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Summary of Statement No. 54 Fund Balance Reporting and Governmental Fund Type Definitions (Issued 02/09)

The objective of this Statement is to enhance the usefulness of fund balance information by providing clearer fund balance classifications that can be more consistently applied and by clarifying the existing governmental fund type definitions. This Statement establishes fund balance classifications that comprise a hierarchy based primarily on the extent to which a government is bound to observe constraints imposed upon the use of the resources reported in governmental funds.

The initial distinction that is made in reporting fund balance information is identifying amounts that are considered *nonspendable*, such as fund balance associated with inventories. This Statement also provides for additional classification as restricted, committed, assigned, and unassigned based on the relative strength of the constraints that control how specific amounts can be spent.

The *restricted* fund balance category includes amounts that can be spent only for the specific purposes stipulated by constitution, external resource providers, or through enabling legislation. The *committed* fund balance classification includes amounts that can be used only for the specific purposes determined by a formal action of the government's highest level of decision-making authority. Amounts in the *assigned* fund balance classification are intended to be used by the government for specific purposes but do not meet the criteria to be classified as restricted or committed. In governmental funds other than the general fund, assigned fund balance represents the remaining amount that is not restricted or committed. *Unassigned* fund balance is the residual classification for the government's general fund and includes all spendable amounts not contained in the other classifications. In other funds, the unassigned classification should be used only to report a deficit balance resulting from overspending for specific purposes for which amounts had been restricted, committed, or assigned. Governments are required to disclose information about the processes through which constraints are imposed on amounts in the committed and assigned classifications.

Governments also are required to classify and report amounts in the appropriate fund balance classifications by applying their accounting policies that determine whether restricted, committed, assigned, and unassigned amounts are considered to have been spent. Disclosure of the policies in the notes to the financial statements is required.

This Statement also provides guidance for classifying stabilization amounts on the face of the balance sheet and requires disclosure of certain information about stabilization arrangements in the notes to the financial statements.

The definitions of the general fund, special revenue fund type, capital projects fund type, debt service fund type, and permanent fund type are clarified by the provisions in this Statement. Interpretations of certain terms within the definition of the special revenue fund type have been provided and, for some governments, those interpretations may affect the activities they choose to report in those funds. The capital projects fund type definition also was clarified for better alignment with the needs of preparers and users. Definitions of other governmental fund types also have been modified for clarity and consistency.

The requirements of this Statement are effective for financial statements for periods beginning after June 15, 2010. Early implementation is encouraged. Fund balance reclassifications made to conform to the provisions of this Statement should be applied retroactively by restating fund balance for all prior periods presented.

How the Changes in This Statement Will Improve Financial Reporting

The requirements in this Statement will improve financial reporting by providing fund balance categories and classifications that will be more easily understood. Elimination of the *reserved* component of fund balance in favor of a *restricted* classification will enhance the consistency between information reported in the government-wide statements and information in the governmental fund financial statements and avoid confusion about the relationship between reserved fund balance and restricted net assets. The fund balance classification approach in this Statement will require governments to classify amounts consistently, regardless of the fund type or column in which they are presented. As a result, an amount cannot be classified as restricted in one fund but unrestricted in another. The fund balance disclosures will give users information necessary to understand the processes under which constraints are imposed upon the use of resources and how those constraints may be modified or eliminated. The clarifications of the governmental fund type definitions will reduce uncertainty about which resources can or should be reported in the respective fund types.

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Unless otherwise specified, pronouncements of the GASB apply to financial reports of all state and local governmental entities, including general purpose governments; public benefit corporations and authorities; public employee retirement systems; and public utilities, hospitals and other healthcare providers, and colleges and universities. Paragraph 3 discusses the applicability of this Statement.

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