The Huntington National Bank

Legal Department Huntington Center 41 South High Street Columbus, Ohio 43287



November 27, 2007

Via Electronic Delivery

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Comptroller of the Currency
Office of the Comptroller of the Currency
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Jennifer J. Johnson
Secretary, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System 20th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20551
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Attention: OCC: Docket ID OCC-2007-0015

Federal Reserve: Docket No. OP-1294

Re: Notice of Proposed Guidance on Garnishment of Exempt Federal Benefit Funds

72 Fed. Reg. 55273 (September 28, 2007)

Dear Mr. Dugan and Ms. Johnson:

This letter is submitted on behalf of The Huntington National Bank ("Huntington") in response to the above-referenced Notice of Proposed Guidance published jointly by the Office of

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¹ Huntington is a subsidiary of Huntington Bancshares Incorporated, which is a \$55 billion regional bank holding company headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. Along with its affiliated companies, Huntington has more than 141 years of serving the financial needs of its customers, and provides innovative retail and commercial financial products and services through over 600 regional banking offices in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Huntington, along with its affiliated companies, also offers retail and commercial financial services online at www.huntington.com; through its technologically advanced, 24-hour telephone bank; and through its network of over 1,400 ATMs. Selected financial service activities are also conducted in other states including: Dealer Sales offices in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee; Private Financial and Capital Markets Group offices in Florida; and Mortgage Banking offices in Maryland and New Jersey. Huntington's affiliate, Sky Insurance, offers retail and commercial insurance agency services, through offices in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana, and West Virginia. International

the Comptroller of the Currency, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and other federal banking agencies (collectively, the "Agencies"). We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Notice.

We understand the Agencies' concern to ensure that bank customers are better able to claim their exemptions in connection with garnishments of federal benefit funds. However, deputizing banks to raise exemptions on behalf of their customers when a customer's account is garnished or subject to some other form of legal process is much more complex than might first appear, and adds significant cost and expense to a process that is already very costly for the bank, and all where the bank is not even a party to the dispute at issue. For example:

- There are multiple types of exempt benefits under the laws of the several states in addition to federal law.
- States have varying garnishment and other legal process procedures from one state to the next, including some states with one-time garnishment and other states with continuing garnishment, different notice requirements, and different periods of time within which to respond to the garnishment.
- There does not appear to be mandated standardized coding that the bank can necessarily rely on in information supplied to the bank with electronic direct deposits of funds representing benefit payments.
- There are no clear rules in most states or at the federal level resolving how far back in time the bank must conduct account research to determine exemptions or about how to determine exemptions when benefit funds are commingled with other funds, which they are the majority of the time.
- Some forms of garnishment or attachment may override exemptions, such as orders for child support or alimony.
- Garnishments are not the only form of legal process banks receive. For example, in addition to alimony and child support orders mentioned above, banks also receive state and federal tax levies, writs of execution, and unemployment levies for overpayments of state unemployment benefits.

Unfortunately, banks receive thousands of garnishments and other forms of legal process each month and have to act quickly and be very efficient with limited staffing resources in responding in order to avoid becoming liable to the issuing creditor for failing to hold or turn

over funds. It is often difficult or impossible to determine with certainty whether or not an account receives potentially exempt benefits, and even when that can be determined, the funds are usually commingled with funds from other sources or joint accountholders and very few states have any rules about how to apply exemptions in such cases. Most of the time, all the bank can do is wait the maximum time in turning over funds in response to the garnishment or other legal process to allow the consumer time to assert to the court any exemption or other claims the consumer may have. Banks are caught in the middle of these disputes between their customers and the creditors of their customers, and are not able to provide legal advice to their customers about exemptions nor are they in a very good position to evaluate their customers' claims of exemption in the face of clear liability of the bank to the creditor for not promptly turning funds over in response to the garnishment or other legal process.

With respect to the Agencies list of "best practices", we have the following comments:

- We believe that notification of customers when funds are held or removed from an account pursuant to a garnishment or other legal process (unless state law already provides that the creditor is required to provide notice to the customer) and restoration of funds or removal of holds when the account is no longer subject to garnishment or other legal process are standard practices. However, providing information to the customer about what types of benefits are exempt potentially involves the bank in providing legal advice which it is not able to do, except where the bank simply forwards to the customer a notice or form required by state law.
- With respect to "minimizing" the cost to the customer, we believe this is a customer service issue best addressed by each bank individually with its customers rather than the Agencies recommending or specifying bank practices with respect to pricing. When customers incur overdraft fees because they are not yet aware that funds have been held or removed pursuant to a garnishment or other legal process, we normally consider refund requests or even automatically reverse such charges. Once the customer is aware of the garnishment or other legal process, however, there is less reason to waive or reverse overdraft fees, again depending on the customer's specific circumstances as determined by the bank. Fees charged by the bank for processing the garnishment itself in our experience do not cover even a majority of the overall costs of processing garnishments and other forms of legal process, due in part to the large number of such garnishments or other legal process received where the bank either has no account or the account has no funds.
- With respect to the suggestion to offer segregated accounts, it is generally not feasible or possible to prohibit non-benefit deposits with respect to segregated accounts, and it is our expectation that very few (if any) customers would even want a segregated account that was restricted in this manner.

• The remaining "best practices" (with respect to determining what accounts contain exempt funds and what funds in such accounts may be exempt) do not appear to account for the complexities listed above that make it difficult or impossible to identify with certainty accounts with benefit funds or to identify what portion of an account balance constitutes exempt funds when benefit deposits are commingled with other funds. We believe that the only feasible practice here under most current circumstances is to delay turning over funds until the end of the required period under state law so as to give the customer more time to raise exemptions or other issues with the court.

One possible way in which the Agencies could be helpful with respect to the difficulties with identifying accounts that receive benefit funds would be to encourage the U.S. Treasury to require the government agencies sending funds to standardize the codes used in the "entry description" field in the batch header accompanying the individual detail records in ACH transmissions so that the receiving bank could reliably and with certainty identify and map such codes to one or more flags in the bank's deposit or customer records that would show that the account receives benefit funds, and even perhaps what type of benefit funds are being received. However, knowing that an account receives benefit funds still does not resolve the issues of how far back in time the bank must research the account or what to do if benefit funds are commingled with other funds.

Enclosed with this letter is a sample Huntington received on a recent day of "batch header codes" containin a "2" in the Originator Status Code denoting a government originator. These batch header codes were used by the originator to describe individual payments accompanying each batch header transmitted to Huntington by ACH that day. As is evidenced by the information in the "Description" column (which represents the "entry description" field in the batch header), there is an initial issue simply in determining which federal payments are exempt. For instance, there are three batch headers on the attached report that are from the Veterans Administration,³ and while only one of them appears to be protected from garnishment, it is impossible to be certain based on the information provided by the batch header codes. Similarly, there are three batch headers that appear to be for Social Security payments⁴ and one additional batch header that appears to be for Social Security supplemental income.⁵ While banks learn from experience that some of these codes are in fact for particular types of federal benefit payments, reliance on that type of experience will not pick up everything and will not eliminate the guesswork that must underlie any programming that relies on such codes as presently provided. Furthermore, it is our understanding that the content of the "entry description" field is whatever the sender puts there, and if changes are made to such codes, any previous programming by the receiving bank to pick up those codes would no longer do so. In

² This would not help with identifying benefit deposits in the form of paper checks.

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³ The three batch headers show "VA ED CH30," "VA MGIBSR," and "VA BENEFIT," appearing on lines 78-80, respectively, on the attached report.

⁴ See lines 75-77 on the attached.

⁵ See line 82.

order for codes to be part of the solution, all senders of exempt payments must adopt and use consistently a standardized batch header code that clearly identifies a payment as exempt and inform all depository institutions which codes apply to which exempt funds.

With respect to notifying customers of their potential exemptions, while banks are not able to provide legal advice to their customers, banks would be able to send to their customers a form of notice developed by the Agencies. Thus if the Agencies want to consider a best practice with respect to notice, we encourage the Agencies to develop such a standard notice or make information about exemptions available on Agency websites. However, even if banks send a standard notice provided by the Agencies, customers receiving the notice who have questions will most likely call the bank and ask questions about their exemptions which the bank is likely not to be able to answer, and such notices are likely to raise customer expectations that the bank is not able to satisfy.

It is not clear that there is anything the Agencies can do about the lack of national uniform rules (or even any rules in most states) to resolve the issues of how far back to research the account or what to do in the case of commingled funds. We understand that California and Connecticut have statutes that are helpful with respect to these issues, but it is our understanding that most states do not. If there were to be any federal statute modeled after the California or Connecticut or similar statute, it would have to clearly preempt state laws that would otherwise hold the bank liable for failing to turn over funds in compliance with any such federal statute.

Thank you for consideration of these comments. If you have any questions concerning these comments, or if I may otherwise be of assistance in connection with this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 614-480-5760.

Sincerely,

Daniel W. Morton

Senior Vice President & Senior Counsel

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* C	OMPANY NAME		COMPANY #		DESCRIPTION				STA	T CODE	* signifies the type of items in batch
5 200 DE	EPT OF EDUCATIO	DOED STUDENT LOAN	9102000601	PPD	STDNTLOAN		071120	324	2	101036990000001	
5 200 DI	LSP	MBS BATCH	1220040806	PPD	MBS.DRAFT	112007	071120	324	2	101036880000011	= items in these batches could be
5 200 FA	AA TREAS 220	003050	111036183	CCD	EDI MISC		071120	324	2	111036180058260	debits or credits
5 200 FH	HWA TREAS 220	003050	111036183	CCD	EDI MISC		071120	324	2	111036180058264	some are definitely benefit payments;
5 200 G	AO TREAS 220	003050	111036183	CCD	EDI MISC		071120	324	2	111036180058257	other may qualify as benefit payments
5 200 IR	RS		3387702000	CCD	USATAXPYMT	112007	071120	324	2	061036010000001	(student loan proceeds??)
5 200 SA	AF/FMBMB		0000000001	PPD	E111907		071119	324	2	051036760000001	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	AL DHAFRA AFB	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071119	071120	324	2	011736110000170	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	AL UDEID AFB	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000128	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	ANACONDA	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000033	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	ARIFJAN	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000021	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	BUCA	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000061	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	FALCON	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000113	
		KNB	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000060	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	SLAYER	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071119	071120	324	2	011736110000079	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	STRIKER	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071119	071120	324	2	011736110000070	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	TAJI	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000094	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	TALIL	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071119	071120	324	2	011736110000136	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	VIRGINIA	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000027	
5 200 US	S TREAS - EAGLE	WARRIOR	3011736114	PPD	CASH KIOSK	071118	071120	324	2	011736110000079	
5 200 US	S TREASURY	CA\$HLINK II	1530133403	CCD	FUNDS CONC		071120	324	2	051036510000001	
5 200 US	S TREASURY 220	003050	20710001	CTX	EDI MISC		071120		2	111036180058299	
5 200 US	S TREASURY 310	003050	70060000	CTX	EDI MISC		071120	324	2	101036150000078	
5 200 US	S TREASURY0303		3031036030	PPD	SOC SEC		070503	324	2	031036030000012	
5 200 VA	AFA TREAS 220	003050	111036183		EDI MISC		071120	324	2	111036180058291	
5 220 A	GRI TREAS 310		3101036009	PPD	FED SALARY	112007	071120	324	2	101036000000001	
		720564834			MISC PAY	112007				101036150000047	= items in these batches are credits
	RC TREAS 312		3121036500		MISC PAY	112007				121036500000033	some are definitely benefit payments;
	RCF TREAS 303		3031036218		MISC PAY	112007				031036210000070	others are payroll and reimbursements;
	PD1 TREAS 303		3031036218		MISC PAY	112007				031036210000032	others are not distinguishable from
	BP TREAS 303		3031036218		MISC PAY	112007				031036210000102	Company Name, Description provided
	DC1 TREAS 310		3101036009		FED TRAVEL	112007				101036000000196	,
		1586051157		CCD	MISC PAY	112007				101036150000093	
	MWC TREAS 303		3031036218		MISC PAY	112107				031036210000000	
	OC1 TREAS 303				FED TRAVEL	112007				031036000000155	
	OM4 TREAS 303		3031036218		MISC PAY	112007				031036210000107	
	EA TREAS 303		3031036218		MISC PAY	112007				031036210000098	
		DO SYMBOL 8522		PPD	IATS PAY	111907				041036000000002	
5 220 DF			9044036412				071119			044036410000001	
	J02 TREAS 310									101036000000068	
	J02 TREAS 310		3101036151							101036150000071	
	OJ TREAS 220		3111036015		FED TRAVEL					111036010000006	
	OJ TREAS 220		3111036183					_		111036180000007	
	OLQ TREAS 303		3031036218							031036210000124	
5 220 D0 5 220 D0 5 220 E0 5 220 EF	OJ TREAS 220		3111036183	CCD CCD CCD	MISC PAY MISC PAY GAPS MISC PAY	112007 112007 071119 112007	071120 071120 071120 071120	324 324 324 324	2 2 2 2	111036180000007	

5 220 FEMA TREAS 220	3111036183	PPD	MISC PAY	112007 071120 324	2	111036180000000	
5 220 GSA TREAS 220	3111036183			112007 071120 324		111036180000022	
5 220 GSA TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000181	
5 220 GSA TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324		101036150000052	
5 220 HRSA TREAS 303	3031036218			112007 071120 324		031036210000117	
5 220 HUD TREAS 303	3031036218			112007 071120 324		031036210000151	
5 220 ID TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000080	
5 220 ID TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324		101036150000053	
5 220 ID TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324		101036150000064	
5 220 IMMS TREAS 303	3031036218			112007 071120 324		031036210000010	
5 220 IRS TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000024	
5 220 IRS TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324		101036150000022	
5 220 Just TREAS 303			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		031036000000136	
5 220 NIH. TREAS 303	3031036218			112007 071120 324		031036210000127	<u> </u>
5 220 NPS TREAS 303			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		031036210000127	
5 220 NRC TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324		101036150000004	
5 220 PAY MGT SYSTEM				111907 071120 324		051036440000003	
5 220 POD TREAS 312	3121036500			112007 071120 324		121036500000017	+
5 220 RD TREAS 312	3101036151			112007 071120 324		101036150000000	
5 220 RD TREAS 310 5 220 Stat TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324		1010361500000051	+
5 220 Stat TREAS 310 5 220 SBAD TREAS 312	3121036500			112007 071120 324		121036500000076	+
5 220 SSA TREAS 303	3031036218			112007 071120 324		031036210000100	-
5 220 TSA2 TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000000	+
5 220 TSP TREAS 310	3101036009			112007 071120 324		101036000000000	-
5 220 US T TREAS 310	3031036218			112007 071120 324		031036210000120	-
5 220 US TREAS 303 5 220 US TREAS 303	3031036216			071119 324		031036210000120	
5 220 US TREAS 303 5 220 US TREAS 310	3101036216			071119 324		101036210000002	-
	3121036241			071119 324		121036240000002	
5 220 US TREAS 312			VA ED CH30	112107 071121 325		11173687000000	
5 220 US TREASURY 220	3111036002					111736880000000	
5 220 US TREASURY 220	3111036002			112107 071121 325		111036190000000	
5 220 US TREASURY 220	3031736068			112107 071121 325			
5 220 US TREASURY 303	3101736134			112007 071120 324 112007 071120 324		031736060000000	
5 220 US TREASURY 310						101736130000000	
5 220 US TREASURY 312	3121736143			112007 071120 324		121736140000000	
5 220 USCG TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000085	
5 220 USDA-FSAKCMOCDSP	3101036106			071119 071120 324		101036100000001	
5 220 USGS TREAS 303	3031036218			112007 071120 324		031036210000096	<u> </u>
5 220 VAIN TREAS 220				112007 071120 324		111736910000000	
5 220 02 TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000044	<u> </u>
5 220 07 TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000030	<u> </u>
5 220 11 TREAS 310			FED TRAVEL	112007 071120 324		101036000000046	
5 220 11 TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324			<u> </u>
5 220 16 TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324			
5 220 18 TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324			<u> </u>
5 220 20 TREAS 303	3031036218			112007 071120 324			
5 220 34 TREAS 310	3101036151			112007 071120 324			
5 220 36 TREAS 220	3111036183			112007 071120 324			
5 220 380100000000000				071119 071120 324			
5 220 90 TREAS 310	3101036151	CCD	IVIISC PAY	112007 071120 324	2	101036150000033	

5	225	AAFES FUNDS CONT	CHECK ORIGINATION	3333333304	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041736120073234		
5	225	CMS MEDICARE	ACH TRANSACTION	7505008003	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057023	=	items in these batches are debits,
5	225	DEPTOFJUSTICE	ACH TRANSACTION	1503000102	WEB	DEBT PYMT	071119	071120	324	2	042736144728544		so presumably we do not need to
5	225	HCTC	ACH TRANSACTION	2009000401	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057056		consider these.
5	225	HUD SF UFMIP	ACH TRANSACTION	8609030004	CCD	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	042736144723697		
5	225	IRS FORM 8554	ACH TRANSACTION	2009000303	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057030		
5	225	LOC/COP/DRPU	CHECK ORIGINATION	0000798503	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041736120073234		
5	225	NPDB QUERY	ACH TRANSACTION	7503003001	CCD	FEE	071117	071120	324	2	042736144714431		
5	225	RRB-MEDICARE	ACH TRANSACTION	7505008001	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057020		
5	225	SBP-RSFPP REMITT	ACH TRANSACTION	0000852201	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057055		
5	225	TREASURY DIRECT	DBT NEW TD PURCHASE	9051736158	PPD	TREAS DRCT	071120	071120	324	2	051736150000001		
5	225	U.S.MINT	ACH TRANSACTION	2016140101	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670056990		
5	225	US CBP	ACH TRANSACTION	7005009701	CCD	PAYMENT	071118	071120	324	2	042736144717428		
5	225	US DEPT OF ED	ACH TRANSACTION	9102000101	CCD	EREFUNDS	071119	071120	324	2	042736144728544		
5	225	USCIS I-90 FEES	ACH TRANSACTION	7001010301	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057098		
5	225	USDA APHIS VS	ACH TRANSACTION	1240340001	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057066		
5	225	USDA CCC257	ACH TRANSACTION	0000499201	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057054		
5	225	USDA NFC DPRS	ACH TRANSACTION	1240000101	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057061		
5	225	USDA RD CSC	ACH TRANSACTION	1220040801	PPD	PAYMENT	071119			2	042736144733790		
5	225	VETERANS AFFAIRS	ACH TRANSACTION	3600120001	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057032		
5	225	VETERANS AFFAIRS	ACH TRANSACTION	3600120001	ARC	PAYMENT	071119	071120	324	2	041015670057035		
5	225	1201 LOAN PAYMT	ACH TRANSACTION	7300000104	WEB	PAYMENT	071117	071120	324	2	042736144714645		