

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT 1995 SUBMISSIONS

A. Justification

1. *Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.*

Part 1 of Title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended, (ERISA) requires, under Section 104 of ERISA, that administrators of pension and welfare plans (collectively, employee benefit plans), and employers sponsoring certain fringe benefit plans and other plans of deferred compensation, file returns/reports annually with the Secretary of Labor (the Secretary) concerning the financial condition and operation of the plans. Reporting requirements are satisfied by filing the Form 5500 in accordance with its instructions and the related regulations. Beginning with plan year filings for 1999, Form 5500 filings were processed under a new system, the ERISA Filing Acceptance System (EFAST), which is designed to simplify and expedite the receipt and processing of the Form 5500 by relying on computer scannable forms and electronic filing technologies. In order to file electronically, employee benefit plan administrators, Form 5500 transmitters, and entities developing software to complete and/or transmit the Form 5500 are required to submit an Application for EFAST Electronic Signature and Codes for EFAST Transmitters and Software Developers (Form EFAST-1) to the Department of Labor / Employee Benefits Security Administration (the Department). Requested information includes: applicant type (an individual applying for an electronic signature, a transmitter, or a software developer); EIN; mailing address; fax number (optional); e-mail address (optional); contact person; daytime telephone number; and, a signature confirming agreement, under penalty of perjury, with the terms and conditions of the electronic filing program.

2. *Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.*

Form EFAST-1 is the vehicle by which administrators' and transmitters' signatures and declarations are transmitted to the Department so they can be provided with secure codes for the

filing and transmission of the Form 5500.

The electronic signatures and other codes also provide future verification of a filer's standing as a qualified participant in the electronic filing program and a means of contact for information exchange and publication distribution between the filer, transmitter, or software developer and the Department. EFAST-1 may also be used to contact company officials if additional information about the form is needed.

3. *Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration for using information technology to reduce burden.*

The purpose of the EFAST program is to facilitate the use of electronic filing of the Form 5500 by plan administrators and service providers of employee benefit plans. The collection of information included in Form EFAST-1 does not involve the use of automated, electronic, or other technological collection techniques because a manual signature on Form EFAST-1 is necessary to facilitate secure electronic filing of the Form 5500. However, as part of EBSA's long-range goal to support the Department's E-government strategy and to improve customer service delivery, EBSA, in conjunction with the IRS, is assessing the possible use of other authentication methods that might eliminate the need for paper-based transactions.

The Department continues to take numerous steps to promote the use of the application, Form EFAST-1, the subject of this ICR, and to encourage electronic filing of the Form 5500 Series by plans and service providers:

- The EBSA website links to a dedicated EFAST website (www.efast.dol.gov) to provide filers with up-to-date information about electronic filing options, software availability, frequently asked questions and answers, and information about upcoming seminars and other outreach activities and events. In addition, information copies of the Form 5500 and the instructions are contained on this site.
 - EBSA has made available a toll-free telephone number to provide assistance to plan filers.
 - To assist the general public in obtaining Form EFAST-1, EBSA also provides on the EFAST Website, a list of vendors that have successfully completed software certification and can therefore generate machine print paper forms with Bar Codes.
 - The most recent revision of the Form 5500 distributed by EBSA and the IRS displays information on the first page of the form about the EFAST program and how to file electronically.
 - EBSA hosts or participates in an average of 20 speaking engagements a year related to updates or changes in filing the Form 5500. Trade association members, accounting firms, and professional societies that attend these meetings are provided with information about electronic filing.
4. *Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.*

This application includes only basic identifying information and a signature confirming agreement with the provisions of the electronic filing program. While there is some duplication of identifying information in the Form EFAST-1 and the identifying information ultimately submitted on the Form 5500, which is filed electronically, this duplication is considered necessary in order to establish a secure method of electronic transmission. The Department has limited duplication by designing both Form EFAST-1 and the processing system to allow an

applicant to apply only once for the required codes, regardless of the number of filings transmitted. The electronic signature and/or codes may be used in subsequent years without re-application.

5. *If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.*

Not applicable. Because only basic identifying information is required, burden is not expected to differ on the basis of the size of the filer, transmitter, or software developer.

6. *Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.*

Participation in the electronic filing program is voluntary. The use of scannable forms and electronic filing technologies is, however, expected to result in greater processing efficiency and reduced costs.

7. *Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:*
- *requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;*
 - *requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;*
 - *requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;*
 - *requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;*
 - *in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;*
 - *requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;*

- *that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or*
- *requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.*

Not applicable.

8. *If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.*

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years -- even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

Attached is a copy of the Department's notice for the Federal Register (73 FR 18002) as required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection. This notice was published in the Federal Register on April 12, 2008, providing the public with 60 days to comment on the submission. No comments were received.

9. *Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.*

No payments or gifts are provided to respondents.

10. *Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.*

No assurance of confidentiality is made in connection with this information collection.

11. *Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.*

None.

12. *Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:*

- *Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.*
- *If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I.*
- *Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included in Item 14.*

Based on the most recent data, the Department estimates that 8,200 applications for electronic signatures will be completed on an annual basis. At 20 minutes per respondent for

completion of an application, the annual hour burden is 2,733 hours.

The forms are expected to be completed by an equal number of accountants and systems analysts. Averaging the wage rates of an accountant (\$58) and a systems analyst (\$70) produces a wage rate of \$64.¹ The equivalent cost of 2,733 hours at \$64 per hour is \$174,912.

13. *Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 or 14).*

While it is possible that some service providers may pass on their costs to comply with this information collection, it is assumed, for purposes of these estimates, that all respondents will satisfy this requirement with expenditure of their own time. Therefore, the only operating cost associated with Form EFAST-1 is \$3,444 for mailing at \$0.42 per application, including the cost for materials.

14. *Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.*

The cost to the Federal government for processing Form EFAST-1 are expected to amount to about \$5.00 per form, based on labor hour rates, which would total \$41,000. Printing costs of approximately \$0.35 per form (\$2,870) are also anticipated, bringing total costs to approximately \$43,870.

15. *Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reporting in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I.*

The increase in burden is the result of an increase in the number of Form EFAST-1

¹ Hourly wage estimates are based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Survey (May 2005) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Cost Index (Sept. 2006). All hourly wage rates include wages and benefits.

applications (from a previously estimated 5,200 to an estimated 8,200).

16. *For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation, and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.*

This is not a collection of information for statistical use and there are no plans to publish the results of this collection.

17. *If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.*

The Department is requesting approval to not display the expiration date on Form EFAST-1. The period of time this form will continue in use without change cannot be predicted at this time. However, as it contains only basic identifying information, it is not expected to require change unless system requirements change. Printing of the expiration date on the Form EFAST-1 might require the destruction of otherwise usable forms, and create confusion among filers if identical forms with differing expiration dates are available to them. For these reasons, the Department believes the public interest will be better served by omitting any expiration date from the Form EFAST-1.

18. *Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission," of OMB 83-I.*

Not applicable; no exceptions to the certification statement.

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

Not applicable. The use of statistical methods is not relevant to this collection of information.