

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDING
BEFORE THE
SECURITIES COMMISSIONER OF SOUTH CAROLINA

In the matter of:)	
)	ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT ORDER
WELLS FARGO INVESTMENTS, LLC,)	
)	File Number 10019
)	
Respondent.)	
)	

WHEREAS, Wells Fargo Investments, LLC ("WFI") is a broker-dealer registered in the State of South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, WFI's activities regarding the marketing of auction rate securities have been the subject of coordinated investigations conducted by a multistate task force; and

WHEREAS, WFI has cooperated fully with regulators conducting the investigations by providing documentary evidence and other materials and by providing regulators with access to information relevant to their investigations; and

WHEREAS, on November 18, 2009, WFI and the multistate task force reached an agreement to resolve the investigations relating to WFI's marketing of ARS to certain customers; and

WHEREAS, WFI agrees, among other things, to purchase certain auction rate securities from customers and to make certain payments; and

WHEREAS, WFI elects to waive permanently any right to a hearing and appeal under South Carolina law with respect to this Administrative Consent Order (the "Order"); and

WHEREAS, WFI admits the jurisdiction of the Securities Commissioner of the State of South Carolina (the "Securities Commissioner") and consents to the entry of this Order by the Securities Commissioner; and

WHEREAS, Wells Fargo Securities, LLC ("WFS"), as successor to Wells Fargo Brokerage Services, LLC ("WFBS"), and Wells Fargo Institutional Securities, LLC ("WFIS") have

1 voluntarily agreed to purchase ARS from certain customers, as described in Section IV below, and
2 to use best efforts to provide liquidity solutions for certain other customers; and

3 WHEREAS, WFI neither admits nor denies the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law
4 contained in this Order;

5 NOW, THEREFORE, the Securities Commissioner, as administrator of the South Carolina
6 Uniform Securities Act of 2005 (the "Act"), hereby enters this Order:

7 I.

8 **FINDINGS OF FACT**

9 **Background**

10 1. Auction Rate Securities ("ARS") are long-term bonds issued by municipalities,
11 corporations, and student loan companies, or perpetual equity instruments issued by closed-end
12 mutual funds, with variable interest rates that reset through a bidding process known as a Dutch
13 auction.

14 2. In a successful Dutch auction, ARS are auctioned at par and bids with successively
15 higher rates are accepted by the auction agent for the issuer until all of the available securities are
16 sold. All ARS are then purchased or sold at the lowest interest rate bid that will result in all ARS
17 placed up for auction being sold. If there are not enough buy orders to purchase all the securities
18 being sold at auction, a failed auction occurs. In the event of an auction failure, the issuer of the
19 ARS pays a default interest rate until the next successful auction. Broker-dealers that served as
20 dealers for the auctions sometimes placed "support bids" on their own behalf in order to prevent
21 auction failures.

22 3. Beginning on or about February 13, 2008, there were not enough purchasers for
23 ARS at many auctions. The broker-dealers that had previously supported the auctions for these
24 securities ceased their practice of bidding to prevent auction failures. As a result, the ARS market
25 experienced widespread failed auctions. ARS purchasers who wished to sell their ARS were
26 forced to continue holding their positions.

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1 because some WFI registered agents were not aware of significant aspects of the auction rate
2 market.

3 11. WFI did not establish specific written supervisory procedures for the review of ARS
4 transactions, nor did WFI train supervisory personnel on how to review ARS transactions.

5 II.

6 CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

7 The Securities Commissioner has jurisdiction over this matter.

8 For the reasons alleged in the Findings of Fact, above, WFI failed to supervise
9 reasonably its registered agents in connection with the marketing of ARS to its customers.

10 The Securities Commissioner finds the following relief appropriate and in the public
11 interest.

12 III.

13 ORDER

14 On the basis of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and WFI's consent to the entry of
15 this Order, for the sole purpose of settling this matter prior to a hearing and without admitting or
16 denying the Findings of Fact or Conclusions of Law,

17 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

18 1. This Order concludes the investigation by the Securities Commissioner and any
19 other action that the Securities Commissioner could commence under applicable South Carolina
20 law on behalf of the State of South Carolina as it relates to WFI's marketing of ARS to customers.

21 2. This Order is entered into solely for the purpose of resolving the above referenced
22 multistate investigation and is not intended to be used for any other purpose.

23 3. Within ten (10) days from the entry of this Order, WFI shall pay the sum of three
24 thousand eight hundred dollars (\$3,800.00) to the State of South Carolina, which amount
25 constitutes the State of South Carolina's proportionate share of the multistate settlement amount of
26 one million nine hundred thousand dollars (\$1,900,000.00).

1 4. The total amount paid to Securities Commissioner, pursuant to the foregoing
2 paragraph, shall remain at three thousand eight hundred dollars (\$3,800.00) regardless of whether
3 another state securities regulator determines not to accept WFI's state settlement offer.

4 5. In addition to the payment required by Section III, Paragraph 3, within ten (10) days
5 from the entry of this Order, WFI shall pay the sum of two hundred dollars (\$200.00) to the
6 Securities Commissioner, which constitutes the State of South Carolina's actual fees and expenses
7 incurred in connection with an investigation into WFI's marketing of ARS prior to November 18,
8 2009.

9 6. WFI shall take certain measures with respect to current and former customers that
10 purchased "Eligible ARS," as defined and described in Paragraphs 7 through 14 of Section III,
11 below.

12 7. Eligible ARS. For purposes of this Order as it relates to WFI, "Eligible ARS" shall
13 mean ARS that were purchased for customers by WFI on or before February 13, 2008, and that
14 have failed at auction at least once since February 13, 2008. Notwithstanding the foregoing
15 definition, Eligible ARS shall not include ARS that were purchased for customers by WFI or
16 entities acquired by Wells Fargo's parent companies in accounts owned, managed or advised by or
17 through independent registered investment advisers.

18 8. Eligible Investor. For the purposes of this Order as it relates to WFI, "Eligible
19 Investor" shall mean:

20 a. Natural persons (including their IRA accounts, testamentary trust and estate
21 accounts, custodian UGMA and UTMA accounts, and guardianship accounts) who
22 purchased Eligible ARS;

23 b. Charities, endowments, or foundations with Internal Revenue Code Section
24 501(c)(3) status, or religious corporations or entities, that purchased Eligible ARS; and

25 c. Trusts, corporate trusts, corporations, employee pension plans/ERISA and
26 Taft Hartley Act plans, educational institutions, incorporated not for profit organizations,

1 limited liability companies, limited partnerships, non public companies, partnerships,
2 personal holding companies, unincorporated associations, government or quasi government
3 entities, which are the beneficial owners of an account that purchased Eligible ARS.

4 d. "Eligible Investors," for the purposes of this Order as it relates to WFI, shall
5 not include brokers, dealers or banks acting as conduits for their customers. This provision
6 shall not affect the rights of any beneficial owner of an account that otherwise would
7 qualify as an Eligible Investor, as set forth in Section III, Paragraph 9, subparts a, b, or c,
8 above.

9 e. "Eligible Investors," for the purposes of this Order as it relates to WFI, shall
10 not include any WFI customer who has entered into a settlement agreement with WFI prior
11 to November 18, 2009, or who has received a final arbitration award against WFI prior to
12 November 18, 2009, with respect to their Eligible ARS holdings at WFI.

13 9. Purchase Offer. WFI shall offer to purchase, at par plus accrued and unpaid
14 dividends/interest, from Eligible Investors their Eligible ARS that have failed at auction at least
15 once since February 13, 2008 (the "Purchase Offer"). WFI shall make the Purchase Offer and
16 purchase the Eligible ARS either as riskless principal or agent for one or more affiliated
17 companies, and not for its own account.

18 10. Notification and Buyback Procedures.

19 a. WFI shall undertake to identify and provide notice to Eligible Investors of
20 the relevant terms of this Order by no later than February 16, 2010. Said notice shall
21 explain what Eligible Investors must do to accept, in whole or in part, the Purchase Offer,
22 including how Eligible Investors may accept the Purchase Offer. WFI shall also provide
23 written notice of the relevant terms of this Order to any subsequently identified Eligible
24 Investors.
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1 b. Initial Offer Period.

2 i. WFI shall keep the Purchase Offer open for sixty (60) days after
3 mailing the notice required by Section III, Paragraph 10a, above (“Initial Offer
4 Period”).

5 ii. Eligible Investors may accept the Purchase Offer by notifying WFI
6 as described in the Purchase Offer, at any time before midnight, Eastern Time, on or
7 before the last day of the Initial Offer Period. For those Eligible Investors who
8 accept the Purchase Offer within the Initial Offer Period, WFI shall purchase their
9 Eligible ARS by no later than five (5) business days following the expiration of the
10 Initial Offer Period (the “Initial Purchase Deadline”).

11 c. Second Offer Period.

12 i. WFI shall undertake its best efforts to identify and provide a second
13 notice to all Eligible Investors who do not accept the Purchase Offer within the
14 Initial Offer Period. This second notice must satisfy the requirements discussed in
15 Section III, Paragraph 10a, above, and be sent no later than thirty (30) days after the
16 Initial Purchase Deadline.

17 ii. WFI shall keep the Purchase Offer open for sixty (60) days after
18 mailing the second notice required by Section III, Paragraph 10c.i, above (“Second
19 Offer Period”).

20 iii. Eligible Investors may accept the Purchase Offer by notifying WFI
21 as described in the Purchase Offer, at any time before midnight, Eastern Time, on or
22 before the last day of the Second Offer Period. For those Eligible Investors who
23 accept the Purchase Offer within the Second Offer Period, WFI shall purchase their
24 Eligible ARS by no later than five (5) business days following the expiration of the
25 Second Offer Period (the “Second Purchase Deadline”).
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1 d. An Eligible Investor may revoke the Eligible Investor's acceptance of WFI's
2 Purchase Offer at any time up until WFI purchases such Eligible Investor's Eligible ARS or
3 provides notice of WFI's intent to purchase such Eligible ARS.

4 e. WFI's obligation to those Eligible Investors who custodied their Eligible
5 ARS away from WFI as of November 18, 2009 shall be contingent on: (1) WFI receiving
6 reasonably satisfactory assurance from the financial institution currently holding the
7 Eligible Investor's Eligible ARS that the bidding rights associated with such Eligible ARS
8 will be transferred to WFI; and (2) transfer of the Eligible ARS back to WFI.

9 f. WFI shall use its best efforts to identify, contact and assist any Eligible
10 Investor who has transferred the Eligible ARS out of WFI's custody in returning such ARS
11 to WFI's custody, and shall not charge such Eligible Investor any fees relating to or in
12 connection with the return to WFI or custodianship by WFI of such Eligible ARS.

13 11. Customer Assistance Line. WFI shall promptly establish a dedicated toll-free
14 telephone assistance line and e-mail address to provide information and to respond to questions
15 concerning the terms of this Order. WFI shall maintain the telephone assistance line and e-mail
16 address through at least the Second Purchase Deadline.

17 12. Relief for Eligible Investors Who Sold Below Par. No later than upon the
18 completion of the buyback (as described in Section III, Paragraph 10, above), WFI shall undertake
19 its best efforts to identify and provide notice to, using the notice to Eligible Investors referenced in
20 Section III, Paragraph 10 above, Eligible Investors who sold Eligible ARS below par between
21 February 13, 2008 and November 18, 2009 ("Below Par Seller") and, upon receipt of satisfactory
22 evidence of the sale, pay them the difference between par and the price at which the Eligible
23 Investor sold the Eligible ARS, plus interest thereon at the rate of seven-day LIBOR.

24 13. Consequential Damages Arbitration Process.

25 a. WFI shall consent to participate in a special arbitration process
26 ("Arbitration") for the exclusive purpose of arbitrating any Eligible Investor's

1 consequential damages claim arising from their inability to sell Eligible ARS. WFI shall
2 notify Eligible Investors of the terms of the Arbitration process through the notice described
3 in Section III, Paragraph 10 above.

4 b. The Arbitration shall be conducted under the auspices of FINRA, pursuant to
5 the NASD Code of Arbitration Procedures for Customer Disputes, eff. April 16, 2007. WFI
6 will pay all applicable forum and filing fees.

7 c. Eligible Investors who choose to pursue such claims in the Arbitration shall
8 bear the burden of proving that they suffered consequential damages and that such damages
9 were caused by their inability to access funds invested in Eligible ARS. In the Arbitration,
10 WFI shall be able to defend itself against such claims; provided, however, that WFI shall
11 not contest liability for the illiquidity of the underlying ARS position, and provided further
12 that, unlike the FINRA's established special arbitration process, WFI shall be able to use as
13 part of its defense an investor's decision not to borrow money from WFI or its affiliates.

14 d. Eligible Investors who elect to use this special arbitration process provided
15 for herein shall not be eligible for punitive damages, or for any other type of damages other
16 than consequential damages.

17 e. Eligible Investors that elect to utilize FINRA's special arbitration process, as
18 set forth above, are limited to the remedies available in that process and may not bring or
19 pursue a claim relating to Eligible ARS in another forum.

20 14. Reimbursement of Negative Carry. In connection with the notices described in
21 Section III, Paragraphs 10 and 12 above, WFI shall inform Eligible Investors that, if they paid
22 more in interest on a loan through WFI or its affiliates secured by Eligible ARS than the customer
23 received in interest or dividends from the Eligible ARS during the time the loan was outstanding
24 ("Negative Carry"), then the Eligible Investor can provide WFI documentation evidencing the
25 amount of Negative Carry, and upon receipt of such documentation, WFI will reimburse the
26 Eligible Investor the amount of Negative Carry actually paid.

1 IV.

2 Additional Considerations

3 1. WFS (as successor to WFBS) and WFIS have voluntarily agreed to purchase ARS
4 from Eligible Investors as set forth in this Section IV, Paragraph 2 below.

5 2. "Eligible Investors," for the purposes of this Order as it relates to WFS (as successor
6 to WFBS) and WFIS, shall mean the following:

7 a. Natural persons (including their IRA accounts, testamentary trust and estate
8 accounts, custodian UGMA and UTMA accounts, and guardianship accounts) who
9 purchased Eligible ARS;

10 b. Charities, endowments, or foundations with Internal Revenue Code Section
11 501(c)(3) status, or religious corporations or entities that purchased Eligible ARS; and

12 c. Trusts, corporate trusts, corporations, employee pension plan/ERISA and
13 Taft Hartley Act plans, educational institutions, incorporated not for profit organizations,
14 limited liability companies, limited partnerships, non public companies, partnerships,
15 personal holding companies, unincorporated associations, governments or quasi
16 government entities, which are the beneficial owners of an account that purchased Eligible
17 ARS, unless the value of the account exceeded \$10 million as of January 31, 2008 or the
18 beneficial owner had disclosed to WFI, WFS (as successor to WFBS), WFBS or WFIS total
19 investable assets in excess of \$10 million;

20 d. "Eligible Investors," for the purposes of this Order as it relates to WFS (as
21 successor to WFBS) and WFIS, shall not include brokers, dealers, or banks acting as
22 conduits for their customers. This provision shall not affect the rights of any beneficial
23 owner of an account that otherwise would qualify as an Eligible Investor, as set forth in
24 subparts a, b, or c of this Paragraph, above;

25 e. "Eligible Investors," for the purposes of this Order as it relates to WFS (as
26 successor to WFBS) and WFIS, shall not include any WFI, WFBS, or WFIS customers who

1 have entered into a settlement agreement with WFI, WFBS (or WFS as its successor), or
2 WFIS prior to November 18, 2009, or who has received a final arbitration award against
3 WFI, WFBS (or WFS as its successor), or WFIS prior to November 18, 2009, with respect
4 to their Eligible ARS holdings at WFI, WFBS (or WFS as its successor), or WFIS.

5 f. "Eligible ARS," for purposes of this Order as it relates to WFS (as successor
6 to WFBS) and WFIS, shall mean ARS that were purchased at WFBS or WFIS on or before
7 February 13, 2008, and that have failed at auction at least once since February 13, 2008.
8 Notwithstanding the foregoing definition, Eligible ARS shall not include ARS that were
9 purchased at WFBS or WFIS or entities acquired by WFBS's or WFIS's parent companies
10 in accounts owned, managed or advised by or through independent registered investment
11 advisers.

12 3. WFS (as successor to WFBS) and WFIS have agreed to use their best efforts to
13 provide liquidity solutions to their customers who have investible assets above \$10 million. WFS
14 (as successor to WFBS) and WFIS shall endeavor to work with issuers and other interested parties,
15 including regulatory and governmental entities, to expeditiously and on a best efforts basis provide
16 liquidity solutions, such as facilitation of secondary market transactions and announced issuer
17 redemptions of the Eligible ARS purchased through WFBS and WFIS. Though WFS (as successor
18 to WFBS) and WFIS shall use their best efforts to offer opportunities to the institutional and other
19 customers who are not Eligible Investors to liquidate Eligible ARS, WFS (as successor to WFBS)
20 and WFIS are under no obligation to offer to purchase ARS from these customers.

21 4. In consideration for the settlement terms contained in this Order, the Securities
22 Commissioner shall not seek additional penalties, and shall terminate its investigation and any
23 enforcement action that the Securities Commissioner could commence under applicable South
24 Carolina law on behalf of the State of South Carolina with respect to WFI, WFS (as successor to
25 WFBS), and WFIS regarding the marketing of ARS. However, if the Securities Commissioner
26 determines that WFS (as successor to WFBS) and WFIS have failed to adhere to their voluntary

1 agreement as described above, the Securities Commissioner may initiate investigation and take
2 enforcement action related to the marketing of ARS by WFS (as successor to WFBS) and WFIS.

3 5. If payment is not made by WFI as required in this Order, or if WFI defaults in any
4 of its other obligations set forth in this Order, the Securities Commissioner may send WFI a written
5 notice of default and, if within ten (10) days after receiving the written notice, WFI does not cure
6 the default, the Securities Commissioner may move to enforce the Order before any competent
7 administrative body and/or court of law.

8 6. This Order is not intended to indicate that WFI or any of its affiliates or current or
9 former employees shall be subject to any disqualifications contained in the federal securities law,
10 the rules and regulations thereunder, the rules and regulations of self-regulatory organizations or
11 various states' securities laws, including any disqualifications from relying upon the registration
12 exemptions or safe harbor provisions. In addition, this Order is not intended to form the basis for
13 any such disqualifications.

14 7. Except as expressly provided in this Order, for any person or entity not a party to
15 this Order, this Order does not limit or create any private rights or remedies against WFI, limit or
16 create liability of WFI, or limit or create defenses of WFI to any claims. Unless applicable law
17 provides otherwise, by entering into this Order, the Securities Commissioner does not waive any
18 rights any departments, agencies, boards, commissions, authorities, political subdivisions and
19 corporations of the State of South Carolina, other than the Securities Commissioner, may have
20 under applicable law, to the extent any such rights exist, to assert a claim, cause of action, or
21 application for compensatory, nominal and/or punitive damages, administrative, civil, criminal, or
22 injunctive relief against WFI in connection with the marketing of ARS by WFI.

23 8. This Order shall not disqualify WFI or any of its affiliates or current or former
24 employees from any business that they otherwise are qualified or licensed to perform under
25 applicable state law and this Order is not intended to form the basis for any disqualification.

1 9. This Order and any dispute related thereto shall be construed and enforced in
2 accordance with, and governed by, the laws of the State of South Carolina without regard to any
3 choice of law principles.

4 10. WFI, through its execution of this Order, voluntarily waives its right to a hearing on
5 this matter and to judicial review of this Order under South Carolina law.


6 11. WFI enters into this Order voluntarily and represents that no threats, offers,
7 promises, or inducements of any kind have been made by the Securities Commissioner, or any
8 member, officer, employee, agent, or representative of the Securities Commissioner, to induce WFI
9 to enter into this Order.

10 12. This Order shall be binding upon WFI, its affiliates, successors and assigns with
11 respect to all conduct subject to the provisions above and all future obligations, responsibilities,
12 undertakings, commitments, limitations, restrictions, events, and conditions.

13 13. Nothing contained in this Order shall be deemed to be an admission of any liability,
14 fault or wrongdoing. The Parties agree that this Order shall not be admissible in any hearing,
15 action, or proceeding except to prove the existence of this Order or to enforce the Order's terms.

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18 Dated this 23 day of August, 2010.

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21 BY ORDER OF THE SECURITIES COMMISSIONER

22
23 
24 HENRY D. McMASTER
25 SECURITIES COMMISSIONER
26 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

