

Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board

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to the creditor agency and which apprises the employee of certain administrative rights.

Notice of salary offset means a written notice from the paying agency to an employee informing the employee that it has received a certification from a creditor agency and intends to begin salary offset.

Participant means any person with an account in the Thrift Savings Plan, or who would have an account but for an employing agency error.

Paying agency means the agency of the Federal Government which employs the individual who owes a debt to the United States. In some cases, the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board may be both the creditor agency and the paying agency.

Payroll office means the payroll office in the paying agency which is primarily responsible for the payroll records and the coordination of pay matters with the appropriate personnel office with respect to an employee.

Person includes a natural person or persons, profit or non-profit corporation, partnership, association, trust, estate, consortium, State and local governments, or other entity that is capable of owing a debt to the United States Government; however, agencies of the United States, are excluded.

Private collection contractor means a private debt collector under contract with an agency to collect a non-tax debt owed to the United States.

Salary offset means an offset to collect a debt under 5 U.S.C. 5514 by deduction(s) at one or more officially established pay intervals from the current pay account of an employee, without his or her consent.

Tax refund offset means the reduction of a tax refund by the amount of a past-due legally enforceable debt owed to the Board or a Federal agency.

Thrift Savings Fund means the Fund described in 5 U.S.C. 8437.

Thrift Savings Plan means the Federal Retirement Thrift Savings Plan established by the Federal Employees' Retirement System Act of 1986, codified in pertinent part at 5 U.S.C. 8431 *et seq.*

Waiver means the cancellation, remission, forgiveness, or non-recovery of a debt allegedly owed by a person to the Board or a Federal agency as per-

mitted or required by 5 U.S.C. 5584 or 8346(b), 10 U.S.C. 2774, 32 U.S.C. 716, or any other law.

§ 1639.5 Use of credit reporting agencies.

(a) The Board may report delinquent debts to appropriate credit reporting agencies by providing the following information:

(1) A statement that the debt is valid and is overdue;

(2) The name, address, taxpayer identification number, and any other information necessary to establish the identity of the debtor;

(3) The amount, status, and history of the debt; and

(4) The program or pertinent activity under which the debt arose.

(b) Before disclosing debt information to a credit reporting agency, the Board will:

(1) Take reasonable action to locate the debtor if a current address is not available; and

(2) If a current address is available, notify the debtor by certified mail, return receipt requested:

(i) That a designated Board official has reviewed the claim and has determined that the claim is valid and overdue;

(ii) That within 60 days the Board intends to disclose to a credit reporting agency the information authorized for disclosure by this section; and

(iii) That the debtor can request an explanation of the claim, can dispute the information in the Board's records concerning the claim, and can file for an administrative review, waiver, or reconsideration of the claim, where applicable.

(c) At the time debt information is submitted to a credit reporting agency, the Board will provide a written statement to the reporting agency that all required actions have been taken. In addition, the Board will, thereafter, ensure that the credit reporting agency is promptly informed of any substantive change in the conditions or amount of the debt, and promptly verify or correct information relevant to the claim.

(d) If a debtor disputes the validity of the debt, the credit reporting agency will refer the matter to the appropriate Board official. The credit reporting

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agency will exclude the debt from its reports until the Board certifies in writing that the debt is valid.

§ 1639.6 Contracting for collection services.

The Board will use the services of a private collection contractor where it determines that such use is in the best interest of the Board. When the Board determines that there is a need to contract for collection services, it will—

(a) Retain sole authority to:

(1) Resolve any dispute by the debtor regarding the validity of the debt;

(2) Compromise the debt;

(3) Suspend or terminate collection action;

(4) Refer the debt to the Department of Justice for litigation; and

(5) Take any other action under this part which does not result in full collection of the debt;

(b) Require the contractor to comply with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, to the extent specified in 5 U.S.C. 552a(m), with applicable Federal and State laws pertaining to debt collection practices (e.g., the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (15 U.S.C. 1692 *et seq.*)), and with applicable regulations of the Board;

(c) Require the contractor to account accurately and fully for all amounts collected; and

(d) Require the contractor to provide to the Board, upon request, all data and reports contained in its files relating to its collection actions on a debt.

§ 1639.7 Initial notice to debtor.

(a) When the Executive Director determines that a debt is owed the Board, he will send a written notice to the debtor. The notice will inform the debtor of the following:

(1) The amount, nature, and basis of the debt;

(2) That payment is due immediately after receipt of the notice;

(3) That the debt is considered delinquent if it is not paid within 30 days of the date the notice is mailed or hand-delivered;

(4) That interest charges (except for State and local governments and Indian tribes), penalty charges, and administrative costs may be assessed against a delinquent debt;

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(5) Any rights available to the debtor to dispute the validity of the debt or to have recovery of the debt waived (citing the available review or waiver authority, the conditions for review or waiver, and the effects of the review or waiver request on the collection of the debt); and

(6) The address, telephone number, and name of the Board official available to discuss the debt.

(b) The Board will respond promptly to communications from the debtor.

(c) Subsequent demand letters also will notify the debtor of any interest, penalty, or administrative costs which have been assessed and will advise the debtor that the debt may be referred to a credit reporting agency (see § 1639.5), a collection agency (see § 1639.6), the Department of Justice (see § 1639.10), or the Department of the Treasury (see § 1639.11), if it is not paid.

§ 1639.8 Interest, penalty, and administrative costs.

(a) *Interest.* The Board will assess interest on all delinquent debts unless prohibited by statute, regulation, or contract.

(1) Interest begins to accrue on all debts from the date the initial notice is mailed or hand-delivered to the debtor. The Board will not recover interest if the debt is paid within 30 days of the date of the initial notice. The Board will assess an annual rate of interest that is equal to the rate of the current value of funds to the United States Treasury (*i.e.*, the Treasury tax and loan account rate) as prescribed and published by the Secretary of the Treasury in the FEDERAL REGISTER and the Treasury Fiscal Requirements Manual Bulletins, unless a different rate is necessary to protect the interests of the Board. The Board will notify the debtor of the basis for its finding when a different rate is necessary to protect the Board's interests.

(2) The Executive Director may extend the 30-day period for payment where he determines that such action is in the best interest of the Board. A decision to extend or not to extend the payment period is final and is not subject to further review.