

Consumer Protection: Service Members

Department of Defense Final Rule on Limitations on Consumer Credit Extended to Service Members and Dependents (Talent Amendment)

The Department of Defense (DoD) has published the attached final rule stipulating the terms of certain credit extensions to active duty service members and their dependents ("covered borrowers"). The rule covers payday loans, motor vehicle title loans, and tax refund anticipation loans, as defined by DoD, and applies to all persons engaged in the business of extending such credit and their assignees. For these defined transactions with covered borrowers ("covered transactions"), the DoD rule:

- Limits interest to a 36 percent "military annual percentage rate (MAPR)" that comprises all fees and charges, including those for single premium credit insurance and other ancillary products sold in connection with the transaction; and
- Requires that certain oral and written loan disclosures be provided before the issuance of a covered transaction.

The DoD rule provides:

- The applicable consumer disclosures;
- The method for calculating the MAPR (as opposed to the Truth in Lending Act APR);
- The maximum amount and types of fees that may be charged; and
- A "safe harbor" for identifying covered borrowers, including a model borrower identification statement that creditors may use.

The DoD rule prohibits:

- mandatory arbitration;
- waiver of legal rights;
- unreasonable notice requirements as a condition for legal action;
- payment allotments; and
- prepayment penalties.

The rule further limits or restricts:

- rollovers and refinancings; and
- the use of a check or other method of access to a covered borrower's account.

Creditors offering any covered transactions are subject to criminal and civil penalties if they violate the rule. Moreover, consumer credit contracts that are not in compliance with the rule will be deemed void from inception.

The final rule will take effect on October 1, 2007, and will apply to covered transactions that are consummated on or after that date. All creditors that offer any covered transactions are expected to be in full compliance by October 1, 2007.

Sandra L. Thompson
Director
Division of Supervision and Consumer Protection