

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-62577; IA-3058; File No. 4-606]

Study Regarding Obligations of Brokers, Dealers, and Investment Advisers

AGENCY: Securities and Exchange Commission.

ACTION: Request for comment.

SUMMARY: The Securities and Exchange Commission is requesting public comment for a study to evaluate: the effectiveness of existing legal or regulatory standards of care for brokers, dealers, investment advisers, and persons associated with them when providing personalized investment advice and recommendations about securities to retail investors; and whether there are gaps, shortcomings, or overlaps in legal or regulatory standards in the protection of retail customers relating to the standards of care for these intermediaries.

DATES: The Commission will accept comments regarding issues related to the study on or before August 30, 2010.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Electronic Comments:

- Use the Commission's Internet comment form (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/other.shtml>); or
- Send an e-mail to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number 4-606 on the subject line.

Paper Comments:

- Send paper comments in triplicate to Elizabeth M. Murphy, Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549-1090. All submissions should refer to File Number 4-606. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is

used. To help us process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's Internet Web site (<http://www.sec.gov>). Comments are also available for Web site viewing and printing in the Commission's Public Reference Room, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549, on official business days between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. All comments received will be posted without change; we do not edit personal identifying information from submissions. You should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Holly Hunter-Ceci, Division of Investment Management, at (202) 551-6825 or Emily Russell, Division of Trading and Markets, at (202) 551-5550, Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549-7010.

DISCUSSION:

On July 21, 2010, President Obama signed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010. Under section 913 of that Act, the Commission is required to conduct a study regarding the obligations of brokers, dealers, and investment advisers.

The study will evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal or regulatory standards of care for brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers for providing personalized investment advice and recommendations about securities to retail customers imposed by the Commission and a national securities association, and other Federal and State legal or regulatory standards. In addition, the study will evaluate whether there are legal or regulatory gaps, shortcomings, or overlaps in legal or regulatory standards in the protection of retail customers relating to the standards of care for

brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers for providing personalized investment advice about securities to retail customers that should be addressed by rule or statute.

For purposes of the study, the term “retail customer” means a natural person (or the legal representative of such natural person) who receives personalized investment advice about securities from a broker or dealer or investment adviser and uses such advice primarily for personal, family, or household purposes.

The Commission is required to submit a study report to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives no later than 6 months after enactment of the Dodd Frank Act. In order to prepare the study report, the Commission is required to seek and consider public input, comments, and data.

Accordingly, we request comment on the following:

(1) the effectiveness of existing legal or regulatory standards of care for brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers for providing personalized investment advice and recommendations about securities to retail customers imposed by the Commission and a national securities association, and other Federal and State legal or regulatory standards;

(2) whether there are legal or regulatory gaps, shortcomings, or overlaps in legal or regulatory standards in the protection of retail customers relating to the standards of care for brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers for providing personalized investment advice about securities to retail customers that should be addressed by rule or statute;

(3) whether retail customers understand that there are different standards of care applicable to brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers in the provision of personalized investment advice about securities to retail customers;

(4) whether the existence of different standards of care applicable to brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers is a source of confusion for retail customers regarding the quality of personalized investment advice that retail customers receive;

(5) the regulatory, examination, and enforcement resources devoted to, and activities of, the Commission, the States, and a national securities association to enforce the standards of care for brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers when providing personalized investment advice and recommendations about securities to retail customers, including—

(A) the effectiveness of the examinations of brokers, dealers, and investment advisers in determining compliance with regulations;

(B) the frequency of the examinations; and

(C) the length of time of the examinations;

(6) the substantive differences in the regulation of brokers, dealers, and investment advisers, when providing personalized investment advice and recommendations about securities to retail customers;

(7) the specific instances related to the provision of personalized investment advice about securities in which—

(A) the regulation and oversight of investment advisers provide greater protection to retail customers than the regulation and oversight of brokers and dealers; and

(B) the regulation and oversight of brokers and dealers provide greater protection to retail customers than the regulation and oversight of investment advisers;

(8) the existing legal or regulatory standards of State securities regulators and other regulators intended to protect retail customers;

(9) the potential impact on retail customers, including the potential impact on access of retail customers to the range of products and services offered by brokers and dealers, of imposing upon brokers, dealers, and persons associated with brokers or dealers—

(A) the standard of care applied under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 for providing personalized investment advice about securities to retail customers of investment advisers, as interpreted by the Commission and the courts; and

(B) other requirements of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940;

(10) the potential impact of eliminating the broker and dealer exclusion from the definition of “investment adviser” under section 202(a)(11)(C) of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, in terms of—

(A) the impact and potential benefits and harm to retail customers that could result from such a change, including any potential impact on access to personalized investment advice and recommendations about securities to retail customers or the availability of such advice and recommendations;

(B) the number of additional entities and individuals that would be required to register under, or become subject to, the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, and the

additional requirements to which brokers, dealers, and persons associated with brokers and dealers would become subject, including—

(i) any potential additional associated person licensing, registration, and examination requirements; and

(ii) the additional costs, if any, to the additional entities and individuals; and

(C) the impact on Commission and State resources to—

(i) conduct examinations of registered investment advisers and the representatives of registered investment advisers, including the impact on the examination cycle; and

(ii) enforce the standard of care and other applicable requirements imposed under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940;

(11) the varying level of services provided by brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers to retail customers and the varying scope and terms of retail customer relationships of brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers with such retail customers;

(12) the potential impact upon retail customers that could result from potential changes in the regulatory requirements or legal standards of care affecting brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers relating to their obligations to retail customers regarding the provision of investment advice, including any potential impact on—

(A) protection from fraud;

(B) access to personalized investment advice, and recommendations about securities to retail customers; or

(C) the availability of such advice and recommendations;

(13) the potential additional costs and expenses to—

(A) retail customers regarding, and the potential impact on the profitability of, their investment decisions; and

(B) brokers, dealers, and investment advisers resulting from potential changes in the regulatory requirements or legal standards affecting brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers relating to their obligations, including duty of care, to retail customers; and

(14) any other considerations commenters would like to comment on to assist the Commission in determining whether to conduct a rulemaking, following the study, to address the legal or regulatory standards of care for brokers, dealers, investment advisers, persons associated with brokers or dealers, and persons associated with investment advisers for providing personalized investment advice and recommendations about securities to retail customers.

By the Commission.

Elizabeth M. Murphy
Secretary

Dated: July 27, 2010