



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

EXECUTIVE ORDER

**INDEPENDENCE OF AUDITORS PERFORMING SERVICES FOR THE OFFICE OF
THE STATE COMPTROLLER AND THE COMMON RETIREMENT FUND**

WHEREAS, improper and deceptive accounting practices by auditing firms and major corporations in recent years resulted in massive losses at a number of corporations, cost thousands of workers their jobs, as well as their retirement savings, and cost investors (both individuals and institutions) billions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, disclosures regarding these practices created a heightened concern over the ability of auditing firms to maintain audit independence when they are permitted to provide consulting services to the same client; and

WHEREAS, situations where the same audit partner is responsible for conducting or supervising the audit of a client in several successive years and situations where auditors are permitted to accept employment with audit clients were also identified as creating the risk of diminished audit independence; and

WHEREAS, the Comptroller General of the United States promulgated generally accepted government auditing standards expressly prohibiting auditors from providing certain non-audit services to an audit client; and

WHEREAS, Congress responded to these issues by enacting the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, which includes provisions creating an oversight board for accounting firms auditing publicly-traded companies, addressing auditor independence issues and expressly prohibiting an audit firm from performing certain non-audit services contemporaneously with an audit, and imposing certain governance requirements on publicly-traded companies; and

WHEREAS, it is impossible to specify all situations that could arise that would create a conflict of interest or the appearance of diminished audit independence in contracts between audit firms and the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) or the New York State Common Retirement Fund (CRF);

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Thomas P. DiNapoli, as the administrative head of OSC and Sole Trustee of the CRF, in order to: (i) prevent the potential conflict of interest presented when a firm providing audit services is in a position to gain financially from providing certain non-audit services to the same client; (ii) avoid the risk of a conflict of interest or the appearance of diminished audit independence where auditor-client relationships are longstanding or where auditors are permitted to accept employment with audit clients; (iii) preserve the independence necessary for sound and reliable financial review, and (iv) provide for an on-going process for review of proposed contracts with audit firms and provide the flexibility in a designated group of senior managers to promulgate additional audit independence standards for OSC and CRF, as appropriate, do hereby order and direct the following policy and procedures for OSC and CRF in connection with new procurements:

First, an Audit Oversight Board (the Board) is established for OSC and CRF, which will consist of the following members:

- First Deputy Comptroller;
- Executive Deputy Comptroller for State and Local Government Accountability;
- General Counsel;
- Executive Deputy Comptroller for Operations.
- Deputy Comptroller for Retirement Services

Second, the Board shall oversee the procurement of all audit services and may promulgate guidelines setting out auditor independence standards for OSC and CRF; the guidelines may impose auditor independence standards in addition to these set forth herein and may be amended from time to time.

Third, before any contract is entered into by OSC or CRF with an audit firm, the Board shall review the proposed contract in the context of any prior, current and pending contracts with such firm for compliance with legal and professional audit standards and with the terms of this Order and guidelines promulgated by the Board.

Fourth, no audit firm shall be hired to perform services for OSC or CRF unless the provision of such services is consistent with standards promulgated by the GAO.

Fifth, no audit firm shall be hired to perform services for OSC or CRF unless the provision of such services is consistent with the auditor independence provisions of section 201 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act¹.

Sixth, no audit firm shall be hired to perform services for OSC or CRF unless the provision of such services is consistent with any additional auditor independence standards that may be issued by the Board, as amended from time to time.

Seventh, where any firm performing audit services for OSC or CRF seeks to respond to a solicitation for services by OSC or CRF for non-audit services to be rendered during the term of the audit contract, and where any firm performing non-audit services for OSC or CRF seeks to respond to a solicitation for services by OSC or CRF for audit services to be rendered during the term of the contract for non-audit services, the firm shall submit with its response a statement (1) setting out the reasons that the firm could perform services under both contracts without any impairment of independence under GAO standards, (2) attesting that the proposed activity is not one which, if the services were subject to the provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, would be precluded under the auditor independence provisions set out in section 201 of the Act, and (3) attesting that the engagements would comply with any additional written standards promulgated by the Board in advance of the solicitation for services to prevent an impairment or the appearance of an impairment of independence arising from two contracts with the same firm; all such statements on independence submitted by any firm shall be reviewed by the Board prior to consideration of a proposal submitted in response to a solicitation for services by OSC or CRF and the Board shall determine whether the firm can be considered for the contract consistent with the requisite independence standards.

Eighth, the lead or coordinating partner having primary responsibility for the audit, or the audit partner having responsibility for reviewing the audit, shall not serve in such capacity for more than five consecutive years.

Ninth, no appointment or promotion to an exempt, policy-making position in OSC shall be approved for any partner or other professional employed by a firm that provided audit services to OSC or CRF during the two-year period preceding the date of the appointment or promotion.

¹ Section 201 expressly prohibits an audit firm from providing the following non-audit services contemporaneously with an audit:

- (1) Bookkeeping or other services related to the accounting records or financial statements of the audit client;
- (2) Financial information systems design and implementation;
- (3) Appraisal or valuation services, fairness opinions, or contribution-in-kind reports;
- (4) Actuarial services;
- (5) Internal audit outsourcing services;
- (6) Management functions or human resources;
- (7) Broker or dealer, investment adviser, or investment banking services;
- (8) Legal services and expert services unrelated to the audit; and
- (9) Any other service that the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board determines, by regulation, is impermissible.

TPD/s

Thomas P. DiNapoli

Comptroller, State of New York

Last Revised Date: February 19, 2009

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