

TITLE 10, CHAPTER 15, CALSAVERS RETIREMENT SAVINGS BOARD

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING ACTION

AMENDMENT TO CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 10, CHAPTER 15,  
REGARDING THE CALSAVERS RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROGRAM

Notice published March 19, 2021

The CalSavers Retirement Savings Board (“Board”) proposes to adopt the regulations amendments described below after considering all comments, objections, and recommendations regarding the proposed action.

WRITTEN COMMENT PERIOD

Any interested person, or their authorized representative, may submit written comments relevant to the proposed regulatory action to the Board. Comments may be submitted by email to [CalSavers@sto.ca.gov](mailto:CalSavers@sto.ca.gov), or by mail:

Regular Mail

CalSavers Retirement Savings Board  
Re: Rulemaking for the CalSavers Retirement Savings Program  
P.O. Box 942809  
Sacramento, CA 95815

Courier Delivery

CalSavers Retirement Savings Board  
Re: Rulemaking for the CalSavers Retirement Savings Program  
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 105  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The written comment period will close May 3, 2021. The Board will only consider comments received by that time. All written comments received by the Board are subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act.

PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing is not scheduled. A public hearing will be held if any interested person, or their duly authorized representative, submits a written request for a public hearing to the contact person listed below no later than 15 days prior to the close of the written comment period.

AVAILABILITY OF CHANGED OR MODIFIED TEXT

After considering all timely and relevant comments received, the Board may adopt the proposed regulations substantially as described in this notice. If the Board makes modifications that are sufficiently related to the original proposed text, it will make the modified text (with the changes clearly indicated) available to the public at <https://www.treasurer.ca.gov/calsavers/regulations/index.asp> for at least 15 days before the Board adopts the regulations as revised. The Board will accept written comments on the modified regulations for 15 days after the date on which they are made available.

AUTHORITY AND REFERENCE

Authority: Section 100048 of Government Code provides the CalSavers Retirement Savings Board the authority to adopt regulations to implement Title 21 of the Government Code.

Reference: Sections 100000, 100002, 100004, 100008, 100010, 100012, 100014, 100032, 100033, 100034, 100043, 100046, and 100048, Government Code.

## INFORMATIVE DIGEST

Existing law establishes the CalSavers Retirement Savings Program (“Program”) and Board in Title 21 (commencing with Section 100000) of the Government Code. The Program requires eligible employers, as defined in statute and regulation, to make available a payroll deposit retirement savings arrangement so that eligible employees may contribute a portion of their salary or wages to a retirement savings program account in the Program, as specified. Existing law authorizes employees to opt out of participating in the Program, as specified. Existing law grants the Board the power to administer the enforcement of employer compliance, including the power to impose specified penalties on employers who fail to allow eligible employees to participate in the program, subject to an appeals and collections process administered by the Franchise Tax Board, as specified.

On October 31, 2019, the Office of Administrative Law (“OAL”) approved permanent regulations for the Program that implement, interpret, and make specific the rules, policies, and procedures for the Program. Specifically, these regulations accomplish the following:

- a. Define terms used in the regulations and further clarify the meaning of definitions in statute;
- b. Define employer eligibility for the Program and establish the means by which the Program shall determine that eligibility;
- c. Establish the deadlines and processes by which eligible employers are required to register for the Program;
- d. Define the duties for participating employers and the processes by which participating employers are required to comply with the requirements of the Program;
- e. Establish processes for the enrollment of eligible employees into the Program;
- f. Define the default account settings for participants whom do not make an alternative election;
- g. Define the alternative elections available to participants;
- h. Establish the policies for the participation of individuals in the Program outside of an employment relationship with an eligible employer; and
- i. Define the processes and policies for contributions, distributions, and the transfer of savings.

Throughout 2020, the Program filed multiple sets of emergency regulations to achieve several programmatic amendments. The changes made were as follows:

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board extended the first employer registration deadline in April 2020 through the emergency rulemaking process. The deadline for employers with more than 100 employees was changed from June 30, 2020, to September 30, 2020.
- On June 29, 2020, Governor Newsom signed AB 102 (Chapter 21, Statutes of 2020), which made a variety of amendments to the Program’s governing statutes. The amendments, among other things, changed the name of the Program’s governing board and the Program trust account. Nonsubstantive changes to existing regulations were filed with the OAL on July 7, 2020, to change the Board and trust account name pursuant to Section 100 of Title 1 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

- On July 27, 2020, the Board approved a variety of regulations amendments, some in response to the passage of AB 102. The amendments added a new default investment fund for participants born January 1, 2003, to January 1, 2007, a change that was necessary to make before December 31, 2020; removed a feature in which eligible employees who previously opted out are subjected again to automatic enrollment; clarified the tax-qualified retirement plans that, if offered by an employer, would render them exempt; and made a variety of technical amendments that improve the clarity of the regulations.
- At the December 7, 2020, Board meeting, the Board voted to approve regulations amendments to change the default investment option, clarify processes for enforcing employer compliance, reduce the minimum contribution amounts for non-payroll contributions, clarify the frequency for recurring non-payroll contributions, clarify that rollovers and transfers into a Program account are permissible, and amend the definition of a tax-qualified plan.

The Board is authorized under Government Code Section 100048 to adopt regulations it deems necessary to implement the Program consistent with the Internal Revenue Code and regulations issued pursuant to that code to ensure that the program meets all criteria for federal tax-exempt benefits. Government Code Section 100048 deems the adoption, amendment, repeal, or readoption of those regulations to address an emergency for the purposes of the Administrative Procedure Act and, more specifically, Government Code Sections 11346.1 and 11349.6 and, thereby, exempts the Board from the requirements of Government Code Section 11346.1(b).

#### Pre-Rulemaking Activity

These amendments were made through three separate rulemakings in 2020: an extension of the first employer deadline due to the COVID-19 pandemic by emergency rulemaking in the spring, a variety of programmatic changes by emergency rulemaking due to the passage of AB 102 made in the summer, and several changes by emergency rulemaking in the winter.

- On April 15, 2020, the Board approved emergency regulations amendments to the Program to extend the first employer registration deadline from June 30, 2020, to September 30, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Upon approval by the OAL, the amendments went into effect on May 4, 2020.
- On June 29, 2020, Governor Newsom signed AB 102, which made a variety of amendments to the Program's governing statutes. On July 27, 2020, the Board approved a variety of emergency regulations amendments, some due in part to passage of AB 102. The amendments removed a feature in which eligible employees who previously opted out are subjected again to automatic enrollment; added a new default investment fund for participants born January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2007, a change that was necessary to make before January 1, 2021; clarified the tax-qualified retirement plans that, if offered by an employer, would render them exempt; and made a variety of technical amendments that improve the clarity of the regulations, including the removal of obsolete and repetitive language.
- At the October 19, 2020, Board meeting, the Board voted to authorize the executive director to develop amendments necessary to change the default investment option to one in which contributions are directed to the Capital Preservation Fund (referred to as the Money Market Fund) for the first 30 days of employee participation and, on the 31<sup>st</sup> day, have all funds directed into a Target Retirement Fund selected based on the participating employee's age. At the meeting, the executive director also informed the Board it would

consider a package of regulations amendments, including the enforcement of employer compliance and reduction of the minimum contribution amount for non-payroll contributions at the subsequent meeting.

- At the December 7, 2020, Board meeting, the Board voted to approve emergency regulations amendments to change the default investment option to one in which contributions are directed to the Capital Preservation Fund (referred to as the Money Market Fund) for 30 days of employee participation and, on the 31<sup>st</sup> day, have all funds directed into a Target Retirement Fund selected based on the participating employee's age. Due to delays in technology necessary for the default investment option change, the regulations amendments stipulate the changes will take effect April 8, 2021. The Board also approved emergency regulations amendments to clarify the processes for enforcing employer compliance, reduce the minimum contribution amounts for non-payroll contributions, clarify the frequency for recurring non-payroll contributions, clarify that rollovers and transfers into a Program account, and amend the definition of a tax-qualified plan.

In addition to the public comment periods involved in the rulemaking process and the public comment periods at each Board meeting, the Board also received and considered input from Program employers and participants that have already begun participating in the Program. Through our client services team, our internal outreach team, local chambers of commerce and other business associations, interactive webinars with the public that occur multiple times a week, and our social media platforms, the Board receives regular feedback about facets of the Program, thoughts on how the Program could be improved, as well as general praise and criticism.

*Anticipated Benefits of the Proposed Regulations:*

About half of working Californians are on track to live at or near poverty upon reaching retirement age. Without the ease and simplicity of regular payroll contributions through a workplace retirement savings arrangement, many simply do not save for retirement. While the problem of retirement insecurity has many causes, including low wages and rising costs of living, research shows access to a retirement savings vehicle makes individuals 15 times more likely to save for retirement. The Program will ensure a majority of California workers have access to a workplace retirement savings vehicle by mandating that employers either sponsor their own plan or register for the Program. The Program and its associated laws were established in an effort to improve retirement security for working Californians. The operation of the program in general is expected to benefit participating employees and individuals by providing a simple pathway to improve their retirement security.

The delay of the first employer deadline from June 30, 2020, to September 30, 2020, benefited participating employers by allowing them more time to respond due to the impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to their compliance with the Program.

The elimination of the open enrollment period lessens the burden on non-participating employees by not making them opt out multiple times if they do not wish to participate. The regulations amendment also benefits participating employers, who may have had to respond to dissatisfied eligible employees who may not wish to be required to opt out multiple times. Additionally, the amendment may benefit participating employers by removing a feature that would have likely required them to update eligible employee contact information.

The changes to the default investment option encourages participants to invest their funds in a manner that is more likely to accrue meaningful interest more quickly than in the previous default investment option, avoiding loss of funds from the current low-interest environment and allowing the opportunity to potentially grow their savings faster. The changes in non-recurring non-payroll contributions requirements allows participants to be more flexible with their contributions and

encourage more frequent savings. The routine addition of more target date funds to the available investment fund list ensures younger eligible employees can participate in the Program according to its default investment option.

Evaluation of Inconsistency/Incompatibility with Existing State Regulations:

The Board evaluated whether or not there are any other regulations that may be adversely impacted by the adoption of these proposed regulations. Because these regulations are solely for the purpose of operating the Program, and no other regulations exist in the California Code of Regulations pertaining to the operation of the Program, the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations.

DISCLOSURES REGARDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

*The Board has made the following determinations regarding fiscal impact:*

- Mandate on local agencies and school districts: none.
- Cost to any local agency or school district that must be reimbursed in accordance with Government Code Sections 17500 through 17630: none.
- Cost or savings to any state agency: none.
- Other nondiscretionary cost or savings imposed on local agencies: none.
- Costs or savings in federal funding to the state: none.
- Cost impacts on a representative person or business: For participating employers, the Program requires no direct costs or fees to participate. Although participating employers' role in facilitating the Program requires minimal activities, employers will be required to perform some duties upon the initial registration and ongoing maintenance to facilitate payroll deductions and assist with the enrollment of new employees. For those duties, the Board estimates approximately \$157 in opportunity costs for the staff time necessary to register and annual ongoing opportunity costs of \$135.

Participation in the Program is completely voluntary for eligible employees. Participating employees will pay an administrative fee taken from their contributions and investment interest. Those fees currently range between 0.82 and 0.95 percent depending on the investment option selected by the participant.

The regulations amendments included in this rulemaking do not materially change the duties of participating employers nor do they impact the administrative fees for participants, and, therefore, cause no changes to the cost impacts on a representative person or business.

The Board is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action.

- Small Business Determination: The regulations amendments included in this rulemaking do not materially change the duties of participating employers nor do they impact the administrative fees for participants, and, therefore, cause no changes to the cost impacts on a representative person or business.

- Significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting businesses, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states: none.
- Significant effects on housing costs: none.
- The proposed regulations do not require a report to be made.

## RESULTS OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

Program staff analysed the economic impacts caused by a direct result of this rulemaking package. These regulations amendments do not materially change the duties or requirements of participating employers so there is no expected change to those business impacts as a result of this rulemaking. The following list identifies the estimated impacts by each category of potential impacts.

The creation or elimination of jobs within the state: no impact.

The creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses within the state: no impact.

The expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state: no impact.

The benefits of the regulation to the health and welfare of California residents, worker safety, and the state's environment: see previous section on anticipated benefits.

## CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with Government Code Section 11346.5 (a)(13), the Board must determine that no reasonable alternative considered by the agency or that has otherwise been identified and brought to the attention of the agency would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the action is proposed, would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed action, or would be more cost effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

The Board invites interested persons to present statements or arguments with respect to alternatives to the proposed regulations during the written comment period.

## CONTACT PERSONS

Inquiries concerning the proposed administrative action may be directed to:

Eric Lawyer  
Director of Policy & Communications  
CalSavers Retirement Savings Board  
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 105  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Telephone: (916) 653-1748  
Email: [Eric.Lawyer@sto.ca.gov](mailto:Eric.Lawyer@sto.ca.gov)

Please direct any inquiries regarding the regulatory process to Mr. Lawyer at the above address. The designated backup contact person is Jacob Schafer, who can be reached at [Jacob.Schafer@sto.ca.gov](mailto:Jacob.Schafer@sto.ca.gov) or by phone at (916) 653-1744.

## AVAILABILITY OF STATEMENT OF REASONS, TEXT OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS, AND RULEMAKING FILE

The Board will have the rulemaking file available for inspection online at <https://www.treasurer.ca.gov/calsavers/regulations/index.asp>. To request a physical inspection of the rulemaking file, please contact the contact persons identified above and they will schedule a time and location for the inspection.

As of the date of this notice is published in the Notice Register, the rulemaking file consists of this notice, the proposed text of the regulations, the economic and fiscal impact analysis, and the initial statement of reasons. Copies may be obtained by contacting Eric Lawyer at the email address or by calling the phone number listed above.

## AVAILABILITY OF THE FINAL STATEMENT OF REASONS

After it is completed, a copy of the Final Statement of Reasons may be obtained by submitting a written request to the contact person identified above.