

B. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
(Randall C. Sumner, Vice President) 411
Locust Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63166-
2034:

1. *Mid-Missouri Bancshares, Inc.*,
Springfield, Missouri; to acquire at least
96.3 percent of the voting shares of
Town and Country Bank of the Ozarks,
Republic, Missouri.

Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve
System, September 11, 2003.

Robert deV. Frierson,

Deputy Secretary of the Board.

[FR Doc. 03-23665 Filed 9-16-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6210-01-S

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

[File No. 011 0222]

South Georgia Health Partners, L.L.C., et al.; Analysis To Aid Public Comment

AGENCY: Federal Trade Commission.

ACTION: Proposed consent agreement.

SUMMARY: The consent agreement in this matter settles alleged violations of federal law prohibiting unfair or deceptive acts or practices or unfair methods of competition. The attached Analysis to Aid Public Comment describes both the allegations in the draft complaint that accompanies the consent agreement and the terms of the consent order—embodied in the consent agreement—that would settle these allegations.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before October 9, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments filed in paper form should be directed to: FTC/Office of the Secretary, Room 159-H, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20580. Comments filed in electronic form should be directed to: consentagreement@ftc.gov, as prescribed in the Supplementary Information section.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Steven Osnowitz, FTC, Bureau of
Competition, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue,
NW., Washington, DC 20580, (202) 326-
2746.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to section 6(f) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 38 Stat. 721, 15 U.S.C. 46(f), and § 2.34 of the Commission's rules of practice, 16 CFR 2.34, notice is hereby given that the above-captioned consent agreement containing a consent order to cease and desist, having been filed with and accepted, subject to final approval, by the Commission, has been placed on the public record for a period of thirty (30) days. The following Analysis to Aid Public Comment

describes the terms of the consent agreement, and the allegations in the complaint. An electronic copy of the full text of the consent agreement package can be obtained from the FTC Home Page (for September 9, 2003), on the World Wide Web, at "<http://www.ftc.gov/os/2003/09/index.htm>." A paper copy can be obtained from the FTC Public Reference Room, Room 130-H, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20580, either in person or by calling (202) 326-2222.

Public comments are invited, and may be filed with the Commission in either paper or electronic form. Comments filed in paper form should be directed to: FTC/Office of the Secretary, Room 159-H, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20580. If a comment contains nonpublic information, it must be filed in paper form, and the first page of the document must be clearly labeled "confidential." Comments that do not contain any nonpublic information may instead be filed in electronic form (in ASCII format, WordPerfect, or Microsoft Word) as part of or as an attachment to email messages directed to the following email box: consentagreement@ftc.gov. Such comments will be considered by the Commission and will be available for inspection and copying at its principal office in accordance with § 4.9(b)(6)(ii) of the Commission's rules of practice, 16 CFR 4.9(b)(6)(ii).

Analysis of Agreement Containing Consent Order To Aid Public Comment

The Federal Trade Commission has accepted, subject to final approval, and agreement containing a proposed consent order with South Georgia Health Partners, L.L.C. ("SGHP"), five other physician-hospital organizations ("PHOs"), and three independent practice associations ("IPAs"). The agreement settles charges that these nine respondents violated section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. 45, by facilitating and implementing agreements among SGHP's members to fix prices and other terms of dealing with employers, health insurance firms, and other third-party payors ("payors") for physician and hospital services, and to refuse to deal with payors except on collectively determined terms. The proposed consent order has been placed on the public record for 30 days to receive comments from interested persons. Comments received during this period will become part of the public record. After 30 days, the Commission will review the agreement and the comments received, and will decide whether it should withdraw from the agreement or make the proposed order final.

The purpose of this analysis is to facilitate public comment on the proposed order. The analysis is not intended to constitute an official interpretation of the agreement and proposed order, or to modify their terms in any way. The proposed consent order has been entered into for settlement purposes only and does not constitute an admission by any respondent that said respondent violated the law or that the facts alleged in the complaint (other than jurisdictional facts) are true.

The Complaint Allegations

According to the Commission compliant, SGHP is a for-profit PHO, the membership of which includes competing hospitals and competing physicians. All its members are located in a region of south Georgia. Through SGHP, the members bargain collectively for higher prices for hospital and physician services. SGHP consists of approximately 500 physicians, as well as 15 hospitals with a total of over 2,200 staffed beds. With one exception, SGHP's member hospitals are the sole hospitals in each of the 15 counties where they are located. SGHP's member physicians constitute approximately 90% of all physicians who practice in the area.

Five respondents—each itself a PHO (the "Owner PHOs")—own equal shares of SGHP: Health Alliance of the South, South Georgia PHO, Coastal Plains Health Alliance, Colquitt County PHO, and Satilla HealthNet. Each has equal representation on SGHP's Board of Directors. The three IPA respondents—Qualicare Physicians Association, South Georgia Physician Network, and Colquitt County Physicians—are the physician components of three of the owner PHOs. The complaint alleges that these eight respondents, with and through SGHP, agreed to fix physician and hospital prices.

Physicians sometimes join IPAs, and physicians and hospitals sometimes form PHOs, to market jointly their health care services to payors or engage in other collective activities. Such organizations may not lawfully orchestrate agreements among their members on the prices to demand from payors, unless the members are integrated in a manner that creates significant efficiencies such as lower costs, and unless the price agreements are reasonably necessary to obtain those efficiencies. According to the compliant, neither SGHP, nor any other respondent, engaged in such integration so as to justify their price-fixing activities.

The complaint further alleges that, with respect to physician services,