

**Subpart B—Legal Process for the Enforcement of a Participant’s Legal Obligations To Provide Child Support or Make Alimony Payments**

SOURCE: 60 FR 45624, Aug. 31, 1995, unless otherwise noted.

**§ 1653.20 Purpose and scope.**

This subpart contains regulations prescribing the Board’s procedures for responding to legal process for the enforcement of a participant’s legal obligations to make alimony or child support payments, as required by 5 U.S.C. 8437(e)(3).

**§ 1653.21 Definitions.**

As used in this subpart:

*Alimony* means the payment of funds for the support and maintenance of a spouse or former spouse. Alimony includes separate maintenance, alimony *pendente lite*, maintenance, and spousal support. Alimony also can include attorney’s fees, interest, and court costs, but only if these items are expressly made recoverable by qualifying legal process as described in § 1653.23.

*Child support* means payment of funds for the support and maintenance of a child or children. Child support includes payments to provide for health care, education, recreation, clothing, or to meet other specific needs of such a child or children. Child support also can include attorney’s fees, interest, and court costs, but only if these items are expressly made recoverable by qualifying legal process as described in § 1653.23.

*Legal obligation* means an obligation to pay alimony or child support, or both, that is currently enforceable under appropriate State or local law. A “legal obligation” may include currently payable, as well as past due, alimony or child support. However, “legal obligation” does not mean any future obligation to make alimony or child support payments.

**§ 1653.22 Service of legal process.**

The Thrift Savings Plan will only review legal process for the enforcement of a participant’s legal obligations to provide child support or make alimony

payments upon receipt of that process. Receipt by an employing agency or any other office of the government shall not constitute receipt by the Thrift Savings Plan. Legal process should be submitted to the Thrift Savings Plan Recordkeeper at the following address: TSP Service Office, National Finance Center, P.O. Box 61500, New Orleans, LA 70161-1500. Receipt by the recordkeeper will be considered receipt by the Thrift Savings Plan.

**§ 1653.23 Requirements for “qualifying” legal process.**

(a) The TSP will only honor legal process if it meets each requirement of paragraph (b) of this section and one of the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section.

(b) Legal process must meet each of the following requirements in order to be qualifying:

(1) The legal process must be a writ, order, summons, or other similar process in the nature of a garnishment that is issued by:

(i) a court or competent jurisdiction within any State, the District of Columbia, territory, or possession of the United States, or an Indian court; or

(ii) a court of competent jurisdiction in any foreign country with which the United States has entered into an agreement which requires the United States to honor such process; or

(iii) an authorized official pursuant to an order of such a court of competent jurisdiction or pursuant to State or local law; or

(iv) A State agency authorized to issue income withholding notices pursuant to State or local law or pursuant to the requirements of 42 U.S.C. 666(b).

(2) The legal process must “expressly relate” to the Thrift Savings Plan account of a current participant. This means that it must express a clear intent to deal with the TSP as distinct from other Federal Government retirement benefits or non-Federal retirement benefits.

(3) The legal process must demonstrate that its purpose is to enforce a current legal obligation of the participant to provide child support or make alimony payments.

(c) In addition to the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, legal

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process also must meet one of the following requirements:

(1) The legal process must require the Board to pay a stated dollar amount from a participant's TSP account; or

(2) The legal process must require the Board to freeze the participant's account in anticipation of an order to pay over the account.

(d) The TSP will presume the competence or authority of any of the entities described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section if presented with a document from that entity that appears regular on its face.

(e) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of this section, the following legal process will be considered nonqualifying:

(1) Legal process relating to a TSP account that contains only non-vested money, unless the money will become vested within 90 days of the date of receipt of the order if the participant were to remain in Federal service;

(2) Legal process that requires an amount to be paid at the future date; or

(3) Legal process that requires a series of payments.

### § 1653.24 Processing legal process.

(a) Upon receipt of a document which purports to be qualifying legal process, the participant's account will be frozen. After an account is frozen, no withdrawal or loans will be allowed until the account is unfrozen. All other account activity, including contributions, adjustments, and interfund transfers, will be permitted.

(b) The following documents will not be treated as purporting to be qualifying legal process. Therefore, accounts of participants to whom such orders relate will not be frozen and these documents will not be reviewed by the Board:

(1) A document that pertains to a TSP account that has been closed.

(2) A document that does not indicate that it relates either to the TSP or to the participant's retirement benefits.

(3) A document that does not appear to have been issued by a proper authority as described in §1653.23(b)(1).

(c) The Board will review a document that purports to be qualifying legal

process to determine whether it is complete.

(d) If the Board determines that the document is incomplete, it will request a complete copy of the document from the party that submitted the document. If a complete copy is not received by the Board within 30 days of the Board's request, the participant's account will be unfrozen and no further action will be taken by the Board with respect to the document.

(e) Upon receipt of a complete document, the Board will review it to determine whether it is qualifying legal process.

(f) The Board will advise the submitting party and the TSP participant of the determination. The Board's decision letter will contain the following information:

(1) A statement of the applicable statute and regulations.

(2) A decision regarding whether the document is qualifying legal process, as defined in §1653.23 (b) and (c).

(3) If the document is determined to be qualifying legal process, the effect that compliance with the terms of the document will have on the participant's account.

(4) If the order requires payment, the amount that will be paid pursuant to the qualifying legal process; and to whom the payment will be made.

(5) If the order requires payment, tax reporting and withholding information will be sent to the party as to whom the payment will be reported to the Internal Revenue Service as income.

(g) The Board's decision constitutes the final administrative action by the Board. There is no appeal right within the Board.

(h) An account frozen under this section will be unfrozen:

(1) If a complete document has not been received within 30 days from the date of a request described in paragraph (d) of this section, upon the expiration of the 30-day period;

(2) If the account was frozen pursuant to legal process requiring the Board to Freeze the participant's account in anticipation of an order to pay over the account, the account will be unfrozen upon the occurrence of any one of the following events: