

of Article IV, Section 1(e) of the Amex Constitution is reasonable.

It Is Therefore Ordered, pursuant to Section 19(b)(2) of the Act,<sup>8</sup> that the proposed rule change (File No. SR-Amex-2003-54) be, and it hereby is, approved.

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.<sup>9</sup>

**Margaret H. McFarland,**

*Deputy Secretary.*

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## SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-48557; File No. SR-Amex-2003-71]

### Self-Regulatory Organizations; Order Granting Approval of Proposed Rule Change by the American Stock Exchange LLC Relating to the Elimination of the Minor Floor Violation Disciplinary Committee

September 29, 2003.

On July 25, 2003, the American Stock Exchange LLC ("Amex" or "Exchange") filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission"), pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act")<sup>1</sup> and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,<sup>2</sup> a proposed rule change to eliminate the Amex's Minor Floor Violation Disciplinary Committee ("MFVDC"). Under the proposed rule change, the responsibilities of the MFVDC will be transferred to the Exchange's Enforcement Department.

The proposed rule change was published for comment in the **Federal Register** on August 28, 2003.<sup>3</sup> The Commission received no comments on the proposal.

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.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the Commission believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6(b)(6)<sup>5</sup> of the Act which requires, among other things, that the Exchange's rules provide that its members and

persons associated with its members be appropriately disciplined for violations of the federal securities laws and the Exchange's rules. The Commission believes that consolidating the responsibility for initiating disciplinary action under Amex's minor rule violation plan exclusively in the Exchange's Enforcement Department should provide a more consistent process for the disciplining of Amex's members and persons associated with its members.

*It Is Therefore Ordered*, pursuant to Section 19(b)(2) of the Act,<sup>6</sup> that the proposed rule change (SR-Amex-2003-71) be, and it hereby is, approved.

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.<sup>7</sup>

**Margaret H. McFarland,**

*Deputy Secretary.*

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## SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-48553; File No. SR-NASD-2003-144]

### Self-Regulatory Organizations; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change by the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. To Extend, for an Additional Six-Month Period, a Pilot Rule Regarding Waiver of California Arbitrator Disclosure Standards

September 26, 2003.

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act"),<sup>1</sup> and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,<sup>2</sup> notice is hereby given that on September 24, 2003, the 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 and II below, which Items have been prepared by NASD. NASD has designated the proposed rule change as constituting a "non-controversial" rule change pursuant to Rule 19b-4(f)(6) under the Act,<sup>3</sup> which renders the proposal effective upon receipt of this filing by the Commission. 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

NASD is proposing to extend the pilot rule in IM-10100(f) of the NASD Code of Arbitration Procedure, which requires industry parties in arbitration to waive application of contested California arbitrator disclosure standards, upon the request of customers, and associated persons with claims against other industry parties, for a six-month period.

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

In its filing with the Commission, NASD 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. The NASD 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

In July 2002, the California Judicial Commission adopted a set of rules, "Ethics Standards for Neutral Arbitrators in Contractual Arbitration" ("California Standards"),<sup>4</sup> governing ethical standards for arbitrators. The rules were designed to address conflicts of interest in private arbitration forums that are not part of a federal regulatory system overseen on a uniform, national basis by the SEC. The California Standards imposed disclosure requirements on arbitrators that conflict with the disclosure rules of NASD and the New York Stock Exchange ("NYSE"). Because NASD could not both administer its arbitration program in accordance with its own rules and comply with the new California Standards at the same time, NASD initially suspended the appointment of arbitrators in cases in California, but offered parties several options for pursuing their cases.<sup>5</sup>

In November 2002, NASD and NYSE filed a lawsuit in federal district court

<sup>4</sup> California Rules of Court, Division VI of the Appendix, entitled, "Ethics Standards for Neutral Arbitrators in Contractual Arbitration."

<sup>5</sup> These measures included providing venue changes for arbitration cases, using non-California arbitrators when appropriate, and waiving administrative fees for NASD-sponsored mediations.

<sup>8</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2).

<sup>9</sup> 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

<sup>1</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

<sup>2</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

<sup>3</sup> See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 48382 (August 20, 2003), 68 FR 51818.

<sup>4</sup> In approving this proposed rule change, the Commission has considered the proposed rule's impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

<sup>5</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(6).

<sup>6</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2).

<sup>7</sup> 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

<sup>1</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

<sup>2</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

<sup>3</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

seeking a declaratory judgment that the California Standards are inapplicable to arbitration forums sponsored by self-regulatory organizations ("SROs").<sup>6</sup> That litigation is currently pending on appeal. Since then, other lawsuits relating to the application of the California Standards to SRO-sponsored arbitration have been filed, several of which are also still pending.

To allow arbitrations to proceed in California while the litigation was pending, NASD implemented a pilot rule to require all industry parties (member firms and associated persons) to waive application of the California Standards to the case, if all the parties in the case who are customers, or associated persons with claims against industry parties, have done so.<sup>7</sup> In such cases, the arbitration proceeds under the NASD Code of Arbitration Procedure, which already contains extensive disclosure requirements and provisions for challenging arbitrators with potential conflicts of interest.<sup>8</sup>

The pilot rule, which was originally approved for six months on September 26, 2002, was extended in March 2003, and is now due to expire on September 30, 2003. Because the pending litigation regarding the California Standards is unlikely to be resolved by September 30, 2003, NASD requests that the effectiveness of the pilot rule be extended through March 31, 2004, in order to prevent NASD from having to suspend administration of cases covered by the pilot rule.

## 2. Statutory Basis

NASD believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with the provisions of Section 15A(b)(6) of the Act,<sup>9</sup> which

requires, among other things, that NASD's 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. NASD believes that expediting the appointment of arbitrators under the waiver rule, at the request of customers and associated persons with claims against industry respondents will allow those parties to exercise their contractual rights to proceed in arbitration in California, notwithstanding the confusion caused by the disputed California Standards.

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

NASD 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, as amended.

### *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

NASD has designated the proposed rule change as one that: (i) Does not significantly affect the protection of investors or the public interest; (ii) does not impose any significant burden on competition; and (iii) does not become operative for 30 days from the date on which it was filed, or such shorter time as the Commission may designate. Therefore, the foregoing rule change has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act<sup>10</sup> and Rule 19b-4(f)(6) thereunder.<sup>11</sup> At any time within 60 days of the filing of the proposed rule change, the Commission may summarily abrogate the rule change if it appears to the Commission that the action is necessary or appropriate in the public interest, for the protection of investors, or would otherwise further the purposes of the Act.

Pursuant to Rule 19b-4(f)(6)(iii) under the Act,<sup>12</sup> the proposal may not become operative for 30 days after the date of its filing, or such shorter time as the Commission may designate if consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest, and the self-regulatory organization must file notice of its intent to file the proposed rule change

at least five business days beforehand. NASD has requested that the Commission waive the five-day pre-filing requirement and the 30-day operative delay so that the proposed rule change will become immediately effective upon filing.

The Commission believes that waiving the five-day pre-filing provision and the 30-day operative delay is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest.<sup>13</sup> Waiving the pre-filing requirement and accelerating the operative date will merely extend a pilot program that is designed to provide investors, and associated persons with claims against industry respondents, with a mechanism to resolve their disputes. During the period of this extension, the Commission and NASD will continue to monitor the status of the previously discussed litigation. For these reasons, the Commission designates the proposed rule change as effective and operative on September 30, 2003.

## 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. Persons making written submissions should file six copies thereof with the Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 450 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20549-0609. 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 NASD. All submissions should refer to File No. SR-NASD-2003-144 and should be submitted by October 24, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> See Motion for Declaratory Judgment, *NASD Dispute Resolution, Inc. and New York Stock Exchange, Inc. v. Judicial Council of California*, filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, No. C 02 3486 SBA (July 22, 2002), available on the NASD Web site at [http://www.nasdaq.com/pdf-text/072202\\_ca\\_complaint.pdf](http://www.nasdaq.com/pdf-text/072202_ca_complaint.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Originally, the pilot rule only applied to claims by customers, or by associated persons asserting a statutory employment discrimination claim against a member, and required a written waiver by the industry respondents. In July 2003, NASD expanded the scope of the pilot rule to include all claims by associated persons against another associated person or a member. At the same time, the rule was amended to provide that when a customer, or an associated person with a claim against a member or another associated person, agrees to waive the application of the California Standards, all respondents that are members or associated persons will be deemed to have waived the application of the standards as well. The July 2003 amendment also clarified that the pilot rule applies to terminated members and associated persons. See Securities Exchange Act Rel. No. 48187 (July 16, 2003), 68 FR 43553 (July 23, 2003) (File No. SR-NASD-2003-106).

<sup>8</sup> The NYSE has a similar rule; Rule 600(g).

<sup>9</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78o-3(b)(6).

<sup>10</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

<sup>11</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

<sup>12</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6)(iii).

<sup>13</sup> For purposes of accelerating the operative date of this proposal, the Commission has considered the proposed rule's impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.<sup>14</sup>

**Margaret H. McFarland,**

*Deputy Secretary.*

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## SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

[Release No. 34-48552; File No. SR-NYSE-2003-28]

### Self-Regulatory Organizations; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change by the New York Stock Exchange, Inc. Relating to Arbitration

September 26, 2003.

Pursuant to section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Act"),<sup>1</sup> and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,<sup>2</sup> notice is hereby given that on September 25, 2003, the New York Stock Exchange, Inc. ("NYSE" or "Exchange") 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 NYSE.<sup>3</sup> NYSE filed the proposed rule change pursuant to section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act<sup>4</sup> and Rule 19b-4(f)(6) thereunder,<sup>5</sup> which renders the proposal effective upon filing with the Commission. 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

The proposed rule change consists of an extension, until March 31, 2004, of Rule 600(g).

#### 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 Exchange 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. The NYSE 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

The proposed rule change is intended to extend until March 31, 2004, Rule 600(g), a pilot program that was initially approved by the Commission on November 12, 2002<sup>6</sup> for a six-month period, and which was then extended until September 30, 2003.<sup>7</sup>

The Exchange's statement of purpose is contained in the Commission's Approval Order. In that Approval Order the Commission stated:

The Exchange's Director of Arbitration will monitor the progress of the above described litigation [*NASD Dispute Resolution, Inc. and New York Stock Exchange, Inc. v. Judicial Council of California*, No. C 02 3485 (N.D. Cal.)] and determine whether there is a continuing need for the waiver option.<sup>8</sup>

The above litigation, in which the Exchange and NASD Dispute Resolution, Inc. sought a declaratory judgment that the Ethics Standards for Neutral Arbitrators in Contractual Arbitrations (the "California Standards") are preempted by federal law, has not been concluded. On November 12, 2002, Judge Samuel Conti dismissed the action on Eleventh Amendment grounds.<sup>9</sup> A Notice of Appeal from Judge Conti's decision has been filed with the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> Release No. 34-46816 (November 12, 2002), 67 FR 69793 (November 19, 2002) (SR-NYSE-2002-56).

<sup>7</sup> Release No. 34-47836 (May 12, 2003), 68 FR 27608 (May 20, 2003) (SR-NYSE-2003-16).

<sup>8</sup> Release No. 34-46816 (November 12, 2002), 67 FR 69793, 69794 (November 19, 2002) (SR-NYSE-2002-56).

<sup>9</sup> *NASD Dispute Resolution, Inc. and New York Stock Exchange, Inc. v. Judicial Council of California*, No. C 02 3485 (N.D. Cal.).

<sup>10</sup> In another district court decision, *Mayo v. Dean Witter Reynolds, Inc., Morgan Stanley Dean Witter & Co. dba Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, and Does 1-50*, No. C-01-20336 JF, 2003 WL 1922963 (N.D. Cal., April 22, 2003), Judge Jeremy Fogel held that application of the California Standards to the Exchange and other self-regulatory organizations is preempted by the Act, the comprehensive system of federal regulation of the securities industry established pursuant to the Act, and the Federal Arbitration Act. The Mayo decision was not appealed. Since the decision in Mayo, the question of the applicability of the California Standards to SROs has been presented in another case in federal court in California, *Credit Suisse First Boston Corp. v. Grunwald*, No. C 02-2051 SBA (N.D. Cal. Mar.

Exchange's Director of Arbitration has determined that, in the absence of a final judicial determination or legislative resolution of the preemption issue, there is a continuing need for the waiver option.

##### 2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange states that the proposed changes are consistent with section 6(b)(5) of the Act<sup>11</sup> in that they promote just and equitable principles of trade by ensuring that members and member organizations and the public have a fair and impartial forum for the resolution of their disputes.

#### 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 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

The Exchange has neither solicited nor received written comments on the proposed rule change.

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

The NYSE has stated that because the proposed rule change does not: (i) significantly affect the protection of investors or the public interest; (ii) impose any significant burden on competition; and (iii) become operative for 30 days (or such shorter time as the Commission may designate if consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest), it has become effective pursuant to section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act<sup>12</sup> and Rule 19b-4(f)(6) thereunder.<sup>13</sup> At any time within 60 days of the filing of the proposed rule change, the Commission may summarily abrogate the rule change if it appears to the Commission that the action is necessary or appropriate in the public

31, 2003). The *Grunwald* court concluded that the California Standards cannot apply to SRO-appointed arbitrators because such arbitrators do not fall within the statutory definition of "neutral arbitrators." The appeal in *Grunwald* is fully briefed, and the Ninth Circuit is considering it on an expedited basis. The Commission and the Judicial Council submitted *amicus* briefs in the Ninth Circuit, and NASD Dispute Resolution and NYSE have moved to intervene on appeal. The appeal from Judge Conti's decision in *NASD Dispute Resolution, Inc. and New York Stock Exchange, Inc. v. Judicial Council of California* is currently stayed pending a decision in *Grunwald*.

<sup>11</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

<sup>12</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

<sup>13</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

<sup>14</sup> 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

<sup>15</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

<sup>2</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

<sup>3</sup> Commission staff made non-substantive changes to the description of the proposed rule change with the permission of the NYSE. Telephone conversation between Robert Clemente, Director—Arbitration, NYSE, and Andrew Shipe, Special Counsel, Division of Market Regulation, Commission, September 26, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

<sup>5</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).