

**THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS
RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE RETURN OF UNCLAIMED U.S. SAVINGS
BONDS TO THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNERS**

Resolution Summary

The primary function of state unclaimed property divisions is to locate and return various forms of unclaimed property to the rightful owners or their heirs. This property could be forgotten bank accounts, uncashed pay checks, unclaimed security deposits, unused gift certificates, etc. It is most often in the form of money, but it can also be stocks, mutual funds, and contents of safe deposit boxes. The property comes from many sources including banks, credit unions, corporations, utilities, insurance agencies, retailers, and governmental agencies throughout the United States.

State unclaimed property programs have enthusiastically and effectively adopted the mission of reuniting owners with their lost property. States use a variety of methods to find lost owners, including: (i) publishing owner names in newspapers; (ii) hosting information booths at state fairs, senior citizen centers, shopping malls, and other community events; (iii) extensive local and national media outreach; (iv) matching owner names against other state and commercial databases; and (v) establishing online searchable databases of unclaimed property. Every state maintains an internet search site, and each year more states allow claims to be initiated on their sites. In addition, 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico participate in a national unclaimed property website, MissingMoney.com, where more than 180 million searches – including 48 million in 2007 – have been conducted.

As of February 2008, \$15.99 billion in U.S. savings bonds have reached final maturity and ceased to pay interest but have not been redeemed by their rightful owners. The federal government retains possession of these bonds until redemption. States, through the National Association of State Treasurers and the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators, propose federal legislation - the Unredeemed U.S. Savings Bond Return Act - to leverage states experience returning unclaimed property to find the owners of these U.S. savings bonds and facilitate their return.

The central premise behind the Unredeemed U.S. Savings Bond Return Act is that these bonds belong to those who purchased them (or their heirs), that action should be taken to return the proceeds of these bonds to their rightful owners, and that the states are best equipped to accomplish this task. The states' successful experience returning abandoned property is directly applicable to matured, unredeemed savings bonds and the proposed program. Growth in the amount of matured, unredeemed bonds has been accelerating in recent years and the federal government has no plan to proactively seek these bondholders and reunite them with their property. The states are both willing and well-equipped to do so.

This resolution expresses The Council of State Governments endorsement and support of the efforts of the National Association of State Treasurers (NAST) and the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators (NAUPA) to establish an effective system of returning matured, unredeemed savings bonds to their rightful owners.

Additional Resource Information

National Association of State Treasurers, www.nast.org

National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators, www.naupa.org

Management Directives

Management Directive #1: CSG will support its affiliate, NAST, in their effort to reunite owners of mature, unredeemed United States savings bonds with their property.

Management Directive #2: CSG staff will post approved resolution on CSG's web site and make available through its regular communication venues at the state and local level to ensure its distribution to the state government and policy community.

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WHEREAS, the United States Department of the Treasury holds more than \$16 billion in matured, unredeemed United States savings bonds. The total number of matured, unredeemed savings bonds is estimated at almost 40 million bonds; and

WHEREAS, officials of the United States Department of the Treasury have stated that their agency lacks the legal authority to turn over to the states any funds representing matured, unredeemed savings bonds, nor the ability to identify the names and last-known addresses of the vast majority of the owners matured, unredeemed savings bonds issued prior to 1974, nor has the effective systems in place to identify, locate, contact and pay the owners of these unredeemed bonds; and

WHEREAS, under common and escheat law, the states are charged with the responsibility of locating missing owners of matured, unredeemed savings bonds and reuniting these owners with their lost assets. The states already have in place unparalleled and effective outreach programs that in 2006 returned over \$1.7 billion in lost or unclaimed property to the rightful owners; and

WHEREAS, State treasurers administer unclaimed property programs in 33 states and the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Since 1999, the National Association of State Treasurers has sought to work cooperatively with the Department of the Treasury to reunite owners of matured, unredeemed United States savings bonds with their property. States treasurers have proposed numerous, creative approaches to facilitate outreach and reunification, and have requested that the Department of the Treasury consider state request to redeem savings bonds retrieved from abandoned safe deposit boxes. The Department has raised various concerns, which the state treasurers have attempted to resolve. To date, the Department has not turned over any bonds or underlying owner information to the states; and

WHEREAS, the states, through the National Association of State Treasurers and the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators, have developed a legislative proposal to establish a program designed to leverage existing state unclaimed property laws in order to return matured, unredeemed savings bonds to their rightful owners. The legislative proposal details the compilation and dissemination of owner data to the states and the facilitation of the claims process.

BE IT NOW RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments does hereby endorse and support the efforts of the National Association of State Treasurers to establish an effective system of returning matured, unredeemed savings bonds to their rightful owners.

Adopted this 31st Day of May, 2008 at the
CSG 75th Anniversary Celebration and Spring Meeting
in Lexington, Kentucky



Governor M. Jodi Rell
2008 CSG President



Representative Kim Koppelman
2008 CSG Chair

