

be applicable to the ABS Securities. In particular, by imposing the hybrid listing standards, suitability disclosure, and compliance requirements noted above, the Commission believes the Exchange has addressed adequately the potential problems that could arise from the hybrid nature of the ABS Securities. Moreover, the Commission notes that the Exchange will distribute a circular to its membership calling attention to the specific risks associated with the ABS Securities.

The Commission notes that the ABS Securities are dependent upon the individual credit of the issuers of the Underlying Securities. To some extent this credit risk is similar minimized by the Exchange's listing standards in Section 107A of the Company Guide which provide that only issuers satisfying asset and equity requirements may issue securities such as the ABS Securities. In addition, the Exchange's "Other Securities" listing standards further provide that there is no minimum holder requirement if the securities are traded in thousand dollar denominations.²⁵ The Commission notes that the Exchange has represented that the ABS Securities will be listed in \$1000 denominations with its existing debt floor trading rules applying to the trading. In any event, financial information regarding the issuers of the Underlying Securities will be publicly available.²⁶

Due to the pass-through and passive nature of the ABS Securities, the Commission does not object to the Exchange's reliance on the assets and stockholder equity of the Underlying Securities rather than the Trust to meet the requirement in Section 107A of the Company Guide. The Commission notes that the distribution and principal amount/aggregate market value requirements found in Sections 107A(b) and (c), respectively, will otherwise be met by the Trust as issuer of the ABS Securities. Thus, the ABS Securities will conform to the initial listing guidelines under Section 107A and continued listing guidelines under Sections 1001–1003 of the Company Guide, except for the assets and stockholder equity characteristics of the Trust. At the time of issuance, the Commission also notes that the ABS Securities will receive an investment grade rating from an NRSRO.

The Commission also believes that the listing and trading of the ABS Securities should not unduly impact the market for the Underlying Securities or raise

manipulative concerns. As discussed more fully above, the Exchange represents that, in addition to requiring the issuers of the Underlying Securities meet the Exchange's Section 107A listing requirements (in the case of Treasury Securities, the Exchange will rely on the fact that the issuer is the United States Government rather than the asset and stockholder tests found in Section 107A), the Underlying Securities will also be required to meet or exceed the Exchange's Bond and Debenture Listing Standards pursuant to Section 104 of the Amex's Company Guide, which among other things, requires that underlying debt instrument receive at least an investment grade rating of "B" or equivalent from an NRSRO. Furthermore, at least 75% of the basket is required to contain Underlying Securities from issuances of \$100 million or more. The Amex also represents that the basket of Underlying Securities will not be managed and will remain static over the term of the ABS Securities. In addition, the Amex's surveillance procedures will serve to deter as well as detect any potential manipulation.

The Commission notes that the investors may obtain price information on the Underlying Securities through market vendors such as Bloomberg L.P., or through websites such as <http://www.investinginbonds.com> (for Underlying Corporate Bonds) and <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov> and <http://www.govpx.com> (for Treasury Securities and GSE Securities, respectively).

The Commission finds good cause for approving the proposed rule change prior to the thirtieth day after the date of publication of notice thereof in the **Federal Register**. The Amex has requested accelerated approval because this product is similar to other asset-backed instruments currently listed and traded on the Amex.²⁷ The Commission believes that the ABS Securities will provide investors with an additional investment choice and that accelerated approval of the proposal will allow investors to begin trading the ABS Securities promptly. Additionally, the ABS Securities will be listed pursuant to Amex's existing hybrid security listing standards as described above. Based on the above, the Commission believes that there is good cause, consistent with Sections 6(b)(5) and 19(b)(2) of the Act²⁸ to approve the proposal on an accelerated basis.

V. Conclusion

It is therefore ordered, pursuant to section 19(b)(2) of the Act,²⁹ that the proposed rule change (SR-Amex-2004-21) is hereby approved on an accelerated basis.

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.³⁰

Jill M. Peterson,

Assistant Secretary.

[FR Doc. 04-10954 Filed 5-13-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8010-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-49674; File No. SR-NASD-2004-001]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Notice of Filing of Proposed Rule Change by the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. Relating to Arbitrator Training Fees

May 10, 2004.

Pursuant to section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act")¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² notice is hereby given that on January 7, 2004, the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. ("NASD"), through its wholly owned subsidiary, NASD Dispute Resolution ("NASD Dispute Resolution"), filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC" or "Commission") the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III below, which Items have been prepared by NASD Dispute Resolution. On April 2, 2004, NASD filed Amendment No. 1 to the proposed rule change.³ The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change, as amended, from interested persons.

I. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Terms of Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

NASD is proposing to amend the fees that are charged to its panel member arbitrators. The text of the proposed rule change is available at the principal office of NASD and at the Commission.

²⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78o-3(b)(6) and 78s(b)(2).

³⁰ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

³ See letter from Mignon McLemore, NASD, to Katherine England, Assistant Director, Division of Market Regulation, Commission, dated April 2, 2004.

²⁵ See Company Guide Section 107A.

²⁶ The ABS Securities will be registered under section 12 of the Act.

²⁷ See *supra* note 11.

²⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5) and 78s(b)(2).

II. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, NASD included statements concerning the purpose of and basis for the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it received on the proposed rule change. The text of these statements may be examined at the places specified in Item IV below. NASD has prepared summaries, set forth in Sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant aspects of such statements.

A. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

NASD proposes to raise the fee for panel member training from \$100 to \$125 for all applicants who register for the training after the proposed rule change becomes effective. This increase is intended to offset increased costs of providing the panel member training program, due primarily to increased room rental and staff travel costs. The proposed increase of \$25 per trainee also will allow NASD to increase the honorarium provided to arbitrators who serve as co-trainers for the programs.

Dispute Resolution staff plans to extend the length of the current four-hour training program to cover additional subject matter. Following approval of the proposed rule change, the usual panel member training program will consist of a four-hour morning session, followed by a two-hour afternoon session.⁴ During the afternoon session, staff and the designated co-trainer, who is an arbitrator on the roster, will facilitate a videotaped training on civility. In light of the increased length of the training session, NASD plans to raise the honorarium of each co-trainer from \$300 for a four-hour program to \$400 for a six-hour program.

NASD believes the increase in the training fee will enable it to provide in-depth arbitrator training, which will improve the quality of the arbitrator roster. Moreover, NASD believes this nominal increase is an equitable allocation of reasonable fees among persons using an NASD system or facility.

2. Statutory Basis

NASD believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with the provisions

of section 15A(b)(6) of the Act, which requires, among other things, that the Association's rules must be designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. NASD believes that the minimal increase in the in-person panel member training fee will help NASD improve the knowledge and experience of arbitrators and thus, improve the quality of the NASD arbitration forum.

B. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Burden on Competition

NASD does not believe that the proposed rule change will result in any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act, as amended.

C. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Comments on the Proposed Rule Change Received From Members, Participants, or Others

Written comments were neither solicited nor received.

III. Date of Effectiveness of the Proposed Rule Change and Timing for Commission Action

Within 35 days of the date of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register** or within such longer period (i) as the Commission may designate up to 90 days of such date if it finds such longer period to be appropriate and publishes its reasons for so finding or (ii) as to which the self-regulatory organization consents, the Commission will:

(A) By order approve such proposed rule change, or

(B) Institute proceedings to determine whether the proposed rule change should be disapproved.

IV. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views, and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposed rule change is consistent with the Act. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Electronic comments:

- Use the Commission's Internet comment form (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or
- Send an E-mail to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-NASD-2004-001 on the subject line.

Paper comments:

- Send paper comments in triplicate to Jonathan G. Katz, Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 450 Fifth Street, NW., Washington, DC 20549-0609.

All submissions should refer to File Number SR-NASD-2004-001. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's Internet Web site (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>). Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for inspection and copying in the Commission's Public Reference Section, 450 Fifth Street, NW., Washington, DC 20549. Copies of such filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of NASD. All comments received will be posted without change; the Commission does not edit personal identifying information from submissions. You should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly. All submissions should refer to File Number SR-NASD-2004-001 and should be submitted on or before June 4, 2004.

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.⁵

Jill M. Peterson,

Assistant Secretary.

[FR Doc. 04-10952 Filed 5-13-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8010-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-49673; File No. SR-NASD-2004-016]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Notice of Filing of Proposed Rule Change by the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. Relating to Implementation of a Web-based Arbitration Claim Notification and Filing Procedure

May 10, 2004.

Pursuant to section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act")¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² notice is hereby given that on January 29, 2004, the National Association of

⁵ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

⁴ NASD room rental expenses will not increase, because rates quoted are for the entire business day.