

HOUSE BILL NO. 667  
INTRODUCED BY C. HARRIS

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT INCLUDING PONZI SCHEMES IN THE LAW CRIMINALIZING FRAUDULENT AND PROHIBITED SECURITIES PRACTICES AND THE CONDUCT OR PROMOTION OF PYRAMID PROMOTIONAL SCHEMES; INCREASING THE PENALTIES FOR OPERATING A PYRAMID PROMOTIONAL SCHEME; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 30-10-301, 30-10-324, AND 30-10-325, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**Section 1.** Section 30-10-301, MCA, is amended to read:

**"30-10-301. Fraudulent and other prohibited practices.** (1) It is unlawful for any person, in connection with the offer, sale, or purchase of any security, directly or indirectly, in, into, or from this state, to:

(a) employ any device, scheme, or artifice to defraud, including a Ponzi scheme as defined in 30-10-324(6)(b);

(b) make any untrue statement of a material fact or omit to state a material fact necessary in order to make the statements made, in the light of the circumstances under which they are made, not misleading; or

(c) engage in any act, practice, or course of business, including a Ponzi scheme as defined in 30-10-324(6)(b), that operates or would operate as a fraud or deceit upon any person.

(2) (a) It is unlawful for any person who receives, directly or indirectly, any consideration from another person for advising the other person as to the value of securities or their purchase or sale, whether through the issuance of analysis or reports or otherwise:

(i) to employ any device, scheme, or artifice to defraud the other person;

(ii) to engage in any act, practice, or course of business that operates or would operate as a fraud or deceit upon the other person; or

(iii) without disclosing to the client in writing before the completion of the transaction the capacity in which the person is acting and obtaining the consent of the client to the transaction:

(A) acting as principal for the person's own account, to knowingly sell any security to or purchase any security from a client; or

(B) acting as agent for a person other than the client, to knowingly effect the sale or purchase of any security for the account of the client.

(b) The prohibitions of subsection (2)(a)(iii) do not apply to any transaction with a customer of a broker-dealer if the broker-dealer is not being compensated for rendering investment advice in relation to the transaction.

(3) In the solicitation of advisory clients, it is unlawful for a person to:

(a) make a false statement of a material fact; or

(b) omit a material fact necessary to make a statement not misleading in light of the circumstances under which it is made.

(4) Except as permitted by rule or order of the commissioner, it is unlawful for any investment adviser who is registered or required to be registered to enter into, extend, or renew any investment advisory contract unless it provides in writing that:

(a) the investment adviser may not be compensated on the basis of a share of capital gains upon or capital appreciation of the funds or any portion of the funds of the client;

(b) an assignment of the contract may not be made by the investment adviser without the consent of the other party to the contract; and

(c) the investment adviser, if a partnership, shall notify the other party to the contract of any change in the membership of the partnership within a reasonable time after the change.

(5) Subsection (4)(a) does not prohibit an investment advisory contract that provides for compensation based upon the total value of a fund averaged over a definite period or as of definite dates or taken as of a definite date. "Assignment", as used in subsection (4)(b), includes any direct or indirect transfer or hypothecation of an investment advisory contract by the assignor or of a controlling block of the assignor's outstanding voting securities by a security holder of the assignor; but if the investment adviser is a partnership, an assignment of an investment advisory contract is not considered to result from the death or withdrawal of a minority of the members of the investment adviser having only a minority interest in the business of the investment adviser or from the admission to the investment adviser of one or more members who, after admission, will be only a minority of the members and will have only a minority interest in the business.

(6) It is unlawful for an investment adviser to take or have custody of any securities or funds of any client if:

(a) the commissioner by rule prohibits custody; or

(b) in the absence of rule, the investment adviser fails to notify the commissioner that the investment adviser has or may have custody."

**Section 2.** Section 30-10-324, MCA, is amended to read:

**"30-10-324. Definitions.** As used in 30-10-324 through 30-10-326, the following definitions apply:

(1) (a) "Compensation" means the receipt of money, a thing of value, or a financial benefit.

(b) Compensation does not include:

(i) payments to a participant based upon the sale of goods or services by the participant to third persons when the goods or services are purchased for actual use or consumption; or

(ii) payments to a participant based upon the sale of goods or services to the participant that are used or consumed by the participant.

(2) (a) "Consideration" means the payment of money, the purchase of goods or services, or the purchase of intangible property.

(b) Consideration does not include:

(i) the purchase of goods or services furnished at cost that are used in making sales and that are not for resale; or

(ii) a participant's time and effort expended in the pursuit of sales or in recruiting activities.

(3) (a) "Multilevel distribution company" means a person that:

(i) sells, distributes, or supplies goods or services through independent agents, contractors, or distributors at different levels of distribution;

(ii) may recruit other participants in the company; and

(iii) is eligible for commissions, cross-commissions, override commissions, bonuses, refunds, dividends, or other consideration that is or may be paid as a result of the sale of goods or services or the recruitment of or the performance or actions of other participants.

(b) The term does not include an insurance producer, real estate broker, or salesperson or an investment adviser, investment adviser representative, broker-dealer, or salesperson, as defined in 30-10-103, operating in compliance with this chapter.

(4) "Participant" means a person involved in a sales plan or operation.

(5) "Person" means an individual, corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other business entity.

(6) (a) "Pyramid promotional scheme" means a sales plan or operation in which a participant gives consideration for the opportunity to receive compensation derived primarily from obtaining the participation of other persons in the sales plan or operation rather than from the sale of goods or services by the participant or the other persons induced to participate in the sales plan or operation by the participant.

(b) A pyramid promotional scheme includes a Ponzi scheme, in which a person makes payments to investors from money obtained from later investors, rather than from any profits or other income of an underlying or purported underlying business venture.

~~(b)~~(c) A pyramid promotional scheme does not include a sales plan or operation that:

(i) subject to the provisions of subsection (6)(b)(v), provides compensation to a participant based primarily upon the sale of goods or services by the participant, including goods or services used or consumed by the participant, and not primarily for obtaining the participation of other persons in the sales plan or operation and that provides compensation to the participant based upon the sale of goods or services by persons whose participation in the sales plan or operation has been obtained by the participant;

(ii) does not require a participant to purchase goods or services in an amount that unreasonably exceeds an amount that can be expected to be resold or consumed within a reasonable period of time;

(iii) is authorized to use a federally registered trademark or servicemark that identifies the company promoting the sales plan or operation, the goods or services sold, or the sales plan or operation;

(iv) (A) provides each person joining the sales plan or operation with a written agreement containing or a written statement describing the material terms of participating in the sales plan or operation;

(B) allows a person at least 15 days to cancel the person's participation in the sales plan or operation plan; and

(C) provides that if the person cancels participation within the time provided and returns any required items, the person is entitled to a refund of any consideration given to participate in the sales plan or operation; and

(v) (A) provides for, upon the request of a participant deciding to terminate participation in the sales plan or operation, the repurchase, at not less than 90% of the amount paid by the participant, of any currently marketable goods or services sold to the participant within 12 months of the request that have not been resold or consumed by the participant; and

(B) if disclosed to the participant at the time of purchase, provides that goods or services are not considered currently marketable if the goods have been consumed or the services rendered or if the goods or services are seasonal, discontinued, or special promotional items. Sales plan or operation promotional materials, sales aids, and sales kits are subject to the provisions of this subsection (6)(b)(v) if they are a required purchase for the participant or if the participant has received or may receive a financial benefit from their purchase."

**Section 3.** Section 30-10-325, MCA, is amended to read:

**"30-10-325. Operating pyramid promotional scheme unlawful.** (1) A person may not conduct or promote or cause to be conducted or promoted a pyramid promotional scheme.

(2) A person who violates the provisions of subsection (1) shall, for each participant giving consideration, be fined an amount not more than ~~\$10,000~~ \$100,000 or be imprisoned for not more than 10 years, or both."

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