

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1442

To amend the Federal Reserve Act to expand the opportunity for private enterprise to compete with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System in the provision of check-clearing and other services, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 24, 1997

Mr. GONZALEZ (for himself and Mrs. MALONEY of New York) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Banking and Financial Services

A BILL

To amend the Federal Reserve Act to expand the opportunity for private enterprise to compete with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System in the provision of check-clearing and other services, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; PURPOSES.**

4 (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Federal Reserve Free Enterprise Act”.

6 (b) **PURPOSES.**—The purposes of this Act are as
7 follows:

1 (1) To facilitate the development of private en-
2 terprise and jobs by promoting competition with the
3 Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
4 (hereafter in this section referred to as the “Board”)
5 in the provision of check-clearing and other services.

6 (2) To further promote such competition by
7 having the Board fairly and accurately price the
8 services provided by the Board or any Federal re-
9 serve bank.

10 (3) To save taxpayer funds by eliminating the
11 subsidy the Board provides through the maintenance
12 of a pricing system for check-clearing and other
13 services which does not fully recover the cost of pro-
14 viding such services.

15 (4) To end the practice of the Board of bun-
16 dling together all the costs and revenue from all
17 check-clearing and other services provided by the
18 Board or any Federal reserve bank and require the
19 Board to price each readily identifiable component of
20 each such service in a way that ensures that the full
21 amount of the costs incurred which are allocable to
22 the provision of such component is fully recovered.

23 (5) To stimulate innovation and provide a wider
24 range of check-clearing and other services through
25 market competition and the free flow of information.

1 **SEC. 2. COMPETITIVE PRICING OF SERVICES.**

2 (a) CLARIFICATION OF FEE SCHEDULE REQUIRE-
3 MENTS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 11A(b) of the Fed-
5 eral Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 248a(b)) is amended by
6 striking paragraph (2) and all that follows through
7 paragraph (8) and inserting the following new para-
8 graphs:

9 “(2) check processing involving sorting and
10 routing paper checks, and settlement services;

11 “(3) electronic funds transfer services;

12 “(4) automated clearinghouse services;

13 “(5) electronic cashletter services;

14 “(6) securities safekeeping services;

15 “(7) check image capture services;

16 “(8) check truncation services;

17 “(9) image archive warehousing services;

18 “(10) electronic check presentation services;

19 “(11) adjustment of incorrect debits or credits
20 services;

21 “(12) return of ‘bad’ checks services;

22 “(13) transportation of paper checks services in
23 the clearing process;

24 “(14) presentation point services;

25 “(15) payor bank service or controlled disburse-
26 ments services;

1 “(16) any other service which the Board offers,
2 directly or through a Federal reserve bank; and

3 “(17) each readily identifiable component of
4 any service described in a preceding paragraph.”.

5 (2) PUBLICATION WITHIN 60 DAYS.—Before the
6 end of the 60-day period beginning on the date of
7 the enactment of this Act, the Board of Governors
8 of the Federal Reserve System shall publish a revi-
9 sion of the schedule of fees required under section
10 11A of the Federal Reserve Act which reflects the
11 changes required in the schedule because of the
12 amendment made by paragraph (1).

13 (b) PRICING OF SERVICE COMPONENTS.—Section
14 11A of the Federal Reserve Act (12 U.S.C. 248a) is
15 amended—

16 (1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as
17 subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

18 (2) by inserting after subsection (c) the follow-
19 ing new subsection:

20 “(d) PRICING OF SERVICE COMPONENTS.—

21 “(1) REQUEST FOR SEPARATE PRICING OF
22 COMPONENT.—If—

23 “(A) any person seeks to compete with the
24 Board or any Federal reserve bank in the provi-

1 sion of any component of any service referred to
2 in subsection (b); and

3 “(B) the Board has not provided an ex-
4 plicit price for such component in the fee sched-
5 ule maintained by the Board under this section,
6 such person may submit a description of the service
7 to be provided and a request for a statement of an
8 explicit price for the provision of such component by
9 the Board or bank.

10 “(2) ACTION ON REQUEST.—Except as provided
11 under paragraph (3), the Board shall—

12 “(A) comply with any request submitted
13 under paragraph (1); and

14 “(B) include the price in the schedule of
15 fees maintained by the Board before the end of
16 the 60-day period beginning on the date the
17 Board receives such request.

18 “(3) FRIVOLOUS AND MERITLESS REQUEST.—
19 The Board may decline any request under paragraph
20 (1) which the Board determines, in accordance with
21 regulations which the Board shall prescribe, is frivo-
22 lous and without any merit whatsoever if the Board
23 publishes a notice of the findings and conclusions of
24 the Board with regard to such determination.”.

1 (c) DOCUMENTATION.—Section 714 of title 31,
2 United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
3 following new subsection:

4 “(e) REVIEW OF PRICING OF SERVICES PROVIDED
5 BY THE FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General
7 shall conduct an annual audit of the Board of Gov-
8 ernors of the Federal Reserve System and the Fed-
9 eral reserve banks to determine whether the require-
10 ments of subsection (c)(3) of section 11A of the
11 Federal Reserve Act are being met with respect to
12 each component of any service referred to in sub-
13 section (b) of such section.

14 “(2) DOCUMENTATION.—Notwithstanding any
15 restriction in this section or any other provision of
16 law relating to the scope of any audit of the Board
17 of Governors of the Federal Reserve System or any
18 Federal reserve bank by the Comptroller General—

19 “(A) the Board and each Federal reserve
20 bank shall maintain such documents and infor-
21 mation as the Comptroller General determines
22 may be useful for purposes of any audit under
23 paragraph (1) for such reasonable period of
24 time as the Comptroller General determines to
25 be appropriate; and

1 “(B) the Comptroller General shall have
2 full access to such documents for purposes of
3 any audit under paragraph (1).

4 “(3) REPORT.—A report on each audit con-
5 ducted under paragraph (1) shall be submitted an-
6 nually to the Congress.”.

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