

would be published subsequently in the Order.

The FAA has determined that this proposed regulation only involves an established body of technical regulations for which frequent and routine amendments are necessary to keep them operationally current. Therefore this, proposed regulation—(1) is not a “significant regulatory action” under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a “significant rule” under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034; February 26, 1979); and (3) does not warrant preparation of a Regulatory Evaluation as the anticipated impact is so minimal. Since this is a routine matter that will only affect air traffic procedures and air navigation, it is certified that this proposed rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR part 71

Airspace, Incorporation by reference, Navigation (air).

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me, the Federal Aviation Administration proposes to amend 14 CFR part 71 as follows:

PART 71—DESIGNATION OF CLASS A, CLASS B, CLASS C, CLASS D, AND CLASS E AIRSPACE AREAS; AIRWAYS; ROUTES; AND REPORTING POINTS

1. The authority citation for part 71 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40103, 40113, 40120; E.O. 10854, 24 FR 9565, 3 CFR, 1959–1963 Comp., p. 389.

§ 71.1 [Amended]

2. The incorporation by reference in 14 CFR 71.1 of the Federal Aviation Administration Order 7400.9F, Airspace Designations and Reporting Points, dated September 10, 1998, and effective September 16, 1998, is amended as follows:

Paragraph 6005 Class E airspace areas extending upward from 700 feet or more above the surface of the earth.

* * * * *

AGL MN E5 Pine River, MN [New]

Pine River Regional Airport, MN
(lat. 46° 43' 29"N, long. 94° 22' 54"W)
Pine River NDB

(lat. 46° 43' 37"N, long. 94° 23' 04"W)

That airspace extending upward from 700 feet above the surface within a 6.3-mile radius of Pine River Regional Airport and within 1.3 miles each side of the 154° bearing from the Pine River NDB, extending from the

6.3-mile radius to 7.0 miles southeast of the airport.

* * * * *

Issued in Des Plaines, Illinois on August 17, 1999.

Christopher R. blum,

Manager, Air Traffic Division.

[FR Doc. 99-22294 Filed 8-20-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

International Trade Administration

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of Insular Affairs

15 CFR Part 303

[Docket No. 990813222-9222-01]

RIN 0625-AA55

Extend Production Incentive Benefits to Jewelry Manufacturers in the U.S. Insular Possessions

AGENCIES: Import Administration, International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce; Office of Insular Affairs, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Departments propose to amend their regulations governing duty-exemption allocations and duty-refund benefits for watch producers in the United States insular possessions (the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) due to the enactment of Pub. L. 106-36. This law amends additional U.S. notes to chapter 71 of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (“HTSUS”) to provide a duty-refund benefit for any article of jewelry within heading 7113 which is the product of the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa or the Northern Mariana Islands in accordance with the new provisions of the note in chapter 71 and additional U.S. note 5 to chapter 91. The proposed rule would amend the regulations by changing Title 15 CFR part 303 to include jewelry, creating a Subpart A for the current insular watch and watch movement regulations and a Subpart B for the new regulations pertaining to jewelry duty-refund benefits authorized by Pub. L. 106-36.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before September 27, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Address written comments to Faye Robinson, Program Manager, Statutory Import Programs Staff, Room

4211, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Faye Robinson, (202) 482-3526, same address as above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The insular possessions watch industry provision in Sec. 110 of Pub. L. 97-446 (96 Stat. 2331) (1983), as amended by Sec. 602 of Pub. L. 103-465 (108 Stat. 4991) (1994); additional U.S. Note 5 to chapter 91 of the HTSUS, as amended by Pub. L. 94-241 (90 Stat. 263) (1976) requires the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior, acting jointly, to establish a limit on the quantity of watches and watch movements which may be entered free of duty during each calendar year. The law also requires the Secretaries to establish the shares of this limited quantity which may be entered from the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (“CNMI”). After the Departments have verified the data submitted on the annual application (Form ITA-334P), the producers’ duty-exemption allocations are calculated from the territorial share in accordance with Section 303.14 of the regulations (15 CFR 303.14) and each producer is issued a duty-exemption license. The law further requires the Secretaries to issue duty-refund certificates to each territorial watch and watch movement producer based on the company’s duty-free shipments and creditable wages paid during the previous calendar year.

Pub. L. 106-36 authorizes the issuance of a duty-refund certificate to each territorial jewelry producer for any article of jewelry provided for in heading 7113 of the HTSUS which is the product of any such territory based on creditable wages paid and duty-free units shipped into the United States during the previous calendar year. Although the law specifically mentions the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa, the issuance of the duty-refund certificate would also apply to the CNMI due to the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America (Pub. L. 94-241), which states that goods from the CNMI are entitled to the same tariff treatment as imports from Guam. (See also 19 CFR 7.2(a)). The law provides that during the first two years, beginning August 9, 1999 (45 days after the date of enactment), jewelry that is assembled in the territories shall be treated as a product of such territories. Thereafter, in order to be considered a product of such territories, the jewelry must meet the

U.S. Custom Service substantial transformation requirements (the jewelry must become a new and different article of commerce as a result of production or manufacture performed in the territory). To receive duty-free treatment, the jewelry must also satisfy the requirements of General Note 3(a)(iv) of the HTSUS and applicable Customs Regulations (19 CFR 7.3).

The law specifies, in addition, that watch producer benefits shall not be diminished as a consequence of extending duty-refund benefits to jewelry manufacturers. In the event that the aggregate amount of the calculated duty refunds for both watches and jewelry exceeds the total amount available under Pub. L. 97-446, as amended by Pub. L. 103-465, the watch producers shall receive their calculated amounts; the jewelry producers would then receive amounts proportionately reduced from the remainder.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

In accordance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*, the Chief Counsel for Regulation at the Department of Commerce has certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy, Small Business Administration, that the proposed rule, if promulgated as final, will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. This rulemaking will not affect the five watch companies currently participating in the insular possessions watch program because Pub. L. 106-36 does not allow watch producers' benefits to be reduced as a consequence of extending benefits to jewelry manufacturers. We expect up to five jewelry companies to set up production facilities in the insular possessions in response to the extension to them of existing incentives by Pub. L. 106-36. However, as with watch producers, the duty refund benefit per company does not apply to shipments exceeding 750,000 units of jewelry into the United States per year. The last Census of Manufacturers statistics (1992) indicate that there are 2,180 precious jewelry manufacturers located in the U.S. employing 32,300 employees. Because the insular jewelry industry would represent such a small percentage of the existing U.S. industry and because there is a limit on the benefit extended to insular jewelry producers, the proposed regulations will not have a significant adverse impact on any small business entities. We expect a positive impact in the form of new jobs in the small U.S. insular economies.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This proposed rulemaking involves new collection-of-information requirements subject to review and approval by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 which have been submitted to OMB for approval. The extension of the insular watch program to include the jewelry benefit will require the use of three of the current forms, modified to accommodate jewelry. The public reporting burden for these collection-of-information requirements include the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Form ITA-334P, the annual application, would be completed once a year by each jewelry producer and requires one burden hour. Form ITA-360P, the certificate of refund, would also be used once a year and is completed by the Department of Commerce and imposes no burden hours. Form ITA-361P, the request for refund of duties, would normally be used once or twice a year per jewelry producer and takes about 10 minutes to complete. Public comment is sought regarding: Whether the proposed collection-of-information requirements are necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; the accuracy of the burden estimate; ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Send comments regarding any of these burden estimates or any other aspect of the collection-of-information to U.S. Department of Commerce (see Address above) and Office of Information and Regulations Officer, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503 (Att: OMB Desk Officer).

Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

E.O. 12866

It has been determined that the proposed rulemaking is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

List of Subjects in 15 CFR Part 303

Administrative practice and procedure, American Samoa, Customs duties and inspection, Guam, Imports, Marketing quotas, Northern Mariana Islands, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Virgin Islands, Watches and jewelry.

For reasons set forth above, The Departments propose to amend 15 CFR Part 303 as follows:

PART 303—WATCHES, WATCH MOVEMENTS AND JEWELRY PROGRAM

1. The authority citation for 15 CFR part 303 is revised to read as follows:

Authority: Pub. L. 97-446, 96 Stat. 2331 (19 U.S.C. 1202, note); Pub. L. 103-465, 108 Stat. 4991; Pub. L. 94-241, 90 Stat. 263 (48 U.S.C. 1681, note); Pub. L. 106-36, 113 Stat. 127,167.

2. Amend the heading for part 303 to read as set forth above.

Subpart A—Watches and Watch Movements

3. Designate §§ 303.1 through 303.14 as subpart A and add a subpart heading as set forth above.

4. Add subpart B to read as follows:

Subpart B—Jewelry

Sec.

303.15 Purpose.

303.16 Definitions and forms.

303.17 Annual jewelry application.

303.18 Sale and transfer of business.

303.19 Issuance and use of production incentive certificate.

303.20 Duty refund.

303.21 Appeals.

Subpart B—Jewelry

§ 303.15 Purpose.

(a) This subpart implements the responsibilities of the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior ("the Secretaries") under Pub. L. 106-36, enacted 25 June 1999 which substantially amended Pub. L. 97-446, enacted 12 January 1983, amended by Pub. L. 89-805, enacted 10 November 1966, amended by Pub. L. 94-88, enacted 8 August 1975, amended by Pub. L. 94-241, enacted 24 March 1976, and amended by Pub. L. 103-465, enacted 8 December 1994.

(b) The amended law provides for the issuance of certificates to insular jewelry producers who have met the requirements of the laws and regulations, entitling the holder (or any transferee) to obtain refunds of duties on watches and watch movements and parts (except discrete watch cases) imported into the customs territory of

the United States. The amounts of these certificates may not exceed specified percentages of the producers' verified creditable wages in the insular possessions (90% of wages paid for the production of the first 300,000 duty-free units and declining percentages, established by the Secretaries, of wages paid for incremental production up to 750,000 units by each producer) nor an aggregate annual amount for all certificates exceeding \$5,000,000 adjusted for growth by the ratio of the previous year's gross national product to the gross national product in 1982. However, the law specifies that watch producer benefits are not to be diminished as a consequence of extending the duty refund to jewelry manufacturers. In the event that the amount of the calculated duty refunds for watches and jewelry exceeds the total aggregate annual amount that is available, the watch producers shall receive their calculated amounts and the jewelry producers would receive amounts proportionately reduced from the remainder. Refund requests are governed by regulations issued by the Department of the Treasury (See 19 CFR 7.4).

(c) Section 2401(a) of Pub. L. 106-36 and additional U.S. note 5 to chapter 91 of the HTSUS authorize the Secretaries to issue regulations necessary to carry out their duties. The Secretaries may cancel or restrict the certificate of any insular manufacturer found violating the regulations.

§ 303.16 Definitions and forms.

(a) *Definitions.* For purposes of this subpart, unless the context indicates otherwise:

(1) *Act* means Pub. L. 97-446, enacted 12 January 1983 (19 U.S.C. 1202), 96 Stat. 2329, as amended by Pub. L. 103-465, enacted on 8 December 1994, 108 Stat. 4991 and, as amended by Pub. L. 106-36, enacted on 25 June 1999.

(2) *Secretaries* means the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Interior or their delegates, acting jointly.

(3) *Director* means the Director of the Statutory Import Programs Staff, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

(4) *Sale or transfer of a business* means the sale or transfer of control, whether temporary or permanent, over a firm which is eligible for a jewelry program duty-refund to any other firm, corporation, partnership, person or other legal entity by any means whatsoever, including, but not limited to, merger and transfer of stock, assets or voting trusts.

(5) *New firm* means a jewelry producer who has requested in writing

to the Secretaries permission to participate in the program, has agreed to abide by the laws and regulations of the program and has been accepted by the Secretaries as a viable company that will make an economic contribution to the territory. Also, the new firm must be an entity which is completely separate from and not associated with, by way of ownership or control, any other potential jewelry duty-refund recipient (and only one watch duty-refund recipient) in any territory.

(6) *Jewelry producer* means a company, located in one of the insular territories (see paragraph (a)(8) of this section), that produces jewelry provided for in heading 7113, HTSUS, which meets all the U.S. Customs Service requirements for duty-free entry set forth in General Note 3(a)(iv), HTSUS, and 19 CFR 7.3, and has maintained its eligibility for duty refund benefits by complying with these regulations.

(7) *Unit of jewelry* means a single article, pair (example: earrings, cufflinks), subassembly or component which is contained in HTSUS heading 7113.

(8) *Territories, territorial and insular possessions* refers to the insular possessions of the United States (i.e., the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands).

(9) *Creditable wages* means all wages—up to the amount per person of \$38,650—paid to permanent residents of the territories employed in the firm's manufacture of HTSUS heading 7113 articles of jewelry which are a product of the insular possessions and have met the U.S. Customs Service's criteria for duty-free entry into the United States, plus any wages paid for the repair of non-insular HTSUS heading 7113 jewelry up to an amount equal to 50 percent of the firm's total creditable wages. Excluded, however, are wages paid for special services rendered to the firm by accountants, lawyers, or other professional personnel plus any wages paid for the assembly of dutiable jewelry or the repair of dutiable jewelry to the extent that such wages exceed the percentage set forth above. Wages paid to persons engaged in production of jewelry that has entered the U.S. both duty-free and duty-paid may be credited proportionately *provided* the firm maintains production and payroll records adequate for the Departments' verification of the creditable wages portion.

(10) *Dutiable jewelry* includes jewelry which does not meet the requirements for duty-free entry under General Note 3(a)(iv), HTSUS, and 19 CFR 7.3, contains any material which is the

product of any country with respect to which Column 2 rates of duty apply or is ineligible for duty-free treatment pursuant to other laws or regulations.

(b) *Forms*—(1) *ITA-334P*. "Annual Application for License to Enter Watches and Watch Movements into the Customs Territory of the United States." The Director shall issue instructions for jewelry manufacturers on the completion of the relevant portions of the form. The form must be completed annually by all jewelry producers desiring to receive a duty refund.

(2) *ITA-360P*. "Certificate of Entitlement to Secure the Refund of Duties on Watches and Watch Movements." This document authorizes a territorial jewelry producer to request the refund of duties on imports of watches, watch movements and parts therefor, with certain exceptions, up to a specified value. Certificates may be used to obtain duty refunds only when presented with a properly executed Form ITA-361P.

(3) *ITA-361P*. "Request for Refund of Duties on Watches and Watch Movements." This form must be completed to obtain the refund of duties authorized by the Director through Form ITA-360P. After authentication by the Department of Commerce, it may be used for the refund of duties on items which were entered into the customs territory of the United States during a specified time period. Copies of the appropriate Customs entries must be provided with this form to establish a basis for issuing the claimed amounts. The forms may also be used to transfer all or part of the producer's entitlement to another party (see § 303.19(c)).

(The information collection requirements in paragraph (b)(1) were approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 0625-0040. The information collection requirements in paragraphs (b) (2) and (3) were approved under control number 0625-0134.)

§ 303.17 Annual jewelry application

(a) Form ITA-334P shall be furnished to producers by January 1 and must be completed and returned to the Director no later than January 31 of each calendar year.

(b) All data supplied are subject to verification by the Secretaries and no duty refund shall be made to producers until the Secretaries are satisfied that the data are accurate. To verify the data, representatives of the Secretaries shall have access to relevant company records including, but not limited to:

(1) Work sheets used to answer all questions on the application form, as specified by the instructions;

(2) Original records from which such data are derived;

(3) Records pertaining to ownership and control of the company;

(4) Records pertaining to all duty-free and dutiable shipments of HTSUS 7113 jewelry, including Customs entry documents;

(5) Records pertaining to corporate income taxes, gross receipts taxes and excise taxes paid by each producer in the territories;

(6) Customs, bank, payroll, and production records;

(7) Records on purchases of components and sales of jewelry, including proof of payment; and

(8) Any other records in the possession of the parent or affiliated companies outside the territory pertaining to any aspect of the producer's jewelry operations.

(c) Data verification shall be performed in the territories, unless other arrangements satisfactory to the Departments are made in advance, by the Secretaries' representatives by the end of February of each calendar year. In the event a company cannot substantiate the data in its application, the Secretaries shall determine which data will be used.

(d) Records subject to the requirements of paragraph (b), of this section, shall be retained for a period of two years following their creation.

§ 303.18 Sale or transfer of business.

(a) The sale or transfer of a business together with its duty refund entitlement shall be permitted with prior written notification to the Departments. Such notification shall be accompanied by certifications and representations, as appropriate, that:

(1) The transferee is neither directly nor indirectly affiliated with any other territorial duty refund jewelry recipient in any territory;

(2) The transferee will not modify the jewelry operations in a manner that will significantly diminish its economic contributions to the territory.

(b) At the request of the Departments, the transferee shall permit representatives of the Departments to inspect whatever records are necessary to establish to their satisfaction that the certifications and representations contained in paragraph (a) of this section have been or are being met.

(c) Any transferee who is either unwilling or unable to make the certifications and representations specified in paragraph (a) of this section shall secure the Departments' approval in advance of the sale or transfer of the business. The request for approval shall specify which of the certifications

specified in paragraph (a) of this section the firm is unable or unwilling to make, and give reasons why such fact should not constitute a basis for the Departments' disapproval of the sale or transfer.

§ 303.19 Issuance and use of production incentive certificates.

(a) *Issuance of certificates.* (1) Certificates of Entitlement, Form ITA-360, shall be issued before March 1 of each year.

(2) Certificates shall not be issued to more than one jewelry company in the territories owned or controlled by the same corporate entity.

(b) *Security and handling of certificates.* (1) Certificate holders are responsible for the security of the certificates. The certificates shall be kept at the territorial address of the producer or at another location having the advance approval of the Departments.

(2) All refund requests made pursuant to the certificates shall be entered on the reverse side of the certificate.

(3) Certificates shall be returned by registered, certified or express carrier mail to the Department of Commerce when:

(i) A refund is requested which exhausts the entitlement on the face of the certificate,

(ii) The certificate expires, or

(iii) The Departments request their return with good cause.

(4) Certificate entitlements may be transferred according to the procedures described in paragraph (c) of this section.

(c) *The use and transfer of certificate entitlements.* (1) Insular producers issued a certificate may request a refund by executing a Form ITA-361P (see § 303.16(b)(3)) and the instructions on the form). After authentication by the Department of Commerce, Form ITA-361P may be used to obtain duty refunds on watch movements, watches, and parts therefor. Duties on watch cases not containing a movement and on articles containing any material which is the product of a country with respect to which Column 2 rates of duty apply may not be refunded. Articles for which duty refunds are claimed must have entered the customs territory of the United States during the two-year period prior to the issue date of the certificate or during the one-year period the certificate remains valid. Copies of the appropriate Customs entries must be provided with the refund request in order to establish a basis for issuing the claimed amounts. Certification regarding drawback claims and liquidated refunds relating to the

presented entries is required from the claimant on the form.

(2) Regulations issued by the U.S. Customs Service, U.S. Department of the Treasury, govern the refund of duties under 19 CFR 7.4. If the Departments receive information from the Customs Service that a producer has made unauthorized use of any official form, they may cancel the affected certificate.

(3) The territorial producer may transfer a portion of all of its certificate entitlement to another party by entering in block C of Form ITA-361P the name and address of the party.

(4) After a Form ITA-361P transferring a certificate entitlement to a party other than the certificate holder has been authenticated by the Department of Commerce, the form may be exchanged for any consideration satisfactory to the two parties. In all cases, authenticated forms shall be transmitted to the certificate holder or its authorized custodian for disposition (see paragraph (b) of this section).

(5) All disputes concerning the use of an authenticated Form ITA-361P shall be referred to the Departments for resolution. Any party named on an authenticated Form ITA-361P shall be considered an "interested party" within the meaning of § 303.21 of this part.

§ 303.20 Duty refund.

(a) Territorial jewelry producers are entitled to duty refund certificates only for jewelry that they produce which is provided for in heading 7113, HTSUS, is a product of a territory and otherwise meets the requirements for duty-free entry under General Note 3 (a)(iv), HTSUS, and 19 CFR 7.3.

(1) An article of jewelry is considered to be a product of a territory if:

(i) The article is wholly the growth or product of the territory; or

(ii) The article became a new and different article of commerce as a result of production or manufacture performed in the territories.

(2) *Two-year exception.* Any article of jewelry provided for in heading 7113, HTSUS, entered or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption during the two-year period beginning August 9, 1999, that is assembled in a territory shall be considered a product of the insular possessions. At the expiration of the two-year period, only jewelry which satisfies either of the criteria set forth in paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall be considered a product of an insular possession.

(b) *Calculation of the value of production incentive certificates.* (1) The value of each producer's certificate shall equal the producer's average creditable wages per unit shipped free

of duty into the United States multiplied by the sum of:

- (i) The number of units shipped up to 300,000 units times a factor of 90%; plus
 - (ii) Incremental units shipped up to 450,000 units times a factor of 85%; plus
 - (iii) Incremental units shipped up to 600,000 times a factor of 80%; plus
 - (iv) Incremental shipments up to 750,000 units times a factor of 75%.
- (2) The Departments may make adjustments for these data in the manner set forth in § 303.17(c).

§ 303.21 Appeals.

(a) Any official decision or action relating to the issuance or use of production incentive certificates may be appealed to the Secretaries by any interested party. Such appeals must be received within 30 days of the date on which the decision was made or the action taken in accordance with the procedures set forth in paragraph (b) of this section. Interested parties may petition for the issuance of a rule, or amendment or repeal of a rule issued by the Secretaries. Interested parties may also petition for relief from the application of any rule on the basis of hardship or extraordinary circumstances resulting in the inability of the petitioner to comply with the rule.

(b) Petitions shall bear the name and post office address of the petitioner and the name and address of the principal attorney or authorized representative (if any) for the party concerned. They shall be addressed to the Secretaries and filed in one original and two copies with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Import Administration, International Trade Administration, Washington, DC 20230, Attention: Statutory Import Programs Staff. Petitions shall contain the following:

- (1) A reference to the decision, action or rule which is the subject of the petition;
 - (2) A short statement of the interest of the petitioner;
 - (3) A statement of the facts as seen by the petitioner;
 - (4) The petitioner's argument as to the points of law, policy or fact. In cases where policy error is contended, the alleged error together with the policy the submitting party advocates as the correct one should be described in full;
 - (5) A conclusion specifying the action that the petitioner believes the Secretaries should take.
- (c) The Secretaries may at their discretion schedule a hearing and invite the participation of other interested parties.
- (d) The Secretaries shall communicate their decision, which shall be final, to

the petitioner by registered, certified or express mail.

Robert LaRussa,

Assistant Secretary for Import Administration, Department of Commerce.

Ferdinand Aranza,

Acting Director, Office of Insular Affairs, Department of the Interior.

[FR Doc. 99-22201 Filed 8-26-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-DS-P and 4310-93-P

DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY

Internal Revenue Service

26 CFR Part 1

[REG-105565-99]

RIN 1545-AX22

Arbitrage Restrictions Applicable to Tax-exempt Bonds Issued by State and Local Governments

AGENCY: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Treasury.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking and notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: This document contains proposed regulations on the arbitrage restrictions applicable to tax-exempt bonds issued by State and local governments. The proposed amendments affect issuers of tax-exempt bonds and provide a safe harbor for qualified administrative costs for brokers' commissions and similar fees incurred in connection with the acquisition of a guaranteed investment contract or investments purchased for a yield restricted defeasance escrow.

DATES: Written comments must be received by November 26, 1999.

Outlines of topics to be discussed at the public hearing scheduled for December 14, 1999, at 10 a.m. must be received by Tuesday, November 23, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send submissions to CC:DOM:CORP:R (REG-105565-99), room 5226, Internal Revenue Service, POB 7604, Ben Franklin Station, Washington, DC 20044. Submissions may be hand delivered Monday through Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to CC:DOM:CORP:R (REG-105565-99), Courier's Desk, Internal Revenue Service, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC. Alternatively, taxpayers may submit comments electronically via the Internet by selecting the "Tax Regs" option on the IRS Home Page, or by submitting comments directly to the IRS site at http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/tax_regs/regslst.html. The public hearing is in the Auditorium, Internal Revenue

Building, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Concerning the proposed regulations, Rose M. Weber, (202) 622-3980; concerning submissions of comments, the hearing, and/or requests to be placed on the building access list to attend the hearing, Michael Slaughter, (202) 622-7180 (not toll-free numbers).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 148 of the Internal Revenue Code provides rules addressing the use of proceeds of tax-exempt State and local bonds to acquire higher-yielding investments. On May 9, 1997, final regulations (TD 8718) relating to the arbitrage restrictions and related rules under sections 103, 148, 149, and 150 were published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 25502). The final regulations (TD 8718) were amended on December 30, 1998 (63 FR 71748). This document proposes to modify § 1.148-5(e)(2) to provide a safe harbor for determining whether brokers' commissions and similar fees incurred in connection with the acquisition of guaranteed investment contracts or investments purchased for a yield restricted defeasance escrow are treated as qualified administrative costs.

Explanation of Provisions

Section 1.148-5(e)(2)(iii) and (iv) of the regulations provides rules for determining whether a broker's commission or similar fee is treated as a qualified administrative cost. Section 1.148-5(e)(2)(iii) provides that, for a guaranteed investment contract, a broker's commission or similar fee paid on behalf of either an issuer or the provider is treated as an administrative cost and, generally, is a qualified administrative cost to the extent that the present value of the commission, as of the date the contract is allocated to the issue, does not exceed the lesser of a reasonable amount or the present value of annual payments equal to .05 percent of the weighted average amount reasonably expected to be invested each year of the term of the contract. Present value is computed using the taxable discount rate used by the parties to compute the commission, or if not readily ascertainable, the yield to the issuer on the investment contract or other reasonable taxable discount rate.

Section 1.148-5(e)(2)(iv) provides that, for investments purchased for a yield restricted defeasance escrow, a fee paid to a bidding agent is a qualified administrative cost only if the fee is comparable to a fee that would be