

March 2000 edition of SF 278 report forms are provided for completion. In addition, information regarding these changes is being posted on OGE's Web site.

Effective January 1, 2002, GSA raised "minimal value" under the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act, 5 U.S.C. 7342, to \$285 or less for the three-year period 2002–2004. See 67 FR 56495–56496 (September 4, 2002). As a result, OGE has advised agencies and revised its financial disclosure regulations to reflect the increase in the thresholds for SF 278 reporting of gifts and travel reimbursements received from any one source to "more than \$285" for the aggregation level for reporting and to "\$114 or less" for the de minimis aggregation exception threshold. These Ethics Act reporting thresholds are tied to any adjustment in foreign gifts minimal value over \$250 (see 5 U.S.C. app. section 102(a)(2)(A) & (B)). See OGE's September 27, 2002 memorandum to designated agency ethics officials (DO–02–021) and 67 FR 61761–61762 (October 2, 2002). Both the GSA and OGE rulemakings and OGE's memorandum are posted on the OGE Web site.

In addition, OGE is in the process of updating the OGE/GOVT–1 system of records notice (covering SF 278 Public Financial Disclosure Reports and other name-retrieved ethics program records). As a result, the Privacy Act Statement, which includes paraphrases of the routine uses on page 11 of the instructions on the SF 278, will be affected. A summary of the anticipated changes relevant to that SF 278 statement has been prepared for inclusion with the paperwork clearance submission to OMB. Once the new language in OGE's forthcoming Privacy Act notice is finalized (anticipated completion date is spring 2003), OGE will advise departments and agencies of the Privacy Act Statement changes (with notice to OMB at that time) without further paperwork clearance.

During the last session of Congress, a bill (S. 1811) was introduced to amend the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. app.) to streamline the financial disclosure process for executive branch employees. The bill was not enacted, but may be introduced again in the current session of Congress. If the bill is enacted, the public financial disclosure requirements will change, and the SF 278 will have to be revised accordingly. At that time, OGE would seek paperwork renewal from OMB and standard form clearance from GSA for the revised SF 278.

For now, OGE will continue to make the unmodified SF 278 available to

departments and agencies and their reporting employees through the Forms, Publications & Other Ethics Documents section of OGE's Web site. This allows employees two different fillable options for preparing their report on a computer (in addition to a downloadable blank form), although a printout and manual signature of the form are still required unless specifically approved otherwise by OGE.

The SF 278 is completed by candidates, nominees, new entrants, incumbents and terminees of certain high-level positions in the executive branch of the Federal Government. The Office of Government Ethics, along with the agencies concerned, conducts the review of the SF 278 reports of Presidential nominees subject to Senate confirmation. This group of nominee reports forms, together with those of terminees from such positions who may file after leaving the Government, forms the basis for OGE's paperwork estimates in this notice.

In light of OGE's experience over the past three years (1999–2001), the estimate of the total number, on average, of such nominees' SF 278 forms expected to be filed annually at OGE by members of the public (as opposed to current Federal employees) is 449. (The 2002 figures are not yet available.) This estimated number is based primarily on the forms processed at OGE by private citizen Presidential nominees to positions subject to Senate confirmation (and their private representatives—lawyers, accountants, brokers and bankers) and those who file termination reports from such positions after their Government service ends, as well as Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates who are private citizens. The OGE estimate covers the next three years, 2003–2005 including a significant increase in reports anticipated with the fall 2004 Presidential election and following transition. The prior paperwork burden estimate was 260 forms per year. The estimated average amount of time to complete the report form, including review of the instructions and gathering of needed information, remains the same at three hours. Thus, the overall estimated annual public burden for the SF 278 for the private citizen/representative nominee and terminnee report forms processed at the Office of Government Ethics is being adjusted to 1,347 (from 780) hours.

Moreover, OGE estimates, based on the agency ethics program questionnaire responses for 1999–2001 (the 2002 figures are not available), that some 21,200 SF 278 report forms are filed annually at departments and agencies

throughout the executive branch. Most of those executive branch filers are current Federal employees at the time they file, but certain candidates for President and Vice President, nominees, new entrants and terminees complete the form either before or after their Government service. The percentage of private citizen filers branchwide is estimated at no more than 5% to 10%, or some 1,060 to 2,120 per year at most.

Public comment is invited on each aspect of the SF 278 Public Financial Disclosure Report as set forth in this notice, including specifically views on the need for and practical utility of this collection of information, the accuracy of OGE's burden estimate, the potential for enhancement of quality, utility and clarity of the information collected, and the minimization of burden (including the use of information technology).

Any comments received in response to this notice will be summarized for, and may be included with, OGE's request for extension of OMB paperwork approval for this information collection. Comments will also become a matter of public record.

Approved: December 30, 2002.

Amy L. Comstock,

Director, Office of Government Ethics.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request

AGENCY: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, HHS.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the intention of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to request the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to allow the proposed information collection project: "Needs Assessment of Primary Care Practice-Based Research Networks (PBRNs)". In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104–13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)), AHRQ invites the public to comment on this proposed information collection.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by March 10, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be submitted to: Cynthia D. McMichael, Reports Clearance Officer, AHRQ, 2101