payment. In the case of a controlled group of corporations within the meaning of section 407(d)(7) of the Act, all members of the controlled group shall be considered to be one employer for purposes of this paragraph (g).

(v) The term "cost of living increase" (CLI) means, as to any month, a percentage equal to the following fraction:

$$\frac{a-b}{b}$$

where a = the CPIU for the month for which a payment is being computed, and b = the CPIU for the first full month the retiree was in pay status. Where the CLI is calculated for the beneficiary of a plan participant, " b " continues to be equal to the CPIU for the first full month the retiree was in pay status. If, however, the participant dies before the commencement of pension benefits, " b " is equal to the CPIU for the first full month the survivor is in pay status.

(vi) The term "CPIU" means the U.S. City Average All Items Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Data concerning the CPIU for a particular period can be obtained from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Consumer Prices and Price Indexes, Washington, DC 20212.

(vii) Where an employer does not pay to a retiree the full amount of the supplemental payments which would be permitted under paragraph (g)(1) of this section, any unpaid amounts may be cumulated and paid in subsequent months to either the retiree or the beneficiary of the retiree. The beneficiary need not be the recipient of a survivor annuity in order to be paid these cumulated supplemental payments.

(5) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate how this paragraph (g) works. As referred to in these examples, the CPIU's for July through November of 1980 are as follows:

July 1980: 247.8
 August 1980: 249.4
 September 1980: 251.7
 October 1980: 253.9
 November 1980: 256.2

Example (1)(a). E is an employer. R received monthly benefits of \$600 under a straight-life annuity under E's defined benefit pension plan after R retired from E and entered pay status on July 1, 1980. The amount that E may pay to R as supplemental payments under a welfare rather than pension plan with respect to the months of July through September of 1980 is computed as follows:

SPF for July 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{a-b}{b} \times \text{PBA} = \frac{247.8 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$600 = \$0.00$$

SPF for August 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{249.4 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$600 = \$3.87$$

SPF for September 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{251.7 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$600 = \$9.44$$

$$\text{Total} = \$0.00 + 3.87 + 9.44 = \$13.31$$

No supplemental payment may be made to R as a welfare plan payment with respect to July 1980, the month of retirement. The \$3.87 that may be paid with respect to August 1980

may be paid at any time after August 31, 1980. The \$9.44 that may be paid with respect to September 1980 may be paid at any time after September 30, 1980.

Example (1)(b). S is the beneficiary of R. Because R received pension benefits under a straight-life annuity, S will receive no survivor annuity from E after R's death. S thus will have no PBA after R's death and will not be eligible to receive any supplemental payments from E based on S's PBA. To the extent, however, that R did not receive supplemental payments from E to the maximum limit allowable under paragraph (g)(1), any amounts not paid to R may be cumulated and paid to S after R's death.

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Example (2)(a). E is an employer. Q received monthly benefits of \$500 in the form of a joint and survivor annuity under E's defined benefit pension plan since retirement from E on July 1, 1980. The amount that E may pay to Q as welfare rather than pension plan payments with respect to the months of July through September of 1980 is computed as follows:

SPF for July 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{247.8 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$500 = \$0.00$$

SPF for August 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{249.4 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$500 = \$3.23$$

SPF for September 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{251.7 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$500 = \$7.87$$

$$\text{Total} = \$0.00 + \$3.23 + \$7.87 = \$11.10$$

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No supplemental payment may be made as a welfare plan payment with respect to July 1980, the month of retirement. The \$3.23 that may be paid with respect to August 1980 may be paid at any time after August 31, 1980. The \$7.87 that may be paid with respect to September 1980 may be paid at any time after September 30, 1980.

Example (2)(b). Q dies on October 15, 1980 without having received any supplemental payments from E. T is the beneficiary of Q. E pays T a survivor's annuity of \$300 beginning in November of 1980. The amount payable to T as a survivor annuity under the plan has not been increased since Q began to receive pension benefits. Thus, T's PBA is \$300. The amount that E may pay to T as welfare rather than pension plan payments with respect to the months of July through November 1980 is computed as follows:

SPF for July 1980 = \$0.00

SPF for August 1980 = \$3.23

SPF for September 1980 = \$7.87

SPF for October 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{a - b}{b} \times \text{PBA} = \frac{253.9 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$500 = \$12.31$$

(Note that T's "b" is equal to Q's "b".)
SPF for November 1980:

$$\text{SPF} = \frac{256.2 - 247.8}{247.8} \times \$300 = \$10.17$$

Total that may be paid to T

The maximum E may pay T with respect to the months of July through November 1980 as welfare rather than pension plan payments is the sum of those months' SPF's, which is \$33.58.

Example (3). Assume the same facts as in Example 1(a), except that R elected to receive a lump-sum distribution rather than a straight-life annuity. If R is unmarried on July 1, 1980, R's PBA is \$600 for the remainder of R's life. If R is married to S on July 1, 1980, the PBAs of R and S are based on the annuity that would have been paid under an election to receive a joint and survivor annuity. See paragraph (g)(3)(ii)(A)(I) of this section.

[40 FR 34530, Aug. 15, 1975, as amended at 44 FR 11763, Mar. 2, 1979; 44 FR 23527, Apr. 20, 1979; 47 FR 50240, Nov. 5, 1982; 47 FR 56847, Dec. 21, 1982; 81 FR 59476, Aug. 30, 2016; 81 FR 92639, Dec. 20, 2016; 82 FR 29237, June 28, 2017]

EDITORIAL NOTE: At 82 FR 29236, June 28, 2017, as required by the Congressional Review Act and Public Law 115-35 and Public

Law 115-24, the Employee Benefits Security Administration removed all amendments to § 2510.3-2 published at 81 FR 59464, Aug. 30, 2016 and at 81 FR 92639, Dec. 20, 2016.

§ 2510.3-3 Employee benefit plan.

(a) *General.* This section clarifies the definition in section 3(3) of the term "employee benefit plan" for purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter. It states a general principle which can be applied to a large class of plans to determine whether they constitute employee benefit plans within the meaning of section 3(3) of the Act. Under section 4(a) of the Act, only employee benefit plans within the meaning of section 3(3) are subject to title I.

(b) *Plans without employees.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, the term "employee benefit plan" shall not include any plan, fund or program, other than an apprenticeship or other training program, under which no employees are participants covered under the plan, as defined in paragraph (d) of this section. For example, a so-called "Keogh" or "H.R. 10" plan under which only partners or

only a sole proprietor are participants covered under the plan will not be covered under title I. However, a Keogh plan under which one or more common law employees, in addition to the self-employed individuals, are participants covered under the plan, will be covered under title I. Similarly, partnership buyout agreements described in section 736 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 will not be subject to title I.

(c) *Employees.* For purposes of this section and except as provided in § 2510.3-55(d):

(1) An individual and his or her spouse shall not be deemed to be employees with respect to a trade or business, whether incorporated or unincorporated, which is wholly owned by the individual or by the individual and his or her spouse, and

(2) A partner in a partnership and his or her spouse shall not be deemed to be employees with respect to the partnership.

(d) *Participant covered under the plan.* (1)(i) An individual becomes a participant covered under an employee welfare benefit plan on the earlier of—

(A) The date designated by the plan as the date on which the individual begins participation in the plan;

(B) The date on which the individual becomes eligible under the plan for a benefit subject only to occurrence of the contingency for which the benefit is provided; or

(C) The date on which the individual makes a contribution to the plan, whether voluntary or mandatory.

(ii) An individual becomes a participant covered under an employee pension plan—

(A) In the case of a plan which provides for employee contributions or defines participation to include employees who have not yet retired, on the earlier of—

(1) The date on which the individual makes a contribution, whether voluntary or mandatory, or

(2) The date designated by the plan as the date on which the individual has satisfied the plan's age and service requirements for participation, and

(B) In the case of a plan which does not provide for employee contributions and does not define participation to include employees who have not yet re-

tired, the date on which the individual completes the first year of employment which may be taken into account in determining—

(1) Whether the individual is entitled to benefits under the plan, or

(2) The amount of benefits to which the individual is entitled, whichever results in earlier participation.

(2)(i) An individual is not a participant covered under an employee welfare plan on the earliest date on which the individual—

(A) Is ineligible to receive any benefit under the plan even if the contingency for which such benefit is provided should occur, and

(B) Is not designated by the plan as a participant.

(ii) An individual is not a participant covered under an employee pension plan or a beneficiary receiving benefits under an employee pension plan if—

(A) The entire benefit rights of the individual—

(1) Are fully guaranteed by an insurance company, insurance service or insurance organization licensed to do business in a State, and are legally enforceable by the sole choice of the individual against the insurance company, insurance service or insurance organization; and

(2) A contract, policy or certificate describing the benefits to which the individual is entitled under the plan has been issued to the individual; or

(B) The individual has received from the plan a lump-sum distribution or a series of distributions of cash or other property which represents the balance of his or her credit under the plan.

(3)(i) In the case of an employee pension benefit plan, an individual who, under the terms of the plan, has incurred a one-year break in service after having become a participant covered under the plan, and who has acquired no vested right to a benefit before such break in service is not a participant covered under the plan until the individual has completed a year of service after returning to employment covered by the plan.

(ii) For purposes of paragraph (d)(3)(i) of this section, in the case of an employee pension benefit plan which is subject to section 203 of the Act the

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term “year of service” shall have the same meaning as in section 203(b)(2)(A) of the Act and any regulations issued under the Act and the term “one-year break in service” shall have the same meaning as in section 203(b)(3)(A) of the Act and any regulations issued under the Act.

[40 FR 34530, Aug. 15, 1975, as amended at 83 FR 28961, June 21, 2018; 84 FR 37543, July 31, 2019; 89 FR 34127, Apr. 30, 2024]

§ 2510.3-5 [Reserved]

§ 2510.3-16 Definition of “plan administrator.”

(a) *In general.* The term “plan administrator” or “administrator” means the person specifically so designated by the terms of the instrument under which the plan is operated. If an administrator is not so designated, the plan administrator is the plan sponsor, as defined in section 3(16)(B) of ERISA.

(b) In the case of a self-insured group health plan established or maintained by an eligible organization, as defined in § 2590.715-2713A(a) of this chapter, if the eligible organization provides a copy of the self-certification of its objection to administering or funding any contraceptive benefits in accordance with § 2590.715-2713A(b)(1)(ii) of this chapter to a third party administrator, the self-certification shall be an instrument under which the plan is operated, shall be treated as a designation of the third party administrator as the plan administrator under section 3(16) of ERISA for any contraceptive services required to be covered under § 2590.715-2713(a)(1)(iv) of this chapter to which the eligible organization objects on religious grounds, and shall supersede any earlier designation. If, instead, the eligible organization notifies the Secretary of Health and Human Services of its objection to administering or funding any contraceptive benefits in accordance with § 2590.715-2713A(b)(1)(ii) of this chapter, the Department of Labor, working with the Department of Health and Human Services, shall separately provide notification to each third party administrator that such third party administrator shall be the plan administrator under section 3(16) of ERISA for any contraceptive services required to be covered under

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§ 2590.715-2713(a)(1)(iv) of this chapter to which the eligible organization objects on religious grounds, with respect to benefits for contraceptive services that the third party administrator would otherwise manage. Such notification from the Department of Labor shall be an instrument under which the plan is operated and shall supersede any earlier designation.

(c) A third party administrator that becomes a plan administrator pursuant to this section shall be responsible for—

(1) Complying with section 2713 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg-13) (as incorporated into section 715 of ERISA) and § 2590.715-2713 of this chapter with respect to coverage of contraceptive services. To the extent the plan contracts with different third party administrators for different classifications of benefits (such as prescription drug benefits versus inpatient and outpatient benefits), each third party administrator is responsible for providing contraceptive coverage that complies with section 2713 of the Public Health Service Act (as incorporated into section 715 of ERISA) and § 2590.715-2713 of this chapter with respect to the classification or classifications of benefits subject to its contract.

(2) Establishing and operating a procedure for determining such claims for contraceptive services in accordance with § 2560.503-1 of this chapter.

(3) Complying with disclosure and other requirements applicable to group health plans under Title I of ERISA with respect to such benefits.

[78 FR 39894, July 2, 2013, as amended at 79 FR 51099, Aug. 27, 2014]

§ 2510.3-21 Definition of “Fiduciary.”

(a)–(b) [Reserved]

(c) *Investment advice.* (1) For purposes of section 3(21)(A)(ii) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), section 4975(e)(3)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code (Code), and this paragraph, a person renders “investment advice” with respect to monies or other property of a plan or IRA if the person makes a recommendation of any securities transaction or other investment transaction or any investment strategy involving securities or

other investment property (as defined in paragraph (f)(10) of this section) to a retirement investor (as defined in paragraph (f)(11) of this section), and either paragraph (c)(1)(i) or (ii) of this section are satisfied:

(i) The person either directly or indirectly (e.g., through or together with any affiliate) makes professional investment recommendations to investors on a regular basis as part of their business and the recommendation is made under circumstances that would indicate to a reasonable investor in like circumstances that the recommendation is based on review of the retirement investor's particular needs or individual circumstances, reflects the application of professional or expert judgment to the retirement investor's particular needs or individual circumstances, and may be relied upon by the retirement investor as intended to advance the retirement investor's best interest; or

(ii) The person represents or acknowledges that they are acting as a fiduciary under Title I of ERISA, Title II of ERISA, or both, with respect to the recommendation.

(iii) A person does not provide "investment advice" within the meaning of this paragraph (c)(1)(iii) if they make a recommendation but neither paragraph (c)(1)(i) nor (c)(1)(ii) of this section is satisfied. For example, a salesperson's recommendation to purchase a particular investment or pursue a particular investment strategy is not investment advice if the person does not represent or acknowledge that they are acting as a fiduciary under ERISA Title I or Title II with respect to the recommendation and if the circumstances would not indicate to a reasonable investor in like circumstances that the recommendation is based on review of the retirement investor's particular needs or individual circumstances, reflects the application of professional or expert judgment to the retirement investor's particular needs or individual circumstances, and may be relied upon by the retirement investor as intended to advance the retirement investor's best interest. Similarly, the mere provision of investment information or education, without an

investment recommendation, is not advice within the meaning of this rule.

(iv) Written statements by a person disclaiming status as a fiduciary under ERISA Title I or Title II, or this section, or disclaiming the conditions set forth in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section, will not control to the extent they are inconsistent with the person's oral or other written communications, marketing materials, applicable State or Federal law, or other interactions with the retirement investor.

(2) A person who is a fiduciary with respect to a plan or IRA by reason of rendering investment advice (as defined in paragraph (c)(1) of this section) for a fee or other compensation, direct or indirect, with respect to any moneys or other property of such plan or IRA, or having any authority or responsibility to do so, shall not be deemed to be a fiduciary regarding any assets of the plan or IRA with respect to which such person does not have any discretionary authority, discretionary control, or discretionary responsibility, does not exercise any authority or control, does not render investment advice (as defined in paragraph (c)(1) of this section) for a fee or other compensation, and does not have any authority or responsibility to render such investment advice, provided that nothing in this paragraph shall be deemed to:

(i) Exempt such person from the provisions of section 405(a) of ERISA concerning liability for fiduciary breaches by other fiduciaries with respect to any assets of the plan; or

(ii) Exclude such person from the definition of the term "party in interest" (as set forth in section 3(14)(B) of ERISA) or "disqualified person" (as set forth in section 4975(e)(2) of the Code) with respect to any assets of the plan or IRA.

(d) *Execution of securities transactions.*

(1) A person who is a broker or dealer registered under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, a reporting dealer who makes primary markets in securities of the United States Government or of an agency of the United States Government and reports daily to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York its positions with respect to such securities and borrowings thereon, or a bank supervised by the United States or a

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State, shall not be deemed to be a fiduciary, within the meaning of section 3(21)(A) of ERISA or section 4975(e)(3) of the Code, with respect to a plan or an IRA solely because such person executes transactions for the purchase or sale of securities on behalf of such plan or IRA in the ordinary course of its business as a broker, dealer, or bank, pursuant to instructions of a fiduciary with respect to such plan or IRA, if:

(i) Neither the fiduciary nor any affiliate of such fiduciary is such broker, dealer, or bank; and

(ii) The instructions specify:

(A) The security to be purchased or sold,

(B) A price range within which such security is to be purchased or sold, or, if such security is issued by an open-end investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940 (15 U.S.C. 80a-1, *et seq.*), a price which is determined in accordance with Rule 22c-1 under the Investment Company Act of 1940 (17 CFR 270.22c-1),

(C) A time span during which such security may be purchased or sold (not to exceed five business days), and

(D) The minimum or maximum quantity of such security which may be purchased or sold within such price range, or, in the case of a security issued by an open-end investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, the minimum or maximum quantity of such security which may be purchased or sold, or the value of such security in dollar amount which may be purchased or sold, at the price referred to in paragraph (d)(1)(ii)(B) of this section.

(2) A person who is a broker-dealer, reporting dealer, or bank which is a fiduciary with respect to a plan or IRA solely by reason of the possession or exercise of discretionary authority or discretionary control in the management of the plan or IRA or the management or disposition of plan or IRA assets in connection with the execution of a transaction or transactions for the purchase or sale of securities on behalf of such plan or IRA which fails to comply with the provisions of paragraph (d)(1) of this section shall not be deemed to be a fiduciary regarding any assets of the plan or IRA with respect to which such broker-dealer, reporting

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dealer or bank does not have any discretionary authority, discretionary control, or discretionary responsibility, does not exercise any authority or control, does not render investment advice (as defined in paragraph (c)(1) of this section) for a fee or other compensation, and does not have any authority or responsibility to render such investment advice, provided that nothing in this paragraph shall be deemed to:

(i) Exempt such broker-dealer, reporting dealer, or bank from the provisions of section 405(a) of ERISA concerning liability for fiduciary breaches by other fiduciaries with respect to any assets of the plan or IRA;

(ii) Exclude such broker-dealer, reporting dealer, or bank from the definition of the term "party in interest" (as set forth in section 3(14)(B) of ERISA) or "disqualified person" (as set forth in section 4975(e)(2) of the Code) with respect to any assets of the plan or IRA.

(e) *For a fee or other compensation, direct or indirect.* For purposes of section 3(21)(A)(ii) of ERISA and section 4975(e)(3)(B) of the Code, a person provides investment advice "for a fee or other compensation, direct or indirect," if the person (or any affiliate) receives any explicit fee or compensation, from any source, for the investment advice or the person (or any affiliate) receives any other fee or other compensation, from any source, in connection with or as a result of the recommended purchase, sale, or holding of a security or other investment property or the provision of investment advice, including, though not limited to, commissions, loads, finder's fees, revenue sharing payments, shareholder servicing fees, marketing or distribution fees, mark ups or mark downs, underwriting compensation, payments to brokerage firms in return for shelf space, recruitment compensation paid in connection with transfers of accounts to a registered representative's new broker-dealer firm, expense reimbursements, gifts and gratuities, or other non-cash compensation. A fee or compensation is paid "in connection with or as a result of" such transaction or service if the fee or compensation would not have been paid but for the

recommended transaction or the provision of investment advice, including if eligibility for or the amount of the fee or compensation is based in whole or in part on the recommended transaction or the provision of investment advice.

(f) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section—

(1) The term “affiliate” of a person means any person directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, controlling, controlled by, or under common control with such person; any officer, director, partner, employee, representative, or relative (as defined in paragraph (f)(13) of this section) of such person; and any corporation or partnership of which such person is an officer, director, or partner.

(2) The term “control” means the power to exercise a controlling influence over the management or policies of a person other than an individual.

(3) The term “IRA” means any account or annuity described in Code section 4975(e)(1)(B) through (F), including, for example, an individual retirement account described in section 408(a) of the Code and a health savings account described in section 223(d) of the Code.

(4) The term “IRA owner” means, with respect to an IRA, either the person who is the owner of the IRA or the person for whose benefit the IRA was established.

(5) The term “IRA fiduciary” means a person described in Code section 4975(e)(3) with respect to an IRA. For purposes of this section, an IRA owner or beneficiary who is merely receiving investment advice is not an IRA fiduciary.

(6) The term “plan” means any employee benefit plan described in section 3(3) of ERISA and any plan described in section 4975(e)(1)(A) of the Code.

(7) The term “plan fiduciary” means a person described in ERISA section (3)(21)(A) and Code section 4975(e)(3) with respect to a plan. For purposes of this section, a plan participant or beneficiary who is receiving investment advice is not a “plan fiduciary” with respect to the plan.

(8) The term “plan participant” or “participant” means, for a plan de-

scribed in section 3(3) of ERISA, a person described in section 3(7) of ERISA.

(9) The term “beneficiary” means, for a plan described in section 3(3) of ERISA, a person described in section 3(8) of ERISA.

(10) The phrase “recommendation of any securities transaction or other investment transaction or any investment strategy involving securities or other investment property” means recommendations as to:

(i) The advisability of acquiring, holding, disposing of, or exchanging, securities or other investment property, investment strategy, or how securities or other investment property should be invested after the securities or other investment property are rolled over, transferred, or distributed from the plan or IRA;

(ii) The management of securities or other investment property, including, among other things, recommendations on investment policies or strategies, portfolio composition, selection of other persons to provide investment advice or investment management services, selection of investment account arrangements (e.g., account types such as brokerage versus advisory) or voting of proxies appurtenant to securities; and

(iii) Rolling over, transferring, or distributing assets from a plan or IRA, including recommendations as to whether to engage in the transaction, the amount, the form, and the destination of such a rollover, transfer, or distribution.

(11) The term “retirement investor” means a plan, plan participant or beneficiary, IRA, IRA owner or beneficiary, plan fiduciary within the meaning of ERISA section (3)(21)(A)(i) or (iii) and Code section 4975(e)(3)(A) or (C) with respect to the plan, or IRA fiduciary within the meaning of Code section 4975(e)(3)(A) or (C) with respect to the IRA.

(12) The term “investment property” does not include health insurance policies, disability insurance policies, term life insurance policies, or other property to the extent the policies or property do not contain an investment component.

(13) The term “relative” means a person described in section 3(15) of ERISA

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and section 4975(e)(6) of the Code or a sibling, or a spouse of a sibling.

(g) *Applicability.* Effective December 31, 1978, section 102 of the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1978, 5 U.S.C. App. 752 (2018), transferred the authority of the Secretary of the Treasury to promulgate regulations of the type published herein to the Secretary of Labor. Accordingly, in addition to defining a “fiduciary” for purposes of section 3(21)(A)(ii) of ERISA, this section applies to the parallel provision in section 4975(e)(3)(B) of the Code, which defines a “fiduciary” of a plan defined in Code section 4975 (including an IRA) for purposes of the prohibited transaction provisions in the Code. For example, a person who satisfies paragraphs (c)(1)(i) or (ii) and (e) of this section in connection with a recommendation to a retirement investor that is an employee benefit plan as defined in section 3(3) of ERISA, a fiduciary of such a plan as defined in paragraph (f)(11), or a participant or beneficiary of such plan, including a recommendation concerning the rollover of assets currently held in a plan to an IRA, is a fiduciary subject to Title I of ERISA.

(h) *Continued applicability of State law regulating insurance, banking, or securities.* Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect or modify the provisions of section 514 of Title I of ERISA, including the savings clause in section 514(b)(2)(A) for State laws that regulate insurance, banking, or securities.

[89 FR 32256, Apr. 25, 2024]

§ 2510.3-37 Multiemployer plan.

(a) *General.* Section 3(37) of the Act contains in paragraphs (a)(i)–(iv) a number of criteria which an employee benefit plan must meet in order to be a multiemployer plan under the Act. Section 3(37) also provides that the Secretary may prescribe by regulation other requirements in addition to those contained in paragraphs (a)(i)–(iv). The purpose of this regulation is to establish such requirements.

(b) *Plans in existence before the effective date.* (1) A plan in existence before September 2, 1974, will be considered a multiemployer plan if it satisfies the requirements of section 3(37)(A)(i)–(iv) of the Act.

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(2) For purposes of this section, a plan is considered to be in existence if:

(i)(A) The plan was reduced to writing and adopted by the participating employers and the employee organization (including, in the case of a corporate employer, formal approval by an employer's board of directors or shareholders, if required), even though no amounts had been contributed under the plan, and

(B) The plan has not been terminated; or

(ii)(A) There was a legally enforceable agreement to establish such a plan signed by the employers and the employee organization, and

(B) The contributions to be made to the plan were set forth in the agreement.

(iii) If a plan was in existence within the meaning of paragraph (b)(2)(i) or (ii) of this section, any other plan with which such existing plan is merged or consolidated shall also be considered to be in existence.

(c) *Plans not in existence before the effective date.* In addition to the provisions of section 3(37)(A)(i)–(iv) of the Act, a multiemployer plan established on or after September 2, 1974, must meet the requirement that it was established for a substantial business purpose. A substantial business purpose includes the interest of a labor organization in securing an employee benefit plan for its members. The following factors are relevant in determining whether a substantial business purpose existed for the establishment of a plan; any single factor may be sufficient to constitute a substantial business purpose:

(1) The extent to which the plan is maintained by a substantial number of unaffiliated contributing employers and covers a substantial portion of the trade, craft or industry in terms of employees or a substantial number of the employees in the trade, craft or industry in a locality or geographic area;

(2) The extent to which the plan provides benefits more closely related to years of service within the trade, craft or industry rather than with an employer, reflecting the fact that an employee's relationship with an employer maintaining the plan is generally short-term although service in the

trade, craft or industry is generally long-term;

(3) The extent to which collective bargaining takes place on matters other than employee benefit plans between the employee organization and the employers maintaining the plan; and

(4) The extent to which the administrative burden and expense of providing benefits through single employer plans would be greater than through a multi-employer plan.

[40 FR 52008, Nov. 7, 1975]

§ 2510.3-38 Filing requirements for State registered investment advisers to be investment managers.

(a) *General.* Section 3(38) of the Act sets forth the criteria for a fiduciary to be an investment manager for purposes of section 405 of the Act. Subparagraph (B)(ii) of section 3(38) of the Act provides that, in the case of a fiduciary who is not registered under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 by reason of paragraph (1) of section 203A(a) of such Act, the fiduciary must be registered as an investment adviser under the laws of the State in which it maintains its principal office and place of business, and, at the time the fiduciary files registration forms with such State to maintain the fiduciary's registration under the laws of such State, also files a copy of such forms with the Secretary of Labor. The purpose of this section is to set forth the exclusive means for investment advisers to satisfy the filing obligation with the Secretary described in subparagraph (B)(ii) of section 3(38) of the Act.

(b) *Filing requirement.* To satisfy the filing requirement with the Secretary in section 3(38)(B)(ii) of the Act, a fiduciary must be registered as an investment adviser with the State in which it maintains its principal office and place of business and file through the Investment Adviser Registration Depository (IARD), in accordance with applicable IARD requirements, the information required to be registered and maintain the fiduciary's registration as an investment adviser in such State. Submitting to the Secretary investment adviser registration forms filed with a State does not constitute compliance

with the filing requirement in section 3(38)(B)(ii) of the Act.

(c) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section, the term "Investment Adviser Registration Depository" or "IARD" means the centralized electronic depository described in 17 CFR 275.203-1.

(d) *Cross reference.* Information for investment advisers on how to file through the IARD is available on the Securities and Exchange Commission website at www.sec.gov/iard.

[69 FR 52125, Aug. 24, 2004]

§ 2510.3-40 Plans Established or Maintained Under or Pursuant to Collective Bargaining Agreements Under Section 3(40)(A) of ERISA.

(a) *Scope and purpose.* Section 3(40)(A) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) provides that the term "multiple employer welfare arrangement" (MEWA) does not include an employee welfare benefit plan that is established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more agreements that the Secretary of Labor (the Secretary) finds to be collective bargaining agreements. This section sets forth criteria that represent a finding by the Secretary whether an arrangement is an employee welfare benefit plan established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements. A plan is established or maintained under or pursuant to collective bargaining if it meets the criteria in this section. However, even if an entity meets the criteria in this section, it will not be an employee welfare benefit plan established or maintained under or pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement if it comes within the exclusions in the section. Nothing in or pursuant to this section shall constitute a finding for any purpose other than the exception for plans established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements under section 3(40) of ERISA. In a particular case where there is an attempt to assert state jurisdiction or the application of state law with respect to a plan or other arrangement that allegedly is covered under Title I of ERISA, the Secretary has set forth a procedure for obtaining individualized findings at 29 CFR part 2570, subpart H.

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(b) *General criteria.* The Secretary finds, for purposes of section 3(40) of ERISA, that an employee welfare benefit plan is "established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more agreements which the Secretary finds to be collective bargaining agreements" for any plan year in which the plan meets the criteria set forth in paragraphs (b)(1), (2), (3), and (4) of this section, and is not excluded under paragraph (c) of this section.

(1) The entity is an employee welfare benefit plan within the meaning of section 3(1) of ERISA.

(2) At least 85% of the participants in the plan are:

(i) Individuals employed under one or more agreements meeting the criteria of paragraph (b)(3) of this section, under which contributions are made to the plan, or pursuant to which coverage under the plan is provided;

(ii) Retirees who either participated in the plan at least five of the last 10 years preceding their retirement, or

(A) Are receiving benefits as participants under a multiemployer pension benefit plan that is maintained under the same agreements referred to in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, and

(B) Have at least five years of service or the equivalent under that multiemployer pension benefit plan;

(iii) Participants on extended coverage under the plan pursuant to the requirements of a statute or court or administrative agency decision, including but not limited to the continuation coverage requirements of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, sections 601-609, 29 U.S.C. 1169, the Family and Medical Leave Act, 29 U.S.C. 2601 *et seq.*, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, 38 U.S.C. 4301 *et seq.*, or the National Labor Relations Act, 29 U.S.C. 158(a)(5);

(iv) Participants who were active participants and whose coverage is otherwise extended under the terms of the plan, including but not limited to extension by reason of self-payment, hour bank, long or short-term disability, furlough, or temporary unemployment, provided that the charge to the individual for such extended coverage is no more than the applicable premium under section 604 of the Act;

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(v) Participants whose coverage under the plan is maintained pursuant to a reciprocal agreement with one or more other employee welfare benefit plans that are established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements and that are multiemployer plans;

(vi) Individuals employed by:

(A) An employee organization that sponsors, jointly sponsors, or is represented on the association, committee, joint board of trustees, or other similar group of representatives of the parties who sponsor the plan;

(B) The plan or associated trust fund;

(C) Other employee benefit plans or trust funds to which contributions are made pursuant to the same agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section; or

(D) An employer association that is the authorized employer representative that actually engaged in the collective bargaining that led to the agreement that references the plan as described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section;

(vii) Individuals who were employed under an agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, provided that they are employed by one or more employers that are parties to an agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) and are covered under the plan on terms that are generally no more favorable than those that apply to similarly situated individuals described in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section;

(viii) Individuals (other than individuals described in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section) who are employed by employers that are bound by the terms of an agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section and that employ personnel covered by such agreement, and who are covered under the plan on terms that are generally no more favorable than those that apply to such covered personnel. For this purpose, such individuals in excess of 10% of the total population of participants in the plan are disregarded;

(ix) Individuals who are, or were for a period of at least three years, employed under one or more agreements between or among one or more "carriers" (including "carriers by air") and one or more "representatives" of employees for collective bargaining purposes and

as defined by the Railway Labor Act, 45 U.S.C. 151 *et seq.*, providing for such individuals' current or subsequent participation in the plan, or providing for contributions to be made to the plan by such carriers; or

(x) Individuals who are licensed marine pilots operating in United States ports as a state-regulated enterprise and are covered under an employee welfare benefit plan that meets the definition of a qualified merchant marine plan, as defined in section 415(b)(2)(F) of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C.).

(3) The plan is incorporated or referenced in a written agreement between one or more employers and one or more employee organizations, which agreement, itself or together with other agreements among the same parties:

(i) Is the product of a *bona fide* collective bargaining relationship between the employers and the employee organization(s);

(ii) Identifies employers and employee organization(s) that are parties to and bound by the agreement;

(iii) Identifies the personnel, job classifications, and/or work jurisdiction covered by the agreement;

(iv) Provides for terms and conditions of employment in addition to coverage under, or contributions to, the plan; and

(v) Is not unilaterally terminable or automatically terminated solely for non-payment of benefits under, or contributions to, the plan.

(4) For purposes of paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section, the following factors, among others, are to be considered in determining the existence of a *bona fide* collective bargaining relationship. In any proceeding initiated under 29 CFR part 2570 subpart H, the existence of a *bona fide* collective bargaining relationship under paragraph (b)(3)(i) shall be presumed where at least four of the factors set out in paragraphs (b)(4)(i) through (viii) of this section are established. In such a proceeding, the Secretary may also consider whether other objective or subjective indicia of actual collective bargaining and representation are present as set out in paragraph (b)(4)(ix) of this section.

(i) The agreement referred to in paragraph (b)(3) of this section provides for contributions to a labor-management trust fund structured according to section 302(c)(5), (6), (7), (8), or (9) of the Taft-Hartley Act, 29 U.S.C. 186(c)(5), (6), (7), (8) or (9), or to a plan lawfully negotiated under the Railway Labor Act;

(ii) The agreement referred to in paragraph (b)(3) of this section requires contributions by substantially all of the participating employers to a multi-employer pension plan that is structured in accordance with section 401 of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C.) and is either structured in accordance with section 302(c)(5) of the Taft-Hartley Act, 29 U.S.C. 186(c)(5), or is lawfully negotiated under the Railway Labor Act, and substantially all of the active participants covered by the employee welfare benefit plan are also eligible to become participants in that pension plan;

(iii) The predominant employee organization that is a party to the agreement referred to in paragraph (b)(3) of this section has maintained a series of agreements incorporating or referencing the plan since before January 1, 1983;

(iv) The predominant employee organization that is a party to the agreement referred to in paragraph (b)(3) of this section has been a national or international union, or a federation of national and international unions, or has been affiliated with such a union or federation, since before January 1, 1983;

(v) A court, government agency, or other third-party adjudicatory tribunal has determined, in a contested or adversary proceeding, or in a government-supervised election, that the predominant employee organization that is a party to the agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section is the lawfully recognized or designated collective bargaining representative with respect to one or more bargaining units of personnel covered by such agreement;

(vi) Employers who are parties to the agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section pay at least 75% of the premiums or contributions required for the coverage of active participants

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under the plan or, in the case of a retiree-only plan, the employers pay at least 75% of the premiums or contributions required for the coverage of the retirees. For this purpose, coverage under the plan for dental or vision care, coverage for excepted benefits under 29 CFR 2590.732(b), and amounts paid by participants and beneficiaries as co-payments or deductibles in accordance with the terms of the plan are disregarded;

(vii) The predominant employee organization that is a party to the agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section provides, sponsors, or jointly sponsors a hiring hall(s) and/or a state-certified apprenticeship program(s) that provides services that are available to substantially all active participants covered by the plan;

(viii) The agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section has been determined to be a *bona fide* collective bargaining agreement for purposes of establishing the prevailing practices with respect to wages and supplements in a locality, pursuant to a prevailing wage statute of any state or the District of Columbia.

(ix) There are other objective or subjective indicia of actual collective bargaining and representation, such as that arm's-length negotiations occurred between the parties to the agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section; that the predominant employee organization that is party to such agreement actively represents employees covered by such agreement with respect to grievances, disputes, or other matters involving employment terms and conditions other than coverage under, or contributions to, the employee welfare benefit plan; that there is a geographic, occupational, trade, organizing, or other rationale for the employers and bargaining units covered by such agreement; that there is a connection between such agreement and the participation, if any, of self-employed individuals in the employee welfare benefit plan established or maintained under or pursuant to such agreement.

(c) *Exclusions.* An employee welfare benefit plan shall not be deemed to be "established or maintained under or pursuant to one or more agreements

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which the Secretary finds to be collective bargaining agreements" for any plan year in which:

(1) The plan is self-funded or partially self-funded and is marketed to employers or sole proprietors

(i) By one or more insurance producers as defined in paragraph (d) of this section;

(ii) By an individual who is disqualified from, or ineligible for, or has failed to obtain, a license to serve as an insurance producer to the extent that the individual engages in an activity for which such license is required; or

(iii) By individuals (other than individuals described in paragraphs (c)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section) who are paid on a commission-type basis to market the plan.

(iv) For the purposes of this paragraph (c)(1):

(A) "Marketing" does not include administering the plan, consulting with plan sponsors, counseling on benefit design or coverage, or explaining the terms of coverage available under the plan to employees or union members;

(B) "Marketing" does include the marketing of union membership that carries with it plan participation by virtue of such membership, except for membership in unions representing insurance producers themselves;

(2) The agreement under which the plan is established or maintained is a scheme, plan, stratagem, or artifice of evasion, a principal intent of which is to evade compliance with state law and regulations applicable to insurance; or

(3) There is fraud, forgery, or willful misrepresentation as to the factors relied on to demonstrate that the plan satisfies the criteria set forth in paragraph (b) of this section.

(d) *Definitions.* (1) *Active participant* means a participant who is not retired and who is not on extended coverage under paragraphs (b)(2)(iii) or (b)(2)(iv) of this section.

(2) *Agreement* means the contract embodying the terms and conditions mutually agreed upon between or among the parties to such agreement. Where the singular is used in this section, the plural is automatically included.

(3) *Individual employed* means any natural person who furnishes services

to another person or entity in the capacity of an employee under common law, without regard to any specialized definitions or interpretations of the terms "employee," "employer," or "employed" under federal or state statutes other than ERISA.

(4) *Insurance producer* means an agent, broker, consultant, or producer who is an individual, entity, or sole proprietor that is licensed under the laws of the state to sell, solicit, or negotiate insurance.

(5) *Predominant employee organization* means, where more than one employee organization is a party to an agreement, either the organization representing the plurality of individuals employed under such agreement, or organizations that in combination represent the majority of such individuals.

(e) *Examples.* The operation of the provisions of this section may be illustrated by the following examples.

Example 1. Plan A has 500 participants, in the following 4 categories of participants under paragraph (b)(2) of this section:

Categories of participants	Total number	Nexus group	Non-nexus
1. Individuals working under CBAs	335 (67%)	335 (67%)	0
2. Retirees	50 (10%)	50 (10%)	0
3. "Special Class"—Non-CBA, non-CBA-alumni	100 (20%)	50 (10%)	50 (10%)
4. Non-nexus participants	15 (3%)	0	15 (3%)
Total	500 (100%)	435 (87%)	65 (13%)

In determining whether at least 85% of Plan A's participant population is made up of individuals with the required nexus to the collective bargaining agreement as required by paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the Plan may count as part of the nexus group only 50 (10% of the total plan population) of the 100 individuals described in paragraph (b)(2)(viii) of this section. That is because the number of individuals meeting the category of individuals in paragraph (b)(2)(viii) exceeds 10% of the total participant population by 50 individuals. The paragraph specifies that of those individuals who would otherwise be deemed to be nexus individuals because they are the type of individuals described in paragraph (b)(2)(viii), the number in excess of 10% of the total plan population may not be counted in the nexus group. Here, 50 of the 100 individuals employed by signatory employers, but not covered by the collective bargaining agreement, are counted as nexus individuals and 50 are not counted as nexus

individuals. Nonetheless, the Plan satisfies the 85% criterion under paragraph (b)(2) because a total of 435 (335 individuals covered by the collective bargaining agreement, plus 50 retirees, plus 50 individuals employed by signatory employers), or 87% of the 500 participants in Plan A are individuals who may be counted as nexus participants under paragraph (b)(2). Beneficiaries (e.g., spouses, dependent children, etc.) are not counted to determine whether the 85% test has been met.

Example 2. (i) International Union MG and its Local Unions have represented people working primarily in a particular industry for over 60 years. Since 1950, most of their collective bargaining agreements have called for those workers to be covered by the National MG Health and Welfare Plan. During that time, the number of union-represented workers in the industry, and the number of active participants in the National MG Health and Welfare Plan, first grew and then declined. New Locals were formed and later were shut down. Despite these fluctuations, the National MG Health and Welfare Plan meets the factors described in paragraphs (b)(4)(iii) and (iv) of this section, as the plan has been in existence pursuant to collective bargaining agreements to which the International Union and its affiliates have been parties since before January 1, 1983.

(ii) Assume the same facts, except that on January 1, 1999, International Union MG merged with International Union RE to form International Union MRGE. MRGE and its Locals now represent the active participants in the National MG Health and Welfare Plan and in the National RE Health and Welfare Plan, which, for 45 years, had been maintained under collective bargaining agreements negotiated by International Union RE and its Locals. Since International Union MRGE is the continuation of, and successor to, the MG and RE unions, the two plans continue to meet the factors in paragraphs (b)(4)(iii) and (iv) of this section. This also would be true if the two plans were merged.

(iii) Assume the same facts as in paragraphs (i) and (ii) of this Example. In addition to maintaining the health and welfare plans described in those paragraphs, International Union MG also maintained the National MG Pension Plan and International Union RE maintained the National RE Pension Plan. When the unions merged and the health and welfare plans were merged, National MG Pension Plan and National RE Pension Plan were merged to form National MRGE Pension Plan. When the unions merged, the employees and retirees covered under the pre-merger plans continued to be covered under the post-merger plans pursuant to the collective bargaining agreements and also were given credit in the post-merger plans for their years of service and coverage in the pre-merger plans. Retirees who originally were covered under the pre-merger

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plans and continue to be covered under the post-merger plans based on their past service and coverage would be considered to be “retirees” for purposes of 2550.3-40(b)(2)(ii). Likewise, bargaining unit alumni who were covered under the pre-merger plans and continued to be covered under the post-merger plans based on their past service and coverage and their continued employment with employers that are parties to an agreement described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section would be considered to be bargaining unit alumni for purposes of 2550.3-40(b)(2)(vii).

Example 3. Assume the same facts as in paragraph (ii) of Example 2 with respect to International Union MG. However, in 1997, one of its Locals and the employers with which it negotiates agree to set up a new multiemployer health and welfare plan that only covers the individuals represented by that Local Union. That plan would not meet the factor in paragraph (b)(4)(iii) of this section, as it has not been incorporated or referenced in collective bargaining agreements since before January 1, 1983.

Example 4. (i) Pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement between various employers and Local 2000, the employers contribute \$2 per hour to the Fund for every hour that a covered employee works under the agreement. The covered employees are automatically entitled to health and disability coverage from the Fund for every calendar quarter the employees have 300 hours of additional covered service in the preceding quarter. The employees do not need to make any additional contributions for their own coverage, but must pay \$250 per month if they want health coverage for their dependent spouse and children. Because the employer payments cover 100% of the required contributions for the employees’ own coverage, the Local 2000 Employers Health and Welfare Fund meets the “75% employer payment” factor under paragraph (b)(4)(vi) of this section.

(ii) Assume, however, that the negotiated employer contribution rate was \$1 per hour, and the employees could only obtain health coverage for themselves if they also elected to contribute \$1 per hour, paid on a pre-tax basis through salary reduction. The Fund would not meet the 75% employer payment factor, even though the employees’ contributions are treated as employer contributions for tax purposes. Under ERISA, and therefore under this section, elective salary reduction contributions are treated as employee contributions. The outcome would be the same if a uniform employee contribution rate applied to all employees, whether they had individual or family coverage, so that the \$1 per hour employee contribution qualified an employee for his or her own coverage and, if he or she had dependents, dependent coverage as well.

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Example 5. Arthur is a licensed insurance broker, one of whose clients is Multiemployer Fund M, a partially self-funded plan. Arthur takes bids from insurance companies on behalf of Fund M for the insured portion of its coverage, helps the trustees to evaluate the bids, and places the Fund’s health insurance coverage with the carrier that is selected. Arthur also assists the trustees of Fund M in preparing material to explain the plan and its benefits to the participants, as well as in monitoring the insurance company’s performance under the contract. At the Trustees’ request, Arthur meets with a group of employers with which the union is negotiating for their employees’ coverage under Fund M, and he explains the cost structure and benefits that Fund M provides. Arthur is not engaged in marketing within the meaning of paragraph (c)(1) of this section, so the fact that he provides these administrative services and sells insurance to the Fund itself does not affect the plan’s status as a plan established or maintained under or pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement. This is the case whether or how he is compensated.

Example 6. Assume the same facts as Example 5, except that Arthur has a group of clients who are unrelated to the employers bound by the collective bargaining agreement, whose employees would not be “nexus group” members, and whose insurance carrier has withdrawn from the market in their locality. He persuades the client group to retain him to find them other coverage. The client group has no relationship with the labor union that represents the participants in Fund M. However, Arthur offers them coverage under Fund M and persuades the Fund’s Trustees to allow the client group to join Fund M in order to broaden Fund M’s contribution base. Arthur’s activities in obtaining coverage for the unrelated group under Fund M constitutes marketing through an insurance producer; Fund M is a MEWA under paragraph (c)(1) of this section.

Example 7. Union A represents thousands of construction workers in a three-state geographic region. For many years, Union A has maintained a standard written collective bargaining agreement with several hundred large and small building contractors, covering wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment for all work performed in Union A’s geographic territory. The terms of those agreements are negotiated every three years between Union A and a multiemployer Association, which signs on behalf of those employers who have delegated their bargaining authority to the Association. Hundreds of other employers—including both local and traveling contractors—have chosen to become bound to the terms of Union A’s standard area agreement for various periods of time and in various ways, such as by signing short-form binders

or "me too" agreements, executing a single job or project labor agreement, or entering into a subcontracting arrangement with a signatory employer. All of these employees represented by Union A and contribute to Plan A, a self-insured multiemployer health and welfare plan established and maintained under Union A's standard area agreement. During the past year, the trustees of Plan A have brought lawsuits against several signatory employers seeking contributions allegedly owed, but not paid to the trust. In defending that litigation, a number of employers have sworn that they never intended to operate as union contractors, that their employees want nothing to do with Union A, that Union A procured their assent to the collective bargaining agreement solely by threats and fraudulent misrepresentations, and that Union A has failed to file certain reports required by the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act. In at least one instance, a petition for a decertification election has been filed with the National Labor Relations Board. In this example, Plan A meets the criteria for a regulatory finding under this section that it is a multiemployer plan established and maintained under or pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements, assuming that its participant population satisfies the 85% test of paragraph (b)(2) of this section and that none of the disqualifying factors in paragraph (c) of this section is present. Plan A's status for the purpose of this section is not affected by the fact that some of the employers who deal with Union A have challenged Union A's conduct, or have disputed under labor statutes and legal doctrines other than ERISA section 3(40) the validity and enforceability of their putative contract with Union A, regardless of the outcome of those disputes.

Example 8. Assume the same facts as Example 7. Plan A's benefits consultant recently entered into an arrangement with the Medical Consortium, a newly formed organization of health care providers, which allows the Plan to offer a broader range of health services to Plan A's participants while achieving cost savings to the Plan and to participants. Union A, Plan A, and Plan A's consultant each have added a page to their Web sites publicizing the new arrangement with the Medical Consortium. Concurrently, Medical Consortium's Web site prominently publicizes its recent affiliation with Plan A and the innovative services it makes available to the Plan's participants. Union A has mailed out informational packets to its members describing the benefit enhancements and encouraging election of family coverage. Union A has also begun distributing similar material to workers on hundreds of non-union construction job sites within its geographic territory. In this example, Plan A remains a plan established

and maintained under or pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements under section 3(40) of ERISA. Neither Plan A's relationship with a new organization of health care providers, nor the use of various media to publicize Plan A's attractive benefits throughout the area served by Union A, alters Plan A's status for purpose of this section.

Example 9. Assume the same facts as in Example 7. Union A undertakes an area-wide organizing campaign among the employees of all the health care providers who belong to the Medical Consortium. When soliciting individual employees to sign up as union members, Union A distributes Plan A's information materials and promises to bargain for the same coverage. At the same time, when appealing to the employers in the Medical Consortium for voluntary recognition, Union A promises to publicize the Consortium's status as a group of unionized health care service providers. Union A eventually succeeds in obtaining recognition based on its majority status among the employees working for Medical Consortium employers. The Consortium, acting on behalf of its employer members, negotiates a collective bargaining agreement with Union A that provides terms and conditions of employment, including coverage under Plan A. In this example, Plan A still meets the criteria for a regulatory finding that it is collectively bargained under section 3(40) of ERISA. Union A's recruitment and representation of a new occupational category of workers unrelated to the construction trade, its promotion of attractive health benefits to achieve organizing success, and the Plan's resultant growth, do not take Plan A outside the regulatory finding.

Example 10. Assume the same facts as in Example 7. The Medical Consortium, a newly formed organization, approaches Plan A with a proposal to make money for Plan A and Union A by enrolling a large group of employers, their employees, and self-employed individuals affiliated with the Medical Consortium. The Medical Consortium obtains employers' signatures on a generic document bearing Union A's name, labeled "collective bargaining agreement," which provides for health coverage under Plan A and compliance with wage and hour statutes, as well as other employment laws. Employees of signatory employers sign enrollment documents for Plan A and are issued membership cards in Union A; their membership dues are regularly checked off along with their monthly payments for health coverage. Self-employed individuals similarly receive union membership cards and make monthly payments, which are divided between Plan A and the Union. Aside from health coverage matters, these new participants have little or no contact with Union A. The new participants enrolled through the Consortium amount to

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18% of the population of Plan A during the current Plan Year. In this example, Plan A now fails to meet the criteria in paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section, because more than 15% of its participants are individuals who are not employed under agreements that are the product of a *bona fide* collective bargaining relationship and who do not fall within any of the other nexus categories set forth in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. Moreover, even if the number of additional participants enrolled through the Medical Consortium, together with any other participants who did not fall within any of the nexus categories, did not exceed 15% of the total participant population under the plan, the circumstances in this example would trigger the disqualification of paragraph (c)(2) of this section, because Plan A now is being maintained under a substantial number of agreements that are a "scheme, plan, stratagem or artifice of evasion" intended primarily to evade compliance with state laws and regulations pertaining to insurance. In either case, the consequence of adding the participants through the Medical Consortium is that Plan A is now a MEWA for purposes of section 3(40) of ERISA and is not exempt from state regulation by virtue of ERISA.

(f) *Cross-reference.* See 29 CFR part 2570, subpart H for procedural rules relating to proceedings seeking an Administrative Law Judge finding by the Secretary under section 3(40) of ERISA.

(g) *Effect of proceeding seeking Administrative Law Judge Section 3(40) Finding.* (1) An Administrative Law Judge finding issued pursuant to the procedures in 29 CFR part 2570, subpart H will constitute a finding whether the entity in that proceeding is an employee welfare benefit plan established or maintained under or pursuant to an agreement that the Secretary finds to be a collective bargaining agreement for purposes of section 3(40) of ERISA.

(2) Nothing in this section or in 29 CFR part 2570, subpart H is intended to provide the basis for a stay or delay of a state administrative or court proceeding or enforcement of a subpoena.

[68 FR 17480, Apr. 9, 2003]

§ 2510.3-44 Registration requirement to serve as a pooled plan provider to pooled employer plans.

(a) *General.* Section 3(44) of the Act sets forth the criteria that a person must meet to be a pooled plan provider for pooled employer plans under section 3(43) of the Act.

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(b) *Registration requirement.* Subparagraph (A)(ii) of section 3(44) requires the person to register as a pooled plan provider with the Department and provide such other information as the Department may require, before beginning operations as a pooled plan provider. For this purpose, "beginning operations as a pooled plan provider" means the initiation of operations of the first plan that the person operates as a pooled employer plan, as described in paragraph (b)(6) of this section. To meet the requirements to register with the Department under section 3(44) of the Act, a person intending to act as a pooled plan provider must:

(1) At least 30 days before beginning operations as a pooled plan provider, file with the Department the following information on a complete and accurate Form PR (Pooled Plan Provider Registration) in accordance with the form's instructions.

(i) The legal business name and any trade name (doing business as) of such person.

(ii) The business mailing address and phone number of such person.

(iii) The employer identification number (EIN) assigned to such person by the Internal Revenue Service.

(iv) The address of any public website or websites of the pooled plan provider or any affiliates to be used to market any such person as a pooled plan provider to the public or to provide public information on the pooled employer plans operated by the pooled plan provider.

(v) Name, address, contact telephone number, and email address for the responsible compliance official of the pooled plan provider. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(1)(v), the term "responsible compliance official" means the person or persons, identified by name, title, or office, responsible for addressing questions regarding the pooled plan provider's status under, or compliance with, applicable provisions of the Act and the Internal Revenue Code as pertaining to a pooled employer plan.

(vi) The agent for service of legal process for the pooled plan provider, and the address at which process may be served on such agent.

(vii) The approximate date when pooled plan operations are expected to commence.

(viii) An identification of the administrative, investment, and fiduciary services that will be offered or provided in connection with the pooled employer plans by the pooled plan provider or an affiliate. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(1)(viii), the term "affiliate" includes all persons who are treated as a single employer with the person intending to be a pooled plan provider under section 414(b), (c), (m), or (o) of the Internal Revenue Code who will provide services to pooled employer plans sponsored by the pooled plan provider and any officer, director, partner, employee, or relative (as defined in section 3(15) of the Act) of such person; and any corporation or partnership of which such person is an officer, director, or partner.

(ix) A statement disclosing any ongoing Federal or State criminal proceedings, or any Federal or State criminal conviction, related to the provision of services to, operation of, or investments of, any employee benefit plan, against the pooled plan provider, or any officer, director, or employee of the pooled plan provider, provided that any criminal conviction may be omitted if the conviction, or related term of imprisonment served, is outside ten years of the date of registration.

(x) A statement disclosing any ongoing civil or administrative proceedings in any court or administrative tribunal by the Federal or State government or other regulatory authority against the pooled plan provider, or any officer, director, or employee of the pooled plan provider, involving a claim of fraud or dishonesty with respect to any employee benefit plan, or involving the mismanagement of plan assets.

(2) No later than the initiation of operations of a plan as a pooled employer plan, as described in paragraph (b)(6) of this section, file with the Department a supplemental report using the Form PR containing the name and plan number that the pooled employer plan will use for annual reporting purposes, and the name, address, and EIN for the trustee for the plan.

(3) File with the Department a supplemental report using the Form PR

within the later of 30 days after the calendar quarter in which the following reportable events occurred or 45 days after a following reportable event occurred:

(i) Any change in the information reported pursuant to paragraph (b)(1) or (2) of this section unless otherwise disclosed pursuant to paragraphs (b)(3)(iii) through (v) of this section.

(ii) Any significant change in corporate or business structure of the pooled plan provider, *e.g.*, merger, acquisition, or initiation of bankruptcy, receivership, or other insolvency proceeding for the pooled plan provider or an affiliate that provides services to a pooled employer plan, or ceasing all operations as a pooled plan provider.

(iii) Receipt of written notice of the initiation of any administrative proceeding or civil enforcement action in any court or administrative tribunal by any Federal or State governmental agency or other regulatory authority against the pooled plan provider, or any officer, director, or employee of the pooled plan provider involving a claim of fraud or dishonesty with respect to any employee benefit plan, or involving the mismanagement of plan assets.

(iv) Receipt of written notice of a finding involving a claim of fraud or dishonesty with respect to any employee benefit plan, or involving the mismanagement of plan assets in any matter described in paragraph (b)(1)(x) or (b)(3)(iii) of this section.

(v) Receipt of written notice of the filing of any Federal or State criminal charges related to the provision of services to, operation of, or investments of any pooled employer plan or other employee benefit plan against the pooled plan provider or any officer, director, or employee of the pooled plan provider.

(4) Only one registration must be filed for each person intending to act as a pooled plan provider, regardless of the number of pooled employer plans it operates. A pooled plan provider must file updates for each pooled employer plan described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, any change of previously reported information, and any change in circumstances listed in paragraph

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(b)(3) of this section, but may file a single statement to report multiple changes, as long as the timing requirements are met with respect to each reportable change.

(5) If a pooled plan provider has terminated and ceased operating all pooled employer plans, the pooled plan provider must file a final supplemental filing in accordance with instructions for the Form PR. For purposes of this section, a pooled employer plan is treated as having terminated and ceased operating when a resolution has been adopted terminating the plan, all assets under the plan (including insurance/annuity contracts) have been distributed to the participants and beneficiaries or legally transferred to the control of another plan, and a final Form 5500 has been filed for the plan.

(6) For purposes of this section, a person is treated as initiating operations of a plan as a pooled employer plan when the first employer executes or adopts a participation, subscription, or similar agreement for the plan specifying that it is a pooled employer plan, or, if earlier, when the trustee of the plan first holds any asset in trust.

(7) Registrations required under this section shall be filed with the Secretary electronically on the Form PR in accordance with the Form PR instructions published by the Department.

(8) For purposes of this section, the term "administrative proceeding" or "administrative proceedings" means a judicial-type proceeding of public record before an administrative law judge or similar decision-maker.

(9) For purposes of this section, the term "other regulatory authority" means Federal or State authorities and self-regulatory organizations authorized by law, but does not include any foreign regulatory authorities.

(10) For purposes of paragraphs (b)(1)(ix) and (x) and (b)(3)(iii) and (v) of this section, employees of the pooled plan provider include employees of the pooled employer plan, but only if they handle assets of the plan, within the meaning of section 412 of the Act, or if they are responsible for operations or investments of the pooled employer plan.

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(c) *Transition rule.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(1) of this section, a person intending to act as a pooled plan provider may file the Form PR on or before beginning operations as a pooled plan provider (dispensing with the 30-day advance filing requirement) if the filing is made before February 1, 2021.

(d) *Acquittals and removal of information.* A pooled plan provider may file an update to remove any matter previously reported under paragraph (b)(1)(ix) or (b)(3)(v) of this section for which the defendant has received an acquittal. For this purpose, the term "acquittal" means a finding by a judge or jury that a defendant is not guilty or any other dismissal or judgment which the government may not appeal.

[85 FR 72955, Nov. 16, 2020]

§ 2510.3-55 Definition of employer—Association Retirement Plans and other multiple employer pension benefit plans.

(a) *In general.* The purpose of this section is to clarify which persons may act as an "employer" within the meaning of section 3(5) of the Act in sponsoring a multiple employer defined contribution pension plan (hereinafter "MEP"). The Act defines the term "employee pension benefit plan" in section 3(2), in relevant part, as any plan, fund, or program established or maintained by an employer, employee organization, or by both an employer and an employee organization, to the extent by its express terms or as a result of surrounding circumstances such plan, fund, or program provides retirement income to employees or results in a deferral of income by employees for periods extending to the termination of covered employment or beyond. For purposes of being able to establish and maintain an employee pension benefit plan within the meaning of section 3(2), an "employer" under section 3(5) of the Act includes any person acting directly as an employer, or any person acting indirectly in the interest of an employer in relation to an employee benefit plan. A group or association of employers is specifically identified in section 3(5) of the Act as a person able to act directly or indirectly in the interest of an employer, including for purposes of establishing or maintaining an

employee benefit plan. A bona fide group or association of employers (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section) and a bona fide professional employer organization (as described in paragraph (c) of this section) shall be deemed to be able to act in the interest of an employer within the meaning of section 3(5) of the Act by satisfying the criteria set forth in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, respectively.

(b)(1) *Bona fide group or association of employers.* For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, a bona fide group or association of employers capable of establishing a MEP shall include a group or association of employers that meets the following requirements:

(i) The primary purpose of the group or association may be to offer and provide MEP coverage to its employer members and their employees; however, the group or association also must have at least one substantial business purpose unrelated to offering and providing MEP coverage or other employee benefits to its employer members and their employees. For purposes of satisfying the standard of this paragraph (b)(1)(i), as a safe harbor, a substantial business purpose is considered to exist if the group or association would be a viable entity in the absence of sponsoring an employee benefit plan. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(1)(i), a business purpose includes promoting common business interests of its members or the common economic interests in a given trade or employer community and is not required to be a for-profit activity;

(ii) Each employer member of the group or association participating in the plan is a person acting directly as an employer of at least one employee who is a participant covered under the plan;

(iii) The group or association has a formal organizational structure with a governing body and has by-laws or other similar indications of formality;

(iv) The functions and activities of the group or association are controlled by its employer members, and the group's or association's employer members that participate in the plan control the plan. Control must be present both in form and in substance;

(v) The employer members have a commonality of interest as described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section;

(vi) The group or association does not make plan participation through the association available other than to employees and former employees of employer members, and their beneficiaries; and

(vii) The group or association is not a bank or trust company, insurance issuer, broker-dealer, or other similar financial services firm (including a pension recordkeeper or third-party administrator), or owned or controlled by such an entity or any subsidiary or affiliate of such an entity, other than to the extent such an entity, subsidiary or affiliate participates in the group or association in its capacity as an employer member of the group or association.

(2) *Commonality of interest.* (i) Employer members of a group or association will be treated as having a commonality of interest if either:

(A) The employers are in the same trade, industry, line of business or profession; or

(B) Each employer has a principal place of business in the same region that does not exceed the boundaries of a single State or a metropolitan area (even if the metropolitan area includes more than one State).

(ii) In the case of a group or association that is sponsoring a MEP under this section and that is itself an employer member of the group or association, the group or association will be deemed for purposes of paragraph (b)(2)(i)(A) of this section to be in the same trade, industry, line of business, or profession, as applicable, as the other employer members of the group or association.

(c)(1) *Bona fide professional employer organization.* A professional employer organization (PEO) is a human-resource company that contractually assumes certain employer responsibilities of its client employers. For purposes of title I of the Act and this chapter, a bona fide PEO is capable of establishing a MEP. A bona fide PEO is an organization that meets the following requirements:

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(i) The PEO performs substantial employment functions on behalf of its client employers that adopt the MEP, and maintains adequate records relating to such functions;

(ii) The PEO has substantial control over the functions and activities of the MEP, as the plan sponsor (within the meaning of section 3(16)(B) of the Act), the plan administrator (within the meaning of section 3(16)(A) of the Act), and a named fiduciary (within the meaning of section 402 of the Act), and continues to have employee-benefit-plan obligations to MEP participants after the client employer no longer contracts with the organization.

(iii) The PEO ensures that each client employer that adopts the MEP acts directly as an employer of at least one employee who is a participant covered under the MEP; and

(iv) The PEO ensures that participation in the MEP is available only to employees and former employees of the PEO and client employers, employees and former employees of former client employers who became participants during the contract period between the PEO and former client employers, and their beneficiaries.

(2) *Safe harbor criteria for substantial employment functions.* For purposes of paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section, whether a PEO performs substantial employment functions on behalf of its client employers is determined on the basis of the facts and circumstances of the particular situation. As a safe harbor, a PEO shall be considered to perform substantial employment functions on behalf of its client-employers that adopt the MEP if it meets the following criteria with respect to each client-employer employee that participates in the MEP—

(i) The PEO assumes responsibility for and pays wages to employees of its client-employers that adopt the MEP, without regard to the receipt or adequacy of payment from those client employers;

(ii) The PEO assumes responsibility for and reports, withholds, and pays any applicable federal employment taxes for its client employers that adopt the MEP, without regard to the receipt or adequacy of payment from those client employers;

(iii) The PEO plays a definite and contractually specified role in recruiting, hiring, and firing workers of its client-employers that adopt the MEP, in addition to the client-employer's responsibility for recruiting, hiring, and firing workers. A PEO is considered to satisfy this standard if it recruits, hires, and fires, assumes responsibility for recruiting, hiring, and firing, or retains the right to recruit, hire, and fire workers of its client-employers that adopt the MEP, in addition to the client-employer's responsibility for recruiting, hiring, and firing workers; and

(iv) The PEO assumes responsibility for and has substantial control over the functions and activities of any employee benefits which the service contract may require the PEO to provide, without regard to the receipt or adequacy of payment from those client employers for such benefits.

(d) *Dual treatment of working owners as employers and employees.* (1) A working owner of a trade or business without common law employees may qualify as both an employer and as an employee of the trade or business for purposes of the requirements in paragraph (b) of this section, including the requirement in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section that each employer member of the group or association adopting the MEP must be a person acting directly as an employer of one or more employees who are participants covered under the MEP, and the requirement in paragraph (b)(1)(vi) of this section that the group or association does not make participation through the group or association available other than to certain employees and former employees and their beneficiaries.

(2) The term “working owner” as used in this paragraph (d) means any person who a responsible plan fiduciary reasonably determines is an individual:

(i) Who has an ownership right of any nature in a trade or business, whether incorporated or unincorporated, including a partner or other self-employed individual;

(ii) Who is earning wages or self-employment income from the trade or business for providing personal services to the trade or business; and

(iii) Who either:

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(A) Works on average at least 20 hours per week or at least 80 hours per month providing personal services to the working owner's trade or business, or

(B) In the case of a MEP described in paragraph (b) of this section, if applicable, has wages or self-employment income from such trade or business that at least equals the working owner's cost of coverage for participation by the working owner and any covered beneficiaries in any group health plan sponsored by the group or association in which the individual is participating or is eligible to participate.

(3) The determination under this paragraph (d) must be made when the working owner first becomes eligible for participation in the defined contribution MEP and continued eligibility must be periodically confirmed pursuant to reasonable monitoring procedures.

(e) *Severability.* (1) If any provision of this section is held to be invalid or unenforceable by its terms, or as applied to any person or circumstance, or stayed pending further agency action, the provision shall be construed so as to continue to give the maximum effect to the provision permitted by law, unless such holding shall be one of complete invalidity or unenforceability, in which event the provision shall be severable from this section and shall not affect the remainder thereof.

(2) *Examples.* (i) If any portion of paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section (containing the substantial business purpose requirement) is found to be void in a manner contemplated by paragraph (e)(1) of this section, then the whole of paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section shall be construed as follows: "The group or association must be a viable entity in the absence of offering and providing MEP coverage or other employee benefits to its employer members and their employees."

(ii) If any portion of paragraph (d) of this section (containing the "working owner" provision) is found to be void in a manner contemplated by paragraph (e)(1) of this section, such a decision does not impact the ability of a bona fide group or association to meet the "commonality of interest" requirement in paragraph (b)(2) of this section

by being located in the same geographic locale.

[84 FR 37543, July 31, 2019]

§ 2510.3-101 Definition of "plan assets"—plan investments.

(a) *In general.* (1) This section describes what constitute assets of a plan with respect to a plan's investment in another entity for purposes of subtitle A, and parts 1 and 4 of subtitle B, of title I of the Act and section 4975 of the Internal Revenue Code. Paragraph (a)(2) of this section contains a general rule relating to plan investments. Paragraphs (b) through (f) of this section define certain terms that are used in the application of the general rule. Paragraph (g) of this section describes how the rules in this section are to be applied when a plan owns property jointly with others or where it acquires an equity interest whose value relates solely to identified assets of an issuer. Paragraph (h) of this section contains special rules relating to particular kinds of plan investments. Paragraph (i) describes the assets that a plan acquires when it purchases certain guaranteed mortgage certificates. Paragraph (j) of this section contains examples illustrating the operation of this section. The effective date of this section is set forth in paragraph (k) of this section.

(2) Generally, when a plan invests in another entity, the plan's assets include its investment, but do not, solely by reason of such investment, include any of the underlying assets of the entity. However, in the case of a plan's investment in an equity interest of an entity that is neither a publicly-offered security nor a security issued by an investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940 its assets include both the equity interest and an undivided interest in each of the underlying assets of the entity, unless it is established that—

(i) The entity is an operating company, or

(ii) Equity participation in the entity by benefit plan investors is not significant.

Therefore, any person who exercises authority or control respecting the

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management or disposition of such underlying assets, and any person who provides investment advice with respect to such assets for a fee (direct or indirect), is a fiduciary of the investing plan.

(b) *Equity interests and publicly-offered securities.* (1) The term *equity interest* means any interest in an entity other than an instrument that is treated as indebtedness under applicable local law and which has no substantial equity features. A profits interest in a partnership, an undivided ownership interest in property and a beneficial interest in a trust are equity interests.

(2) A *publicly-offered security* is a security that is freely transferable, part of a class of securities that is widely held and either—

(i) Part of a class of securities registered under section 12(b) or 12(g) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, or

(ii) Sold to the plan as part of an offering of securities to the public pursuant to an effective registration statement under the Securities Act of 1933 and the class of securities of which such security is a part is registered under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 within 120 days (or such later time as may be allowed by the Securities and Exchange Commission) after the end of the fiscal year of the issuer during which the offering of such securities to the public occurred.

(3) For purposes of paragraph (b)(2) of this section, a class of securities is “widely-held” only if it is a class of securities that is owned by 100 or more investors independent of the issuer and of one another. A class of securities will not fail to be widely-held solely because subsequent to the initial offering the number of independent investors falls below 100 as a result of events beyond the control of the issuer.

(4) For purposes of paragraph (b)(2) of this section, whether a security is “freely transferable” is a factual question to be determined on the basis of all relevant facts and circumstances. If a security is part of an offering in which the minimum investment is \$10,000 or less, however, the following factors ordinarily will not, alone or in combination, affect a finding that such securities are freely transferable:

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(i) Any requirement that not less than a minimum number of shares or units of such security be transferred or assigned by any investor, provided that such requirement does not prevent transfer of all of the then remaining shares or units held by an investor;

(ii) Any prohibition against transfer or assignment of such security or rights in respect thereof to an ineligible or unsuitable investor;

(iii) Any restriction on, or prohibition against, any transfer or assignment which would either result in a termination or reclassification of the entity for Federal or state tax purposes or which would violate any state or Federal statute, regulation, court order, judicial decree, or rule of law;

(iv) Any requirement that reasonable transfer or administrative fees be paid in connection with a transfer or assignment;

(v) Any requirement that advance notice of a transfer or assignment be given to the entity and any requirement regarding execution of documentation evidencing such transfer or assignment (including documentation setting forth representations from either or both of the transferor or transferee as to compliance with any restriction or requirement described in this paragraph (b)(4) of this section or requiring compliance with the entity's governing instruments);

(vi) Any restriction on substitution of an assignee as a limited partner of a partnership, including a general partner consent requirement, provided that the economic benefits of ownership of the assignor may be transferred or assigned without regard to such restriction or consent (other than compliance with any other restriction described in this paragraph (b)(4) of this section);

(vii) Any administrative procedure which establishes an effective date, or an event, such as the completion of the offering, prior to which a transfer or assignment will not be effective; and

(viii) Any limitation or restriction on transfer or assignment which is not created or imposed by the issuer or any person acting for or on behalf of such issuer.

(c) *Operating company.* (1) An “operating company” is an entity that is primarily engaged, directly or through

a majority owned subsidiary or subsidiaries, in the production or sale of a product or service other than the investment of capital. The term “operating company” includes an entity which is not described in the preceding sentence, but which is a “venture capital operating company” described in paragraph (d) or a “real estate operating company” described in paragraph (e).

(2) [Reserved]

(d) *Venture capital operating company.*

(1) An entity is a “venture capital operating company” for the period beginning on an initial valuation date described in paragraph (d)(5)(i) and ending on the last day of the first “annual valuation period” described in paragraph (d)(5)(ii) (in the case of an entity that is not a venture capital operating company immediately before the determination) or for the 12 month period following the expiration of an “annual valuation period” described in paragraph (d)(5)(ii) (in the case of an entity that is a venture capital operating company immediately before the determination) if—

(i) On such initial valuation date, or at any time within such annual valuation period, at least 50 percent of its assets (other than short-term investments pending long-term commitment or distribution to investors), valued at cost, are invested in venture capital investments described in paragraph (d)(3)(i) or derivative investments described in paragraph (d)(4); and

(ii) During such 12 month period (or during the period beginning on the initial valuation date and ending on the last day of the first annual valuation period), the entity, in the ordinary course of its business, actually exercises management rights of the kind described in paragraph (d)(3)(ii) with respect to one or more of the operating companies in which it invests.

(2)(i) A venture capital operating company described in paragraph (d)(1) shall continue to be treated as a venture capital operating company during the “distribution period” described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii). An entity shall not be treated as a venture capital operating company at any time after the end of the distribution period.

(ii) The “distribution period” referred to in paragraph (d)(2)(i) begins on a date established by a venture capital operating company that occurs after the first date on which the venture capital operating company has distributed to investors the proceeds of at least 50 percent of the highest amount of its investments (other than short-term investments made pending long-term commitment or distribution to investors) outstanding at any time from the date it commenced business (determined on the basis of the cost of such investments) and ends on the earlier of—

(A) The date on which the company makes a “new portfolio investment”, or

(B) The expiration of 10 years from the beginning of the distribution period.

(iii) For purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(A), a “new portfolio investment” is an investment other than—

(A) An investment in an entity in which the venture capital operating company had an outstanding venture capital investment at the beginning of the distribution period which has continued to be outstanding at all times during the distribution period, or

(B) A short-term investment pending long-term commitment or distribution to investors.

(3)(i) For purposes of this paragraph (d) a “venture capital investment” is an investment in an operating company (other than a venture capital operating company) as to which the investor has or obtains management rights.

(ii) The term “management rights” means contractual rights directly between the investor and an operating company to substantially participate in, or substantially influence the conduct of, the management of the operating company.

(4)(i) An investment is a “derivative investment” for purposes of this paragraph (d) if it is—

(A) A venture capital investment as to which the investor’s management rights have ceased in connection with a public offering of securities of the operating company to which the investment relates, or

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(B) An investment that is acquired by a venture capital operating company in the ordinary course of its business in exchange for an existing venture capital investment in connection with:

(1) A public offering of securities of the operating company to which the existing venture capital investment relates, or

(2) A merger or reorganization of the operating company to which the existing venture capital investment relates, provided that such merger or reorganization is made for independent business reasons unrelated to extinguishing management rights.

(ii) An investment ceases to be a derivative investment on the later of:

(A) 10 years from the date of the acquisition of the original venture capital investment to which the derivative investment relates, or

(B) 30 months from the date on which the investment becomes a derivative investment.

(5) For purposes of this paragraph (d) and paragraph (e)—

(i) An “initial valuation date” is the later of—

(A) Any date designated by the company within the 12 month period ending with the effective date of this section, or

(B) The first date on which an entity makes an investment that is not a short-term investment of funds pending long-term commitment.

(ii) An “annual valuation period” is a preestablished annual period, not exceeding 90 days in duration, which begins no later than the anniversary of an entity’s initial valuation date. An annual valuation period, once established may not be changed except for good cause unrelated to a determination under this paragraph (d) or paragraph (e).

(e) *Real estate operating company.* An entity is a “real estate operating company” for the period beginning on an initial valuation date described in paragraph (d)(5)(i) and ending on the last day of the first “annual valuation period” described in paragraph (d)(5)(ii) (in the case of an entity that is not a real estate operating company immediately before the determination) or for the 12 month period following the

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expiration of an annual valuation period described in paragraph (d)(5)(ii) (in the case of an entity that is a real estate operating company immediately before the determination) if:

(1) On such initial valuation date, or on any date within such annual valuation period, at least 50 percent of its assets, valued at cost (other than short-term investments pending long-term commitment or distribution to investors), are invested in real estate which is managed or developed and with respect to which such entity has the right to substantially participate directly in the management or development activities; and

(2) During such 12 month period (or during the period beginning on the initial valuation date and ending on the last day of the first annual valuation period) such entity in the ordinary course of its business is engaged directly in real estate management or development activities.

(f) *Participation by benefit plan investors.* (1) Equity participation in an entity by benefit plan investors is “significant” on any date if, immediately after the most recent acquisition of any equity interest in the entity, 25 percent or more of the value of any class of equity interests in the entity is held by benefit plan investors (as defined in paragraph (f)(2)). For purposes of determinations pursuant to this paragraph (f), the value of any equity interests held by a person (other than a benefit plan investor) who has discretionary authority or control with respect to the assets of the entity or any person who provides investment advice for a fee (direct or indirect) with respect to such assets, or any affiliate of such a person, shall be disregarded.

(2) A “benefit plan investor” is any of the following—

(i) Any employee benefit plan (as defined in section 3(3) of the Act), whether or not it is subject to the provisions of title I of the Act,

(ii) Any plan described in section 4975(e)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code,

(iii) Any entity whose underlying assets include plan assets by reason of a plan’s investment in the entity.

(3) An “affiliate” of a person includes any person, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries,

controlling, controlled by, or under common control with the person. For purposes of this paragraph (f)(3), "control", with respect to a person other than an individual, means the power to exercise a controlling influence over the management or policies of such person.

(g) *Joint ownership.* For purposes of this section, where a plan jointly owns property with others, or where the value of a plan's equity interest in an entity relates solely to identified property of the entity, such property shall be treated as the sole property of a separate entity.

(h) *Specific rules relating to plan investments.* Notwithstanding any other provision of this section—

(1) Except where the entity is an investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, when a plan acquires or holds an interest in any of the following entities its assets include its investment and an undivided interest in each of the underlying assets of the entity:

(i) A group trust which is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code pursuant to the principles of Rev. Rul. 81-100, 1981-1 C.B. 326,

(ii) A common or collective trust fund of a bank,

(iii) A separate account of an insurance company, other than a separate account that is maintained solely in connection with fixed contractual obligations of the insurance company under which the amounts payable, or credited, to the plan and to any participant or beneficiary of the plan (including an annuitant) are not affected in any manner by the investment performance of the separate account.

(2) When a plan acquires or holds an interest in any entity (other than an insurance company licensed to do business in a State) which is established or maintained for the purpose of offering or providing any benefit described in section 3(1) or section 3(2) of the Act to participants or beneficiaries of the investing plan, its assets will include its investment and an undivided interest in the underlying assets of that entity.

(3) When a plan or a related group of plans owns all of the outstanding equity interests (other than director's

qualifying shares) in an entity, its assets include those equity interests and all of the underlying assets of the entity. This paragraph (h)(3) does not apply, however, where all of the outstanding equity interests in an entity are qualifying employer securities described in section 407(d)(5) of the Act, owned by one or more eligible individual account plan(s) (as defined in section 407(d)(3) of the Act) maintained by the same employer, provided that substantially all of the participants in the plan(s) are, or have been, employed by the issuer of such securities or by members of a group of affiliated corporations (as determined under section 407(d)(7) of the Act) of which the issuer is a member.

(4) For purposes of paragraph (h)(3), a "related group" of employee benefit plans consists of every group of two or more employee benefit plans—

(i) Each of which receives 10 percent or more of its aggregate contributions from the same employer or from members of the same controlled group of corporations (as determined under section 1563(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, without regard to section 1563(a)(4) thereof); or

(ii) Each of which is either maintained by, or maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated by, the same employee organization or affiliated employee organizations. For purposes of this paragraph, an "affiliate" of an employee organization means any person controlling, controlled by, or under common control with such organization, and includes any organization chartered by the same parent body, or governed by the same constitution and bylaws, or having the relation of parent and subordinate.

(i) *Governmental mortgage pools.* (1) Where a plan acquires a guaranteed governmental mortgage pool certificate, as defined in paragraph (i)(2), the plan's assets include the certificate and all of its rights with respect to such certificate under applicable law, but do not, solely by reason of the plan's holding of such certificate, include any of the mortgages underlying such certificate.

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(2) A "guaranteed governmental mortgage pool certificate" is a certificate backed by, or evidencing an interest in, specified mortgages or participation interests therein and with respect to which interest and principal payable pursuant to the certificate is guaranteed by the United States or an agency or instrumentality thereof. The term "guaranteed governmental mortgage pool certificate" includes a mortgage pool certificate with respect to which interest and principal payable pursuant to the certificate is guaranteed by:

- (i) The Government National Mortgage Association;
- (ii) The Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation; or
- (iii) The Federal National Mortgage Association.

(j) *Examples.* The principles of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

(1) A plan, P, acquires debentures issued by a corporation, T, pursuant to a private offering. T is engaged primarily in investing and reinvesting in precious metals on behalf of its shareholders, all of which are benefit plan investors. By its terms, the debenture is convertible to common stock of T at P's option. At the time of P's acquisition of the debentures, the conversion feature is incidental to T's obligation to pay interest and principal. Although T is not an operating company, P's assets do not include an interest in the underlying assets of T because P has not acquired an *equity* interest in T. However, if P exercises its option to convert the debentures to common stock, it will have acquired an equity interest in T at that time and (assuming that the common stock is not a publicly-offered security and that there has been no change in the composition of the other equity investors in T) P's assets would then include an undivided interest in the underlying assets of T.

(2) A plan, P, acquires a limited partnership interest in a limited partnership, U, which is established and maintained by A, a general partner in U. U has only one class of limited partnership interests. U is engaged in the business of investing and reinvesting in securities. Limited partnership interests in U are offered privately pursuant to an exemption from the registration requirements of the Securities Act of 1933. P acquires 15 percent of the value of all the outstanding limited partnership interests in U, and, at the time of P's investment, a governmental plan owns 15 percent of the value of those interests. U is not an operating company because it is engaged primarily in the invest-

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ment of capital. In addition, equity participation by benefit plan investors is significant because immediately after P's investment such investors hold more than 25 percent of the limited partnership interests in U. Accordingly, P's assets include an undivided interest in the underlying assets of U, and A is a fiduciary of P with respect to such assets by reason of its discretionary authority and control over U's assets. Although the governmental plan's investment is taken into account for purposes of determining whether equity participation by benefit plan investors is significant, nothing in this section imposes fiduciary obligations on A with respect to that plan.

(3) Assume the same facts as in paragraph (j)(2), except that P acquires only 5 percent of the value of all the outstanding limited partnership interests in U, and that benefit plan investors in the aggregate hold only 10 percent of the value of the limited partnership interests in U. Under these facts, there is no significant equity participation by benefit plan investors in U, and, accordingly, P's assets include its limited partnership interest in U, but do not include any of the underlying assets of U. Thus, A would not be a fiduciary of P by reason of P's investment.

(4) Assume the same facts as in paragraph (j)(3) and that the aggregate value of the outstanding limited partnership interests in U is \$10,000 (and that the value of the interests held by benefit plan investors is thus \$1000). Also assume that an affiliate of A owns limited partnership interests in U having a value of \$6500. The value of the limited partnership interests held by A's affiliate are disregarded for purposes of determining whether there is significant equity participation in U by benefit plan investors. Thus, the percentage of the aggregate value of the limited partnership interests held by benefit plan investors in U for purposes of such a determination is approximately 28.6% (\$1000/\$3500). Therefore there is significant benefit plan investment in T.

(5) A plan, P, invests in a limited partnership, V, pursuant to a private offering. There is significant equity participation by benefit plan investors in V. V acquires equity positions in the companies in which it invests, and, in connection with these investments, V negotiates terms that give it the right to participate in or influence the management of those companies. Some of these investments are in publicly-offered securities and some are in securities acquired in private offerings. During its most recent valuation period, more than 50 percent of V's assets, valued at cost, consisted of investments with respect to which V obtained management rights of the kind described above. V's managers routinely consult informally with, and advise, the management of only one portfolio

company with respect to which it has management rights, although it devotes substantial resources to its consultations with that company. With respect to the other portfolio companies, V relies on the managers of other entities to consult with and advise the companies' management. V is a venture capital operating company and therefore P has acquired its limited partnership investment, but has not acquired an interest in any of the underlying assets of V. Thus, none of the managers of V would be fiduciaries with respect to P solely by reason of its investment. In this situation, the mere fact that V does not participate in or influence the management of all its portfolio companies does not affect its characterization as a venture capital operating company.

(6) Assume the same facts as in paragraph (j)(5) and the following additional facts: V invests in debt securities as well as equity securities of its portfolio companies. In some cases V makes debt investments in companies in which it also has an equity investment; in other cases V only invests in debt instruments of the portfolio company. V's debt investments are acquired pursuant to private offerings and V negotiates covenants that give it the right to substantially participate in or to substantially influence the conduct of the management of the companies issuing the obligations. These covenants give V more significant rights with respect to the portfolio companies' management than the covenants ordinarily found in debt instruments of established, creditworthy companies that are purchased privately by institutional investors. V routinely consults with and advises the management of its portfolio companies. The mere fact that V's investments in portfolio companies are debt, rather than equity, will not cause V to fail to be a venture capital operating company, provided it actually obtains the right to substantially participate in or influence the conduct of the management of its portfolio companies and provided that in the ordinary course of its business it actually exercises those rights.

(7) A plan, P, invests (pursuant to a private offering) in a limited partnership, W, that is engaged primarily in investing and reinvesting assets in equity positions in real property. The properties acquired by W are subject to long-term leases under which substantially all management and maintenance activities with respect to the property are the responsibility of the lessee. W is not engaged in the management or development of real estate merely because it assumes the risks of ownership of income-producing real property, and W is not a real estate operating company. If there is significant equity participation in W by benefit plan investors, P will be considered to have acquired an undivided interest in each of the underlying assets of W.

(8) Assume the same facts as in paragraph (j)(7) except that W owns several shopping centers in which individual stores are leased for relatively short periods to various merchants (rather than owning properties subject to long-term leases under which substantially all management and maintenance activities are the responsibility of the lessee). W retains independent contractors to manage the shopping center properties. These independent contractors negotiate individual leases, maintain the common areas and conduct maintenance activities with respect to the properties. W has the responsibility to supervise and the authority to terminate the independent contractors. During its most recent valuation period more than 50 percent of W's assets, valued at cost, are invested in such properties. W is a real estate operating company. The fact that W does not have its own employees who engage in day-to-day management and development activities is only one factor in determining whether it is actively managing or developing real estate. Thus, P's assets include its interest in W, but do not include any of the underlying assets of W.

(9) A plan, P, acquires a limited partnership interest in X pursuant to a private offering. There is significant equity participation in X by benefit plan investors. X is engaged in the business of making "convertible loans" which are structured as follows: X lends a specified percentage of the cost of acquiring real property to a borrower who provides the remaining capital needed to make the acquisition. This loan is secured by a mortgage on the property. Under the terms of the loan, X is entitled to receive a fixed rate of interest payable out of the initial cash flow from the property and is also entitled to that portion of any additional cash flow which is equal to the percentage of the acquisition cost that is financed by its loan. Simultaneously with the making of the loan, the borrower also gives X an option to purchase an interest in the property for the original principal amount of the loan at the expiration of its initial term. X's percentage interest in the property, if it exercises this option, would be equal to the percentage of the acquisition cost of the property which is financed by its loan. The parties to the transaction contemplate that the option ordinarily will be exercised at the expiration of the loan term if the property has appreciated in value. X and the borrower also agree that, if the option is exercised, they will form a limited partnership to hold the property. X negotiates loan terms which give it rights to substantially influence, or to substantially participate in, the management of the property which is acquired with the proceeds of the loan. These loan terms give X significantly greater rights to participate in the management of the property than it would obtain under a conventional mortgage loan.

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In addition, under the terms of the loan, X and the borrower ratably share any capital expenditures relating to the property. During its most recent valuation period, more than 50 percent of the value of X's assets valued at cost consisted of real estate investments of the kind described above. X, in the ordinary course of its business, routinely exercises its management rights and frequently consults with and advises the borrower and the property manager. Under these facts, X is a real estate operating company. Thus, P's assets include its interest in X, but do not include any of the underlying assets of X.

(10) In a private transaction, a plan, P, acquires a 30 percent participation in a debt instrument that is held by a bank. Since the value of the participation certificate relates solely to the debt instrument, that debt instrument is, under paragraph (g), treated as the sole asset of a separate entity. Equity participation in that entity by benefit plan investors is significant since the value of the plan's participation exceeds 25 percent of the value of the instrument. In addition, the hypothetical entity is not an operating company because it is primarily engaged in the investment of capital (*i.e.*, holding the debt instrument). Thus, P's assets include the participation and an undivided interest in the debt instrument, and the bank is a fiduciary of P to the extent it has discretionary authority or control over the debt instrument.

(11) In a private transaction, a plan, P, acquires 30% of the value of a class of equity securities issued by an operating company, Y. These securities provide that dividends shall be paid solely out of earnings attributable to certain tracts of undeveloped land that are held by Y for investment. Under paragraph (g), the property is treated as the sole asset of a separate entity. Thus, even though Y is an operating company, the hypothetical entity whose sole assets are the undeveloped tracts of land is not an operating company. Accordingly, P is considered to have acquired an undivided interest in the tracts of land held by Y. Thus, Y would be a fiduciary of P to the extent it exercises discretionary authority or control over such property.

(12) A medical benefit plan, P, acquires a beneficial interest in a trust, Z, that is not an insurance company licensed to do business in a State. Under this arrangement, Z will provide the benefits to the participants and beneficiaries of P that are promised under the terms of the plan. Under paragraph (h)(2), P's assets include its beneficial interest in Z and an undivided interest in each of its underlying assets. Thus, persons with discretionary authority or control over the assets of Z would be fiduciaries of P.

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(k) *Effective date and transitional rules.* (1) In general, this section is effective for purposes of identifying the assets of a plan on or after March 13, 1987. Except as a defense, this section shall not apply to investments in an entity in existence on March 13, 1987, if no plan subject to title I of the Act or plan described in section 4975(e)(1) of the Code (other than a plan described in section 4975(g)(2) or (3)) acquires an interest in the entity from an issuer or underwriter at any time on or after March 13, 1987 except pursuant to a contract binding on the plan in effect on March 13, 1987 with an issuer or underwriter to acquire an interest in the entity.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (k)(1), this section shall not, except as a defense, apply to a real estate entity described in section 11018(a) of Pub. L. 99-272.

[51 FR 41280, Nov. 13, 1986, as amended at 51 FR 47226, Dec. 31, 1986]

§ 2510.3-102 Definition of "plan assets"—participant contributions.

(a)(1) *General rule.* For purposes of subtitle A and parts 1 and 4 of subtitle B of title I of ERISA and section 4975 of the Internal Revenue Code only (but without any implication for and may not be relied upon to bar criminal prosecutions under 18 U.S.C. 664), the assets of the plan include amounts (other than union dues) that a participant or beneficiary pays to an employer, or amounts that a participant has withheld from his wages by an employer, for contribution or repayment of a participant loan to the plan, as of the earliest date on which such contributions or repayments can reasonably be segregated from the employer's general assets.

(2) *Safe harbor.* (i) For purposes of paragraph (a)(1) of this section, in the case of a plan with fewer than 100 participants at the beginning of the plan year, any amount deposited with such plan not later than the 7th business day following the day on which such amount is received by the employer (in the case of amounts that a participant or beneficiary pays to an employer), or the 7th business day following the day on which such amount would otherwise have been payable to the participant in

cash (in the case of amounts withheld by an employer from a participant's wages), shall be deemed to be contributed or repaid to such plan on the earliest date on which such contributions or participant loan repayments can reasonably be segregated from the employer's general assets.

(ii) This paragraph (a)(2) sets forth an optional alternative method of compliance with the rule set forth in paragraph (a)(1) of this section. This paragraph (a)(2) does not establish the exclusive means by which participant contribution or participant loan repayment amounts shall be considered to be contributed or repaid to a plan by the earliest date on which such contributions or repayments can reasonably be segregated from the employer's general assets.

(b) *Maximum time period for pension benefit plans.* (1) Except as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, with respect to an employee pension benefit plan as defined in section 3(2) of ERISA, in no event shall the date determined pursuant to paragraph (a)(1) of this section occur later than the 15th business day of the month following the month in which the participant contribution or participant loan repayment amounts are received by the employer (in the case of amounts that a participant or beneficiary pays to an employer) or the 15th business day of the month following the month in which such amounts would otherwise have been payable to the participant in cash (in the case of amounts withheld by an employer from a participant's wages).

(2) With respect to a SIMPLE plan that involves SIMPLE IRAs (*i.e.*, Simple Retirement Accounts, as described in section 408(p) of the Internal Revenue Code), in no event shall the date determined pursuant to paragraph (a)(1) of this section occur later than the 30th calendar day following the month in which the participant contribution amounts would otherwise have been payable to the participant in cash.

(c) *Maximum time period for welfare benefit plans.* With respect to an employee welfare benefit plan as defined in section 3(1) of ERISA, in no event shall the date determined pursuant to

paragraph (a)(1) of this section occur later than 90 days from the date on which the participant contribution amounts are received by the employer (in the case of amounts that a participant or beneficiary pays to an employer) or the date on which such amounts would otherwise have been payable to the participant in cash (in the case of amounts withheld by an employer from a participant's wages).

(d) *Extension of maximum time period for pension plans.* (1) With respect to participant contributions received or withheld by the employer in a single month, the maximum time period provided under paragraph (b) of this section shall be extended for an additional 10 business days for an employer who—

(i) Provides a true and accurate written notice, distributed in a manner reasonably designed to reach all the plan participants within 5 business days after the end of such extension period, stating—

(A) That the employer elected to take such extension for that month;

(B) That the affected contributions have been transmitted to the plan; and

(C) With particularity, the reasons why the employer cannot reasonably segregate the participant contributions within the time period described in paragraph (b) of this section;

(ii) Prior to such extension period, obtains a performance bond or irrevocable letter of credit in favor of the plan and in an amount of not less than the total amount of participant contributions received or withheld by the employer in the previous month; and

(iii) Within 5 business days after the end of such extension period, provides a copy of the notice required under paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section to the Secretary, along with a certification that such notice was provided to the participants and that the bond or letter of credit required under paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section was obtained.

(2) The performance bond or irrevocable letter of credit required in paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section shall be guaranteed by a bank or similar institution that is supervised by the Federal government or a State government and shall remain in effect for 3 months after the month in which the extension expires.

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(3)(i) An employer may not elect an extension under this paragraph (d) more than twice in any plan year unless the employer pays to the plan an amount representing interest on the participant contributions that were subject to all the extensions within such plan year.

(ii) The amount representing interest in paragraph (d)(3)(i) of this section shall be the greater of—

(A) The amount that otherwise would have been earned on the participant contributions from the date on which such contributions were paid to, or withheld by, the employer until such money is transmitted to the plan had such contributions been invested during such period in the investment alternative available under plan which had the highest rate of return; or

(B) Interest at a rate equal to the underpayment rate defined in section 6621(a)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code from the date on which such contributions were paid to, or withheld by, the employer until such money is fully restored to the plan.

(e) *Definition.* For purposes of this section, the term *business day* means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or any day designated as a holiday by the Federal Government.

(f) *Examples.* The requirements of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

(1) Employer A sponsors a 401(k) plan. There are 30 participants in the 401(k) plan. A has one payroll period for its employees and uses an outside payroll processing service to pay employee wages and process deductions. A has established a system under which the payroll processing service provides payroll deduction information to A within 1 business day after the issuance of paychecks. A checks this information for accuracy within 5 business days and then forwards the withheld employee contributions to the plan. The amount of the total withheld employee contributions is deposited with the trust that is maintained under the plan on the 7th business day following the date on which the employees are paid. Under the safe harbor in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, when the participant contributions are deposited with the plan on the 7th busi-

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ness day following a pay date, the participant contributions are deemed to be contributed to the plan on the earliest date on which such contributions can reasonably be segregated from A's general assets.

(2) Employer B is a large national corporation which sponsors a 401(k) plan with 600 participants. B has several payroll centers and uses an outside payroll processing service to pay employee wages and process deductions. Each payroll center has a different pay period. Each center maintains separate accounts on its books for purposes of accounting for that center's payroll deductions and provides the outside payroll processor the data necessary to prepare employee paychecks and process deductions. The payroll processing service issues the employees' paychecks and deducts all payroll taxes and elective employee deductions. The payroll processing service forwards the employee payroll deduction data to B on the date of issuance of paychecks. B checks this data for accuracy and transmits this data along with the employee 401(k) deferral funds to the plan's investment firm within 3 business days. The plan's investment firm deposits the employee 401(k) deferral funds into the plan on the day received from B. The assets of B's 401(k) plan would include the participant contributions no later than 3 business days after the issuance of paychecks.

(3) Employer C sponsors a self-insured contributory group health plan with 90 participants. Several former employees have elected, pursuant to the provisions of ERISA section 602, 29 U.S.C. 1162, to pay C for continuation of their coverage under the plan. These checks arrive at various times during the month and are deposited in the employer's general account at bank Z. Under paragraphs (a) and (c) of this section, the assets of the plan include the former employees' payments as soon after the checks have cleared the bank as C could reasonably be expected to segregate the payments from its general assets, but in no event later than 90 days after the date on which the former employees' participant contributions are received by C. If, however, C deposits the former employees' payments with the plan no later than

the 7th business day following the day on which they are received by C, the former employees' participant contributions will be deemed to be contributed to the plan on the earliest date on which such contributions can reasonably be segregated from C's general assets.

(g) *Effective date.* This section is effective February 3, 1997.

(h) *Applicability date for collectively-bargained plans.* (1) Paragraph (b) of this section applies to collectively bargained plans no sooner than the later of—

(i) February 3, 1997; or

(ii) The first day of the plan year that begins after the expiration of the last to expire of any applicable bargaining agreement in effect on August 7, 1996.

(2) Until paragraph (b) of this section applies to a collectively bargained plan, paragraph (c) of this section shall apply to such plan as if such plan were an employee welfare benefit plan.

(i) *Optional postponement of applicability.* (1) The application of paragraph (b) of this section shall be postponed for up to an additional 90 days beyond the effective date described in paragraph (g) of this section for an employer who, prior to February 3, 1997—

(i) Provides a true and accurate written notice, distributed in a manner designed to reach all the plan participants before the end of February 3, 1997, stating—

(A) That the employer elected to postpone such applicability;

(B) The date that the postponement will expire; and

(C) With particularity the reasons why the employer cannot reasonably segregate the participant contributions within the time period described in

paragraph (b) of this section, by February 3, 1997;

(ii) Obtains a performance bond or irrevocable letter of credit in favor of the plan and in an amount of not less than the total amount of participant contributions received or withheld by the employer in the previous 3 months;

(iii) Provides a copy of the notice required under paragraph (i)(1)(i) of this section to the Secretary, along with a certification that such notice was provided to the participants and that the bond or letter of credit required under paragraph (i)(1)(ii) of this section was obtained; and

(iv) For each month during which such postponement is in effect, provides a true and accurate written notice to the plan participants indicating the date on which the participant contributions received or withheld by the employer during such month were transmitted to the plan.

(2) The notice required in paragraph (i)(1)(iv) of this section shall be distributed in a manner reasonably designed to reach all the plan participants within 10 days after transmission of the affected participant contributions.

(3) The bond or letter of credit required under paragraph (i)(1)(ii) shall be guaranteed by a bank or similar institution that is supervised by the Federal government or a State government and shall remain in effect for 3 months after the month in which the postponement expires.

(4) During the period of any postponement of applicability with respect to a plan under this paragraph (i), paragraph (c) of this section shall apply to such plan as if such plan were an employee welfare benefit plan.

[61 FR 41233, Aug. 7, 1996, as amended at 62 FR 62936, Nov. 25, 1997; 75 FR 2076, Jan. 14, 2010]