

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-59754; File No. SR-FINRA-2009-018)

April 13, 2009

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc.; Notice of Filing of Proposed Rule Change to Adopt IM-2830-1 (“Breakpoint” Sales) in the Consolidated FINRA Rulebook

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 March 26, 2009, Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc. (“FINRA”) (f/k/a National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. (“NASD”)) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC” or “Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III below, which Items have been prepared by FINRA. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change from interested persons.

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

FINRA is proposing to adopt NASD Interpretive Material 2830-1 (“IM-2830-1”) (“Breakpoint” Sales) as a FINRA rule in the consolidated FINRA rulebook with minor changes. The proposed rule change would renumber NASD IM-2830-1 as FINRA Rule 2342 in the consolidated FINRA rulebook.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on FINRA’s Web site at <http://www.finra.org>, at the principal office of FINRA and at the Commission’s Public Reference Room.

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

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

In its filing with the Commission, FINRA 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. FINRA has prepared summaries, set forth in sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant aspects of such statements.

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

1. Purpose

As part of the process of developing a new consolidated rulebook (“Consolidated FINRA Rulebook”),³ FINRA is proposing to adopt NASD IM-2830-1 into the Consolidated FINRA Rulebook with minor changes discussed below. The proposed rule change would renumber NASD IM-2830-1 as FINRA Rule 2342. NASD IM-2830-1 prohibits sales of mutual fund shares in amounts below a “breakpoint” if such sales are made “so as to share in the higher sales charges.” In the context of mutual fund sales, a “breakpoint” is that point at which the sales charge is reduced for quantity purchases of fund shares.

The application of the standard in NASD IM-2830-1 depends on the facts and circumstances of particular transactions to determine whether a member executed a transaction

³ The current FINRA rulebook consists of (1) FINRA Rules; (2) NASD Rules; and (3) rules incorporated from NYSE (“Incorporated NYSE Rules”) (together, the NASD Rules and Incorporated NYSE Rules are referred to as the “Transitional Rulebook”). While the NASD Rules generally apply to all FINRA members, the Incorporated NYSE Rules apply only to those members of FINRA that are also members of the NYSE (“Dual Members”). The FINRA Rules apply to all FINRA members, unless such rules have a more limited application by their terms. For more information about the rulebook consolidation process, see FINRA Information Notice, March 12, 2008 (Rulebook Consolidation Process).

for the purpose of earning a higher sales charge. In 1998, NASD IM-2830-1 was amended to address the use of modern portfolio investment strategies that utilize many different mutual funds with varying investment objectives.⁴ The amendments specify more precisely those facts and circumstances that FINRA will consider when examining whether trades that miss breakpoints, but are made pursuant to bona fide asset allocation programs, may have violated NASD IM-2830-1. In making such determinations, the rule provides that FINRA will consider, among other things, whether a member has retained records that demonstrate that the trade was executed in accordance with a bona fide asset allocation program that the member offers to its customers which is designed to meet their diversification needs and investment goals; and under which the member discloses to its customers that they may not qualify for breakpoint reductions that are otherwise available.

Breakpoint issues have been of concern to the regulatory community. On December 23, 2002, FINRA issued Special Notice to Members 02-85, which reminded firms of their obligation to apply correctly breakpoint discounts to front-end sales load mutual fund transactions.⁵ In 2003, the staffs of FINRA, the SEC, and the NYSE conducted examinations of broker-dealers to assess their ability to deliver breakpoint discounts and memorialized the findings of those examinations in a joint report.⁶ Concurrently, FINRA staff and industry members formed a joint task force to consider issues regarding breakpoints. The joint task force issued a report in July

⁴ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 40659 (Nov. 10, 1998), 63 FR 64136 (Nov. 18, 1998) (Order Approving Proposed Rule Change Relating to Mutual Fund Breakpoint Sales).

⁵ NASD Special Notice to Members 02-85, NASD Requires Immediate Member Firm Action Regarding Mutual Fund Purchases and Breakpoint Schedules (December 2002).

⁶ See Joint SEC/NASD/NYSE Report of Examinations of Broker/Dealers Regarding Discounts on Front-End Sales Charges on Mutual Funds (March 2003), available at <http://www.finra.org/Industry/Issues/Breakpoints/P006438>.

2003 containing recommendations for the industry to facilitate the accurate delivery of breakpoint discounts.⁷

FINRA proposes to adopt NASD IM-2830-1 as FINRA Rule 2342 as it believes this rule continues to be an important tool in regulating members' sales of mutual fund shares to ensure that they are not sold in dollar amounts just below breakpoints so as to share in higher sales charges. FINRA proposes to eliminate references to "just and equitable principles of trade" and make other minor changes to the text to reflect that it would be a stand-alone rule, rather than Interpretive Material, and to eliminate certain redundant text that is inconsistent with a rules-based format.

As noted above, FINRA will announce the implementation date of the proposed rule change in a Regulatory Notice to be published no later than 90 days following Commission approval.

2. Statutory Basis

FINRA believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with the provisions of Section 15A(b)(6) of the Act,⁸ which requires, among other things, that FINRA rules must be designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. FINRA believes that the proposed rule change would continue to provide FINRA with an important tool in regulating members' sales of mutual fund shares, consistent with the goals of protecting investors and the public interest.

⁷ See Report of the Joint NASD/Industry Task Force on Breakpoints (July 2003), available at <http://www.finra.org/Industry/Issues/Breakpoints/P006422>.

⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78q-3(b)(6).

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

FINRA does not believe that the proposed rule change will result in any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

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

Written comments were neither solicited nor received.

III. Date of Effectiveness of the Proposed Rule Change and Timing for Commission Action

Within 35 days of the date of publication of this notice in the Federal Register or within such longer period (i) as the Commission may designate up to 90 days of such date if it finds such longer period to be appropriate and publishes its reasons for so finding or (ii) as to which the self-regulatory organization consents, the Commission will:

(A) by order approve such proposed rule change, or

(B) institute proceedings to determine whether the proposed rule change should be disapproved.

IV. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposed rule change is consistent with the Act. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Electronic Comments:

- Use the Commission's Internet comment form (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or
- Send an e-mail to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-FINRA-2009-018 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 SR-FINRA-2009-018. This 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, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's Internet Web site (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>). 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, 100 F Street, NE., Washington, DC 20549, on official business days between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Copies of such filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of FINRA. All comments received will be posted without change; the Commission does not edit personal identifying information from submissions. You should submit only information that

you wish to make available publicly. All submissions should refer to File Number SR-FINRA-2009-018 and should be submitted on or before [insert date 21 days from publication in the Federal Register].

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.⁹

Florence E. Harmon
Deputy Secretary

⁹ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).