

Part III - Administrative, Procedural, and Miscellaneous

Voluntary Closing Agreement Program For Tax-Exempt Bonds and Tax Credit Bonds

Notice 2008-31

SECTION 1. PURPOSE

This Notice provides information about the voluntary closing agreement program for tax-exempt bonds and tax credit bonds (“TEB VCAP”). In particular, the Notice updates procedures whereby issuers of tax-exempt bonds and tax credit bonds can resolve violations of the Internal Revenue Code (the “Code”) through closing agreements with the Internal Revenue Service (the “Service”). The Tax Exempt Bonds Compliance & Program Management (“TEB CPM”) function of Tax Exempt and Government Entities (TE/GE) is continuing to develop voluntary compliance initiatives to insure compliance by issuers of tax-exempt bonds and tax credit bonds with applicable provisions of the Code. TEB VCAP is part of the TEB CPM voluntary compliance initiatives and provides appropriate remedies when issuers voluntarily come forward and express a desire to resolve violations of the Code. TEB VCAP is intended to encourage issuers and conduit borrowers to exercise due diligence in complying with the Code and to provide a vehicle to correct violations of the Code. It is the continuing policy of the Service to attempt to resolve violations of the Code without taxing bondholders. TEB VCAP reflects this policy.

The Service is continuing to work on more detailed procedures about the program, and intends to provide those procedures in forthcoming guidance. For example, the Service anticipates specifying standardized closing agreement terms and amounts for particular violations.

SECTION 2. CHANGES

This Notice modifies and supersedes Notice 2001-60, 2001-2 C.B. 304. In general, Notice 2001-60 is amended by: (1) changing references to Outreach Planning and Review (OPR) to Compliance & Program Management (CPM); (2) incorporating tax credit bonds into the TEB VCAP program; (3) simplifying section 5(a) by referring to

Internal Revenue Manual (“IRM”) 7.2.3 for the specific information required for a VCAP submission; (4) clarifying that under section 5(b) CPM staff will obtain additional information as needed; (5) clarifying that all information for a VCAP submission must be provided in electronic format; and (6) providing email and regular mail addresses for submissions.

SECTION 3. BACKGROUND

Gross income does not include interest on any state or local bond that meets the requirements of section 103 and related provisions of the Code. A credit against tax is provided to a holder of a qualified tax credit bond issued under sections 54, 1397E or 1400N that meets the requirements of those sections and related provisions of the Code. Under certain circumstances, an issuer may take remedial action under provisions such as sections 1.141-12, 1.142-2, 1.144-2, 1.145-2, and 1.147-2 of the Income Tax Regulations and similar provisions that are applicable to tax credit bonds in order to cure a violation of the Code.

The Service has previously provided formal tax-exempt bond closing agreement programs such as the program described in Rev. Proc. 97-15, 1997-1 C.B. 635. Violations of section 103 and related provisions of the Code that cannot be remediated under existing remedial action provisions or other tax-exempt bond closing agreement programs contained in regulations or other published guidance may be resolved by entering into a closing agreement under TEB VCAP.

Section 7121 of the Code and the regulations thereunder authorize the Commissioner to enter into written closing agreements with any person in connection with the tax liability of such person (or of the person or estate for which he acts). Section 301.7121-1 of the Income Tax Regulations provides, in part, that a closing agreement may be entered into in any case in which there appears to be an advantage in having the case permanently and conclusively closed, or if good and sufficient reasons are shown by the taxpayer for desiring a closing agreement and it is determined by the Commissioner that the United States will sustain no disadvantage through consummation of such an agreement.

SECTION 4. SCOPE OF TEB VCAP

Under TEB VCAP, an issuer may request a closing agreement with respect to its bonds to resolve violations of sections 103, 54, 1397E, 1400N and related provisions of the Code. TEB VCAP is not available when:

(a) Absent extraordinary circumstances, the violation can be remediated under existing remedial action provisions or tax-exempt bond closing agreement programs contained in regulations or other published guidance.

(b) The bond issue is under examination. A bond issue is generally treated as

under examination on the date a letter opening an examination on the bond issue is sent.

(c) The tax-exempt status of the bonds or qualified status of tax credit bonds is at issue in any court proceeding or is being considered by the IRS Office of Appeals.

(d) The Service determines that the violation was due to willful neglect.

SECTION 5. PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING A CLOSING AGREEMENT UNDER TEB VCAP

(a) Information Required in Requests. An issuer or its authorized representative requesting a closing agreement must submit the information specified in IRM 7.2.3 and the information reporting return for the applicable bonds on IRS Form 8038 or other comparable form that was filed with respect to the issue. (For convenience of reference, the relevant portions of the Internal Revenue Manual (IRM) are available on the IRS website, at www.irs.gov, in the section on the Tax-Exempt Bond Community, under the subheading of Published Guidance.) All information concerning the closing agreement must be submitted under penalty of perjury signed by an official of the issuer with knowledge of the issue and authorized to make the submissions on behalf of the issuer. The request may also contain a Form 2848 with the name, address, phone number, and fax number of an authorized contact person.

(b) Additional Information for Requests. CPM staff may require additional information depending on the facts and circumstances. All additional information must be submitted under penalty of perjury signed by the person who initially signed the submission or who would have been authorized to make the original submission.

(c) Electronic Format. All information submitted in support of a closing agreement request must be provided in an electronic format that is either emailed in PDF format or provided on a compact disc ("CD") sent via regular mail to the address provided by this Notice. Hard copies of the submissions can be provided but are not required.

(d) Anonymous Closing Agreement Requests. An issuer or its authorized representative may initiate discussions regarding the appropriate terms of a closing agreement on an anonymous basis. An anonymous request may be made on behalf of a group of similarly situated issuers. However, the execution of a closing agreement must be between the Service and a disclosed issuer, and all terms of a closing agreement must be consistent with section 7121 of the Code. Until the name of the bond issue is disclosed to the Service, a request for a closing agreement under TEB VCAP will not prevent the Service from beginning an examination of the bond issue. An issue for which a request has been submitted under this paragraph (d) that has been placed under examination prior to the date the issue is identified to the Service will no

longer be eligible for TEB VCAP.

(e) TEB VCAP Mailing Address. TEB VCAP submissions should be mailed to:

Internal Revenue Service
Attn: TEB VCAP
1122 Town & Country Commons
St. Louis, MO 63017

(f) TEB VCAP E-Mail Address. In the alternative, VCAP information may be submitted in PDF format to TEBVCAP@irs.gov. TEB CPM will provide an acknowledgement of receipt of an email request.

SECTION 6. CLOSING AGREEMENT TERMS

Closing agreements under TEB VCAP will generally follow the model closing agreement in IRM 4.81.1, Exhibit 9, as the same may be modified or changed. Specific closing agreement terms will depend on the facts and circumstances of the case, including the degree of diligence exercised by the issuer and any conduit borrower. Any standardized closing agreement terms that are developed for TEB VCAP will be set forth in the Internal Revenue Manual and/or other published guidance.

SECTION 7. EFFECT OF CLOSING AGREEMENT EXECUTED UNDER TEB VCAP

A closing agreement properly executed by the issuer and the Service will protect bondholders from including in their gross income any interest on the bonds or from recapturing tax credits during the period specified in the agreement for any violation described in the agreement. A closing agreement executed under section 7121 of the Code shall be final and conclusive except that: (1) the matter it relates to may be reopened in the event of fraud, malfeasance, or misrepresentation of a material fact; (2) it is subject to the sections of the Code that expressly provide that effect be given to their provisions (including any stated exception for section 7122 of the Code) notwithstanding any other law or rule of law; and (3) it is subject to any law, enacted after the date of the agreement, that applies to a tax period ending after the date of the agreement covered by the agreement.

SECTION 8. REQUESTS FOR COMMENTS

We anticipated that TEB VCAP will continue to be expanded and refined over time based on experience and public comment. The Service welcomes comments regarding the format and operation of TEB VCAP, and suggestions with regard to the general framework of closing agreement terms including standardized closing agreement terms and amounts that may be specified for particular violations. Comments should be submitted in writing and should be emailed to

Steven.A.Chamberlin@irs.gov or mailed to the following address:

Steven A. Chamberlin
Manager, Tax Exempt Bonds Compliance & Program Management
SE:T:GE:TEB:CPM
1122 Town & Country Commons
St. Louis, MO 63017

SECTION 9. EFFECT ON OTHER DOCUMENTS

Notice 2001-60, 2001-2 C.B. 304, is modified and superceded.

SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE

TEB VCAP is effective February 27, 2008.

SECTION 11. DRAFTING INFORMATION

The principal authors of this notice are Steven A. Chamberlin of Tax Exempt Bonds Compliance & Program Management, Tax Exempt & Government Entities, and Carla Young of the Office of Associate Chief Counsel (Financial Institutions & Products). For further information regarding this notice contact Steven Chamberlin at (636) 255-1290 or Carla Young at (202) 622-3980 (not toll-free calls).