

concentration of resources, decreased or unfair competition, conflicts of interests, or unsound banking practices" (12 U.S.C. 1843). Any request for a hearing on this question must be accompanied by a statement of the reasons a written presentation would not suffice in lieu of a hearing, identifying specifically any questions of fact that are in dispute, summarizing the evidence that would be presented at a hearing, and indicating how the party commenting would be aggrieved by approval of the proposal.

Unless otherwise noted, comments regarding the applications must be received at the Reserve Bank indicated or the offices of the Board of Governors not later than January 10, 1997.

A. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (Zane R. Kelley, Vice President) 104 Marietta Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30303:

1. *Compass Bancshares, Inc.*, Birmingham, Alabama; Compass Banks of Texas, Inc., Birmingham, Alabama; Compass Bancorporation of Texas, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware; to acquire Horizon Bancorp, Inc., Austin, Texas, and Horizon Bank & Trust, SSB, Austin, Texas, and thereby engage in operating a savings association, pursuant to § 225.25(b)(9) of the Board's Regulation Y. These activities will be conducted throughout the State of Texas.

Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, December 19, 1996.

Jennifer J. Johnson,

Deputy Secretary of the Board.

[FR Doc. 96-32742 Filed 12-24-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6210-01-F

[Docket No. R-0953]

Fair Credit Reporting

AGENCY: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (Board).

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Board solicits comment on issues to be addressed in a study concerning the public availability and use of social security numbers and other sensitive identifying information about consumers. The Board's study is required by the Economic Growth and Regulatory Paperwork Reduction Act of 1996.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before January 31, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments should refer to Docket No. R-0953, and may be mailed to William W. Wiles, Secretary, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 20th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20551. Comments also may be delivered to

Room B-2222 of the Eccles Building between 8:45 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. weekdays, or to the guard station in the Eccles Building courtyard on 20th Street, N.W. (between Constitution Avenue and C Street) at any time. Comments may be inspected in Room MP-500 of the Martin Building between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays, except as provided in 12 CFR 261.8 of the Board's rules regarding the availability of information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jane Jensen Gell or Sheila Goodman, Staff Attorneys, Division of Consumer and Community Affairs, at (202) 452-2412 or (202) 452-3667; for users of Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) only, please contact Dorothea Thompson at (202) 452-3544.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

On September 30, 1996, the President signed into law the Economic Growth and Paperwork Reduction Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009) (the 1996 Act). The 1996 Act amends several consumer credit laws, including the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) (15 U.S.C. 1681). An amendment to the FCRA directs the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (Board), in consultation with the Federal Trade Commission (the Commission) and the federal financial regulatory agencies, to conduct a study to determine the availability to the public of sensitive identifying information about consumers, the possibility that such information could be used for financial fraud, and the potential for fraud or risk of loss, if any, to insured depository institutions. By March 31, 1997, the Board must report the results of the study to the Congress, including any suggestions for legislative change. The Board solicits the comment of interested parties on these issues. The comments received will be used in the Board's study. Because of the short time frame the Congress gave the Board to study this matter, all comments must be received by January 31, 1997.

II. Availability of Sensitive Consumer Information

The Congress became concerned about the availability of sensitive identifying information about consumers after a widely-publicized incident in which a large database service offered personal information for sale—including individuals' social security numbers—from one of its electronic databases. After a few days, the service discontinued the practice of making social security numbers

available but continued to permit users to search for information by social security number. At about the same time, members of Congress learned of situations in which such identifying information was being used for financial fraud. In addition, testimony at a recent Federal Trade Commission hearing highlighted how easy it is to obtain identifying information about a consumer and to use that information to fraudulently receive credit in the consumer's name—without the knowledge of the consumer or the credit granting institution. This practice is often referred to as "identity theft." Armed with such information, criminals can request and receive credit or negotiate checks in the consumer's name, with devastating results for the consumer.

Sometimes identity theft begins with the use of publicly available information. A government employee who participated in the Commission hearings related such an incident. General information about this witness was listed in a publicly-available government directory. Using that information, an unknown individual was able to obtain a copy of the employee's college transcript, which showed his social security number. The individual was able subsequently to get a copy of the employee's birth certificate using the social security number. The thief then had all he needed to "assume" the employee's identity and use the information to commit fraud.

III. Request for Comment

In response to concerns about the availability of identifying information about consumers, and anecdotal evidence suggesting an increase in identity theft and financial fraud, the Congress has directed the Board to conduct a study regarding the availability to the public of sensitive information used to identify consumers. The Board is to determine whether there are organizations "engaged in the business of making sensitive consumer identification information, including social security numbers, mothers' maiden names, prior addresses and dates of birth, available to the general public." To help make this determination, the Board solicits comment on the following issues:

1. What is or should be considered sensitive consumer information for purposes of the study?

2. What information is currently used, or might be used in the future, to identify individuals, and what types of public or private organizations, repositories, or databases make such

information available to certain entities or to the general public?

3. How is the information obtained (for example, by phone, through the mail, or on the Internet), what costs are associated with obtaining the information, what are the specific uses for which the information is obtained, and does the furnisher place any restrictions on the distribution or use of this information on the purchaser? If so, how does the furnisher ensure that use of the data is limited to its intended purposes?

4. Is the compilation, sale, and use of sensitive identifying information about consumers subject to industry guidelines or regulations, and if not, what guidelines, regulatory or legal requirements might be appropriate?

If sensitive information about consumers is available, the Board must determine whether the availability of the information creates "undue potential for fraud and risk of loss to insured depository institutions." In order to make this assessment, the Board seeks comment on the following issues:

5. How is sensitive identifying information about consumers used for financial fraud (for example, to obtain a credit card in another person's name)?

6. What types of identifying information about consumers are most meaningful in granting and verifying credit, and how can consumers, financial institutions, and others control the fraudulent use of this information?

7. What magnitude of financial loss do institutions attribute to fraudulent use of consumer information?

Finally, if the Board determines that additional laws are needed to lessen the risks of fraud and loss to the banking system, the Board is directed to make legislative recommendations to the Congress. Accordingly, the Board is seeking comment on the following issues:

8. What, if any, legislative changes should be considered to help protect sensitive identifying information about consumers?

9. What, if any, legislative changes should be considered to limit the use of such information and reduce the risk of fraud or other loss to the banking system?

IV. Form of Comment Letters

Comment letters should refer to Docket No. R-0953, and, when possible, should use a standard courier typeface with a type size of 10 or 12 characters per inch. This will enable the Board to convert the text to machine-readable form through electronic scanning, and will facilitate automated retrieval of

comments for review. Also, if accompanied by an original document in paper form, comments may be submitted on 3½ inch or 5¼ inch computer diskettes in any IBM-compatible DOS-based format.

By order of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, December 17, 1996.
William W. Wiles,

Secretary of the Board.

[FR Doc. 96-32495 Filed 12-24-96; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Children and Families

Regional Offices; Statement of Organization, Functions, and Delegations of Authority

This notice amends Part K of the Statement of Organization, Functions, and Delegations of Authority of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) as follows: Chapter KD, The Regional Offices of the Administration for Children and Families (61 FR 50029), as last amended, September 24, 1996. This Notice reflects the organizational changes for Regions 4, 8 and 9 and the reorganizations for Region 3 and X.

I. Amend Notice 61 FR 50029, dated September 24, 1996, Roman numeral I, 13th line to read "amended, May 1, 1995."

II. Amend Chapter KD as follows:

a. KD.10 Organization. Delete in its entirety and replace with the following:
KD.10 Organization. Regions 4, 8 and 9 are organized as follows:

Office of the Regional Administrator (KD8A)

Office of the Regional Hub Director (KD4A and KD9A)

Office of Financial Operations (KD4B, KD8B and KD9B)

Office of Family Security (KD4C, KD8C and KD9C)

Office of Family Supportive Services (KD4D, KD8D and KD9D)

b. KD.20 Functions. Delete Paragraph A in its entirety and replace with the following:

KD.20 Functions (For Region 8). A. The Office of the Regional Administrator is headed by a Regional Administrator who reports to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. In addition, the Office of the Regional Administrator has a Deputy Regional Administrator who reports to the Regional Administrator. The Office

provides executive leadership and direction to state, county, city, territorial and tribal governments, as well as public and private local grantees to ensure effective and efficient program and financial management. It ensures that these entities conform to federal laws, regulations, policies and procedures governing the programs, and exercises all delegated authorities and responsibilities for oversight of the programs. The Office takes action to approve the state plans and submits recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families concerning state plan disapproval.

The Office contributes to the development of national policy based on regional perspectives on all ACF programs. It oversees ACF operations, the management of ACF regional staff; coordinates activities across regional programs; and assures that goals and objectives are met and departmental and agency initiatives are carried out. The Office alerts the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families to problems and issues that may have significant regional or national impact. It represents ACF at the regional level in executive communications within ACF, with the HHS Regional Director, other HHS operating division, other federal agencies, and public or private local organizations representing children and families.

Within the Office of the Regional Administrator, an Administrative staff assists the Regional Administrator and Deputy Regional Administrator in providing day-to-day support for regional administrative functions, including budget, internal systems, employees relations, and human resource development activities. The Staff develops and implements the regional planning process. It tracks, monitors and reports on regional progress in the attainment of ACF national goals and objectives. The Staff coordinates public awareness activities, information and education campaign in accordance with the ACF Office of Public Affairs and in conjunction with the HHS Regional Director. It assists the Regional Administrator in management of cross-cutting initiatives and activities among the regional components, and ensures effective and efficient management of internal automation processes.

c. After the end of KD2.20 Functions (60 FR 21211, 05/01/95), Paragraph D, and before KD5.10 Organization (60 FR 34284, 06/30/95), insert the following:

KD3.10 Organization. The Administration for Children and Families, Region 3, is organized as follows: Office of the Regional