companies within that organization. Applicants note that the Participating Insurance Companies are not expected to play any role in the management or administration of the Funds. Therefore, Applicants assert, applying the restrictions of Section 9(a) serves no regulatory purpose. The application states that the relief requested should not be affected by the proposed sale of shares of the Funds to the Plans because the Plans are not investment companies and are not, therefore, subject to Section 9(a).

10. Rules 6e–2(b)(15)(iii) and 6e– 3(T)(b)(15)(iii) under the 1940 Act assume the existence of a pass-through voting requirement with respect to management investment company shares held by a separate account. The application states that the Participating Insurance Companies will provide passthrough voting privileges to all Contract owners so long as the Commission interprets the 1940 Act to require such privileges.

11. Rules 6e–2(b)(15)(iii) and 6e– 3(T)(b)(15)(iii) under the 1940 Act provide exemptions from the passthrough voting requirement with respect to several significant matters, assuming observance of the limitations on mixed and shared funding imposed by the 1940 Act and the rules thereunder.

Rules 6e–2(b)(15)(iii)(A) and 6e– 3(T)(b)(15)(iii)(A) provide that the insurance company may disregard voting instructions of its contract owners with respect to the investments of an underlying fund, or any contract between a fund and its investment advisor, when required to do so by an insurance regulatory authority.

Rules 6e–2(b)(15)(iii)(B) and 6e– 3(T)(b)(15)(iii)(B) provide that the insurance company may disregard voting instructions of its contract owners if the contract owners initiate any change in the company's policies, principal underwriter, or any investment advisor, provided that disregarding such voting instructions is reasonable and subject to the other provisions of paragraphs (b)(15)(ii) and (b)(7)(ii) (B) and (C) of each rule.

12. Applicants further represent that the Funds' sale of shares to the Plans does not impact the relief requested in this regard. As noted previously by Applicants, shares of the Funds sold to Plans would be held by the trustees of such Plans as required by Section 403(a) of ERISA. Section 403(a) also provides that the trustee(s) must have exclusive authority and discretion to manage and control the Plan with two exceptions: (a) When the Plan expressly provides that the trustee(s) is (are) subject to the direction of a named fiduciary who is

not a trustee, in which case the trustee(s) is (are) subject to proper directions made in accordance with the terms of the Plan and not contrary to ERISA; and (b) when the authority to manage, acquire or dispose of assets of the Plan is delegated to one or more investment managers pursuant to Section 402(c)(3) of ERISA. Unless one of the two exceptions stated in Section 403(a) applies, Plan trustees have the exclusive authority and responsibility for voting proxies. Where a named fiduciary appoints an investment manager, the investment manager has the responsibility to vote the shares held unless the right to vote such shares is reserved to the trustees or to the named fiduciary. In any event, there is no passthrough voting to the participants in such Plans. Accordingly, Applicants note that, unlike the case with insurance company separate accounts, the issue of the resolution of material irreconcilable conflicts with respect to voting is not present with Plans.

13. Applicants state that no increased conflicts of interest would be present by the granting of the requested relief. Applicants assert that shared funding does not present any issues that do not already exist where a single insurance company is licensed to do business in several, or all, states. Applicants note that where insurers are domiciled in different states, it is possible that the state insurance regulatory body in a state in which one insurance company is domiciled could require action that is inconsistent with the requirements of insurance regulators in one or more other states in which other insurance companies are domiciled. Applicants submit that this possibility is no different and no greater than exists where a single insurer and its affiliates offer their insurance products in several states.

14. Applicants further submit that affiliation does not reduce the potential, if any exists, for differences among state regulatory requirements. In any event, the conditions (adapted from the conditions included in Rule 6e– 3(T)(b)(15)) discussed below are designed to safeguard against any adverse effect that these differences may produce. If a particular state insurance regulator's decision conflicts with the majority of other state regulators, the affected insurer may be required to withdraw its separate account's investment in the relevant Fund.

15. Applicants also argue that affiliation does not eliminate the potential, if any exists, for divergent judgments as to the advisability or legality of a change in investment policies, principal underwriter, or

investment advisor initiated by owners of the Contracts. Potential disagreement is limited by the requirement that the Participating Insurance Company's disregard of voting instructions be both reasonable and based on specified good faith determinations. However, if a Participating Insurance Company's decision to disregard Contract owner instructions represents a minority position or would preclude a majority vote approving a particular change, such Participating Insurance Company may be required, at the election of the relevant Fund, to withdraw its investment in that Fund. No change or penalty will be imposed as a result of such withdrawal.

16. Applicants state that there is no reason why the investment policies of a Fund with mixed funding would or should be materially different from what those policies would or should be if such investment company or series thereof under only variable annuity or variable life insurance contracts. Applicants therefore argue that there is no reason to believe that conflicts of interest would result from mixed funding. Moreover, Applicants represent that the Fund will not be managed to favor or disfavor any particular insurance company or type of Contract.

17. Section 817(h) imposes certain diversification standards on the underlying assets of variable annuity contracts and variable life insurance contracts held in the portfolios of management investment companies. Treasury Regulation 1.817-5(f)(3)(iii), which established diversification requirements for such portfolios, specifically permits "qualified pension or retirement plans" and separate accounts to share the same underlying management investment company. Therefore, Applicants have concluded that neither the Code, nor the Treasury regulations nor the revenue rulings thereunder present any inherent conflicts of interest if Plans, variable annuity separate accounts and variable life insurance separate accounts all invest in the same management investment company.

18. Applicants note that while there are differences in the manner in which distributions are taxed for variable annuity contracts, variable life insurance contracts and Plans, Applicants state that these tax consequences do not raise any conflicts of interest. When distributions are to be made, and the separate account or the Plan is unable to net purchase payments to make the distributions, the separate account or the Plan will redeem shares of the Funds at their respective net asset