

Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission

AGENCY: Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation

TITLE: Reduction or Waiver of Partial Withdrawal Liability (29 CFR Part 4208)

STATUS: Request for regular review and extension of currently approved collection (OMB control number 1212-0039; expires March 31, 2008)

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1. Need for collection. Section 4208 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) contains rules for the reduction or elimination of an employer's partial withdrawal liability under certain circumstances and authorizes the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) to promulgate additional partial withdrawal abatement rules. Pursuant to section 4208, PBGC has promulgated its regulation on Reduction or Waiver of Partial Withdrawal Liability (29 CFR Part 4208). Under both the statutory and the PBGC abatement rules, reduction or waiver of an employer's partial withdrawal liability is predicated on the employer's restoring to the multiemployer plan from which it has partially withdrawn some or all of the contributions for covered work whose cessation caused the partial withdrawal.

Under the regulation, an employer that believes it meets the requirements for abatement makes application to the plan for an abatement determination (' 4208.3(a)). When the plan makes its determination, it so

notifies the employer (" 4208.3(b) and 4208.5(e)). An employer that has met certain of the abatement requirements may furnish a bond or escrow for the benefit of the plan, instead of making partial withdrawal liability payments, pending a later plan determination as to whether all the abatement requirements are met. An employer that furnishes a bond or escrow must so notify the plan (' 4208.5(c)). When the plan makes an abatement determination following the furnishing of a bond or escrow, it must so notify the bonding or escrow agent (" 4208.3(b) and 4208.5(b) and (e)).

Applications for abatement simply identify the employer and the partial withdrawal and set forth the basis for the employer=s entitlement to abatement of its liability. A plan=s notice to the employer in response to the abatement application states whether or not the liability has been abated and explains the consequences of the decision. An employer=s notice to a plan that a bond or escrow has been furnished identifies the bonding or escrow agent and the partial withdrawal liability payments that the employer is withholding, and states the amount of the bond or escrow. A plan=s notice to a bonding or escrow agent of an abatement determination may be simply a copy of the plan=s notice to the employer.

The regulation permits plans to adopt abatement rules tailored to their particular circumstances, and also sets forth the standards under which PBGC will approve plan rules and the procedures for requesting such approval (' 4208.9).

A request for PBGC approval of plan abatement rules must identify the plan and include copies of the new rules, the plan's most recent actuarial valuation (to assure that the rules are not adverse to the interests of plan participants and the PBGC insurance program), and a certification that notice of the rules and the application has been given to contributing employers and participants' collective bargaining representatives.

2. Use of information. Plans use the information in employers' abatement applications to determine whether partial withdrawal liability should be abated. The other notices provided for in the abatement application process serve to inform the plan, the employer, and the bonding or escrow agent of other parties' actions.

PBGC uses the information in applications for approval of plan abatement rules to evaluate the rules in the context of the plan's particular circumstances and financial condition and to determine whether the amendment is adverse to the interests of plan participants and beneficiaries or will significantly increase PBGC's risk of loss with respect to the plan.

3. Information technology. No consideration has been given to the use of improved information technology to reduce burden. The reporting volume under the regulation is too low to warrant the use of high technology.

4. Duplicate or similar information. Each application and notice required under the regulation is triggered by a unique event (an abatement situation, or a plan=s adoption of abatement rules covered by the regulation), and thus duplication is not an issue. Other than the actuarial report required as part of a plan=s application for PBGC approval of abatement rules, no information similar to that required by the regulation exists. The actuarial report called for is the plan=s most recent, which is routinely prepared for other purposes (but is not otherwise routinely sent to PBGC).

5. Reducing the burden on small entities. Inapplicable.

6. Consequence of reduced collection. Reporting under the regulation is required only upon the occurrence of a specified event (an abatement situation, or a plan=s adoption of abatement rules covered by the regulation) that occurs relatively rarely. Without the information required by the regulation, employers and plans would be hindered in making and processing abatement requests, and PBGC would be hindered in the performance of its statutory duties.

7. Consistency with guidelines. The information collection is not conducted in a manner inconsistent with 5 CFR ' 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Outside input. PBGC published two Federal Register notices soliciting public comment on this and other collections of information, one

pursuant to 5 CFR ' 1320.8(d) (November 26, 2007, at 72 FR 65989), and the other pursuant to 5 CFR ' 1320.5(a)(1)(iv) (February 25, 2008, at 73 FR 10071). No public comments were received in response to the November 2007 notice.

9. Payment to respondents. PBGC provides no payments or gifts to respondents in connection with this collection of information.

10. Confidentiality. The regulation gives no assurance of confidentiality, but information submitted to PBGC under the regulation is accessible only in accordance with applicable law and regulations. PBGC=s rules providing and restricting access to its records are set forth in 29 CFR Part 4901.

11. Personal questions. The regulation does not call for submission of information of a sensitive nature.

12. Hour burden on the public. PBGC estimates that 1,000 employers apply to plans each year for abatement of partial withdrawal liability and that each application takes 1 hour of professional time to prepare. (This estimate includes the time it would take an employer to notify the plan when a bond or escrow was furnished.) PBGC estimates that a plan=s response to an employer=s abatement application (including a notice to a bond/escrow agent if required) takes about 15 minutes of managerial time to prepare.

Based on experience, PBGC estimates that it will receive 1 request per year for approval of plan abatement rules under the regulation and that a request takes 30 minutes of managerial time to prepare. This time estimate includes the time needed to give notices to employers and unions of an application for PBGC approval of plan abatement rules, which would typically be part of the notices regarding the adoption of the new rules as required under ERISA section 4214.

However, PBGC also believes, based on its experience, that virtually all of the professional services involved in preparing these applications are performed by plans= outside consultants. Accordingly, PBGC estimates that the annual hour burden of this collection of information is 250 hours and 30 minutes, with an estimated cost to respondents of \$28,808.

13. Cost burden on the public. PBGC assumes that professional time costs employers and plan sponsors \$350 per hour. Based on the estimate in item 12 that professional consultants spend 1 hour in preparing each of 1,000 applications under the regulation, the total annual cost burden under the regulation is estimated to be \$350,000.

14. Cost to the government. PBGC assumes that, as noted in item 12, it will receive 1 submission per year under the regulation. PBGC estimates that it takes 24 hours of staff time to process a submission. At a rate of \$99 per hour, PBGC=s estimated annual cost of processing submissions under the regulation is thus estimated to be \$2,376.

15. Explanation of burden changes. The cost burden has increased from \$275,000 to \$350,000, due to an increase (from \$275 to \$350 per professional hour) in the estimated rate associated with services performed by outside consultants.

16. Publication plans. PBGC does not intend to publish the results of this collection of information.

17. Display of expiration date. PBGC is not seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of this information collection.

18. Exceptions to certification statement. There are no exceptions to the certification statement.