

Form 5 Notice Required by 11 U.S.C. §§ 342(b) and 527(a)¹

Notice to Individual Consumer Debtor Under Section 342(b) and 527(a) of the Bankruptcy Code

In accordance with section 342(b) of the Bankruptcy Code, this notice: (1) Describes briefly the services available from credit counseling services; (2) Describes briefly the purposes, benefits and costs of the four types of bankruptcy proceedings you may commence; and (3) Informs you about bankruptcy crimes and notifies you that the Attorney General may examine all information you supply in connection with a bankruptcy case.

You are cautioned that bankruptcy law is complicated and not easily described. Thus, you may wish to seek the advice of an attorney to learn of your rights and responsibilities should you decide to file a petition. Court employees cannot give you legal advice.

Notices from the bankruptcy court are sent to the mailing address you list on your bankruptcy petition. In order to ensure that you receive information about events concerning your case, Bankruptcy Rule 4002 requires that you notify the court of any changes in your address. If you are filing a **joint case** (a single bankruptcy case for two individuals married to each other), and each spouse lists the same mailing address on the bankruptcy petition, you and your spouse will generally receive a single copy of each notice mailed from the bankruptcy court in a jointly addressed envelope, unless you file a statement with the court requesting that each spouse receive a separate copy of all notices.

1. Services Available from Credit Counseling Agencies

With limited exceptions, section 109(h) of the Bankruptcy Code requires that all individual debtors who file for bankruptcy relief on or after October 17, 2005, receive a briefing that outlines the available opportunities for credit counseling and provides assistance in performing a budget analysis. The briefing must be given within 180 days **before** the bankruptcy filing. The briefing may be provided individually or in a group (including briefings conducted by telephone or on the Internet) and must be provided by a nonprofit budget

¹Section 342(b) requires the clerk to give each consumer debtor, prior to the filing of the petition, a notice describing each chapter under which such individual may proceed, the services of credit counseling agencies, and the possible consequences of bankruptcy fraud. In addition, section 521(a)(1)(B)(iii) requires the debtor's attorney to file a certification that the attorney delivered the notice to the debtor. This certification is part of Exhibit B in Official Form 1, the bankruptcy petition. Based upon these provisions, the debtor's attorney should deliver the section 342(b) notice, which is reprinted in Appendix E, *supra*, to the debtor and sign the certification on the petition to comply with section 521(a)(1)(B)(iii). If the debtor's attorney is not a debt relief agency, for example if the attorney works for a legal services organization, only this notice needs to be provided to the debtor. However, section 527 sets out a series of notices and disclosures that debt relief agencies must make to all assisted persons being provided bankruptcy assistance. This form contains the written notice required by section 527(a)(1) and (a)(2) and is combined with the section 342(b) notice so that they may be given at the same time. These items must be provided within three days of when the agency first offers to provide bankruptcy assistance services to an assisted person. If the notice is not provided at the time the client signs an initial consultation agreement, *see* Form 4, Appx. G.2, *supra*, and with a copy attached thereto, the attorney should include the certificate of receipt and have the client sign it.

and credit counseling agency approved by the United States trustee or bankruptcy administrator. The clerk of the bankruptcy court has a list that you may consult of the approved budget and credit counseling agencies.

In addition, after filing a bankruptcy case, an individual debtor generally must complete a financial management instructional course before he or she can receive a discharge. The clerk also has a list of approved financial management instructional courses.

2. The Four Chapters of the Bankruptcy Code Available to Individual Consumer Debtors

Chapter 7: Liquidation (\$245 filing fee, \$46 administrative fee, \$15 trustee surcharge: Total fee \$306)

Chapter 7 is designed for debtors in financial difficulty who do not have the ability to pay their existing debts. Debtors whose debts are primarily consumer debts are subject to a “means test” designed to determine whether the case should be permitted to proceed under chapter 7. If your income is greater than the median income for your state of residence and family size, in some cases, creditors have the right to file a motion requesting that the court dismiss your case under section 707(b) of the Code. It is up to the court to decide whether the case should be dismissed.

Under chapter 7, you may claim certain of your property as exempt under governing law. A trustee may have the right to take possession of and sell the remaining property that is not exempt and use the sale proceeds to pay your creditors.

The purpose of filing a chapter 7 case is to obtain a discharge of your existing debts. If, however, you are found to have committed certain kinds of improper conduct described in the Bankruptcy Code, the court may deny your discharge and, if it does, the purpose for which you filed the bankruptcy petition will be defeated.

Even if you receive a general discharge, some particular debts are not discharged under the law. Therefore, you may still be responsible for most taxes and student loans; debts incurred to pay nondischargeable taxes; domestic support and property settlement obligations; most fines, penalties, forfeitures, and criminal restitution obligations; certain debts which are not properly listed in your bankruptcy papers; and debts for death or personal injury caused by operating a motor vehicle, vessel, or aircraft while intoxicated from alcohol or drugs. Also, if a creditor can prove that a debt arose from fraud, breach of fiduciary duty, or theft, or from a willful and malicious injury, the bankruptcy court may determine that the debt is not discharged.

Chapter 13: Repayment of All or Part of the Debts of an Individual with Regular Income (\$235 filing fee, \$46 administrative fee: Total fee \$281)

Chapter 13 is designed for individuals with regular income who would like to pay all or part of their debts in installments over a period of time. You are only eligible for chapter 13 if your debts do not exceed certain dollar amounts set forth in the Bankruptcy Code.

Under chapter 13, you must file with the court a plan to repay your creditors all or part of the money that you owe them, using your future earnings. The period allowed by the court to repay your debts may be three years or five years, depending upon your income and other factors. The court must approve your plan before it can take effect.

After completing the payments under your plan, your debts are generally discharged except for domestic support obligations; most student loans; certain taxes; most criminal fines and restitution obligations; certain debts which are not properly listed in your bankruptcy papers; certain debts for acts that caused death or personal injury; and certain long term secured obligations.

Chapter 11: Reorganization (\$1000 filing fee, \$46 administrative fee: Total fee \$1046)

Chapter 11 is designed for the reorganization of a business but is also available to consumer debtors. Its provisions are quite complicated, and any decision by an individual to file a chapter 11 petition should be reviewed with an attorney.

Chapter 12: Family Farmer or Fisherman (\$200 filing fee, \$46 administrative fee: Total fee \$246)

Chapter 12 is designed to permit family farmers and fishermen to repay their debts over a period of time from future earnings and is similar to chapter 13. The eligibility requirements are restrictive, limiting its use to those whose income arises primarily from a family-owned farm or commercial fishing operation.

3. Bankruptcy Crimes and Availability of Bankruptcy Papers to Law Enforcement Officials

A person who knowingly and fraudulently conceals assets or makes a false oath or statement under penalty of perjury, either orally or in writing, in connection with a bankruptcy case is subject to a fine, imprisonment, or both. All information supplied by a debtor in connection with a bankruptcy case is subject to examination by the Attorney General acting through the Office of the United States Trustee, the Office of the United States Attorney, and other components and employees of the Department of Justice.

WARNING: Section 521(a)(1) of the Bankruptcy Code requires that you promptly file detailed information regarding your creditors, assets, liabilities, income, expenses and general financial condition. Your bankruptcy case may be dismissed if this information is not filed with the court within the time deadlines set by the Bankruptcy Code, the Bankruptcy Rules, and the local rules of the court. The documents and the deadlines for filing them are listed on Form B200, which is available at www.uscourts.gov/bkforms/bankruptcy_forms.html#procedure.

In accordance with section 527(a)(2) of the Bankruptcy Code, be advised that:

1. All information you are required to provide with a bankruptcy petition and during a bankruptcy case must be complete, accurate, and truthful.

2. All assets and all liabilities must be completely and accurately disclosed in the documents filed in your case, and the replacement value of each asset must be stated in those documents where requested after reasonable inquiry to establish such value.

3. Current monthly income, the amounts specified in the means test under section 707(b)(2), and disposable income in chapter 13 cases must be stated after reasonable inquiry.

4. Information that you provide during your bankruptcy case may be audited, and the failure to provide such information may result in dismissal of the case or other sanction, including a criminal sanction.