

From: Laurent Meillon <laurentmeillon@yahoo.com>  
Sent: Friday, March 23, 2012 1:29 PM  
To: !FHFA REG-COMMENTS  
Subject: RIN 2590-AA53 - Please restore PACE programs

Mr. Alfred Pollard  
General Counsel  
Federal Housing Finance Agency  
400 7th St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20024

RE: RIN 2590-AA53 Mortgage Assets Affected by PACE Programs; Comments on  
Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and EIS Scoping Comments

Dear Mr. Pollard:

In my home State of Colorado, our PUC, GEO and other State instances just approved  
an amortization table of 60 years for a new coal plant - 60 years through 2071!!!

PACE is a much needed mechanism to level the playing field between the fossil fuels  
that will leave our children in front of a wall, and clean, free, local, independent,  
renewable energies that will leave our children with a solution that can power their  
economy.

You have a chance to participate in implementing needed solutions and contributing to  
a healthy long-term future, which, in my mind, is exactly what your role should be in a  
capitalist society where corporations cannot seek anything but shorter term profits. I  
believe asking you to support PACE is simply asking you to do your job.

Below is the more complete expansion text from Vote Solar, which I fully understand  
and support.

PACE was developed in 2007 to enable local communities interested in increasing  
energy security and electric grid reliability, creating jobs and reducing emissions of  
greenhouse gases and other pollutants to provide an affordable mechanism for  
homeowners to make energy efficiency or renewable energy improvements. PACE is a  
means by which local governments can effect these important public purposes using  
longstanding, widely-adopted land-secured municipal finance structures, known around  
the country as "improvement districts", "special tax districts", "assessment districts" and  
the like (collectively "land-secured municipal finance districts").

PACE enables local communities to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy  
improvements with little or no upfront cost, at competitive interest rates and over a time  
period that matches the period over which energy savings associated with such  
improvements are realized. With PACE, assessments are made against property that  
benefits from energy efficiency or renewable energy improvements financed by a local  
government, tying the repayment obligation with the beneficiary of the financing.

Because of its unique ability to spur homeowner investment in energy efficiency and  
clean, on-site renewable energy, PACE legislation was passed by 27 states in just two  
and a half years. It has strong bi-partisan support at the local, state and Federal levels.  
PACE programs have been received with such overwhelming public support because

they address one of the most important problems facing America, and offer an ability to scale that is unmatched by other alternatives.

We believe that FHFA's action to unilaterally halt local government PACE programs on July 6, 2010 was unwarranted. This rulemaking provides an opportunity to establish a fact-based record and correct misinformation and misunderstandings, to the benefit of all stakeholders: local governments, mortgage lenders, homeowners, and our nation. We appreciate the opportunity, and urge FHFA to look for ways to accommodate these broadly beneficial programs. To this end, we recommend that the FHFA adopt reasonable underwriting standards that ensure local PACE programs are designed to maximize benefit and minimize risk, as described below.

1) PACE assessments are valid - and are not "loans" as asserted by FHFA  
FHFA has repeatedly referred to PACE assessments as "loans." To the contrary, they are property assessments with characteristics similar to those of more than 37,000 other land-secured special assessment districts in the United States that are rooted in hundreds of years of state and local law. Such districts are typically created at the voluntary behest of property owners who vote to allow their local governments to finance public improvements such as sewer systems, sidewalks, lighting, parks, open space acquisitions, and business improvements on their behalf. Other districts allow property owners to act voluntarily and individually to adopt municipally financed improvements to their property that are repaid with assessments. These assessments are secured by liens, just as with property tax liens, which have always been senior to privately-held liens such as the first mortgage. PACE is but an additional public purpose sought to be carried out by municipalities using an established finance structure well familiar to the real estate and mortgage industries.

2) PACE assessments present minimal risks to lenders, investors, homeowners and GSEs  
FHFA asserts that PACE presents "significant safety and soundness" concerns, but there is no evidence that this is true. There is long-standing experience, borne out by studies, that energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements reduce homeowners' energy bills and increase their property's value, strengthening their financial position and increasing the value of a lender's collateral. PACE financed improvements allow homeowners to hedge themselves against fuel price spikes and rising fuel costs over time. These factors lessen, if not eliminate, the safety and soundness risk than the FHFA has asserted. Local governments that established PACE programs prior to the July 6, 2010 action by FHFA developed program standards to protect lenders and consumers. The White House (October 18, 2009) and the Department of Energy (May 7, 2010) both published national PACE guidelines with clear, strong underwriting standards to ensure that homeowners are able to afford the improvements. A bi-partisan bill in the House of Representatives (HR 2599 – Hayworth R-NY19) further delineates national standards to minimize risk to lenders and consumers. Finally, the early results of PACE pilot programs in Boulder County, CO; Sonoma County and Palm Desert, CA; and Babylon, NY; show that PACE presents minimal risk: there are only a handful of known defaults out of nearly 3,200 upgraded properties, substantially fewer than the rate of default for non-PACE property-owners in the same districts.

3) Home energy improvements financed with PACE achieve important economic and environmental benefits  
State and local governments have also passed PACE laws because PACE has great potential to help governments attain important economic and environmental goals. For

example, according to a May 2011 Department of Energy study, the Boulder County PACE program created over 120 jobs, generated more than \$20 million in overall economic activity and reduced consumers' energy use by more than \$125,000 in the first year alone. These benefits are important by themselves. In developing a rule that serves the public interest, the FHFA must weigh perceived risks against economic benefits that clearly reduce default rates.

4) Proposed Rule:

We strongly urge FHFA to reconsider its blanket opposition to PACE programs and to revise the Statement and the Directive. We recommend that FHFA's proposed rule provide that Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and any other mortgage lenders regulated by FHFA (Enterprises) be allowed to buy residential mortgages with PACE assessments that are originated by programs that conform to standards and guidelines such as those established in the Department of Energy's "Guidelines for Pilot PACE Financing Programs" (May 7, 2010) (DOE Guidelines) or HR 2599 (The PACE Assessment Protection Act) to protect the interests of local governments, homeowners, mortgage lenders and the Enterprises.

5) EIS Scoping Comments

The Proposed Action in FHFA's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be changed to provide that the Enterprises may purchase mortgages subject to a first-lien PACE obligation or that could become subject to first-lien PACE obligations so long as the applicable PACE program conforms to standards and guidelines such as those established in HR 2599 or the DOE Guidelines. If FHFA does not alter the Proposed Action, one of the alternatives analyzed in the EIS should be revisions to the FHFA's July 6, 2010 Statement and February 28, 2010 Directive to provide that the Enterprises are permitted to purchase mortgages subject to a first-lien PACE obligation or that could become subject to first-lien PACE obligations so long as the applicable PACE program conforms to standards and guidelines such as those established in HR 2599 or the DOE Guidelines.

Sincerely,

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