

Security Administration is soliciting comments concerning the proposed extension of a currently approved collection of information included in the Delinquent Filer Voluntary Compliance Program.

A copy of the proposed information collection request (ICR) can be obtained by contacting the individual listed in the ADDRESSES section of this notice.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted to the office listed in the Addresses section below on or before January 31, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Gerald B. Lindrew, Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20210, (202) 693-8410, FAX (202) 693-4745 (these are not toll-free numbers).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The Secretary of Labor has the authority, under section 502(c)(2) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), to assess civil penalties of up to \$1,000 a day¹ against plan administrators who fail or refuse to file complete and timely annual reports (Form 5500 Series Annual Return/Reports) as required under section 101(b)(4) of ERISA related regulations. Pursuant to 29 CFR 2560.502c-2 and 2570.60 *et seq.*, EBSA has maintained a program for the assessment of civil penalties for noncompliance with the annual reporting requirements. Under this program, plan administrators filing annual reports after the date on which the report was required to be filed may be assessed \$50 per day for each day an annual report is filed after the date on which the annual report(s) was required to be filed, without regard to any extensions for filing.

Plan administrators who fail to file an annual report may be assessed a penalty of \$300 per day, up to \$30,000 per year, until a complete annual report is filed. Penalties are applicable to each annual report required to be filed under Title I of ERISA. The Department may, in its discretion, waive all or part of a civil penalty assessed under section 502(c)(2) upon a showing by the administrator that there was reasonable cause for the failure to file a complete and timely annual report.

The Department has determined that the possible assessment of these civil penalties may deter certain delinquent filers from voluntarily complying with

the annual reporting requirements under Title I of ERISA. In an effort to encourage annual reporting compliance, therefore, the Department implemented the Delinquent Filer Voluntary Compliance (DFVC) Program (the Program) on April 27, 1995 (60 FR 20873). Under the Program, administrators otherwise subject to the assessment of higher civil penalties are permitted to pay reduced civil penalties for voluntarily complying with the annual reporting requirements under Title I of ERISA.

This ICR covers the requirement of providing data necessary to identify the plan along with the penalty payment. This data is the means by which each penalty payment is associated with the appropriate plan. With respect to most pension plans and welfare plans, the requirement is satisfied by sending a photocopy of the delinquent Form 5500 annual report² that has been filed, along with the penalty payment.

Under current regulations, apprenticeship and training plans may be exempted from the reporting and disclosure requirements of Part 1 of Title I, and certain pension plans maintained for highly compensated employees, commonly called "top hat" plans may comply with these reporting and disclosure requirements by using an alternate method by filing a one-time identifying statement with the Department. The DFVC Program provides that apprenticeship and training plans and top hat plans may, in lieu of filing any past due annual reports and paying otherwise applicable civil penalties, complete and file specific portions of a Form 5500, file the identifying statements that were required to be filed, and pay a one-time penalty.

II. Review Focus

The Department of Labor is particularly interested in comments that:

- Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;
- Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information,

² DFVC information collection provisions originally required submission of the first page of the Form 5500 annual report. Because of the recent revisions to the Form 5500, the information needed to process the DFVC filing is no longer confined to the first page of the Form 5500. DFVC filers using a 1999 or later Form 5500 must submit a copy of all pages of the Form 5500 (generally 4), dated with original signature but without any schedules or attachments.

including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

- Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submissions of responses.

III. Current Actions

The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) approval of this ICR will expire on February 28, 2005. After considering comments received in response to this notice, the Department intends to submit the ICR to OMB for continuing approval. No change to the existing ICR is proposed or made at this time.

Type of Review: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Agency: U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration.

Title: Delinquent Filer Voluntary Compliance Program.

OMB Number: 1210-0089.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit; not-for-profit institutions.

Frequency: On occasion.

Average Burden Hours/Minutes Per Response: 21 minutes.

Number of Respondents: 4,100.

Total Annual Responses: 4,100.

Total Annual Burden Hours: 145.

Total Burden Cost (Operating and Maintenance): \$107,300.

Dated: November 24, 2004.

Gerald B. Lindrew,

Deputy Director, Office of Policy and Research, Employee Benefits Security Administration.

[FR Doc. 04-26547 Filed 12-1-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4510-29-P

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employee Benefits Security Administration

Proposed Extension of Information Collection Request Submitted for Public Comment and Recommendations; Suspension of Benefits

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Labor, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, conducts a preclearance consultation

¹ Adjusted to \$1,100 per day pursuant to the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990 and the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996. See 62 FR 40696, July 29, 1997.

program to provide the general public and Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and continuing collections of information in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA 95). This program helps to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden (time and financial resources) is minimized, collection instruments are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed. Currently, the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) is soliciting comments concerning the extension without change of the information collection request (ICR) included in the suspension of pension benefits regulation issued pursuant to the authority of section 203(a)(3)(B) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), which governs the circumstances under which pension plans may suspend pension benefit payments to retirees who return to work, or of participants who continue to work beyond normal retirement age (29 CFR 2530.203-3).

A copy of the proposed information collection request (ICR) can be obtained by contacting the office listed below in the addresses section of this notice.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted to the office listed in the addresses section below on or before January 31, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Interested parties are invited to submit written comments regarding the collection of information. Send comments to Mr. Gerald B. Lindrew, Office of Policy and Research, U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., Room N-5647, Washington, DC 20210. Telephone: (202) 693-8410 Fax: (202) 693-4745 (These are not toll-free numbers).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Section 203(a)(3)(B) of ERISA governs the circumstances under which pension plans may suspend pension benefit payments to retirees that return to work or to participants that continue to work beyond normal retirement age. Furthermore, section 203(a)(3)(B) of ERISA authorizes the Secretary to prescribe regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

In this regard, the Department issued a regulation which describes the circumstances and conditions under which plans may suspend the pension benefits of retirees that return to work,

or of participants that continue to work beyond normal retirement age (29 CFR 2530.203-3). In order for a plan to suspend benefits pursuant to the regulation, it must notify affected retirees or participants (by first class mail or personal delivery) during the first calendar month or payroll period in which the plan withholds payment, that benefits are suspended. This notice must include the specific reasons for such suspension, a general description of the plan provisions authorizing the suspension, a copy of the relevant plan provisions, and a statement indicating where the applicable regulations may be found, (*i.e.*, 29 CFR 2530.203-3). In addition, the suspension notification must inform the retiree or participant of the plan's procedure for affording a review of the suspension of benefits.

II. Review Focus

The Department of Labor (Department) is particularly interested in comments that:

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

III. Current Actions

The Office of Management and Budget's approval of this ICR will expire on February 28, 2005. This notice requests comments on the extension of the ICR. The Department is not proposing or implementing changes to the existing ICR at this time in connection with this extension. Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of the information collection request; they will also become a matter of public record.

AGENCY: Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration.

Title: Suspension of Benefits Regulation pursuant to 29 CFR 2530.203-3.

Type of Review: Extension of a currently approved collection.

OMB Number: 1210-0048.

Affected Public: Individuals or households; business or other for-profit; not-for-profit institutions.

Total Respondents: 74,872.

Total Responses: 74,872.

Frequency of Response: On occasion.

Total Annual Burden: 18,718.

Total Burden Cost (Operating and Maintenance): \$63,000.

Dated: November 24, 2004.

Gerald B. Lindrew,

Deputy Director, Office of Policy and Research, Employee Benefits Security Administration.

[FR Doc. 04-26548 Filed 12-1-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4510-29-P

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employee Benefits Security Administration

Proposed Extension of Information Collection Request Submitted for Public Comment and Recommendations; Prohibited Transaction Class Exemption 77-4

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Labor, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, conducts a preclearance consultation program to provide the general public and Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and continuing collections of information in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA 95). This program helps to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden (time and financial resources) is minimized, collection instruments are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed. Currently, the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) is soliciting comments concerning the proposed extension of a currently approved collection of information, Class Exemption 77-4 for certain transactions between investment companies and employee benefit plans.

A copy of the proposed information collection request (ICR) can be obtained by contacting the office listed below in the addresses section of this notice.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted to the office listed in the