

rule was that shareholders might be unable to distinguish between frequent distributions of capital gains and dividends from net investment income. Applicants state that, in accordance with rule 19a-1 under the Act, a statement showing the source or sources of the distribution will accompany each distribution (or the confirmation of the reinvestment thereof under a Fund's common stock distribution reinvestment plan). Applicants state that, for both the common stock and the preferred stock, the amount and sources of distributions received during the year has been or will be included on each Fund's IRS Form 1099-DIV reports of distributions during the year, which will be sent to each shareholder who received distributions (including shareholders who have sold shares during the year). Applicants state that this information, on an aggregate basis, also has been, or will be, included in each Fund's annual report to shareholders.

4. Another concern underlying section 19(b) and rule 19b-1 is that frequent capital gains distributions could facilitate improper distribution practices, including, in particular, the practice of urging an investor to purchase fund shares on the basis of an upcoming distribution ("selling the dividend"), where the dividend results in an immediate corresponding reduction in net asset value and would be, in effect, a return of the investor's capital. Applicants submit that this concern does not apply to closed-end investment companies, such as the Funds, which do not continuously distribute their shares. Applicants also assert that by paying out periodically any capital gains that have occurred, at least up to the fixed periodic payout amount, the Funds' Distribution Policies help avoid the buildup of end-of-the-year distributions and accordingly actually help avoid the scenario in which an investor acquires shares in the open market that are subject to a large upcoming capital gains dividend. Applicants also state that the "selling the dividend" concern is not applicable to preferred stock, which entitles a holder to a specific periodic dividend and, like a debt security, is initially sold at a price based on its liquidation preference, credit quality, dividend rate and frequency of payment. In addition, applicants state that any rights offering will be timed so that shares issuable upon exercise of the rights will be issued only in the 15-day period immediately following the record date for the declaration of a monthly dividend, or in the six-week period immediately following the record date

of a quarterly dividend. Thus, applicants state that, in a rights offering, the abuse of selling the dividend could not occur as a matter of timing. Any rights offering also will comply with all relevant Commission and staff guidelines. In determining compliance with these guidelines, a Fund's Board will consider, among other things, the brokerage commissions that would be paid in connection with the offering. Any offering by a Fund of transferable rights will comply with any applicable rules of the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. regarding the fairness of compensation.

5. Section 6(c) of the Act provides that the Commission may exempt any person, security or transaction or class or classes of any persons, securities, or transactions from any provision of the Act, or from any rule thereunder, if such exemption is necessary or appropriate in the public interest and consistent with the protection of investors and the purposes fairly intended by the policy and provisions of the Act. For the reasons stated above, applicants believe that the requested relief satisfies this standard.

Applicants' Condition

Applicants agree that any order granting the requested relief with respect to a Fund's common stock shall terminate with respect to the Fund upon the effective date of a registration statement under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, for any future public offering of common stock of the Fund after the date of the requested order and after the Fund's initial public offering other than:

(i) A rights offering to shareholders of such Fund, provided that (a) shares are issued only within a 15-day period immediately following the record date of a monthly dividend, or within the six-week period immediately following the record date of a quarterly dividend; (b) the prospectus for such rights offering makes it clear that common shareholders exercising rights will not be entitled to receive such dividend with respect to shares issued pursuant to such rights offering; and (c) such Fund has not engaged in more than one rights offering during any given calendar year; or

(ii) an offering in connection with a merger, consolidation, acquisition, spin-off or reorganization, unless such Fund has received from the staff of the Commission written assurance that the order will remain in effect.

For the Commission, by the Division of Investment Management, pursuant to delegated authority.

Margaret H. McFarland,

Deputy Secretary.

[FR Doc. 04-4569 Filed 3-1-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8010-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-49315; File No. SR-Amex-2004-08]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Notice of Filing and Order Granting Accelerated Approval of a Proposed Rule Change by the American Stock Exchange LLC Relating to Trust Certificates Linked to a Basket of Investment Grade Fixed Income Securities

February 24, 2004.

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act"),¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² notice is hereby given that on January 26, 2004, the American Stock Exchange LLC ("Amex" or "Exchange") filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC" or "Commission") the proposed rule change as described in Items I and II below, which Items have been prepared by the Exchange. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change from interested persons and is approving the proposal on an accelerated basis.

I. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Terms of Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

The Exchange proposes to approve for listing and trading under Section 107A of the Amex Company Guide ("Company Guide"), trust certificates linked to a basket of investment grade fixed income debt instruments.

II. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, the Amex included statements concerning the purpose of, and basis for, the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it received on the proposed rule change. The text of these statements may be examined at the places specified in Item III below. The Amex has prepared summaries, set forth in Sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant aspects of such statements.

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

A. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and the Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

Under Section 107A of the Company Guide, the Exchange may approve for listing and trading securities which cannot be readily categorized under the listing criteria for common and preferred stocks, bonds, debentures, or warrants.³ The Amex proposes to list for trading under Section 107A of the Company Guide, the asset-backed securities (the "ABS Securities") representing ownership interests in the Select Notes Trust 2004-02 ("Trust"), a special purpose trust to be formed by Structured Obligations Corporation ("SOC"),⁴ and the trustee of the Trust pursuant to a trust agreement, which will be entered into on the date that the ABS Securities are issued. The assets of the Trust will consist primarily of a basket or portfolio of up to approximately twenty-five (25) investment-grade fixed-income securities ("Underlying Corporate Bonds") and United States Department of Treasury STRIPS or securities issued by the United States Department of the Treasury ("Treasury Securities") or government sponsored entity securities ("GSE securities"). In the aggregate, the component securities of the basket or portfolio will be referred to as the "Underlying Securities."

The ABS Securities will conform to the initial listing guidelines under Section 107A⁵ and continued listing guidelines under Sections 1001-1003⁶

of the Company Guide. At the time of issuance, the ABS Securities will receive an investment grade rating from a nationally recognized securities rating organization ("NRSRO"). The issuance of the ABS Securities will be a repackaging of the Underlying Corporate Bonds together with the addition of either Treasury Securities or GSE Securities,⁷ with the obligation of the Trust to make distributions to holders of the ABS Securities depending on the amount of distributions received by the Trust on the Underlying Securities.

However, due to the pass-through and passive nature of the ABS Securities, the Exchange intends to rely on the assets and stockholder equity of the issuers of the Underlying Corporate Bonds as well as GSE Securities, rather than the Trust to meet the requirement in Section 107A of the Company Guide. The corporate issuers of the Underlying Corporate Bonds and GSE Securities will meet or exceed the requirements of Section 107A of the Company Guide. The distribution and principal amount/aggregate market value requirements found in Section 107A(b) and (c), respectively, will otherwise be met by the Trust as issuer of the ABS Securities. In addition, the Exchange for purposes of including Treasury Securities will rely on the fact that the issuer is the U.S. Government rather than the asset and stockholder tests found in Section 107A.

The basket of Underlying Securities will not be managed and will generally remain static over the term of the ABS Securities. Each of the Underlying Securities provide for the payment of interest on a semi-annual basis, but the ABS Securities will provide for monthly or quarterly distributions of interest. Neither the Treasury Securities or GSE Securities will make periodic payments

of interest.⁸ The Exchange represents that, to alleviate this cash flow timing issue, the Trust will enter into an interest distribution agreement ("Interest Distribution Agreement") as described in the prospectus supplement related to the ABS Securities ("Prospectus Supplement").⁹ Principal distributions on the ABS Securities are expected to be made on dates that correspond to the maturity dates of the Underlying Securities (*i.e.*, the Underlying Corporate Bonds and Treasury Securities or GSE Securities). However, some of the Underlying Securities may have redemption provisions and in the event of an early redemption or other liquidation (*e.g.*, upon an event of default) of the Underlying Securities, the proceeds from such redemption (including any make-whole premium associated with such redemption) or liquidation will be distributed pro rata to the holders of the ABS Securities. Each Underlying Corporate Bond will be issued by a corporate issuer and purchased in the secondary market.

In the case of Treasury Securities, the Trust will either purchase the securities directly from primary dealers or in the secondary market that consists of primary dealers, non-primary dealers, customers, financial institutions, non-financial institutions and individuals. Similarly, in the case of GSE Securities, the Trust will either purchase the securities directly from the issuer or in the secondary market.

Holders of the ABS Securities generally will receive interest on the face value in an amount to be determined at the time of issuance of the ABS Securities and disclosed to investors. The rate of interest payments will be based upon prevailing interest rates at the time of issuance and made to the extent that coupon payments are received from the Underlying Securities. Distributions of interest will be made monthly or quarterly. Investors will also be entitled to be repaid the principal of their ABS Securities from the proceeds of the principal payments on the

³ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 27753 (March 1, 1990), 55 FR 8626 (March 8, 1990) (order approving File No. SR-Amex-89-29).

⁴ SOC is a wholly-owned special purpose entity of J.P. Morgan Securities Holdings Inc. and the registrant under the Form S-3 Registration Statement (No. 333-67188) under which the securities will be issued.

⁵ The initial listing standards for the ABS Securities require: (1) A minimum public distribution of one million units; (2) a minimum of 400 shareholders; (3) a market value of at least \$4 million; and (4) a term of at least one year. However, if traded in thousand dollar denominations, then there is no minimum holder requirement. In addition, the listing guidelines provide that the issuer have assets in excess of \$100 million, stockholder's equity of at least \$10 million, and pre-tax income of at least \$750,000 in the last fiscal year or in two of the three prior fiscal years. In the case of an issuer which is unable to satisfy the earning criteria stated in Section 101 of the Company Guide, the Exchange pursuant to Section 107A of the Company Guide will require the issuer to have the following: (1) Assets in excess of \$200 million and stockholders' equity of at least \$10 million; or (2) assets in excess of \$100 million and stockholders' equity of at least \$20 million.

⁶ The Exchange's continued listing guidelines are set forth in Sections 1001 through 1003 of Part 10 to the Exchange's Company Guide. Section 1002(b) of the Company Guide states that the Exchange will

consider removing from listing any security where, in the opinion of the Exchange, it appears that the extent of public distribution or aggregate market value has become so reduced to make further dealings on the Exchange inadvisable. With respect to continued listing guidelines for distribution of the ABS Securities, the Exchange will rely on the guidelines for bonds in Section 1003(b)(iv). Section 1003(b)(iv)(A) provides that the Exchange will normally consider suspending dealings in, or removing from the list, a security if the aggregate market value or the principal amount of bonds publicly held is less than \$400,000.

⁷ A GSE Security is a security that is issued by a government-sponsored entity such as Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie Mae"), Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation ("Freddie Mac"), Student Loan Marketing Association ("Sallie Mae"), the Federal Home Loan Banks and the Federal Farm Credit Banks. All GSE debt is sponsored but not guaranteed by the federal government, whereas government agencies such as Government National Mortgage Association ("Ginnie Mae") are divisions of the United States government whose securities are backed by the full faith and credit of the United States.

⁸ A stripped fixed income security, such as a Treasury Security or GSE Security, is a security that is separated into its periodic interest payments and principal repayment. The separate strips are then sold individually as zero coupon securities providing investors with a wide choice of alternative maturities.

⁹ Pursuant to the Interest Distribution Agreement, shortfalls in the amounts available to pay monthly or quarterly interest to holders of the ABS Securities due to the Underlying Securities paying interest semi-annually will be made to the Trust by JP Morgan Chase Bank or one of its affiliates and will be repaid out of future cash flow received by the Trust from the Underlying Securities.

Underlying Securities.¹⁰ The payout or return to investors on the ABS Securities will not be leveraged.

The ABS Securities will mature on the latest maturity date of the Underlying Securities. Holders of the ABS Securities will have no direct ability to exercise any of the rights of a holder of an Underlying Corporate Bond; however, holders of the ABS Securities as a group will have the right to direct the Trust in its exercise of its rights as holder of the Underlying Securities.

The proposed ABS Securities are virtually identical to a product currently listed and traded on the Exchange.¹¹ The only difference being the actual Underlying Securities in the basket of investment grade fixed-income securities. Accordingly, the Exchange also proposes to provide for the listing and trading of the ABS Securities where the Underlying Securities meet the Exchange's Bond and Debenture Listing Standards set forth in Section 104 of the Company Guide. The Exchange represents that all of the Underlying Securities in the proposed basket will meet or exceed these listing standards.

The Exchange's Bond and Debenture Listing Standards in Section 104 of the Company Guide provide for the listing of individual bond or debenture issuances provided the issue has an aggregate market value or principal amount of at least \$5 million and any of: (1) The issuer of the debt security has equity securities listed on the Exchange (or on the New York Stock Exchange ("NYSE") or on the Nasdaq National Market ("Nasdaq")); (2) an issuer of equity securities listed on the Exchange (NYSE or on the Nasdaq) directly or indirectly owns a majority interest in, or is under common control with, the issuer of the debt security; (3) an issuer of equity securities listed on the Exchange (or on the NYSE or on the Nasdaq) has guaranteed the debt security; (4) an NRSRO has assigned a

current rating to the debt security that is no lower than an S&P Corporation ("S&P") "B" rating or equivalent rating by another NRSRO; or (5) or if no NRSRO has assigned a rating to the issue, an NRSRO has currently assigned (i) an investment grade rating to an immediately senior issue or (ii) a rating that is no lower than a S&P "B" rating or an equivalent rating by another NRSRO to a pari passu or junior issue.

In addition to the Exchange's Bond and Debenture Listing Standards, an Underlying Security must also be of investment grade quality as rated by an NRSRO and at least 75% of the underlying basket is required to contain Underlying Securities from issuances of \$100 million or more. The maturity of each Underlying Security is expected to match the payment of principal of the ABS Securities with the maturity date of the ABS Securities being the latest maturity date of the Underlying Securities. Amortization of the ABS Securities will be based on (1) the respective maturities of the Underlying Securities, including Treasury Securities or GSE Securities, (2) principal payout amounts reflecting the pro-rata principal amount of maturing Underlying Securities and (3) any early redemption or liquidation of the Underlying Securities, including Treasury Securities or GSE Securities.

Investors will be able to obtain the prices for the Underlying Securities through Bloomberg L.P. or other market vendors, including the broker-dealer through whom the investor purchased the ABS Securities.¹² In addition, The Bond Market Association ("TBMA") provides links to price and other bond information sources on its investor Web site at <http://www.investinginbonds.com>. Transaction prices and volume data for the most actively traded bonds on the exchanges are also published daily in newspapers and on a variety of financial Web sites. The National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. ("NASD") Trade Reporting and Compliance Engine ("TRACE") also will help investors obtain transaction information for the most active corporate debt securities, such as investment grade corporate bonds.¹³ For a fee, investors can have access to intra-day bellwether quotes.¹⁴

Price and transaction information for Treasury Securities and GSE Securities may also be obtained at <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov> and <http://www.govpx.com>, respectively. Price quotes are also available to investors via proprietary systems such as Bloomberg L.P., Reuters and Dow Jones Telerate. Valuation prices¹⁵ and analytical data may be obtained through vendors such as Bridge Information Systems, Muller Data, Capital Management Sciences, Interactive Data Corporation and Barra.

The ABS Securities will be listed in \$1,000 denominations with the Exchange's existing debt floor trading rules applying to trading.¹⁶ First, pursuant to Amex Rule 411, the Exchange will impose a duty of due diligence on its members and member firms to learn the essential facts relating to every customer prior to trading the ABS Securities.¹⁷ Second, the ABS Securities will be subject to the debt margin rules of the Exchange.¹⁸ Third, the Exchange will, prior to trading the ABS Securities, distribute a circular to the membership providing guidance with regard to member firm compliance responsibilities (including suitability recommendations) when handling transactions in the ABS Securities and highlighting the special risks and characteristics of the ABS Securities. With respect to suitability recommendations and risks, the Exchange will require members, member organizations and employees thereof recommending a transaction in the ABS Securities: (1) To determine that such transaction is suitable for the customer, and (2) to have a reasonable basis for believing that the customer can evaluate the special characteristics of, and is able to bear the financial risks of such transaction.

The Exchange represents that its surveillance procedures are adequate to properly monitor the trading of the ABS Securities. Specifically, the Amex will rely on its existing surveillance procedures governing debt, which have

¹⁰ The Underlying Securities may drop out of the basket upon maturity or upon payment default or acceleration of the maturity date for any default other than payment default. See Prospectus for a schedule of the distribution of interest and of the principal upon maturity of each Underlying Security and for a description of payment default and acceleration of the maturity date.

¹¹ See Securities Exchange Act Release Nos. 48791 (November 17, 2003), 68 FR 65750 (November 21, 2003) (File No. SR-Amex-2003-92); 48312 (August 8, 2003), 68 FR 48970 (August 15, 2003) (File No. SR-Amex-2003-69); 47884 (May 16, 2003), 68 FR 28305 (May 23, 2003) (File No. SR-Amex-2003-37); 47730 (April 24, 2003), 68 FR 23340 (May 1, 2003) (File No. SR-Amex-2003-25); 46923 (November 27, 2002), 67 FR 72247 (December 4, 2002) (File No. SR-Amex-2002-92); and 46835 (November 14, 2002), 67 FR 70271 (November 21, 2002) (File No. SR-Amex-2002-70).

¹² The prices of Underlying Securities generally will be determined by one or more market makers in accordance with applicable law and self-regulatory organization rules.

¹³ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 43873 (January 23, 2001), 66 FR 8131 (January 29, 2001). Investors are able to access TRACE information at <http://www.nasdbondinfo.com/>.

¹⁴ Corporate prices are available at 20-minute intervals from Capital Management Services at <http://www.bondvu.com/>.

¹⁵ "Valuation Prices" refer to an estimated price that has been determined based on an analytical evaluation of a bond in relation to similar bonds that have traded. Valuation prices are based on bond characteristics, market performance, changes in the level of interest rates, market expectations and other factors that influence a bond's value.

¹⁶ The ABS Securities will trade on Amex's debt trading floor. Telephone conversation between Jeffrey P. Burns, Associate General Counsel, Amex, and Florence Harmon, Senior Special Counsel, Division of Market Regulation, Commission, on February 24, 2004.

¹⁷ Amex Rule 411 requires that every member, member firm or member corporation use due diligence to learn the essential facts, relative to every customer and to every order or account accepted.

¹⁸ See Amex Rule 462.

been deemed adequate under the Act. In addition, the Exchange also has a general policy, which prohibits the distribution of material, non-public information by its employees.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6 of the Act¹⁹ in general and furthers the objectives of Section 6(b)(5)²⁰ in particular in that it is designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, promote just and equitable principles of trade, remove impediments to and perfect the mechanisms of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general, protect investors and the public interest.

B. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Burden on Competition

The Exchange does not believe that the proposed rule change will impose any burden on competition.

C. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Comments on the Proposed Rule Change Received From Members, Participants or Others

The Exchange did not receive any written comments on the proposed rule change.

III. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposal is consistent with the Act. Persons making written submissions should file six copies thereof with the Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 450 Fifth Street NW., Washington, DC 20549-0609. Comments may also be submitted electronically at the following e-mail address: rule-comments@sec.gov. All comment letters should refer to File No. SR-Amex-2004-08. The file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, comments should be sent in hardcopy or by e-mail but not by both methods. Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the

provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for inspection and copying in the Commission's Public Reference Room. Copies of such filing will also be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. All submissions should refer to the File No. SR-Amex-2004-08 and should be submitted by March 23, 2004.

IV. Commission's Findings and Order Granting Accelerated Approval of Proposed Rule Change

After careful consideration, the Commission finds that the proposed rule change is consistent with the requirements of the Act and the rules and regulations thereunder applicable to a national securities exchange, and, in particular, with the requirements of section 6(b)(5) of the Act.²¹ The Commission finds that this proposal is similar to several approved equity-linked instruments currently listed and traded on the Amex.²² Accordingly, the Commission finds that the listing and trading of the ABS Securities is consistent with the Act and will promote just and equitable principles of trade, foster cooperation and coordination with persons engaged in regulating, clearing, settling, processing information with respect to, and facilitating transactions in securities, and, in general, protect investors and the public interest consistent with Section 6(b)(5) of the Act.²³

As described more fully above, the ABS securities are asset-backed securities and represent a repackaging of the Underlying Corporate Bonds together with the addition of either Treasury Securities or GSE Securities, subject to certain distribution of interest obligations of the Trust. The ABS Securities are not leveraged instruments. The ABS Securities are debt instruments whose price will still be derived and based upon the value of the Underlying Securities. The Exchange represents that the value of the Underlying Securities will be determined by one or more market makers, in accordance with Exchange rules. Investors are guaranteed at least the principal amount that they paid for the Underlying Securities. In addition, each of the Underlying Corporate Bonds will pay interest on a semi-annual basis while the ABS securities themselves will pay interest on a monthly or quarterly basis, pursuant to the Interest Distribution Agreement. Neither the

Treasury Securities or GSE Securities will make periodic payments of interest.²⁴ In addition, the ABS securities will mature on the latest maturity date of the Underlying Securities.²⁵ However, due to the pass-through nature of the ABS Securities, the level of risk involved in the purchase or sale of the ABS Securities is similar to the risk involved in the purchase or sale of traditional common stock.

The Commission notes that the Exchange's rules and procedures that address the special concerns attendant to the trading of hybrid securities will be applicable to the ABS Securities. In particular, by imposing the hybrid listing standards, suitability, disclosure, and compliance requirements noted above, the Commission believes the Exchange has addressed adequately the potential problems that could arise from the hybrid nature of the ABS Securities. Moreover, the Commission notes that the Exchange will distribute a circular to its membership calling attention to the specific risks associated with the ABS Securities.

The Commission notes that the ABS Securities are dependent upon the individual credit of the issuers of the Underlying Securities. To some extent this credit risk is minimized by the Exchange's listing standards in Section 107A of the Company Guide which provide that only issuers satisfying asset and equity requirements may issue securities such as the ABS Securities. In addition, the Exchange's "Other Securities" listing standards further provide that there is no minimum holder requirement if the securities are traded in thousand dollar denominations.²⁶ The Commission notes that the Exchange has represented that the ABS Securities will be listed in \$1000 denominations with its existing debt floor trading rules applying to the trading. In any event, financial information regarding the issuers of the Underlying Securities will be publicly available.²⁷ Due to the pass-through and passive nature of the ABS Securities, the Commission does not object to the Exchange's reliance on the assets and

²⁴ See *supra* note 8.

²⁵ The Commission notes, however, that the Exchange has represented that the Underlying Securities may drop out of the basket upon maturity or upon payment default or acceleration of the maturity date for any default other than payment default. See Prospectus for a schedule of the distribution of interest and of the principal upon maturity of each Underlying Security and for a description of payment default and acceleration of the maturity date.

²⁶ See Company Guide Section 107A.

²⁷ The ABS Securities will be registered under section 12 of the Act.

¹⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

²⁰ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

²¹ *Id.*

²² See *supra* note 11.

²³ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5). In approving this rule, the Commission notes that it has considered the proposed rule's impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

stockholder equity of the Underlying Securities rather than the Trust to meet the requirement in Section 107A of the Company Guide. The Commission notes that the distribution and principal amount/aggregate market value requirements found in Sections 107A(b) and (c), respectively, will otherwise be met by the Trust as issuer of the ABS Securities. Thus, the ABS Securities will conform to the initial listing guidelines under Section 107A and continued listing guidelines under Sections 1001–1003 of the Company Guide, except for the assets and stockholder equity characteristics of the Trust. At the time of issuance, the Commission also notes that the ABS Securities will receive an investment grade rating from an NRSRO.

The Commission also believes that the listing and trading of the ABS Securities should not unduly impact the market for the Underlying Securities or raise manipulative concerns. As discussed more fully above, the Exchange represents that, in addition to requiring the issuers of the Underlying Securities meet the Exchange's Section 107A listing requirements (in the case of Treasury securities, the Exchange will rely on the fact that the issuer is the U.S. Government rather than the asset and stockholder tests found in Section 107A), the Underlying Securities will also be required to meet or exceed the Exchange's Bond and Debenture Listing Standards pursuant to Section 104 of the Amex's Company Guide, which among other things, requires that underlying debt instrument receive at least an investment grade rating of "B" or equivalent from an NRSRO. Furthermore, at least 75% of the basket is required to contain Underlying Securities from issuances of \$100 million or more. The Amex also represents that the basket of Underlying Securities will not be managed and will remain static over the term of the ABS securities. In addition, the Amex's surveillance procedures will serve to deter as well as detect any potential manipulation.

The Commission notes that the investors may obtain price information on the Underlying Securities through market vendors such as Bloomberg, L.P., or through Web sites such as <http://www.investinginbonds.com> (for Underlying Corporate Bonds) and <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov> and <http://www.govpx.com> (for Treasury Securities and GSE Securities, respectively).

The Commission finds good cause for approving the proposed rule change prior to the thirtieth day after the date of publication of notice thereof in the **Federal Register**. The Amex has

requested accelerated approval because this product is similar to several other asset-backed instruments currently listed and traded on the Amex.²⁸ The Commission believes that the ABS Securities will provide investors with an additional investment choice and that accelerated approval of the proposal will allow investors to begin trading the ABS Securities promptly. Additionally, the ABS Securities will be listed pursuant to Amex's existing hybrid security listing standards as described above. Based on the above, the Commission believes that there is good cause, consistent with Sections 6(b)(5) and 19(b)(2) of the Act²⁹ to approve the proposal on an accelerated basis.

V. Conclusion

It is therefore ordered, pursuant to Section 19(b)(2) of the Act,³⁰ that the proposed rule change (SR-Amex-2004-08) is hereby approved on an accelerated basis.

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.³¹

Margaret H. McFarland,
Deputy Secretary.

[FR Doc. 04-4573 Filed 3-1-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8010-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-49317; File No. SR-FICC-2003-12]

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Fixed Income Clearing Corporation; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change Relating to Modifications to FICC's Rules Regarding Member Compliance With Applicable Laws, Modern Forms of Signatures, and Non-Eligibility of Certain Securities

February 24, 2004.

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act"),¹ notice is hereby given that on October 17, 2003, Fixed Income Clearing Corporation ("FICC") filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission") the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III below, which items have been prepared primarily by FICC. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the

proposed rule change from interested parties.

I. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Terms of Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

The purpose of the proposed rule change is to allow FICC to amend rules for its Government Securities Division ("GSD") and Mortgage-Backed Securities Division ("MBSD") regarding member compliance with applicable laws in the use of FICC's services, use of modern forms of signatures, and the non-eligibility of certain securities.²

II. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, FICC included statements concerning the purpose of and basis for the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it received on the proposed rule change. The text of these statements may be examined at the places specified in Item IV below. FICC has prepared summaries, set forth in sections (A), (B), and (C) below, of the most significant aspects of these statements.³

(A) Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Compliance With Laws

The proposed rule change will allow FICC to add language to GSD and MBSD rules to clarify and to remind members of the requirement to comply with all applicable laws in connection with their use of FICC's services.⁴ In particular, members should be cognizant of all applicable securities, taxation, and money laundering laws because these laws are likely to be invoked each time a member submits a transaction for processing through FICC. For example, a member must comply with the applicable requirements pertaining to it

² On January 1, 2003, the MBS Clearing Corporation ("MBSCC") was merged into the Government Securities Clearing Corporation ("GSCC"), and GSCC was renamed FICC. FICC operates through two divisions, the Government Securities Division (the "GSD," formerly GSCC) and the Mortgage-Backed Securities Division ("MBSD," formerly MBSCC) handling Government securities and mortgage-backed securities transactions, respectively. Each Division has retained its own set of rules. This rule filing will implement changes to the rules of both the GSD and MBSD. Changes to the MBSD rules will affect both clearing and electronic pool notification ("EPN") services.

³ The Commission has modified the text of the summaries prepared by FICC.

⁴ FICC will add language to GSD Rule 3, Section 8 and amend language in MBSD Article III, Rule 1, Section 7 of the clearing rulebook and in MBSD Article VIII, Rule 1, Section 5 of the EPN rulebook.

²⁸ See *supra* note 11.

²⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5) and 78s(b)(2).

³⁰ 15 U.S.C. 78o-3(b)(6) and 78s(b)(2).

³¹ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).