



1 and credit card with Defendant Bank of America. Plaintiff was also enrolled in one of Defendant's  
2 overdraft protection plans, specifically, one which linked his credit card to his checking account for  
3 overdraft protection.

4 Plaintiff alleges that when he enrolled in Defendant's overdraft protection plan ("ODP"),  
5 Defendant also enrolled Plaintiff in an uncollected funds protection plan ("UFP") without his  
6 knowledge or consent. (Second Am Compl. ¶ 30.) In contrast to the basic method of processing  
7 deposits, which Plaintiff alleges is based primarily on the customer's checking account balance, UFP  
8 uses "linked accounts (balances, credit limits) as funding sources to secure quicker access to  
9 uncollected funds when the checking account balance would otherwise trigger a hold." (*Id.* ¶ 27.)

10 On May 16, 2006, Plaintiff deposited a check for \$7,500 into his checking account at a Bank  
11 of America branch in San Diego, California. (*Id.* ¶ 47.) Before making this deposit, Plaintiff had  
12 \$1,847.17 in his checking account. (*Id.*) After the deposit, and in accordance with the UFP feature,  
13 Plaintiff's available balance appeared to be \$9,347.17. (*Id.* ¶ 48.) Plaintiff alleges these funds would  
14 not have been available immediately if he had not enrolled in ODP. (*Id.* ¶ 49.)

15 On May 18, 2006, Plaintiff withdrew \$6,420 from his checking account at a Bank of America  
16 branch in San Diego, California. (*Id.* ¶ 49.) The next day, a check for \$200 was paid out of Plaintiff's  
17 checking account, leaving a balance of \$2,727.17. (*Id.*)

18 On or before May 23, 2006, the \$7,500 check Plaintiff deposited into his account was returned.  
19 (*Id.* ¶ 50.) This left a negative balance of \$4,772.83 in Plaintiff's checking account. (*Id.*) Plaintiff  
20 was charged a "deposited item return fee" of \$5. (*Id.*)

21 In accordance with Plaintiff's ODP, Defendant transferred \$4,800 from Plaintiff's credit card  
22 to his checking account to cover the negative balance. (*Id.* ¶ 51.) In connection with this transaction,  
23 Plaintiff was charged a "cash advance fee" of \$144, and an interest rate of 23.99% on the \$4,800  
24 balance on his credit card. (*Id.* ¶ 52.)

25 Plaintiff alleges Defendant's policies and practices relating to its ODP violates the CLRA and  
26 California's unfair competition and false advertising laws, and that this conduct amounts to a breach  
27 of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing.

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1 **II.**

2 **DISCUSSION**

3 Defendant raises two primary arguments in its motion to dismiss. As in its first motion to  
4 dismiss, Defendant argues Plaintiff's claims are preempted by the EFAA and the NBA. Second,  
5 Defendant contends Plaintiff has failed to plead the necessary elements of each claim.

6 **A. Standard of Review**

7 In two recent opinions, the Supreme Court established a more stringent standard of review for  
8 12(b)(6) motions. *See Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, \_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_, 129 S.Ct. 1937 (2009); *Bell Atlantic Corp. v.*  
9 *Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007). To survive a motion to dismiss under this new standard, "a complaint  
10 must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to 'state a claim to relief that is plausible on  
11 its face.'" *Iqbal*, 129 S.Ct. at 1949 (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). "A claim has facial plausibility  
12 when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that  
13 the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556).

14 "Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief will ... be a context-  
15 specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense."  
16 *Id.* at 1950 (citing *Iqbal v. Hasty*, 490 F.3d 143, 157-58 (2d Cir. 2007)). In *Iqbal*, the Court began this  
17 task "by identifying the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth."  
18 *Id.* at 1951. It then considered "the factual allegations in respondent's complaint to determine if they  
19 plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief." *Id.* at 1951.

20 **B. Preemption**

21 Defendant's first argument in support of its motion to dismiss is that Plaintiff's claims are  
22 preempted by the EFAA and the NBA. The Court addresses each of these statutes below.

23 **1. EFAA**

24 "The purpose of EFAA is to provide faster availability of deposited funds." *Beffa v. Bank of*  
25 *West*, 152 F.3d 1174, 1176 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1998) (citation omitted). EFAA also mandates that banks disclose  
26 their funds availability policies to their customers. *See* 12 U.S.C. § 4004.

27 Here, Defendant argues Plaintiff's claims are expressly preempted by EFAA, and more  
28 specifically, by Regulation CC promulgated thereunder. Both the statute and the regulation expressly

1 provide for preemption of inconsistent state laws. 12 U.S.C. § 4007(b); 12 C.F.R. § 229.20(b). The  
2 regulation explains that a state law may be inconsistent with EFAA if it:

- 3 (1) Permits a depository bank to make funds deposited in an account by cash,  
4 electronic payment, or check available for withdrawal in a longer period of time than  
5 the maximum period of time permitted under subpart B, and, in connection therewith,  
subpart A; or (2) Provides for disclosures or notices concerning funds availability  
relating to accounts.

6 12 C.F.R. § 229.20(c). The Ninth Circuit has found that the preemptive scope of these provisions “is  
7 quite narrow. Only state laws that establish different timing or disclosure requirements than EFAA  
8 or otherwise directly conflict with EFAA face preemption. Congress expressed no desire to preempt  
9 state laws or causes of action that supplement, rather than contradict, EFAA.” *Beffa*, 152 F.3d at  
10 1177. In granting Defendant’s motion to dismiss the First Amended Complaint, this Court found that  
11 Plaintiff’s claims were preempted by EFAA because they were based on Defendant’s funds  
12 availability policies and the disclosures surrounding those policies. According to Defendant, that  
13 remains the basis for the claims alleged in the Second Amended Complaint, therefore the Court should  
14 again find that Plaintiff’s claims are preempted. Plaintiff, however, disputes this characterization of  
15 his claims. He states,

16 the gravamen of [his] allegations is that: 1) when BANA’s customers choose to enroll  
17 in its optional ODP program, which Defendant represents to be added protection  
18 against overdraft with respect to customer’s *own* items drawn on their checking  
19 accounts solely, BANA surreptitiously also enrolls them in its UFP program and thus  
20 enters customers into an unauthorized contractual relationship for UFP; and 2) at the  
time of enrollment, customers are thus unaware that the accounts they link to their  
checking account for ODP of their own items are also being linked to the stealth UFP  
feature to secure BANA’s extension of provisional credit for third-party checks  
deposited into their accounts to hedge the risk of these items not clearing.

21 (Opp’n to Mot. at 13.)

22 In general terms, and as alleged in the Second Amended Complaint, the basis for Plaintiff’s  
23 claims appears to be Defendant’s “false and misleading statements concerning [its] ODP program[.]”  
24 (Second Am. Compl. ¶ 101.) Those statements include representations that (1) Defendant’s ODP is  
25 ordinary when, in fact, it includes the undisclosed UFP feature, and (2) Defendant’s ODP will protect  
26 consumers from overdrafts and overdraft-related fees when, in reality, it creates “a greater risk of  
27 overdrafts and ODP related fees and charges.” (*Id.* ¶ 36.) Plaintiff also challenges Defendant’s  
28 surreptitious enrollment of its ODP customers in UFP. None of these theories directly implicates the

1 time in which Defendant makes deposited funds available to its customers or Defendant’s disclosures  
2 or notices concerning funds availability. Therefore, Plaintiff’s claims as alleged in the Second  
3 Amended Complaint are not preempted by EFAA.

4 2. NBA

5 As with EFAA, “[f]ederally chartered banks are subject to state laws of general application  
6 in their daily business to the extent such laws do not conflict with the letter or the general purposes  
7 of the NBA.” *Watters v. Wachovia Bank, N.A.*, 550 U.S. 1, 11 (2007). The purpose of the NBA,  
8 however, is much greater than EFAA. Whereas EFAA is concerned with the limited issue of funds  
9 availability, the NBA governs “all such incidental powers as shall be necessary to carry on the  
10 business of banking.” 12 U.S.C. § 24 Seventh.

11 Included in these powers is the authority to “receive deposits and engage in any activity  
12 incidental to receiving deposits, including issuing evidence of accounts, subject to such terms,  
13 conditions, and limitations prescribed by the Comptroller of the Currency and any other applicable  
14 Federal law.” 12 C.F.R. § 7.4007(a). National banks may exercise these “deposit-taking” powers  
15 “without regard to state law limitations concerning: ... ii) Checking accounts; (iii) Disclosure  
16 requirements; (iv) Funds availability[.]” 12 C.F.R. § 7.4007(b)(2)(ii)-(iv).

17 In the order granting Defendant’s first motion to dismiss, this Court found Plaintiff’s claims  
18 were preempted by this regulation because they would affect Defendant’s deposit-taking powers in  
19 each area, *i.e.*, checking accounts, disclosure requirements and funds availability. Defendant argues  
20 the claims alleged in the Second Amended Complaint have the same effect, therefore the Court should  
21 again find Plaintiff’s claims are preempted.

22 Plaintiff disputes Defendant’s argument, and relies on several cases in support. First, Plaintiff  
23 cites *In re Checking Account Overdraft Litig.*, 694 F.Supp.2d 1302 (S.D. Fl. 2010). In that  
24 multidistrict litigation, the plaintiffs alleged the defendant banks had a common practice of posting  
25 debits to the plaintiff’s account “from the ‘largest to the smallest’ thus maximizing the overdraft fee  
26 revenue for themselves.” *Id.* at 1307. The defendants moved to dismiss the case on several grounds,  
27 including preemption by the NBA. The court denied the motion, and specifically rejected the  
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1 defendants' preemption argument. The court reasoned that the claims sounded in contract and tort,  
2 and had only an incidental effect on the banks' exercise of their deposit taking powers. *Id.* at 1313.

3 In reaching that decision, the court relied on two cases that Plaintiff cites in his opposition to  
4 the present motion. One of those cases is *White v. Wachovia Bank, N.A.*, 563 F.Supp.2d 1358 (N.D.  
5 Ga. 2008). That case was based on facts similar to those in the multidistrict case, and also alleged that  
6 the defendant banks were imposing overdraft fees "even when there are sufficient funds in the account  
7 to cover the transaction." *Id.* at 1361. Like the defendants in the multidistrict case, the defendant in  
8 *White* filed a motion to dismiss based on several grounds, including preemption by the NBA. The  
9 *White* court rejected that argument, finding that the plaintiffs' claims sounded in tort and contract and  
10 did "not more than incidentally affect Wachovia's deposit-taking powers." *Id.* at 1367. In reaching  
11 that decision, the court noted that although the case implicated the defendant's "largest-to-smallest  
12 transaction posting policy, it more importantly claims that Wachovia's policy allows the routine  
13 imposition of an overdraft fee for transactions that do not result in an actual overdraft." *Id.* at 1368.

14 The other case Plaintiff relies on is *Gutierrez v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.*, No. C 07-05923  
15 WHA, 2008 WL 4279550 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 11, 2008). Like the multidistrict case and *White*, *Gutierrez*  
16 involved the bank's practice of posting "multiple daily debits against a checking account in a revised  
17 sequence that maximizes overdraft penalties against the customer rather than in the actual sequence  
18 in which the charges were incurred, among other alleged practices." *Id.* at \*1. The defendant bank  
19 moved for summary judgment on several grounds, including preemption by the NBA, and the court  
20 denied the motion. It found that neither 12 C.F.R. § 7.4002 nor 12 C.F.R. § 7.4007 expressly  
21 preempted the plaintiffs' claims. *Id.* at \*9. The court also relied on a 2002 advisory letter from the  
22 Office of the Comptroller of the Currency ("OCC") and a May 22, 2001 interpretive letter from the  
23 OCC in declining to find preemption.<sup>1</sup> *Id.* at \*10-12.

24 At first glance, these cases appear to support a similar conclusion in this case, *i.e.*, that  
25 Plaintiff's claims are not preempted. However, the Court declines to follow that line of cases. Both  
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27 <sup>1</sup> The *Gutierrez* opinion cites a May 21, 2007 advisory letter from the OCC, but "[t]he  
28 issuance of Advisory Letters was suspended at the end of 2004." <http://www.occ.treas.gov/advlst04.htm>. The letter cited in the opinion appears to be Interpretive  
Letter #916, which was issued on May 22, 2001.

1 the multidistrict case and *White* are from outside the Ninth Circuit, and thus do not follow the Ninth  
2 Circuit’s approach to preemption analysis. In *Silvas v. E\*Trade Mortgage Corp.*, 514 F.3d 1001, 1004  
3 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2008), the Ninth Circuit set out a framework for analyzing preemption under the Home  
4 Owners’ Loan Act (“HOLA”), and that framework has since been applied to the NBA. *See Davis v.*  
5 *Chase Bank U.S.A., N.A.*, 650 F.Supp.2d 1072 (C.D. Cal. 2009) (applying *Silvas* framework to issue  
6 of NBA preemption). According to that framework, courts should first determine whether the state  
7 laws at issue fall within subsection 12 C.F.R § 7.4007(b)(2). If they do, the laws are preempted, and  
8 no further analysis is necessary. If the laws do not fall within subsection (b)(2), courts must then  
9 consider whether the laws fall within subsection (c). Neither *White* nor the multidistrict case followed  
10 this approach. Rather, those courts skipped the first step of the *Silvas* analysis and proceeded directly  
11 to determine whether the state laws at issue sounded in contract or tort. *See In re Checking Account*  
12 *Overdraft Litig.*, 694 F.Supp.2d at 1313; *White*, 563 F.Supp.2d at 1367. After concluding that the state  
13 law claims did sound in tort and contract, the courts then addressed whether the claims “more than  
14 ‘incidentally affect the exercise of national banks’ deposit taking powers.” *In re Checking Account*  
15 *Overdraft Litig.*, 694 F.Supp.2d at 1313 (citing 12 C.F.R. § 7.4007(c)). *See also White*, 563 F.Supp.2d  
16 at 1367 (concluding that plaintiffs’ exercise of their rights “does not more than incidentally affect  
17 Wachovia’s deposit-taking powers.”) Neither case addressed whether application of the state laws  
18 at issue would impose any limitations on the defendants’ deposit-taking powers or otherwise fell  
19 within the confines of subsection (b)(2).

20 *Gutierrez* also failed to apply the *Silvas* approach. That court found *Silvas* was inapplicable  
21 to the NBA because the regulations under that statute were “dissimilar” to the regulations under the  
22 HOLA. 2008 WL 4279550, at \* 12. However, as the *Davis* court pointed out,

23 The extent of Federal regulation and supervision of Federal savings associations under  
24 the Home Owners’ Loan Act is substantially the same as for national banks under the  
25 national banking laws, a fact that warrants similar conclusions about the applicability  
of state laws to the conduct of the Federally authorized activities of both types of  
entities.

26 Bank Activities and Operations; Real Estate Lending and Appraisals, 69 Fed. Reg. 1904-01, 1912 n.62  
27 (Feb. 12, 2004). The *Gutierrez* court did not take this reasoning into consideration, and instead drew  
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1 a distinction based solely on the difference between the regulations. This Court finds the reasoning  
2 of *Davis* more persuasive, and that reasoning supports the application of *Silvas* to the facts of this case.

3 Under *Silvas*, the first issue for the Court is whether the state laws at issue fall within  
4 subsection 7.4007(b)(2). That subsection states “[a] national bank may exercise its deposit-taking  
5 powers without regard to state law limitations concerning: ... (ii) Checking accounts; (iii) Disclosure  
6 requirements; (iv) Funds availability[.]” 12 C.F.R. § 7.4007(b)(2)(ii)-(iv). Plaintiff attempts to avoid  
7 this subsection by asserting that his claims focus on Defendant’s surreptitious enrollment of its ODP  
8 customers into the UFP program, not Defendant’s deposit taking powers. However, this assertion  
9 ignores the underlying facts giving rise to Plaintiff’s claims, and the nature of the alleged UFP  
10 program.

11 Although Plaintiff casts his claims as a challenge to Defendant’s representations and  
12 enrollment practices concerning ODP, Plaintiff’s enrollment in that program did not give rise to the  
13 claims alleged in this case. Rather, the event that triggered Plaintiff’s claims was Plaintiff’s *deposit*  
14 of “a \$7,500 check into his *checking account* at a BANA branch in San Diego, California[.]” (Second  
15 Am. Compl. ¶ 47) (emphasis added), and Defendant’s process of making those *funds available* to  
16 Plaintiff. Clearly, that transaction involved Defendant’s deposit taking powers, and more specifically,  
17 its deposit taking powers concerning checking accounts and funds availability, as set out in  
18 subsections 7.4007(b)(2)(ii) and (iv).

19 These critical facts, *i.e.*, Plaintiff’s deposit of a third party check and Defendant’s processing  
20 thereof, are notably absent from the cases in which courts have declined to find preemption. *White*  
21 was limited to allegations that “Wachovia delays, reorders, or otherwise manipulates posting  
22 transactions to an account and imposes overdraft fees even where the account contains sufficient funds  
23 to pay a draft.” 563 F.Supp.2d at 1361. Indeed, the court appeared to rely more on the latter  
24 allegation in finding no preemption under subsection 7.4007. *Id.* at 1367. The claims in *Gutierrez*  
25 also did not involve any deposit-taking powers of the defendant bank. Rather, those claims were  
26 based on the bank’s “practice of resequencing multiple daily posting of debits *from largest to smallest*  
27 so as to use up the account as fast as possible and thus impose as many overdraft fees as possible[.]”  
28 2008 WL 4279550, at \*3, as well as the bank’s “practice of including items and then deleting them



1 without adequate notice, thereby deceiving customers into thinking they have a larger balance and  
2 inducing them to go into overdraft situations[.]” *Id.* at \*9. *In re Checking Account Overdraft Litig.*,  
3 like *White*, was also limited to the bank’s procedures for posting debits and “the allegedly unlawful  
4 manner in which the banks operate their overdraft programs to maximize fees at the expense of  
5 consumers.” 694 F.Supp.2d at 1313.

6 Plaintiff here attempts to cloak his claims in the protective shield of these cases by focusing  
7 on Defendant’s ODP, but as stated above, Plaintiff’s claims do not arise from his enrollment in that  
8 program. Rather, his claims derive from the alleged UFP feature of Defendant’s ODP program, and  
9 as Plaintiff describes it, UFP is a method of “deposit processing[.]” (Second Am. Compl. ¶ 27.) As  
10 so alleged, Plaintiff’s claims are preempted by the NBA.<sup>2</sup>

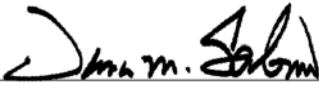
11 **III.**

12 **CONCLUSION**

13 For these reasons, the Court grants Defendant’s motion to dismiss Plaintiff’s Second Amended  
14 Complaint. The Second Amended Complaint is hereby dismissed with prejudice.

15 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

16 DATED: July 22, 2010

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18 \_\_\_\_\_  
19 HON. DANA M. SABRAW  
20 United States District Judge

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<sup>2</sup> In light of this finding, the Court declines to address Defendant’s other arguments in support  
of dismissal.