

STATEMENT OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

February 28, 2021

WEISS ALTERNATIVE MULTI-STRATEGY FUND (formerly Weiss Alternative Balanced Risk Fund)

Class A	(not available for purchase)
Investor Class	WEIZX
Class I	(not available for purchase)
Class K	WEISX

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This Statement of Additional Information (“SAI”) is not a prospectus, but should be read in conjunction with the Prospectus of the Weiss Alternative Multi-Strategy Fund (formerly Weiss Alternative Balanced Risk Fund) (the “Fund”), a series of Series Portfolios Trust (the “Trust”), dated February 28, 2021 as may be supplemented from time to time, which is incorporated by reference into this SAI. Weiss Multi-Strategy Advisers LLC (the “Adviser”) is the investment adviser to the Fund. You may obtain the Prospectus without charge by contacting U.S. Bank Global Fund Services at the address or telephone number listed above or by visiting the Fund’s website at www.weissfunds.com.

The Fund’s audited financial statements and notes thereto for the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020, and the unqualified report of Cohen & Company, Ltd., the Fund’s independent registered public accounting firm, on such financial statements are included in the Fund’s [annual report to shareholders for the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020](#), and are incorporated by reference into this SAI. A copy of the annual report may be obtained without charge by calling or writing the Fund as shown above or by visiting the Fund’s website at www.weissfunds.com.

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THE TRUST

The Trust is a Delaware statutory trust organized on July 27, 2015, and is registered with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”) as an open-end management investment company. The Trust’s Declaration of Trust, as amended and/or restated to date (the “Declaration of Trust”), permits the Trust’s Board of Trustees (the “Board”) to issue an unlimited number of full and fractional shares of beneficial interest, without par value, which may be issued in any number of series. The Board may from time to time issue other series, the assets and liabilities of which will be separate and distinct from any other series. This SAI relates only to the Fund.

The Declaration of Trust also provides for indemnification and reimbursement of expenses out of the Fund’s assets for any Trustee or Trust officer held personally liable for obligations of the Fund or the Trust. All such rights are limited to the assets of the Fund. The Declaration of Trust further provides that the Trust may maintain appropriate insurance (for example, fidelity bonding and errors and omissions insurance) for the protection of the Trust, its shareholders, trustees, officers, employees and agents to cover possible claims and other liabilities. However, the activities of the Trust as an investment company would not likely give rise to liabilities in excess of the Trust’s total assets. Thus, the risk of a shareholder incurring financial loss on account of shareholder liability is limited to circumstances in which both inadequate insurance exists and the Fund itself is unable to meet its obligations.

The Fund’s Prospectus and this SAI are a part of the Trust’s Registration Statement filed with the SEC. Copies of the Trust’s complete Registration Statement may be obtained from the SEC upon payment of the prescribed fee or may be accessed free of charge at the SEC’s website at www.sec.gov.

The Fund, a series of the Trust, is a diversified fund as defined in the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (the “1940 Act”). The Fund does not hold itself out as related to any other series of the Trust for purposes of investment and investor services, nor does it share the same investment adviser with any other series of the Trust. Effective February 28, 2021, the Fund’s name changed from Weiss Alternative Balanced Risk Fund to Weiss Alternative Multi-Strategy Fund.

INVESTMENT POLICIES AND RISKS

The following information supplements the discussion of the Fund’s principal investment strategies as set forth in its Prospectus. The Fund may invest in the following types of investments, each of which is subject to certain risks, as discussed below.

Equity Securities

Equity securities in which the Fund invests include common stocks, preferred stocks and securities convertible into common stocks, such as convertible bonds, warrants, rights and options. The value of equity securities varies in response to many factors, including the activities and financial condition of individual companies, the business market in which individual companies compete and general market and economic conditions. Equity securities fluctuate in value, often based on factors unrelated to the value of the issuer of the securities, and such fluctuations can be significant.

Common Stock

Common stock represents an equity (ownership) interest in a company, and usually possesses voting rights and earns dividends. Dividends on common stock are not fixed but are declared at the discretion of the issuer. Common stock generally represents the riskiest investment in a company. In addition, common stock generally has the greatest appreciation and depreciation potential because increases and decreases in earnings are usually reflected in a company’s stock price.

Preferred Stock

Preferred stocks are securities that have characteristics of both common stocks and corporate bonds. Preferred stocks may receive dividends but payment is not guaranteed as with a bond. These securities may be undervalued because of a lack of analyst coverage resulting in a high dividend yield or yield to maturity. The risks of preferred stocks include a lack of voting rights and the Fund’s Adviser may incorrectly analyze the security, resulting in a loss

to the Fund. Furthermore, preferred stock dividends are not guaranteed and management can elect to forego the preferred dividend, resulting in a loss to the Fund. Preferred stock may also be convertible into the common stock of the issuer. In general, preferred stocks generally pay a dividend at a specified rate and have preference over common stock in the payment of dividends and in liquidation. The Fund may invest in preferred stock with any or no credit rating. Preferred stock is a class of stock having a preference over common stock as to the payment of dividends and the recovery of investment should a company be liquidated, although preferred stock is usually junior to the debt securities of the issuer. Preferred stock market value may change based on changes in interest rates.

Convertible Securities

The Fund may invest in convertible securities with no minimum credit rating. Convertible securities include fixed income securities that may be exchanged or converted into a predetermined number of shares of the issuer's underlying common stock at the option of the holder during a specified period. Convertible securities may take the form of convertible preferred stock, convertible bonds or debentures, units consisting of "usable" bonds and warrants or a combination of the features of several of these securities. Convertible securities are senior to common stocks in an issuer's capital structure, but are usually subordinated to similar non-convertible securities. While providing a fixed-income stream (generally higher in yield than the income derivable from common stock but lower than that afforded by a similar nonconvertible security), a convertible security also gives an investor the opportunity, through its conversion feature, to participate in the capital appreciation of the issuing company depending upon a market price advance in the convertible security's underlying common stock.

Warrants

The Fund may invest in warrants. Warrants are options to purchase common stock at a specific price (usually at a premium above the market value of the optioned common stock at issuance) valid for a specific period of time. Warrants may have a life ranging from less than one year to twenty years, or they may be perpetual. However, most warrants have expiration dates after which they are worthless. In addition, a warrant is worthless if the market price of the common stock does not exceed the warrant's exercise price during the life of the warrant. Warrants have no voting rights, pay no dividends, and have no rights with respect to the assets of the corporation issuing them. The percentage increase or decrease in the market price of the warrant may tend to be greater than the percentage increase or decrease in the market price of the optioned common stock.

Depository Receipts

The Fund may invest in sponsored and unsponsored American Depositary Receipts ("ADRs"), which are receipts issued by an American bank or trust company evidencing ownership of underlying securities issued by a foreign issuer. ADRs, in registered form, are designed for use in U.S. securities markets. Unsponsored ADRs may be created without the participation of the foreign issuer. Holders of unsponsored ADRs generally bear all the costs of the ADR facility, whereas foreign issuers typically bear certain costs in a sponsored ADR. The bank or trust company depository of an unsponsored ADR may be under no obligation to distribute shareholder communications received from the foreign issuer or to pass through voting rights. Many of the risks described below regarding foreign securities apply to investments in ADRs.

Foreign Securities

General. The Fund may invest in foreign securities as well as exchange traded funds ("ETFs") and other investment companies that hold a portfolio of foreign securities. Investing in securities of foreign companies and countries involves certain considerations and risks that are not typically associated with investing in U.S. government securities and securities of domestic companies. There may be less publicly available information about a foreign issuer than a domestic one, and foreign companies are not generally subject to uniform accounting, auditing and financial standards and requirements comparable to those applicable to U.S. companies. There may also be less government supervision and regulation of foreign securities exchanges, brokers and listed companies than exists in the United States. There may be the possibility of expropriations, seizure or nationalization of foreign deposits, confiscatory taxation, political, economic or social instability or diplomatic developments that could affect assets of the Fund held in foreign countries. Finally, the establishment of exchange controls or other foreign governmental laws or restrictions could adversely affect the payment of obligations.

At a referendum in June 2016, the citizens of the United Kingdom (the “UK”) voted to leave the European Union (“EU”), commonly known as “Brexit”. On January 31, 2020, the UK officially withdrew from the EU. The UK and the EU signed a trade agreement on December 30, 2020, which remains subject to approval by the EU Parliament. The agreement, if approved, would leave many aspects of the current UK-EU trade relationship in place subject to further negotiation. Notwithstanding this agreement, there is likely to be considerable uncertainty as to the UK’s post-transition framework, and the framework will likely continue to develop as the UK continues to negotiate different aspects of the trading arrangement. Throughout the withdrawal process and afterward, there is uncertainty about the potential impact of these developments on UK, European and global economies and markets. There is also the possibility of withdrawal movements within other EU countries and the possibility of additional political, economic and market uncertainty and instability. Brexit and any similar developments may have negative effects on economies and markets, such as increased volatility and illiquidity and potentially lower economic growth in the UK, EU and globally, which may adversely affect the value of Fund investments.

The Fund may be subject to foreign taxes and withholding on dividends and interest earned with respect to foreign securities and does not expect to be eligible to elect to pass through to shareholders any credits or deductions with respect to such foreign taxes; accordingly, the net return on such investments may be decreased as compared to the return on income from domestic securities.

To the extent the Fund’s currency exchange transactions do not fully protect the Fund against adverse changes in currency exchange rates, decreases in the value of currencies of the foreign countries in which the Fund will invest relative to the U.S. dollar will result in a corresponding decrease in the U.S. dollar value of the Fund’s assets denominated in those currencies (and possibly a corresponding increase in the amount of securities required to be liquidated to meet distribution requirements). Conversely, increases in the value of currencies of the foreign countries in which the Fund invests relative to the U.S. dollar will result in a corresponding increase in the U.S. dollar value of the Fund’s assets (and possibly a corresponding decrease in the amount of securities to be liquidated).

Emerging Markets Securities

Investing in emerging market securities imposes risks different from, or greater than, risks of investing in foreign developed countries. These risks include: smaller market capitalization of securities markets, which may suffer periods of relative illiquidity; significant price volatility; restrictions on foreign investment; possible repatriation of investment income and capital. In addition, foreign investors may be required to register the proceeds of sales; future economic or political crises could lead to price controls, forced mergers, expropriation or confiscatory taxation, seizure, nationalization, or creation of government monopolies. The currencies of emerging market countries may experience significant declines against the U.S. dollar, and devaluation may occur subsequent to investments in these currencies by the Fund. Inflation and rapid fluctuations in inflation rates have had, and may continue to have, negative effects on the economies and securities markets of certain emerging market countries.

Additional risks of emerging markets securities may include: greater social, economic and political uncertainty and instability; more substantial governmental involvement in the economy; less governmental supervision and regulation; unavailability of currency hedging techniques; companies that are newly organized and small; differences in auditing and financial reporting standards, which may result in unavailability of material information about issuers; and less developed legal systems. In addition, emerging securities markets may have different clearance and settlement procedures, which may be unable to keep pace with the volume of securities transactions or otherwise make it difficult to engage in such transactions. Settlement problems may cause the Fund to miss attractive investment opportunities, hold a portion of its assets in cash pending investment, or be delayed in disposing of a portfolio security. Such a delay could result in possible liability to a purchaser of the security.

Other Investment Companies

The Fund may invest in securities of other investment companies such as open-end funds (mutual funds), closed-end funds, and ETFs. The 1940 Act provides that the Fund may not: (1) purchase more than 3% of another investment company’s outstanding shares; (2) invest more than 5% of its assets in any such investment company (the “5% Limit”), and (3) invest more than 10% of its assets in investment companies overall (the “10% Limit”),

unless: (i) the underlying investment company and/or the Fund has received an order for exemptive relief from such limitations from the SEC; and (ii) the underlying investment company and the Fund take appropriate steps to comply with any conditions in such order. In addition, Section 12(d)(1)(F) of the 1940 Act provides that the provisions of paragraph 12(d)(1) shall not apply to securities purchased or otherwise acquired by the Fund if (i) immediately after such purchase or acquisition not more than 3% of the total outstanding stock of such registered investment company is owned by the Fund and all affiliated persons of the Fund; and (ii) the Fund has not, and is not proposing to offer or sell any security issued by it through a principal underwriter or otherwise at a public or offering price which includes a sales load of more than 1.50%, except as permitted by Rule 12d1-3, described below. An investment company that issues shares to the Fund pursuant to paragraph 12(d)(1)(F) shall not be required to redeem its shares in an amount exceeding 1% of such investment company's total outstanding shares in any period of less than thirty days. The Fund (or the Adviser acting on behalf of the Fund) must comply with the following voting restrictions: when the Fund exercises voting rights, by proxy or otherwise, with respect to investment companies owned by the Fund, the Fund will either seek instruction from the Fund's shareholders with regard to the voting of all proxies and vote in accordance with such instructions, or vote the shares held by the Fund in the same proportion as the vote of all other holders of such security.

Further, the Fund may rely on Rule 12d1-3, which allows unaffiliated mutual funds to exceed the 5% Limit and the 10% Limit, provided the aggregate sales loads any investor pays (i.e., the combined distribution expenses of both the acquiring fund and the acquired funds) does not exceed the limits on sales loads established by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority ("FINRA") for funds of funds.

In December 2018, the SEC issued a proposed rulemaking package related to investments in other investment companies that, if adopted, could require the Fund to adjust its investments accordingly. These adjustments may have an impact on the Fund's performance and may have negative risk consequences on the investing Fund as well as the underlying investment companies.

The Fund and any "affiliated persons," as defined by the 1940 Act may purchase in the aggregate only up to 3% of the total outstanding securities of any other investment company. Accordingly, when affiliated persons hold shares of any of the investment companies, the Fund's ability to invest fully in shares of those funds is restricted, and the Adviser must then, in some instances, select alternative investments that would not have been its first preference. The 1940 Act also provides that an investment company whose shares are purchased by the Fund will be obligated to redeem shares held by the Fund only in an amount up to 1% of the investment company's outstanding securities during any period of less than 30 days. Shares held by the Fund in excess of 1% of an investment company's outstanding securities therefore, will be considered not readily marketable securities, which, together with other such securities, may not exceed 15% of the Fund's total assets.

Under certain circumstances an investment company may determine to make payment of a redemption by the Fund wholly or partly by a distribution in kind of securities from its portfolio, in lieu of cash, in conformity with the rules of the SEC. In such cases, the Fund may hold securities distributed by an investment company until the Adviser determines that it is appropriate to dispose of such securities.

Investment decisions by the investment advisers of the other investment companies are made independently of the Fund and its Adviser. Therefore, the investment adviser of one investment company may be purchasing shares of the same issuer whose shares are being sold by the investment adviser of another such fund. The result would be an indirect expense to the Fund without accomplishing any investment purpose. Because other investment companies employ an investment adviser, such investments by the Fund may cause shareholders to bear duplicate fees.

Closed-End Investment Companies. The Fund may invest its assets in "closed-end" investment companies (or "closed-end funds"), subject to the investment restrictions set forth above. Shares of closed-end funds are typically offered to the public in a one-time initial public offering by a group of underwriters who retain a spread or underwriting commission of between 4% or 6% of the initial public offering price. Such securities are then listed for trading on the New York Stock Exchange ("NYSE"), the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation System (commonly known as "NASDAQ") and, in some cases, may be traded in other over-the-counter

markets. Because the shares of closed-end funds cannot be redeemed upon demand to the issuer like the shares of an open-end investment company (such as the Fund), investors seek to buy and sell shares of closed-end funds in the secondary market.

The Fund generally will purchase shares of closed-end funds only in the secondary market. The Fund will incur normal brokerage costs on such purchases similar to the expenses the Fund would incur for the purchase of securities of any other type of issuer in the secondary market. The Fund may, however, also purchase securities of a closed-end fund in an initial public offering when, in the opinion of the Adviser, based on a consideration of the nature of the closed-end fund's proposed investments, the prevailing market conditions and the level of demand for such securities, they represent an attractive opportunity for growth of capital. The initial offering price typically will include a dealer spread, which may be higher than the applicable brokerage cost if the Fund purchased such securities in the secondary market.

The shares of many closed-end funds, after their initial public offering, frequently trade at a price per share that is less than the net asset value per share, the difference representing the "market discount" of such shares. This market discount may be due in part to the investment objective of long-term appreciation, which is sought by many closed-end funds, as well as to the fact that the shares of closed-end funds are not redeemable by the holder upon demand to the issuer at the next determined net asset value but rather are subject to the principles of supply and demand in the secondary market. A relative lack of secondary market purchasers of closed-end fund shares also may contribute to such shares trading at a discount to their net asset value.

The Fund may invest in shares of closed-end funds that are trading at a discount to net asset value or at a premium to net asset value. There can be no assurance that the market discount on shares of any closed-end fund purchased by the Fund will ever decrease. In fact, it is possible that this market discount may increase and the Fund may suffer realized or unrealized capital losses due to further decline in the market price of the securities of such closed-end funds, thereby adversely affecting the net asset value of the Fund's shares. Similarly, there can be no assurance that any shares of a closed-end fund purchased by the Fund at a premium will continue to trade at a premium or that the premium will not decrease subsequent to a purchase of such shares by the Fund.

Closed-end funds may issue senior securities (including preferred stock and debt obligations) for the purpose of leveraging the closed-end fund's common shares in an attempt to enhance the current return to such closed-end fund's common shareholders. The Fund's investment in the common shares of closed-end funds that are financially leveraged may create an opportunity for greater total return on its investment, but at the same time may be expected to exhibit more volatility in market price and net asset value than an investment in shares of investment companies without a leveraged capital structure.

Exchange Traded Funds. ETFs are funds that track their related index and have the flexibility of trading like a security. They are managed by professionals and provide the investor with diversification, cost and tax efficiency, liquidity, marginability, are useful for hedging, have the ability to go long and short, and some provide quarterly dividends. ETFs generally have two markets. The primary market is where institutions swap "creation units" in block-multiples of shares, typically 25,000 or 50,000 for in-kind securities and cash in the form of dividends. The secondary market is where individual investors can trade as little as a single share during trading hours on the exchange. This is different from open-ended mutual funds that are traded after hours once the net asset value ("NAV") is calculated. ETFs share many similar risks with open-end and closed-end funds.

There is a risk that an ETF in which the Fund invests may terminate due to extraordinary events that may cause any of the service providers to the ETF, such as the trustee or sponsor, to close or otherwise fail to perform their obligations to the ETF. Also, because the ETFs in which the Fund intends to principally invest may be granted licenses by agreement to use the indices as a basis for determining their compositions and/or otherwise to use certain trade names, the ETFs may terminate if such license agreements are terminated. In addition, an ETF may terminate if its entire net asset value falls below a certain amount. Although the Fund believes that, in the event of the termination of an underlying ETF, it will be able to invest instead in shares of an alternate ETF tracking the same market index or another market index with the same general market, there is no guarantee that shares of an

alternate ETF would be available for investment at that time. To the extent the Fund invests in a sector product, the Fund is subject to the risks associated with that sector.

Real Estate Investment Trusts

The Fund may invest in securities of real estate investment trusts (“REITs”). REITs are corporations or trusts that specialize in acquiring, holding and managing residential, commercial or industrial real estate, and are frequently publicly traded. A REIT is eligible for a dividends paid deduction (and therefore generally does not pay U.S. federal income tax at the entity level to the extent of any dividends it pays) if it distributes to shareholders or unitholders at least 95% of its taxable income for each taxable year and complies with certain other requirements relating to its organization, ownership, assets and income.

REITs generally can be classified as “Equity REITs”, “Mortgage REITs” and “Hybrid REITs.” An Equity REIT invests the majority of its assets directly in real property and derives its income primarily from rents and from capital gains on real estate appreciation, which are realized through property sales. A Mortgage REIT invests the majority of its assets in real estate mortgage loans and services its income primarily from interest payments. A Hybrid REIT combines the characteristics of an Equity REIT and a Mortgage REIT. Although the Fund can invest in all three kinds of REITs, its emphasis is expected to be on investments in Equity REITs.

Investments in the real estate industry involve particular risks. The real estate industry has been subject to substantial fluctuations and declines on a local, regional and national basis in the past and may continue to be in the future. Real property values and income from real property continue to be in the future. Real property values and income from real property may decline due to general and local economic conditions, overbuilding and increased competition, increases in property taxes and operating expenses, changes in zoning laws, casualty or condemnation losses, regulatory limitations on rents, changes in neighborhoods and in demographics, increases in market interest rates, or other factors. Factors such as these may adversely affect companies that own and operate real estate directly, companies that lend to such companies, and companies that service the real estate industry.

Investments in REITs also involve risks. Equity REITs will be affected by changes in the values of and income from the properties they own, while Mortgage REITs may be affected by the credit quality of the mortgage loans they hold. In addition, REITs are dependent on specialized management skills and on their ability to generate cash flow for operating purposes and to make distributions to shareholders or unitholders. REITs may have limited diversification and are subject to risks associated with obtaining financing for real property, as well as to the risk of self-liquidation. REITs also can be adversely affected by their failure to qualify for preferential tax treatment of their income under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”), or their failure to maintain an exemption from registration under the 1940 Act. By investing in REITs indirectly through the Fund, a shareholder bears not only a proportionate share of the expenses of the Fund, but also may indirectly bear similar expenses of some of the REITs in which it invests.

Master Limited Partnerships

The Fund may invest in master limited partnership interests (“MLPs”). MLPs are limited partnerships, the interests in which (known as “units”) are traded on public exchanges, just like corporate stock. MLPs are limited partnerships that provide an investor with a direct interest in a group of assets (generally, oil and gas properties). Master limited partnership units typically trade publicly, like stock, and thus may provide the investor more liquidity than ordinary limited partnerships. Master limited partnerships are also called publicly traded partnerships and public limited partnerships. A limited partnership has one or more general partners (they may be individuals, corporations, partnerships or another entity) which manage the partnership, and limited partners, which provide capital to the partnership but have no role in its management. When an investor buys units in an MLP, he or she becomes a limited partner. MLPs are formed in several ways. A non-traded partnership may decide to go public. Several non-traded partnerships may “roll up” into a single MLP. A corporation may spin off a group of assets or part of its business into an MLP of which it is the general partner, either to realize what it believes to be the assets’ full value or as an alternative to issuing debt. A corporation may fully convert to an MLP, although since 1986 the tax consequences have made this an unappealing; or, a newly formed company may operate as an MLP from its inception.

There are different types of risks to investing in MLPs, including regulatory risks and interest rate risks. Currently most publicly traded MLPs qualify for pass through taxation of their income to partners, on account of satisfying a qualifying income test, which prevents double taxation of earnings. If the government were to change the tax treatment of MLPs, unitholders would not be able to enjoy the relatively high yields in the sector for long. In addition, MLPs that charge government-regulated fees for transportation of oil and gas products through their pipelines are subject to unfavorable changes in government-approved rates and fees, which would affect an MLP's revenue stream negatively. MLPs also carry some interest rate risks. During increases in interest rates, MLPs may not produce desirable returns to shareholders.

Derivatives

The Fund may use derivative instruments for various reasons, including to create investment leverage; as a substitute for securities, interest rates, currencies and commodities; for tax purposes; and/or to hedge against market movements. The information below contains general additional information about derivatives.

In October 2020, the SEC adopted Rule 18f-4 under the 1940 Act. The rule replaces the current standard for funds' use of derivatives. Once the rule becomes effective, funds that are subject to the rule will be required to limit their use of derivatives based on the fund's value-at-risk ("VaR"). VaR is a measure of estimated potential losses on an instrument or portfolio, expressed as a percentage of the value of the portfolio's assets (or net assets when computing a fund's VaR), over a specified time horizon and at a given confidence level. A fund must limit its derivatives usage to 200% of the VaR of a designated reference portfolio, which may be an index that meets certain requirements or the fund's own securities portfolio. Alternatively, if this test is impractical based on the fund's portfolio, the fund may comply with the "absolute VaR test" which limits the fund's VaR to 20% of its net assets. Rule 18f-4 also requires (i) the appointment of a derivatives risk manager by the fund's board to oversee the program, (ii) monitoring and stress testing requirements, and (iii) reporting and escalation procedures if thresholds are breached. Funds that limit derivatives exposure to 10% of net assets are exempt from many of the requirements of Rule 18f-4.

Cover for Futures Contracts. Transactions involving futures contracts expose the Fund to an obligation to another party. The Fund will not enter into any such transactions unless it owns either: (1) an offsetting ("covered") position in other futures contracts; or (2) cash and liquid assets with a value, marked-to-market daily, sufficient to cover its potential obligations to the extent not covered as provided in (1) above. The Fund will comply with SEC guidelines regarding cover for these instruments and will, if the guidelines so require, designate on its books or maintain in a separate account cash, liquid investments, or other permissible assets, in the prescribed amount as determined daily. The Fund may enter into agreements with broker-dealers, which require the broker-dealers to accept physical settlement for certain futures contracts. If this occurs, the Fund would treat the futures contract as being cash-settled for purposes of determining the Fund's coverage requirements.

Regulation as a Commodity Pool Operator. The Adviser has claimed an exclusion from the definition of the term "commodity pool operator" with respect to the Fund under the Commodity Exchange Act ("CEA") pursuant to the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission ("CFTC") Regulation 4.5. The Fund currently expects to operate in a manner that would permit the Adviser to continue to claim the exclusion under Rule 4.5, which may adversely affect the Adviser's ability to manage the Fund under certain market conditions and may adversely affect the Fund's total return. In the event the Adviser becomes unable to rely on the exclusion under Rule 4.5 and is required to register with the CFTC as a commodity pool operator with respect to the Fund, the Fund's expenses may increase and the Fund may be adversely affected. The Fund may be limited in its ability to use futures and options on futures and to engage in certain swaps transactions during any period where its investment adviser is not registered as a commodity pool operator or commodity trading advisor. Such limitations are not expected to affect the normal operations of the Fund.

Options on Futures Contracts. The Fund may purchase and sell options on the same types of futures in which it may invest. Options on futures are similar to options on underlying instruments except that options on futures give the purchaser the right, in return for the premium paid, to assume a position in a futures contract (a long position if the option is a call and a short position if the option is a put), rather than to purchase or sell the futures contract, at a

specified exercise price at any time during the period of the option. Upon exercise of the option, the delivery of the futures position by the writer of the option to the holder of the option will be accompanied by the delivery of the accumulated balance in the writer's futures margin account which represents the amount by which the market price of the futures contract, at exercise, exceeds (in the case of a call) or is less than (in the case of a put) the exercise price of the option on the futures contract. Purchasers of options who fail to exercise their options prior to the exercise date suffer a loss of the premium paid

Options on Securities. The Fund may purchase and write (*i.e.*, sell) put and call options. Such options may relate to particular securities or stock indices, and may or may not be listed on a domestic or foreign securities exchange and may or may not be issued by the Options Clearing Corporation. Options trading is a highly specialized activity that entails greater than ordinary investment risk. Options may be more volatile than the underlying instruments, and therefore, on a percentage basis, an investment in options may be subject to greater fluctuation than an investment in the underlying instruments themselves.

A call option for a particular security gives the purchaser of the option the right to buy, and the writer (seller) the obligation to sell, the underlying security at the stated exercise price at any time prior to the expiration of the option, regardless of the market price of the security. The premium paid to the writer is in consideration for undertaking the obligation under the option contract. A put option for a particular security gives the purchaser the right to sell the security at the stated exercise price at any time prior to the expiration date of the option, regardless of the market price of the security.

Stock index options are put options and call options on various stock indices. In most respects, they are identical to listed options on common stocks. The primary difference between stock options and index options occurs when index options are exercised. In the case of stock options, the underlying security, common stock, is delivered. However, upon the exercise of an index option, settlement does not occur by delivery of the securities comprising the index. The option holder who exercises the index option receives an amount of cash if the closing level of the stock index upon which the option is based is greater than, in the case of a call, or less than, in the case of a put, the exercise price of the option. This amount of cash is equal to the difference between the closing price of the stock index and the exercise price of the option expressed in dollars times a specified multiple. A stock index fluctuates with changes in the market value of the stocks included in the index. For example, some stock index options are based on a broad market index, such as the Standard & Poor's 500[®] Index or the Value Line Composite Index, or a narrower market index, such as the Standard & Poor's 100[®] Index. Indices may also be based on an industry or market segment, such as the NYSE Arca Oil and Gas Index or the Computer and Business Equipment Index. Options on stock indices are currently traded on the Chicago Board Options Exchange, the NYSE, and the Philadelphia Stock Exchange.

The Fund's obligation to sell an instrument subject to a call option written by it, or to purchase an instrument subject to a put option written by it, may be terminated prior to the expiration date of the option by the Fund's execution of a closing purchase transaction, which is effected by purchasing on an exchange an option of the same series (*i.e.*, same underlying instrument, exercise price and expiration date) as the option previously written. A closing purchase transaction will ordinarily be effected to realize a profit on an outstanding option, to prevent an underlying instrument from being called, to permit the sale of the underlying instrument or to permit the writing of a new option containing different terms on such underlying instrument. The cost of such a liquidation purchase plus transactions costs may be greater than the premium received upon the original option, in which event the Fund will have incurred a loss in the transaction. There is no assurance that a liquid secondary market will exist for any particular option. An option writer unable to effect a closing purchase transaction will not be able to sell the underlying instrument or liquidate the assets held in a segregated account, as described below, until the option expires or the optioned instrument is delivered upon exercise. In such circumstances, the writer will be subject to the risk of market decline or appreciation in the instrument during such period.

If an option purchased by the Fund expires unexercised, the Fund realizes a loss equal to the premium paid. If the Fund enters into a closing sale transaction on an option purchased by it, the Fund will realize a gain if the premium received by the Fund on the closing transaction is more than the premium paid to purchase the option or a loss if it

is less. If an option written by the Fund expires on the stipulated expiration date or if the Fund enters into a closing purchase transaction, it will realize a gain (or loss if the cost of a closing purchase transaction exceeds the net premium received when the option is sold). If an option written by the Fund is exercised, the proceeds of the sale will be increased by the net premium originally received and the Fund will realize a gain or loss.

Certain Risks Regarding Options. There are several risks associated with transactions in options. For example, there are significant differences between the securities and options markets that could result in an imperfect correlation between these markets, causing a given transaction not to achieve its objectives. In addition, a liquid secondary market for particular options, whether traded over-the-counter or on an exchange, may be absent for reasons which include the following: there may be insufficient trading interest in certain options; restrictions may be imposed by an exchange on opening transactions or closing transactions or both; trading halts, suspensions or other restrictions may be imposed with respect to particular classes or series of options or underlying securities or currencies; unusual or unforeseen circumstances may interrupt normal operations on an exchange; the facilities of an exchange or the Options Clearing Corporation may not at all times be adequate to handle current trading value; or one or more exchanges could, for economic or other reasons, decide or be compelled at some future date to discontinue the trading of options (or a particular class or series of options), in which event the secondary market on that exchange (or in that class or series of options) would cease to exist, although outstanding options that had been issued by the Options Clearing Corporation as a result of trades on that exchange would continue to be exercisable in accordance with their terms.

Successful use by the Fund of options on stock indices will be subject to the ability of the Adviser to correctly predict movements in the directions of the stock market. This requires different skills and techniques than predicting changes in the prices of individual securities. In addition, the Fund's ability to effectively hedge all or a portion of the securities in its portfolio, in anticipation of or during a market decline, through transactions in put options on stock indices, depends on the degree to which price movements in the underlying index correlate with the price movements of the securities held by the Fund. Inasmuch as the Fund's securities will not duplicate the components of an index, the correlation will not be perfect. Consequently, the Fund bears the risk that the prices of its securities being hedged will not move in the same amount as the prices of its put options on the stock indices. It is also possible that there may be a negative correlation between the index and the Fund's securities that would result in a loss on both such securities and the options on stock indices acquired by the Fund.

The hours of trading for options may not conform to the hours during which the underlying securities are traded. To the extent that the options markets close before the markets for the underlying securities, significant price and rate movements can take place in the underlying markets that cannot be reflected in the options markets. The purchase of options is a highly specialized activity that involves investment techniques and risks different from those associated with ordinary portfolio securities transactions. The purchase of stock index options involves the risk that the premium and transaction costs paid by the Fund in purchasing an option will be lost as a result of unanticipated movements in prices of the securities comprising the stock index on which the option is based.

There is no assurance that a liquid secondary market on an options exchange will exist for any particular option, or at any particular time, and for some options no secondary market on an exchange or elsewhere may exist. If the Fund is unable to close out a call option on securities that it has written before the option is exercised, the Fund may be required to purchase the optioned securities in order to satisfy its obligation under the option to deliver such securities. If the Fund was unable to effect a closing sale transaction with respect to options on securities that it has purchased, it would have to exercise the option in order to realize any profit and would incur transaction costs upon the purchase and sale of the underlying securities.

Cover for Options Positions. Transactions using options (other than options that the Fund has purchased) expose the Fund to an obligation to another party. The Fund will not enter into any such transactions unless it owns either (i) an offsetting ("covered") position in securities or other options or (ii) cash or liquid investments with a value sufficient at all times to cover its potential obligations not covered as provided in (i) above. The Fund will comply with SEC guidelines regarding cover for these instruments and, if the guidelines so require, set aside cash or liquid

investments in a segregated account with the custodian in the prescribed amount. Under current SEC guidelines, the Fund will segregate assets to cover transactions in which the Fund writes or sells options.

Assets used as cover or held in a segregated account cannot be sold while the position in the corresponding option is open unless they are replaced with similar assets. As a result, the commitment of a large portion of the Fund's assets to cover or segregated accounts could impede portfolio management or the Fund's ability to meet redemption requests or other current obligations.

Dealer Options. The Fund may engage in transactions involving dealer options as well as exchange-traded options. Certain additional risks are specific to dealer options. While the Fund might look to a clearing corporation to exercise exchange-traded options, if the Fund were to purchase a dealer option it would need to rely on the dealer from which it purchased the option to perform if the option were exercised. Failure by the dealer to do so would result in the loss of the premium paid by the Fund as well as loss of the expected benefit of the transaction.

Exchange-traded options generally have a continuous liquid market while dealer options may not. Consequently, the Fund may generally be able to realize the value of a dealer option it has purchased only by exercising or reselling the option to the dealer who issued it. Similarly, when the Fund writes a dealer option, the Fund may generally be able to close out the option prior to its expiration only by entering into a closing purchase transaction with the dealer to whom the Fund originally wrote the option. While the Fund will seek to enter into dealer options only with dealers who will agree to and which are expected to be capable of entering into closing transactions with the Fund, there can be no assurance that the Fund will at any time be able to liquidate a dealer option at a favorable price at any time prior to expiration. Unless the Fund, as a covered dealer call option writer, is able to effect a closing purchase transaction, it will not be able to liquidate securities (or other assets) used as cover until the option expires or is exercised. In the event of insolvency of the other party, the Fund may be unable to liquidate a dealer option. With respect to options written by the Fund, the inability to enter into a closing transaction may result in material losses to the Fund. For example, because the Fund must maintain a secured position with respect to any call option on a security it writes, the Fund may not sell the assets that it has segregated to secure the position while it is obligated under the option. This requirement may impair the Fund's ability to sell portfolio securities at a time when such sale might be advantageous.

The staff of the SEC has taken the position that purchased dealer options are less liquid. The Fund may treat the cover used for written dealer options as liquid if the dealer agrees that the Fund may repurchase the dealer option it has written for a maximum price to be calculated by a predetermined formula. In such cases, the dealer option would be considered illiquid only to the extent the maximum purchase price under the formula exceeds the intrinsic value of the option. Accordingly, the Fund will treat dealer options as subject to the Fund's limitation on illiquid investments. If the SEC changes its position on the liquidity of dealer options, the Fund will change its treatment of such instruments accordingly.

Spread Transactions. The Fund may purchase covered spread options from securities dealers. These covered spread options are not presently exchange-listed or exchange-traded. The purchase of a spread option gives the Fund the right to put securities that it owns at a fixed dollar spread or fixed yield spread in relationship to another security that the Fund does not own, but which is used as a benchmark. The risk to the Fund, in addition to the risks of dealer options described above, is the cost of the premium paid as well as any transaction costs. The purchase of spread options will be used to protect the Fund against adverse changes in prevailing credit quality spreads, *i.e.*, the yield spread between high quality and lower quality securities. This protection is provided only during the life of the spread options.

Futures Contracts. A futures contract provides for the future sale by one party and purchase by another party of a specified amount of a specific financial instrument (e.g., units of a stock index) for a specified price, date, time and place designated at the time the contract is made. Brokerage fees are paid when a futures contract is bought or sold and margin deposits must be maintained. Entering into a contract to buy is commonly referred to as buying or purchasing a contract or holding a long position. Entering into a contract to sell is commonly referred to as selling a contract or holding a short position. Unlike when the Fund purchases or sells a security, no price would be paid or

received by the Fund upon the purchase or sale of a futures contract. Upon entering into a futures contract, and to maintain the Fund's open positions in futures contracts, the Fund would be required to deposit with its custodian or futures broker in a segregated account in the name of the futures broker an amount of cash, U.S. government securities, suitable money market instruments, or other liquid investments, known as "initial margin." The margin required for a particular futures contract is set by the exchange on which the contract is traded, and may be significantly modified from time to time by the exchange during the term of the contract. Futures contracts are customarily purchased and sold on margins that may range upward from less than 5% of the value of the contract being traded.

If the price of an open futures contract changes (by increase in underlying instrument or index in the case of a sale or by decrease in the case of a purchase) so that the loss on the futures contract reaches a point at which the margin on deposit does not satisfy margin requirements, the broker will require an increase in the margin. However, if the value of a position increases because of favorable price changes in the futures contract so that the margin deposit exceeds the required margin, the broker will pay the excess to the Fund. These subsequent payments, called "variation margin," to and from the futures broker, are made on a daily basis as the price of the underlying assets fluctuate making the long and short positions in the futures contract more or less valuable, a process known as "marking to the market." The Fund expects to earn interest income on any margin deposits. Although certain futures contracts, by their terms, require actual future delivery of and payment for the underlying instruments, in practice most futures contracts are usually closed out before the delivery date. Closing out an open futures contract purchase or sale is effected by entering into an offsetting futures contract sale or purchase, respectively, for the same aggregate amount of the identical underlying instrument or index and the same delivery date. If the offsetting purchase price is less than the original sale price, the Fund realizes a gain; if it is more, the Fund realizes a loss. Conversely, if the offsetting sale price is more than the original purchase price, the Fund realizes a gain; if it is less, the Fund realizes a loss. The transaction costs must also be included in these calculations. There can be no assurance, however, that the Fund will be able to enter into an offsetting transaction with respect to a particular futures contract at a particular time. If the Fund is not able to enter into an offsetting transaction, the Fund will continue to be required to maintain the margin deposits on the futures contract.

Because the Fund will designate on its books or maintain in a separate account liquid assets to satisfy its purchase commitments in the manner described, the Fund's liquidity and the ability of the Adviser to manage them may be affected in the event the Fund's forward commitments, commitments to purchase when-issued securities and delayed settlements ever exceeded 15% of the value of its net assets.

Futures trading is speculative and futures prices are highly volatile. Price movements for futures contracts, for example, which may fluctuate substantially during a short period of time, are influenced by numerous factors that affect the securities markets, including: changing supply and demand relationships; government programs and policies; national and international political and economic events and changes in interest rates. Also, the success of many futures trading strategies that use "technical" factors in identifying price moves depends upon the occurrence in the future of price movements. Technical systems will not be profitable and may in fact produce losses if there are no market moves of the kind the system seeks to follow. Any factor that would make it more difficult to execute the trades identified, such as a reduction of liquidity, also would reduce profitability.

Futures trading is highly leveraged. The low margin deposits normally required in trading futures interests permit an extremely high degree of leverage. Accordingly, a relatively small price movement in a futures interest may result in an immediate and substantial loss to the investor. Like other leveraged investments, futures trading may result in losses in excess of the amount invested.

Futures contracts may be classified as illiquid. Most U.S. futures exchanges impose daily limits regulating the maximum amount above or below the previous day's settlement price which a futures contract price may fluctuate during a single day. During a single trading day no trades may be executed at prices beyond the daily limit. Once the price of a particular futures contract has increased or decreased to the limit point, it may be difficult, costly or impossible to liquidate a position. Futures prices in particular contracts have occasionally moved the daily limit for several consecutive days with little or no trading. If this occurs, the Fund might be prevented from promptly

liquidating unfavorable positions which could result in substantial losses. Those losses could significantly exceed the margin initially committed to the trades involved. In addition, even if prices have not moved the daily limit, or if there are no limits for the contracts traded by the Fund, the Fund may not be able to execute trades at favorable prices if little trading in the contracts is taking place. It is also possible that an exchange or the CFTC may suspend trading in a particular contract, order immediate settlement of a contract or order that trading to the liquidation of open positions only. The CFTC and U.S. exchanges may also impose speculative position limits which, if applicable to the Fund's trading in futures contracts, could require liquidation of positions that could negatively impact profitability. Futures trading involves counterparty risk. Futures brokers must maintain the Fund's assets (other than assets used to trade foreign futures or options on foreign markets) in a segregated account. If a futures broker goes bankrupt, the Fund could lose money as it may only be able to recover a pro-rata share of the property available for distribution to all of the broker's customers. In addition, even if a futures broker adequately segregates the Fund's assets, the Fund may still be subject to risk of loss of funds on deposit should another customer of the futures broker fail to satisfy deficiencies in such other customer's account. In addition, trading may occur on foreign exchanges and other non-U.S. markets. Neither existing CFTC regulations nor regulations of any other U.S. governmental agency apply to transactions on foreign markets. The Fund, should it trade futures contracts, is at risk for fluctuations in the exchange rate between the currencies in which it trades and U.S. dollars. It also is possible that exchange controls could be imposed in the future. There is no restriction on how much of the Fund's trading might be on foreign markets. In addition, if the Fund chooses to exchange a cash, forward or spot market position outside of regular trading hours for a comparable futures position, such transactions are subject to counterparty creditworthiness risk.

Swap Agreements. The Fund may enter into interest rate, index and currency exchange rate swap agreements in an attempt to obtain a particular desired return at a lower cost to the Fund than if it had invested directly in an instrument that yielded that desired return. Swap agreements are two-party contracts entered into primarily by institutional investors for periods ranging from a few weeks to more than one year. In a standard "swap" transaction, two parties agree to exchange the returns (or differentials in rates of returns) earned or realized on particular predetermined investments or instruments. The gross returns to be exchanged or "swapped" between the parties are calculated with respect to a "notional amount," i.e., the return on or increase in value of a particular dollar amount invested at a particular interest rate, in a particular foreign currency, or in a "basket" of securities representing a particular index. The "notional amount" of the swap agreement is only a fictive basis on which to calculate the obligations the parties to a swap agreement have agreed to exchange. The Fund's obligations (or rights) under a swap agreement will generally be equal only to the amount to be paid or received under the agreement based on the relative values of the positions held by each party to the agreement (the "net amount"). The Fund's obligations under a swap agreement will be accrued daily (offset against any amounts owing to the Fund) and any accrued but unpaid net amounts owed to a swap counterparty will be covered by the maintenance of a segregated account consisting of cash, U.S. government securities, or other liquid investments, to avoid leveraging of the Fund's portfolio.

Whether the Fund's use of swap agreements enhances the Fund's total return will depend on the Adviser's ability to correctly predict whether certain types of investments are likely to produce greater returns than other investments. Because they are two-party contracts and may have terms of greater than seven days, swap agreements may be classified as illiquid. Moreover, the Fund bears the risk of loss of the amount expected to be received under a swap agreement in the event of the default or bankruptcy of a swap agreement counterparty. The Fund's Adviser will cause the Fund to enter into swap agreements only with counterparties that would be eligible for consideration as repurchase agreement counterparties under the Fund's repurchase agreement guidelines. The swap market is a relatively new market and is largely unregulated. It is possible that developments in the swaps market, including potential government regulation, could adversely affect the Fund's ability to terminate existing swap agreements or to realize amounts to be received under such agreements.

Certain swap agreements are exempt from most provisions of the CEA and, therefore, are not regulated as futures or commodity option transactions under the CEA, pursuant to regulations of the CFTC. To qualify for this exemption, a swap agreement must be entered into by "eligible participants," which include the following, provided the participants' total assets exceed established levels: a bank or trust company, savings association or credit union,

insurance company, investment company subject to regulation under the 1940 Act, commodity pool, corporation, partnership, proprietorship, organization, trust or other entity, employee benefit plan, governmental entity, broker-dealer, futures commission merchant, natural person, or regulated foreign person. To be eligible, natural persons and most other entities must have total assets exceeding \$10 million; commodity pools and employees benefit plans must have assets exceeding \$5 million. In addition, an eligible swap transaction must meet three conditions. First, the swap agreement may not be part of a fungible class of agreements that are standardized as to their material economic terms. Second, the creditworthiness of parties with actual or potential obligations under the swap agreement must be a material consideration in entering into or determining the terms of the swap agreement, including pricing, cost or credit enhancement terms. Third, swap agreements may not be entered into and traded on or through a multilateral transaction execution facility.

Certain Investment Techniques and Derivatives Risks. When the Fund uses investment techniques such as margin, leverage and short sales, and forms of financial derivatives, such as options and futures, an investment in the Fund may be more volatile than investments in other mutual funds. Although the intention is to use such investment techniques and derivatives to minimize risk to the Fund, there is the possibility that improper implementation of such techniques and derivative strategies or unusual market conditions could result in significant losses to the Fund. Derivatives are used to limit risk in the Fund or to enhance investment return and have a return tied to a formula based upon an interest rate, index, price of a security, or other measurement. Derivatives involve special risks, including: (1) the risk that interest rates, securities prices and currency markets will not move in the direction that a portfolio manager anticipates; (2) imperfect correlation between the price of derivative instruments and movements in the prices of the securities, interest rates or currencies being hedged; (3) the fact that skills needed to use these strategies are different than those needed to select portfolio securities; (4) the possible absence of a liquid secondary market for any particular instrument and possible exchange imposed price fluctuation limits, either of which may make it difficult or impossible to close out a position when desired; (5) the risk that adverse price movements in an instrument can result in a loss substantially greater than the Fund's initial investment in that instrument (in some cases, the potential loss is unlimited); (6) particularly in the case of privately-negotiated instruments, the risk that the counterparty will not perform its obligations, or that penalties could be incurred for positions held less than the required minimum holding period, which could leave the Fund worse off than if it had not entered into the position; and (7) the inability to close out certain hedged positions. In addition, the use of derivatives for non-hedging purposes (that is, to seek to increase total return) is considered a speculative practice and may present an even greater risk of loss than when used for hedging purposes.

Fixed Income/Debt/Bond Securities

Yields on fixed income securities are dependent on a variety of factors, including the general conditions of the money market and other fixed income securities markets, the size of a particular offering, the maturity of the obligation and the rating of the issue. An investment in the Fund will be subjected to risk even if all fixed income securities in the Fund's portfolio are paid in full at maturity. All fixed income securities, including U.S. Government securities, can change in value when there is a change in interest rates or the issuer's actual or perceived creditworthiness or ability to meet its obligations.

There is normally an inverse relationship between the market value of securities sensitive to prevailing interest rates and actual changes in interest rates. In other words, an increase in interest rates produces a decrease in market value. The longer the remaining maturity (and duration) of a security, the greater will be the effect of interest rate changes on the market value of that security. Changes in the ability of an issuer to make payments of interest and principal and in the markets' perception of an issuer's creditworthiness will also affect the market value of the debt securities of that issuer. Obligations of issuers of fixed income securities (including municipal securities) are subject to the provisions of bankruptcy, insolvency, and other laws affecting the rights and remedies of creditors, such as the Federal Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1978. In addition, the obligations of municipal issuers may become subject to laws enacted in the future by Congress, state legislatures, or referenda extending the time for payment of principal and/or interest, or imposing other constraints upon enforcement of such obligations or upon the ability of municipalities to levy taxes. Changes in the ability of an issuer to make payments of interest and principal and in the market's perception of an issuer's creditworthiness will also affect the market value of the debt securities of that

issuer. The possibility exists, therefore, that, the ability of any issuer to pay, when due, the principal of and interest on its debt securities may become impaired.

The corporate debt securities in which the Fund may invest include corporate bonds and notes and short-term investments such as commercial paper and variable rate demand notes. Commercial paper (short-term promissory notes) is issued by companies to finance their or their affiliate's current obligations and is frequently unsecured. Variable and floating rate demand notes are unsecured obligations redeemable upon not more than 30 days' notice. These obligations include master demand notes that permit investment of fluctuating amounts at varying rates of interest pursuant to a direct arrangement with the issuer of the instrument. The issuer of these obligations often has the right, after a given period, to prepay the outstanding principal amount of the obligations upon a specified number of days' notice. These obligations generally are not traded, nor generally is there an established secondary market for these obligations. To the extent a demand note does not have a 7-day or shorter demand feature and there is no readily available market for the obligation, it is treated as an illiquid investment.

The Fund may invest in debt securities, including non-investment grade debt securities. The following describes some of the risks associated with fixed income debt securities:

Interest Rate Risk. Debt securities have varying levels of sensitivity to changes in interest rates. In general, the price of a debt security can fall when interest rates rise and can rise when interest rates fall. Securities with longer maturities and mortgage securities can be more sensitive to interest rate changes although they usually offer higher yields to compensate investors for the greater risks. The longer the maturity of the security, the greater the impact a change in interest rates could have on the security's price. In addition, short-term and long-term interest rates do not necessarily move in the same amount or the same direction. Short-term securities tend to react to changes in short-term interest rates and long-term securities tend to react to changes in long-term interest rates.

Credit Risk. Fixed income securities of issuers with lower credit quality have speculative characteristics and changes in economic conditions or other circumstances are more likely to lead to a weakened capacity of those issuers to make principal or interest payments, as compared to issuers of more highly rated securities of issuers with higher credit quality.

Extension Risk. The Fund is subject to the risk that an issuer will exercise its right to pay principal on an obligation held by the Fund (such as mortgage-backed securities) later than expected. This may happen when there is a rise in interest rates. These events may lengthen the duration (i.e. interest rate sensitivity) and potentially reduce the value of these securities.

Prepayment Risk. Certain types of debt securities, such as mortgage-backed securities, have yield and maturity characteristics corresponding to underlying assets. Unlike traditional debt securities, which may pay a fixed rate of interest until maturity when the entire principal amount comes due, payments on certain mortgage-backed securities may include both interest and a partial payment of principal. Besides the scheduled repayment of principal, payments of principal may result from the voluntary prepayment, refinancing, or foreclosure of the underlying mortgage loans.

Securities subject to prepayment are less effective than other types of securities as a means of "locking in" attractive long-term interest rates. One reason is the need to reinvest prepayments of principal; another is the possibility of significant unscheduled prepayments resulting from declines in interest rates. These prepayments would have to be reinvested at lower rates. As a result, these securities may have less potential for capital appreciation during periods of declining interest rates than other securities of comparable maturities, although they may have a similar risk of decline in market value during periods of rising interest rates. Prepayments may also significantly shorten the effective maturities of these securities, especially during periods of declining interest rates. Conversely, during periods of rising interest rates, a reduction in prepayments may increase the effective maturities of these securities, subjecting them to a greater risk of decline in market value in response to rising interest rates than traditional debt securities, and, therefore, potentially increasing the volatility of the Fund.

At times, some of the mortgage-backed securities in which the Fund may invest will have higher than market interest rates and therefore will be purchased at a premium above their par value. Prepayments may cause losses in securities purchased at a premium, as unscheduled prepayments, which are made at par, will cause the Fund to experience a loss equal to any unamortized premium.

Certificates of Deposit and Bankers' Acceptances

The Fund may invest in certificates of deposit and bankers' acceptances, which are considered to be short-term money market instruments.

Certificates of deposit are receipts issued by a depository institution in exchange for the deposit of funds. The issuer agrees to pay the amount deposited plus interest to the bearer of the receipt on the date specified on the certificate. The certificate usually can be traded in the secondary market prior to maturity. Bankers' acceptances typically arise from short-term credit arrangements designed to enable businesses to obtain funds to finance commercial transactions. Generally, an acceptance is a time draft drawn on a bank by an exporter or an importer to obtain a stated amount of funds to pay for specific merchandise. The draft is then "accepted" by a bank that, in effect, unconditionally guarantees to pay the face value of the instrument on its maturity date. The acceptance may then be held by the accepting bank as an earning asset or it may be sold in the secondary market at the going rate of discount for a specific maturity. Although maturities for acceptances can be as long as 270 days, most acceptances have maturities of six months or less.

Commercial Paper

The Fund may purchase commercial paper. Commercial paper consists of short-term (usually from 1 to 270 days) unsecured promissory notes issued by corporations in order to finance their current operations. It may be secured by letters of credit, a surety bond or other forms of collateral. Commercial paper is usually repaid at maturity by the issuer from the proceeds of the issuance of new commercial paper. As a result, investment in commercial paper is subject to the risk the issuer cannot issue enough new commercial paper to satisfy its outstanding commercial paper, also known as rollover risk. Commercial paper may become illiquid or may suffer from reduced liquidity in certain circumstances. Like all fixed income securities, commercial paper prices are susceptible to fluctuations in interest rates. If interest rates rise, commercial paper prices will decline. The short-term nature of a commercial paper investment makes it less susceptible to interest rate risk than many other fixed income securities because interest rate risk typically increases as maturity lengths increase. Commercial paper tends to yield smaller returns than longer-term corporate debt because securities with shorter maturities typically have lower effective yields than those with longer maturities. As with all fixed income securities, there is a chance that the issuer will default on its commercial paper obligation.

Time Deposits and Variable Rate Notes

The Fund may invest in fixed time deposits, whether or not subject to withdrawal penalties.

The commercial paper obligations, which the Fund may buy are unsecured and may include variable rate notes. The nature and terms of a variable rate note (i.e., a "Master Note") permit the Fund to invest fluctuating amounts at varying rates of interest pursuant to a direct arrangement between the Fund as Lender, and the issuer, as borrower. It permits daily changes in the amounts borrowed. The Fund has the right at any time to increase, up to the full amount stated in the note agreement, or to decrease the amount outstanding under the note. The issuer may prepay at any time and without penalty any part of or the full amount of the note. The note may or may not be backed by one or more bank letters of credit. Because these notes are direct lending arrangements between the Fund and the issuer, it is not generally contemplated that they will be traded; moreover, there is currently no secondary market for them. Except as specifically provided in the Prospectus, there is no limitation on the type of issuer from whom these notes may be purchased; however, in connection with such purchase and on an ongoing basis, the Fund's Adviser will consider the earning power, cash flow and other liquidity ratios of the issuer, and its ability to pay principal and interest on demand, including a situation in which all holders of such notes made demand simultaneously. Variable rate notes are subject to the Fund's investment restriction on illiquid investments unless such notes can be put back to the issuer on demand within seven days.

Insured Bank Obligations

The Fund may invest in insured bank obligations. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (“FDIC”) insures the deposits of federally insured banks and savings and loan associations (collectively referred to as “banks”) up to \$250,000. The Fund may purchase bank obligations that are fully insured as to principal by the FDIC. Currently, to remain fully insured as to principal, these investments must be limited to \$250,000 per bank; if the principal amount and accrued interest together exceed \$250,000, the excess principal and accrued interest will not be insured. Insured bank obligations may have limited marketability.

High Yield Securities

The Fund may invest in high yield securities. High yield, high risk bonds are securities that are generally rated below investment grade by the primary rating agencies (BB+ or lower by S&P and Ba1 or lower by Moody’s). Other terms used to describe such securities include “lower rated bonds,” “non-investment grade bonds,” “below investment grade bonds,” and “junk bonds.” These securities are considered to be high-risk investments. The risks include the following:

Greater Risk of Loss. These securities are regarded as predominately speculative. There is a greater risk that issuers of lower rated securities will default than issuers of higher rated securities. Issuers of lower rated securities generally are less creditworthy and may be highly indebted, financially distressed, or bankrupt. These issuers are more vulnerable to real or perceived economic changes, political changes or adverse industry developments. In addition, high yield securities are frequently subordinated to the prior payment of senior indebtedness. If an issuer fails to pay principal or interest, the Fund would experience a decrease in income and a decline in the market value of its investments.

Sensitivity to Interest Rate and Economic Changes. The income and market value of lower-rated securities may fluctuate more than higher rated securities. Although non-investment grade securities tend to be less sensitive to interest rate changes than investment grade securities, non-investment grade securities are more sensitive to short-term corporate, economic and market developments. During periods of economic uncertainty and change, the market price of the investments in lower-rated securities may be volatile. The default rate for high yield bonds tends to be cyclical, with defaults rising in periods of economic downturn.

Valuation Difficulties. It is often more difficult to value lower rated securities than higher rated securities. If an issuer’s financial condition deteriorates, accurate financial and business information may be limited or unavailable. In addition, the lower rated investments may be thinly traded and there may be no established secondary market. Because of the lack of market pricing and current information for investments in lower rated securities, valuation of such investments is much more dependent on judgment than is the case with higher rated securities.

Liquidity. There may be no established secondary or public market for investments in lower rated securities. Such securities are frequently traded in markets that may be relatively less liquid than the market for higher rated securities. In addition, relatively few institutional purchasers may hold a major portion of an issue of lower-rated securities at times. As a result, the Fund may be required to sell investments at substantial losses or retain them indefinitely when an issuer’s financial condition is deteriorating.

Credit Quality. Credit quality of non-investment grade securities can change suddenly and unexpectedly, and even recently-issued credit ratings may not fully reflect the actual risks posed by a particular high-yield security.

New Legislation. Future legislation may have a possible negative impact on the market for high yield, high risk investments. As an example, in the late 1980’s, legislation required federally-insured savings and loan associations to divest their investments in high yield, high risk bonds. New legislation, if enacted, could have a material negative effect on the Fund’s investments in lower rated securities. High yield, high risk investments may include the following:

Straight fixed-income debt securities. These include bonds and other debt obligations that bear a fixed or variable rate of interest payable at regular intervals and have a fixed or resettable maturity date. The particular terms of such securities vary and may include features such as call provisions and sinking funds.

Zero-coupon debt securities. These bear no interest obligation but are issued at a discount from their value at maturity. When held to maturity, their entire return equals the difference between their issue price and their maturity value.

Zero-fixed-coupon debt securities. These are zero-coupon debt securities that convert on a specified date to interest-bearing debt securities.

Pay-in-kind bonds. These are bonds which allow the issuer, at its option, to make current interest payments on the bonds either in cash or in additional bonds. These bonds are typically sold without registration under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (“1933 Act”), usually to a relatively small number of institutional investors.

Loan Participations and Assignments. These are participations in, or assignments of all or a portion of loans to corporations or to governments, including governments of less developed countries (“LDCs”).

Securities issued in connection with Reorganizations and Corporate Restructurings. In connection with reorganizing or restructuring of an issuer, an issuer may issue common stock or other securities to holders of its debt securities. The Fund may hold such common stock and other securities even if it does not invest in such securities.

Municipal Government Obligations

In general, municipal obligations are debt obligations issued by or on behalf of states, territories and possessions of the United States (including the District of Columbia) and their political subdivisions, agencies and instrumentalities. Municipal obligations generally include debt obligations issued to obtain funds for various public purposes. Certain types of municipal obligations are issued in whole or in part to obtain funding for privately operated facilities or projects. Municipal obligations include general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, industrial development bonds, notes and municipal lease obligations. Municipal obligations also include additional obligations, the interest on which is exempt from U.S. federal income tax that may become available in the future as long as the Board of the Fund determines that an investment in any such type of obligation is consistent with the Fund’s investment objectives. Municipal obligations may be fully or partially backed by local government, the credit of a private issuer, current or anticipated revenues from a specific project or specific assets or domestic or foreign entities providing credit support such as letters of credit, guarantees or insurance.

Bonds and Notes. General obligation bonds are secured by the issuer’s pledge of its full faith, credit and taxing power for the payment of interest and principal. Revenue bonds are payable only from the revenues derived from a project or facility or from the proceeds of a specified revenue source. Industrial development bonds are generally revenue bonds secured by payments from and the credit of private users. Municipal notes are issued to meet the short-term funding requirements of state, regional and local governments. Municipal notes include tax anticipation notes, bond anticipation notes, revenue anticipation notes, tax and revenue anticipation notes, construction loan notes, short-term discount notes, tax-exempt commercial paper, demand notes and similar instruments.

Municipal Lease Obligations. Municipal lease obligations may take the form of a lease, an installment purchase or a conditional sales contract. They are issued by state and local governments and authorities to acquire land, equipment and facilities, such as vehicles, telecommunications and computer equipment and other capital assets. The Fund may invest in investment companies that purchase these lease obligations directly, or it may purchase participation interests in such lease obligations. States have different requirements for issuing municipal debt and issuing municipal leases. Municipal leases are generally subject to greater risks than general obligation or revenue bonds because they usually contain a “non-appropriation” clause, which provides that the issuer is not obligated to make payments on the obligation in future years unless funds have been appropriated for this purpose each year. Such non-appropriation clauses are required to avoid the municipal lease obligations from being treated as debt for state debt restriction purposes. Accordingly, such obligations are subject to “non-appropriation” risk. Municipal

leases may be secured by the underlying capital asset and it may be difficult to dispose of any such asset in the event of non-appropriation or other default.

United States Government Obligations

These consist of various types of marketable securities issued by the United States Treasury, i.e., bills, notes and bonds. Such securities are direct obligations of the United States government and differ mainly in the length of their maturity. Treasury bills, the most frequently issued marketable government security, have a maturity of up to one year and are issued on a discount basis. The Fund may also invest in Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities (“TIPS”). TIPS are special types of treasury bonds that were created in order to offer bond investors protection from inflation. The values of the TIPS are automatically adjusted to the inflation rate as measured by the Consumer Price Index (“CPI”). If the CPI goes up by half a percent, the value of the bond (the TIPS) would also go up by half a percent. If the CPI falls, the value of the bond does not fall because the government guarantees that the original investment will stay the same. TIPS decline in value when real interest rates rise. However, in certain interest rate environments, such as when real interest rates are rising faster than nominal interest rates, TIPS may experience greater losses than other fixed income securities with similar duration.

United States Government Agency

These consist of debt securities issued by agencies and instrumentalities of the United States government, including the various types of instruments currently outstanding or which may be offered in the future. Agencies include, among others, the Federal Housing Administration, Government National Mortgage Association (“GNMA”), Farmer’s Home Administration, Export-Import Bank of the United States, Maritime Administration, and General Services Administration. Instrumentalities include, for example, each of the Federal Home Loan Banks, the National Bank for Cooperatives, the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (“FHLMC”), the Farm Credit Banks, the Federal National Mortgage Association (“FNMA”), and the United States Postal Service. These securities are either: (i) backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government (e.g., United States Treasury Bills); (ii) guaranteed by the United States Treasury (e.g., GNMA mortgage-backed securities); (iii) supported by the issuing agency’s or instrumentality’s right to borrow from the United States Treasury (e.g., FNMA Discount Notes); or (iv) supported only by the issuing agency’s or instrumentality’s own credit (e.g., Tennessee Valley Association). On September 7, 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department and the Federal Housing Finance Authority (the “FHFA”) announced that FNMA and FHLMC had been placed into conservatorship, a statutory process designed to stabilize a troubled institution with the objective of returning the entity to normal business operations. The U.S. Treasury Department and the FHFA at the same time established a secured lending facility and a Secured Stock Purchase Agreement with both FNMA and FHLMC to ensure that each entity had the ability to fulfill its financial obligations. The FHFA announced that it does not anticipate any disruption in pattern of payments or ongoing business operations of FNMA and FHLMC.

Government-related guarantors (i.e. not backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Government) include FNMA and FHLMC. FNMA is a government-sponsored corporation owned entirely by private stockholders. It is subject to general regulation by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. FNMA purchases conventional (i.e., not insured or guaranteed by any government agency) residential mortgages from a list of approved seller/servicers which include state and federally chartered savings and loan associations, mutual savings banks, commercial banks and credit unions and mortgage bankers. Pass-through securities issued by FNMA are guaranteed as to timely payment of principal and interest by FNMA but are not backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Government. FHLMC was created by Congress in 1970 for the purpose of increasing the availability of mortgage credit for residential housing. It is a government-sponsored corporation formerly owned by the twelve Federal Home Loan Banks and now owned entirely by private stockholders. FHLMC issues Participation Certificates (“PC’s”), which represent interests in conventional mortgages from FHLMC’s national portfolio. FHLMC guarantees the timely payment of interest and ultimate collection of principal, but PCs are not backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Government. Commercial banks, savings and loan institutions, private mortgage insurance companies, mortgage bankers and other secondary market issuers also create pass-through pools of conventional residential mortgage loans. Such issuers may, in addition, be the originators and/or servicers of the underlying mortgage loans as well as the guarantors of the mortgage-related securities. Pools created by such nongovernmental issuers generally offer a higher rate of interest than government and government-related pools

because there are no direct or indirect government or agency guarantees of payments in the former pools. However, timely payment of interest and principal of these pools may be supported by various forms of insurance or guarantees, including individual loan, title, pool and hazard insurance and letters of credit. The insurance and guarantees are issued by governmental entities, private insurers and the mortgage poolers.

Mortgage Pass-Through Securities

Interests in pools of mortgage pass-through securities differ from other forms of debt securities (which normally provide periodic payments of interest in fixed amounts and the payment of principal in a lump sum at maturity or on specified call dates). Instead, mortgage pass-through securities provide monthly payments consisting of both interest and principal payments. In effect, these payments are a “pass-through” of the monthly payments made by the individual borrowers on the underlying residential mortgage loans, net of any fees paid to the issuer or guarantor of such securities. Unscheduled payments of principal may be made if the underlying mortgage loans are repaid or refinanced or the underlying properties are foreclosed, thereby shortening the securities’ weighted average life. Some mortgage pass-through securities (such as securities guaranteed by GNMA) are described as “modified pass-through securities.” These securities entitle the holder to receive all interest and principal payments owed on the mortgage pool, net of certain fees, on the scheduled payment dates regardless of whether the mortgagor actually makes the payment.

The principal governmental guarantor of mortgage pass-through securities is GNMA. GNMA is authorized to guarantee, with the full faith and credit of the U.S. Treasury, the timely payment of principal and interest on securities issued by lending institutions approved by GNMA (such as savings and loan institutions, commercial banks and mortgage bankers) and backed by pools of mortgage loans. These mortgage loans are either insured by the Federal Housing Administration or guaranteed by the Veterans Administration. A “pool” or group of such mortgage loans is assembled and after being approved by GNMA, is offered to investors through securities dealers.

Government-related guarantors of mortgage pass-through securities (i.e., not backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. Treasury) include FNMA and FHLMC. FNMA is a government-sponsored corporation owned entirely by private stockholders. It is subject to general regulation by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. FNMA purchases conventional (i.e., not insured or guaranteed by any government agency) residential mortgages from a list of approved sellers/servicers which include state and federally chartered savings and loan associations, mutual savings banks, commercial banks and credit unions and mortgage bankers. Mortgage pass-through securities issued by FNMA are guaranteed as to timely payment of principal and interest by FNMA but are not backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. Treasury.

FHLMC was created by Congress in 1970 for the purpose of increasing the availability of mortgage credit for residential housing. It is a U.S. government-sponsored corporation formerly owned by the twelve Federal Home Loan Banks and now owned entirely by private stockholders. FHLMC issues Participation Certificates (“PCs”), which represent interests in conventional mortgages from FHLMC’s national portfolio. FHLMC guarantees the timely payment of interest and ultimate collection of principal, but PCs are not backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. Treasury.

Commercial banks, savings and loan institutions, private mortgage insurance companies, mortgage bankers and other secondary market issuers also create pass-through pools of conventional residential mortgage loans. Such issuers may, in addition, be the originators and/or servicers of the underlying mortgage loans as well as the guarantors of the mortgage pass-through securities. The Fund does not purchase interests in pools created by such non-governmental issuers.

Resets. The interest rates paid on the Adjustable Rate Mortgage Securities (“ARMs”) in which the Fund may invest generally are readjusted or reset at intervals of one year or less to an increment over some predetermined interest rate index. There are two main categories of indices: those based on U.S. Treasury securities and those derived from a calculated measure, such as a cost of funds index or a moving average of mortgage rates. Commonly utilized indices include the one-year and five-year constant maturity Treasury Note rates, the three-month Treasury Bill rate, the 180-day Treasury Bill rate, rates on longer-term Treasury securities, the National Median Cost of Funds, the

one-month or three-month London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR), the prime rate of a specific bank, or commercial paper rates. Some indices, such as the one-year constant maturity Treasury Note rate, closely mirror changes in market interest rate levels. Others tend to lag changes in market rate levels and tend to be somewhat less volatile.

LIBOR Transition. LIBOR is expected to be phased out by the end of 2021. However, the LIBOR administrator and other regulators indicate that it is possible that certain LIBORs may continue beyond 2021 and the most widely used LIBORs may continue until mid-2023. While the effect of the transition cannot yet be determined, moving to a new benchmark may result in, among other things, increased volatility or illiquidity in markets for instruments based on LIBOR and changes in the value of such instruments. Multiple financial industry groups have begun planning for the transition away from LIBOR, but there are obstacles to converting that could affect the functioning, liquidity and value of instruments that reference LIBOR. There are multiple alternative reference rates emerging, but the preferred rate, methodology and jurisdiction is in transition. A group of large U.S. banks working with the Federal Reserve announced its selection of a new Secured Overnight Funding Rate (“SOFR”) as an appropriate replacement for LIBOR. SOFR is intended to be a broad measure of secured overnight U.S. Treasury repo rates. Alternatives for other market include the Sterling Overnight Interbank Average Rate (“SONIA”) in the United Kingdom.

Caps and Floors. The underlying mortgages which collateralize the ARMs in which the Fund invests will frequently have caps and floors which limit the maximum amount by which the loan rate to the residential borrower may change up or down: (1) per reset or adjustment interval, and (2) over the life of the loan. Some residential mortgage loans restrict periodic adjustments by limiting changes in the borrower’s monthly principal and interest payments rather than limiting interest rate changes. These payment caps may result in negative amortization. The value of mortgage securities in which the Fund invests may be affected if market interest rates rise or fall faster and farther than the allowable caps or floors on the underlying residential mortgage loans. Additionally, even though the interest rates on the underlying residential mortgages are adjustable, amortization and prepayments may occur, thereby causing the effective maturities of the mortgage securities in which the Fund invests to be shorter than the maturities stated in the underlying mortgages.

U.S. Initial Public Offerings

The Fund may invest in initial public offerings for securities of companies organized under U.S. law (“U.S. IPOs”). Existing accounts that are eligible to participate in FINRA-regulated initial public offerings of securities of companies organized under U.S. law (“U.S. IPOs”) include Weiss Multi-Strategy Partners LLC, Weiss Insurance Partners (Cayman) Ltd., Weiss Strategic Interval Fund, Weiss Alternative Multi-Strategy Fund, Bespoke Alpha MAC WMS LP separately managed account and the Dunham Monthly Distribution Fund. Each eligible client account will be allocated a percentage of U.S. IPOs based upon a pre-determined IPO trade allocation. The pre-determined IPO trade allocation percentage will be calculated by taking the allocated capital amount for each client account (other than the charitable account for the Weiss Family Foundation) divided by the total allocated capital amount for all client accounts (other than the Charitable Account). Allocated capital in client accounts is adjusted periodically by the Adviser’s Allocation Committee following certain investment actions, which may include, but not be limited to, subscriptions and redemptions. The pre-determined IPO trade allocation percentage is updated to reflect these adjustments to allocated capital.

Separately managed accounts for most institutional investors, with the exception of Bespoke Alpha MAC WMS LP, do not receive shares of U.S. IPOs at their request. The amount of U.S. IPOs that, based on allocated capital, are attributable to the separately managed accounts for such investors will be allocated to the eligible client accounts in proportion to their pre-determined IPO trade allocation of that issue. The Weiss Family Foundation Charitable account is ineligible to receive U.S. IPOs and is not included in the calculation or allocation of U.S. IPO shares.

Special Purpose Acquisition Companies. The Fund may invest in stock, rights, warrants, and other securities of special purpose acquisition companies (“SPACs”) or similar special purpose entities. A SPAC is a publicly traded company that raises investment capital in the form of a blind pool via an IPO for the purpose of acquiring an existing company. Unless and until an acquisition is completed, a SPAC generally invests the proceeds of its IPO

(less an amount to cover expenses), which are held in trust, in U.S. government securities, money market fund securities and cash. The shares of a SPAC are typically issued in “units” that include one share of common stock and one right or warrant (or partial right or warrant) conveying the right to purchase additional shares or partial shares. At a specified time following the SPAC’s IPO (generally 1-2 months), the rights and warrants may be separated from the common stock at the election of the holder, after which they become freely tradeable. If a SPAC does not complete an acquisition within a specified period of time after going public, the SPAC is dissolved, at which point the invested funds are returned to the SPAC’s shareholders (less certain permitted expenses) and any rights or warrants issued by the SPAC expire worthless. Investments in SPACs may be illiquid and/or be subject to restrictions on resale. To the extent the SPAC is invested in cash or similar securities, this may impact a Fund’s ability to meet its investment objective.

Because SPACs and similar entities are in essence blank check companies without an operating history or ongoing business other than seeking acquisitions, the value of their securities is particularly dependent on the ability of the entity’s management to identify and complete a profitable acquisition. Some SPACs may pursue acquisitions only within certain industries or regions, which may increase the volatility of their prices. In addition, the securities issued by a SPAC, which are typically traded in the over-the-counter market, may be considered illiquid and/or be subject to restrictions on resale.

Non-U.S. Initial Public Offerings. The Fund may invest in initial public offerings for securities of companies organized outside the U.S. (“Non-U.S. IPOs”). The Adviser allocates these shares among its clients according to the Adviser’s standard trade allocation procedures. The standard trade allocation procedures permit related accounts of the Adviser and its personnel to receive non-U.S. IPO shares. As a result, other eligible client accounts may not receive the full amount of IPO shares they could receive if the related accounts of the Adviser and its personnel did not receive non-U.S. IPO shares. See “The Fund’s Investment Adviser – Conflicts of Interest” for additional information.

Illiquid Investments and Restricted Securities

The Fund may not purchase or otherwise acquire any illiquid investment if, immediately after the acquisition, the Fund would have invested more than 15% of its net assets in illiquid investments that are assets. Illiquid investments include securities subject to contractual or legal restrictions on resale (e.g., because they have not been registered under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the “Securities Act”)) and securities that are otherwise not readily marketable (e.g., because trading in the security is suspended or because market makers do not exist or will not entertain bids or offers)). Securities that have not been registered under the Securities Act are referred to as private placements or restricted securities and are purchased directly from the issuer or in the secondary market. Foreign securities that are freely tradable in their principal markets are not considered to be illiquid. The Fund has implemented a written liquidity risk management program and related procedures (“Liquidity Program”) that is reasonably designed to assess and manage the Fund’s “liquidity risk” (defined by the SEC as the risk that a Fund could not meet requests to redeem shares issued by the Fund without significant dilution of remaining investors’ interests in the Fund). The adoption of the Liquidity Program is not a guarantee that the Fund will have sufficient liquidity to satisfy its redemption requests, as they relate to all market conditions or that redemptions can be effected without diluting remaining investors in the Fund.

Restricted securities and other illiquid investments may be subject to the potential for delays on resale and uncertainty in valuation. The Fund might be unable to dispose of illiquid investments promptly or at reasonable prices and might thereby experience difficulty in satisfying redemption requests from shareholders. The Fund might have to register restricted securities in order to dispose of them, resulting in additional expense and delay. Adverse market conditions could impede such a public offering of securities.

A large institutional market exists for certain securities that are not registered under the Securities Act, including foreign securities. The fact that there are contractual or legal restrictions on resale to the general public or to certain institutions may not be indicative of the liquidity of such investments. Rule 144A under the Securities Act allows such a broader institutional trading market for securities otherwise subject to restrictions on resale to the general public. Rule 144A establishes a “safe harbor” from the registration requirements of the Securities Act for resale of

certain securities to qualified institutional buyers. Rule 144A has produced enhanced liquidity for many restricted securities, and market liquidity for such securities may continue to expand as a result of this regulation and the consequent existence of the PORTAL system, which is an automated system for the trading, clearance and settlement of unregistered securities of domestic and foreign issuers sponsored by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc.

Under guidelines adopted by the Trust's Board, the Adviser of the Fund may determine that particular Rule 144A securities, and commercial paper issued in reliance on the private placement exemption from registration afforded by Section 4(a)(2) of the Securities Act, are liquid even though they are not registered. A determination of whether such a security is liquid or not is a question of fact. In making this determination, the Adviser will consider, as it deems appropriate under the circumstances and among other factors: (1) the frequency of trades and quotes for the security; (2) the number of dealers that purchase or sell the security; (3) the number of dealers that have undertaken to make a market in the security; (4) the number of potential purchasers; and (5) the nature of the security and how trading is effected (e.g., the time needed to sell the security, how bids are solicited and the mechanics of transfer).

Rule 144A securities and Section 4(a)(2) commercial paper that have been deemed liquid as described above will continue to be monitored by the Fund's Adviser to determine if the security is no longer liquid as the result of changed conditions. Investing in Rule 144A securities or Section 4(a)(2) commercial paper could have the effect of increasing the amount of the Fund's assets invested in illiquid investments if institutional buyers are unwilling to purchase such securities.

Repurchase Agreements

The Fund may enter into repurchase agreements. In a repurchase agreement, an investor (such as the Fund) purchases a security (known as the "underlying security") from a securities dealer or bank. Any such dealer or bank must be deemed creditworthy by the Adviser. At that time, the bank or securities dealer agrees to repurchase the underlying security at a mutually agreed upon price on a designated future date. The repurchase price may be higher than the purchase price, the difference being income to the Fund, or the purchase and repurchase prices may be the same, with interest at an agreed upon rate due to the Fund on repurchase. In either case, the income to the Fund generally will be unrelated to the interest rate on the underlying securities. Repurchase agreements must be "fully collateralized," in that the market value of the underlying securities (including accrued interest) must at all times be equal to or greater than the repurchase price. Therefore, a repurchase agreement can be considered a loan collateralized by the underlying securities.

Repurchase agreements are generally for a short period of time, often less than a week, and will generally be used by the Fund to invest excess cash or as part of a temporary defensive strategy. Repurchase agreements that do not provide for payment within seven days will be treated as illiquid securities. In the event of a bankruptcy or other default by the seller of a repurchase agreement, the Fund could experience both delays in liquidating the underlying security and losses. These losses could result from: (a) possible decline in the value of the underlying security while the Fund is seeking to enforce its rights under the repurchase agreement; (b) possible reduced levels of income or lack of access to income during this period; and (c) expenses of enforcing its rights.

Reverse Repurchase Agreements

The Fund may enter into reverse repurchase agreements as a non-principal investment strategy. Reverse repurchase agreements involve the sale of securities held by the Fund subject to its agreement to repurchase the securities at an agreed-upon date or upon demand and at a price reflecting a market rate of interest. Reverse repurchase agreements are subject to the Fund's limitation on borrowings and may be entered into only with banks or securities dealers or their affiliates. While a reverse repurchase agreement is outstanding, the Fund will maintain the segregation, either on its records or with the Fund's custodian, of cash or other liquid investments, marked-to-market daily, in an amount at least equal to its obligations under the reverse repurchase agreement.

Reverse repurchase agreements involve the risk that the buyer of the securities sold by the Fund might be unable to deliver them when the Fund seeks to repurchase. If the buyer of securities under a reverse repurchase agreement files for bankruptcy or becomes insolvent, the buyer or trustee or receiver may receive an extension of time to

determine whether to enforce the Fund's obligation to repurchase the securities, and the Fund's use of the proceeds of the reverse repurchase agreement may effectively be restricted pending such decision.

When-Issued, Forward Commitments and Delayed Settlements

The Fund may purchase and sell securities on a when-issued, forward commitment or delayed settlement basis. In this event, the custodian will segregate liquid assets equal to the amount of the commitment in a separate account. Normally, the custodian will set aside portfolio securities to satisfy a purchase commitment. In such a case, the Fund may be required subsequently to segregate additional assets in order to assure that the value of the account remains equal to the amount of the Fund's commitment. It may be expected that the Fund's net assets will fluctuate to a greater degree when it sets aside portfolio securities to cover such purchase commitments than when it sets aside cash.

The Fund does not intend to engage in these transactions for speculative purposes but only in furtherance of its investment objectives. Because the Fund will segregate liquid assets to satisfy its purchase commitments in the manner described, the Fund's liquidity and the ability of the Fund's Adviser to manage them may be affected in the event the Fund's forward commitments, commitments to purchase when-issued securities and delayed settlements ever exceeded 15% of the value of its net assets.

The Fund will purchase securities on a when-issued, forward commitment or delayed settlement basis only with the intention of completing the transaction. If deemed advisable as a matter of investment strategy, however, the Fund may dispose of or renegotiate a commitment after it is entered into, and may sell securities it has committed to purchase before those securities are delivered to the Fund on the settlement date. In these cases the Fund may recognize taxable income. When the Fund engages in when-issued, forward commitment and delayed settlement transactions, it relies on the other party to consummate the trade. Failure of such party to do so may result in the Fund incurring a loss or missing an opportunity to obtain a price credited to be advantageous.

The market value of the securities underlying a when-issued purchase, forward commitment to purchase securities, or a delayed settlement and any subsequent fluctuations in their market value is taken into account when determining the market value of the Fund starting on the day the Fund agrees to purchase the securities. The Fund does not earn interest on the securities it has committed to purchase until it has paid for and delivered on the settlement date.

Lending Portfolio Securities

For the purpose of achieving income, the Fund may lend its portfolio securities, provided (1) the loan is secured continuously by collateral consisting of U.S. Government securities or cash or cash equivalents (cash, U.S. Government securities, negotiable certificates of deposit, bankers' acceptances or letters of credit) maintained on a daily mark-to-market basis in an amount at least equal to the current market value of the securities loaned, (2) the Fund may at any time call the loan and obtain the return of securities loaned, (3) the Fund will receive any interest or dividends received on the loaned securities, and (4) the aggregate value of the securities loaned will not at any time exceed one-third of the total assets of the Fund.

Short Sales

The Fund may sell securities short. A short sale is a transaction in which the Fund sells a security it does not own or have the right to acquire (or that it owns but does not wish to deliver) in anticipation that the market price of that security will decline.

When the Fund makes a short sale, the broker-dealer through which the short sale is made must borrow the security sold short and deliver it to the party purchasing the security. The Fund is required to make a margin deposit in connection with such short sales; the Fund may have to pay a fee to borrow particular securities and will often be obligated to pay over any dividends and accrued interest on borrowed securities.

If the price of the security sold short increases between the time of the short sale and the time the Fund covers its short position, the Fund will incur a loss; conversely, if the price declines, the Fund will realize a capital gain. Any

gain will be decreased, and any loss increased, by the transaction costs described above. The successful use of short selling may be adversely affected by imperfect correlation between movements in the price of the security sold short and the securities being hedged.

To the extent the Fund sells securities short, it will provide collateral to the broker-dealer and (except in the case of short sales “against the box”) will maintain additional asset coverage in the form of cash, U.S. government securities or other liquid investments with its custodian in a segregated account in an amount at least equal to the difference between the current market value of the securities sold short and any amounts required to be deposited as collateral with the selling broker (not including the proceeds of the short sale). A short sale is “against the box” to the extent the Fund contemporaneously owns, or has the right to obtain at no added cost, securities identical to those sold short.

Cybersecurity and Operational Risk

With the increased use of technologies such as the Internet to conduct business, the Fund and its service providers are susceptible to operational, information security and related risks. In general, cyber incidents can result from deliberate attacks or unintentional events. Cyber attacks include, but are not limited to, gaining unauthorized access to digital systems (e.g., through “hacking” or malicious software coding) for purposes of misappropriating assets or sensitive information, corrupting data, or causing operational disruption. Cyber attacks may also be carried out in a manner that does not require gaining unauthorized access, such as causing denial-of-service attacks on websites (i.e., efforts to make network services unavailable to intended users). Cyber incidents affecting the Fund or its service providers have the ability to cause disruptions and impact business operations, potentially resulting in financial losses, interference with the Fund’s ability to calculate its NAV, impediments to trading, the inability of fund shareholders to transact business, violations of applicable privacy and other laws, regulatory fines, penalties, reputational damage, reimbursement or other compensation costs, or additional compliance costs. Similar adverse consequences could result from cyber incidents affecting issuers of securities in which a fund invests, counterparties with which the Fund engages in transactions, governmental and other regulatory authorities, exchange and other financial market operators, banks, brokers, dealers, insurance companies and other financial institutions (including financial intermediaries and service providers for fund shareholders) and other parties. In addition, substantial costs may be incurred in order to prevent any cyber incidents in the future. While the Fund’s service providers have established business continuity plans in the event of, and risk management systems to prevent, such cyber incidents, there are inherent limitations in such plans and systems including the possibility that certain risks have not been identified. Furthermore, the Fund cannot control the cyber security plans and systems put in place by its service providers or any other third parties whose operations may affect the Funds or their shareholders. The Fund and its shareholders could be negatively impacted as a result.

Large Shareholder Risk

Certain account holders may from time to time own or control a significant percentage of the Fund’s shares. The Fund is subject to the risk that a redemption by large shareholders of all or a portion of their Fund shares or a purchase of Fund shares in large amounts and/or on a frequent basis will adversely affect the Fund’s performance if it is forced to sell portfolio securities or invest cash when the Adviser would not otherwise choose to do so. This risk will be particularly pronounced if one shareholder owns a substantial portion of the Fund. Redemptions of a large number of shares may affect the liquidity of the Fund’s portfolio, increase the Fund’s transaction costs and/or lead to the liquidation of the Fund. Such transactions also potentially limit the use of any capital loss carryforwards and certain other losses to offset future realized capital gains (if any).

Temporary Defensive Positions

In order to respond to adverse or unstable market, economic, political or other conditions, the Fund may assume a temporary defensive position that is inconsistent with its investment objective and principal investment strategies and invest, without limitation, in cash or prime quality cash equivalents.

INVESTMENT RESTRICTIONS

The Trust (on behalf of the Fund) has adopted the following restrictions as fundamental policies, which may not be changed without the affirmative vote of the holders of a “majority” of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund. Under the 1940 Act, the “vote of the holders of a majority of the outstanding voting securities” means the vote of the holders of the lesser of (i) 67% or more of the shares of the Fund present at a meeting at which the holders of more than 50% of the Fund’s outstanding shares are present or represented by proxy or (ii) more than 50% of the outstanding shares of the Fund.

As a matter of fundamental policy, the Fund may not:

1. Lend money or other assets except to the extent permitted by (i) the 1940 Act, or interpretations or modifications by the SEC, SEC staff or other authority with appropriate jurisdiction, or (ii) exemptive or other relief or permission from the SEC, SEC staff or other authority. For purposes of this fundamental investment restriction, the entry into repurchase agreements, lending securities and acquiring of debt securities shall not constitute loans by the Fund.
2. Borrow money, except as permitted by (i) the 1940 Act, or interpretations or modifications by the SEC, SEC staff or other authority with appropriate jurisdiction, or (ii) exemptive or other relief or permission from the SEC, SEC staff or other authority.
3. Issue senior securities except as permitted by (i) the 1940 Act, or interpretations or modifications by the SEC, SEC staff or other authority with appropriate jurisdiction, or (ii) exemptive or other relief or permission from the SEC, SEC staff or other authority.
4. Concentrate its investments in a particular industry, as concentration is defined under the 1940 Act, the rules or regulations thereunder or any exemption therefrom, as such statute, rules or regulations may be amended or interpreted from time to time, except that the Fund may invest without limitation in: (i) securities issued or guaranteed by the U.S. government, its agencies or instrumentalities; (ii) tax-exempt obligations of state or municipal governments and their political subdivisions; (iii) securities of other investment companies; and (iv) repurchase agreements.
5. Purchase or sell real estate, except as permitted by (i) the 1940 Act, or interpretations or modifications by the SEC, SEC staff or other authority with appropriate jurisdiction, or (ii) exemptive or other relief or permission from the SEC, SEC staff or other authority.
6. Buy or sell commodities or commodity (futures) contracts, except as permitted by (i) the 1940 Act, or interpretations or modifications by the SEC, SEC staff or other authority with appropriate jurisdiction, or (ii) exemptive or other relief or permission from the SEC, SEC staff or other authority.
7. Purchase the securities of any issuer if, as a result, the Fund would fail to be a diversified company within the meaning of the 1940 Act, and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, as each may be amended from time to time, except to the extent that the Fund may be permitted to do so by the 1940 Act, and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, as each may be amended from time to time, exemptive order, SEC release, no-action letter or similar relief or interpretations.
8. Engage in the business of underwriting the securities of other issuers except as permitted by (i) the 1940 Act, or interpretations or modifications by the SEC, SEC staff or other authority with appropriate jurisdiction, or (ii) exemptive or other relief or permission from the SEC, SEC staff or other authority, and except to the extent that the Fund may be deemed to be an underwriter within the meaning of the Securities Act in connection with the purchase and sale of portfolio securities.

Except with respect to borrowing and liquidity, all percentage or rating restrictions on an investment or use of assets set forth herein or in the Prospectus is adhered to at the time of investment. Later changes in the percentage or rating resulting from any cause other than actions by the Fund will not be considered a violation of the Fund's investment restrictions. If the value of the Fund's holdings of illiquid investments at any time exceeds the percentage limitation applicable due to subsequent fluctuations in value or other reasons, the Board will consider what actions are appropriate to maintain adequate liquidity.

With respect to repurchase agreements, the Fund invests in repurchase agreements that are fully collateralized by securities issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Government, its agencies or instrumentalities, or by corporate or sovereign bonds. For purposes of the Fund's fundamental investment policy with respect to concentration, the Fund does not consider such repurchase agreements to constitute an industry or group of industries because the Fund chooses to look through such securities to the underlying collateral, which is itself excepted from the Fund's concentration policy.

The following descriptions of the 1940 Act may assist investors in understanding the above policies and restrictions.

Lending. The 1940 Act does not prohibit a fund from making loans (including lending its securities); however, SEC staff interpretations currently prohibit funds from lending more than one-third of their total assets (including lending its securities), except through the purchase of debt obligations or the use of repurchase agreements. In addition, collateral arrangements with respect to options, forward currency and futures transactions and other derivative instruments (as applicable), as well as delays in the settlement of securities transactions, will not be considered loans.

Senior Securities and Borrowing. The 1940 Act prohibits the Fund from issuing any class of senior securities or selling any senior securities of which it is the issuer, except that the Fund is permitted to borrow from a bank so long as, immediately after such borrowings, there is an asset coverage of at least 300% for all borrowings of the Fund (not including borrowings for temporary purposes in an amount not exceeding 5% of the value of the Fund's total assets). In the event that such asset coverage falls below this percentage, the Fund is required to reduce the amount of its borrowings within three days (not including Sundays and holidays) so that the asset coverage is restored to at least 300%. Asset coverage means the ratio that the value of a fund's total assets (including amounts borrowed), minus liabilities other than borrowings, bears to the aggregate amount of all borrowings. Borrowing money to increase portfolio holdings is known as "leveraging." Certain trading practices and investments, such as reverse repurchase agreements, may be considered to be borrowings or involve leverage and thus are subject to the 1940 Act restrictions. In accordance with SEC staff guidance and interpretations, when a fund engages in such transactions, the fund instead of maintaining asset coverage of at least 300%, may segregate or earmark liquid assets, or enter into an offsetting position, in an amount at least equal to the fund's exposure, on a mark-to-market basis, to the transaction (as calculated pursuant to requirements of the SEC). The fundamental restriction in (2) above will be interpreted to permit the Fund to engage in trading practices and investments that may be considered to be borrowing or to involve leverage to the extent permitted by the 1940 Act and to permit the Fund to segregate or earmark liquid assets or enter into offsetting positions in accordance with the 1940 Act. Short-term credits necessary for the settlement of securities transactions and arrangements with respect to securities lending will not be considered to be borrowings under the policy. Practices and investments that may involve leverage but are not considered to be borrowings are not subject to the policy.

Concentration. The SEC staff has defined concentration as investing 25% or more of a fund's total assets in any particular industry or group of industries, with certain exceptions such as with respect to investments in obligations issued or guaranteed by the U.S. government or its agencies and instrumentalities, or tax-exempt obligations of state or municipal governments and their political subdivisions. For purposes of the Fund's concentration policy, the Fund may classify and re-classify companies in a particular industry and define and re-define industries in any reasonable manner, consistent with SEC and SEC staff guidance. In addition, the Trust will use reasonable efforts to consider the concentration of affiliated and unaffiliated underlying investment companies when determining whether the Fund is in compliance with its own concentration policies.

Diversification. Under the 1940 Act and the rules, regulations and interpretations thereunder, an investment company is a “diversified company” if, as to 75% of its total assets, it does not purchase securities of any issuer (other than obligations of, or guaranteed by, the U.S. government or its agencies, or instrumentalities or securities of other investment companies) if, as a result, more than 5% of its total assets would be invested in the securities of such issuer, or more than 10% of the issuer’s voting securities would be held by the investment company. For purposes of the Fund’s diversification policy, the identification of the issuer of a security may be determined in any reasonable manner, consistent with SEC guidance.

Underwriting. The 1940 Act does not prohibit a fund from engaging in the underwriting business or from underwriting the securities of other issuers; in fact, in the case of diversified funds, the 1940 Act permits a fund to have underwriting commitments of up to 25% of its assets under certain circumstances. Those circumstances currently are that the amount of a fund’s underwriting commitments, when added to the value of the fund’s investments in issuers where the fund owns more than 10% of the outstanding voting securities of those issuers, cannot exceed the 25% cap.

PORTFOLIO TURNOVER

The frequency of the Fund’s portfolio transactions (the portfolio turnover rate) will vary from year to year depending on many factors. The Fund expects its annual portfolio turnover rate to exceed 100%. Higher portfolio turnover rates may result in increased brokerage costs to the Fund and a possible increase in short-term capital gains or losses. See the “Financial Highlights” section of the Fund’s Prospectus for the Fund’s annual portfolio turnover rate as of the most recently completed fiscal period.

The Fund’s portfolio turnover rate for the last two fiscal years ending October 31, 2020 and 2019 was 738% and 585%, respectively. The relatively high portfolio turnover rate for the last two fiscal years was attributable primarily to the inclusion of new strategies in the Fund with higher portfolio turnover rates coupled with the discontinuation of strategies that tended to have lower portfolio turnover rates.

PORTFOLIO HOLDINGS INFORMATION

The Trust, on behalf of the Fund, has adopted a portfolio holdings disclosure policy that governs the timing and circumstances of disclosure of portfolio holdings of the Fund. The Adviser has also adopted a policy with respect to disclosure of Fund’s portfolio holdings (the “Adviser’s Policy”). Information about the Fund’s portfolio holdings will not be distributed to any third party except in accordance with the portfolio holdings policies and the Adviser’s Policy (the “Disclosure Policies”). The Adviser and the Board considered the circumstances under which the Fund’s portfolio holdings may be disclosed under the Disclosure Policies and the actual and potential material conflicts that could arise in such circumstances between the interests of the Fund’s shareholders and the interests of the Adviser, distributor or any other affiliated person of the Fund. After due consideration, the Adviser and the Board determined that the Fund has a legitimate business purpose for disclosing portfolio holdings to persons described in the Disclosure Policies, including mutual fund rating or statistical agencies, or persons performing similar functions, and internal parties involved in the investment process, administration or custody of the Fund. Pursuant to the Disclosure Policies, the Trust’s Chief Compliance Officer (“CCO”), is authorized to consider and authorize dissemination of portfolio holdings information to additional third parties, after considering the best interests of the Fund shareholders and potential conflicts of interest in making such disclosures.

The Board exercises continuing oversight of the disclosure of the Fund’s portfolio holdings by (1) overseeing the implementation and enforcement of the Disclosure Policies, Codes of Ethics and other relevant policies of the Fund and its service providers, by the Trust’s CCO, (2) by considering reports and recommendations by the Trust’s CCO concerning any material compliance matters (as defined in Rule 38a-1 under the 1940 Act), and (3) by considering the approval of any amendment to the Disclosure Policies. The Board reserves the right to amend the Disclosure Policies at any time without prior notice to shareholders in its sole discretion.

Disclosure of the Fund's complete holdings is required to be made quarterly within 60 days of the end of each period covered by the Annual Report and Semi-Annual Report to Fund shareholders and in the quarterly holdings report on Part F of Form N-PORT. These reports are available, free of charge, on the EDGAR database on the SEC's website at www.sec.gov. The Fund may provide its complete portfolio holdings at the same time that it is filed with the SEC.

In the event of a conflict between the interests of the Fund and the interests of the Adviser or an affiliated person of the Adviser, the CCO of the Adviser, in consultation with the Trust's CCO, shall make a determination in the best interests of the Fund, and shall report such determination to the Board at the end of the quarter in which such determination was made. Any employee of the Adviser who suspects a breach of this obligation must report the matter immediately to the Adviser's CCO or to his or her supervisor.

In addition, material non-public holdings information may be provided without lag as part of the normal investment activities of the Fund to each of the following entities, which, by explicit agreement or by virtue of their respective duties to the Fund, are required to maintain the confidentiality of the information disclosed, including a duty not to trade on non-public information: the fund administrator, fund accountant, custodian, transfer agent, auditors, counsel to the Fund or the Board, broker-dealers (in connection with the purchase or sale of securities or requests for price quotations or bids on one or more securities) and regulatory authorities. Portfolio holdings information not publicly available with the SEC or through the Fund's website may only be provided to additional third parties, including mutual fund ratings or statistical agencies, in accordance with the Disclosure Policies, when the Fund has a legitimate business purpose and the third party recipient is subject to a confidentiality agreement that includes a duty not to trade on non-public information.

In no event shall the Adviser, its affiliates or employees, the Fund, or any other party receive any direct or indirect compensation in connection with the disclosure of information about the Fund's portfolio holdings.

There can be no assurance that the Disclosure Policies will protect the Fund from potential misuse of portfolio holdings information by individuals or entities to which it is disclosed.

TRUSTEES AND EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

The Board oversees the management and operations of the Trust. The Board, in turn, elects the officers of the Trust, who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Trust and its separate series. The current Trustees and officers of the Trust, their year of birth, positions with the Trust, terms of office with the Trust and length of time served, principal occupations during the past five years and other directorships are set forth in the table below. Unless noted otherwise, the principal business address of each Trustee is c/o U.S. Bank Global Fund Services, 615 East Michigan Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202.

Name and Year of Birth	Positions with the Trust	Term of Office and Length of Time Served	Principal Occupations During Past Five Years	Number of Portfolios in Fund Complex ⁽²⁾ Overseen by Trustees	Other Directorships Held During Past Five Years
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Independent Trustees of the Trust⁽¹⁾

Koji Felton (born 1961)	Trustee	Indefinite Term; Since September 2015.	Retired. Counsel, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. L.P. (2013-2015); Counsel, Dechert LLP (2011-2013).	1	Independent Trustee, Listed Funds Trust (15 portfolios) (Since 2019.)
Debra McGinty-Poteet (born 1956)	Trustee	Indefinite Term; Since September 2015.	Retired.	1	Independent Trustee, First Western Funds Trust (3 portfolios) (since May 2015).
Daniel B. Willey (born 1955)	Trustee	Indefinite Term; Since September 2015.	Retired. Chief Compliance Officer, United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (2009 - 2017)	1	None

Interested Trustee

Jeanine M. Bajczyk ⁽³⁾ (born 1965)	Chair, Trustee	Indefinite Term; Since July 2020.	Senior Vice President, U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (since 2006).	1	None
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Name and Year of Birth	Positions with the Trust	Term of Office and Length of Time Served	Principal Occupations During Past Five Years	Number of Portfolios in Fund Complex ⁽²⁾ Overseen by Trustees	Other Directorships Held During Past Five Years
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Officers of the Trust

Ryan L. Roell (born 1973)	President and Principal Executive Officer	Indefinite Term; Since July 2019.	Vice President, U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (since 2005).	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Cullen O. Small (born 1987)	Vice President, Treasurer and Principal Financial Officer	Indefinite Term; Since January 2019.	Vice President, U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (since 2010).	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Donna Barrette (born 1966)	Vice President, Chief Compliance Officer and Anti-Money Laundering Officer	Indefinite Term; Since November 2019.	Senior Vice President and Compliance Officer, U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (since 2004).	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Adam W. Smith (born 1981)	Secretary	Indefinite Term; Since June 2019.	Vice President, U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (since 2012).	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Hailey S. Glaser (born 1989)	Assistant Treasurer	Indefinite Term; Since July 2019.	Assistant Vice President, U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (since 2015); Audit Senior, Deloitte & Touche LP (2012-2015).	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Kristen M. Pierson (born 1979)	Assistant Treasurer	Indefinite Term; Since July 2019.	Assistant Vice President, U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (since 2017); Lead Fund Accountant, UMB Fund Services, Inc. (2006-2017).	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

- (1) The Trustees of the Trust who are not “interested persons” of the Trust as defined under the 1940 Act (“Independent Trustees”).
- (2) As of the date of this SAI, the Trust was comprised of 8 portfolios (including the Fund) managed by unaffiliated investment advisors. The term “Fund Complex” applies only to the Fund. The Fund does not hold itself out as related to any other series within the Trust for investment purposes, nor does it share the same investment adviser with any other series within the Trust.
- (3) Ms. Bajczyk, as a result of her employment with U.S. Bank Global Fund Services, which acts as transfer agent, administrator, and fund accountant to the Trust, is considered to be an “interested person” of the Trust, as defined by the 1940 Act.

Additional Information Concerning the Board of Trustees

The Role of the Board

The Board oversees the management and operations of the Trust. Like all mutual funds, the day-to-day management and operation of the Trust is the responsibility of the various service providers to the Trust, such as the Adviser, the Distributor, the Administrator, the Custodian, and the Transfer Agent, each of whom are discussed in greater detail in this SAI. The Board has appointed various senior employees of the Administrator as officers of the Trust, with responsibility to monitor and report to the Board on the Trust’s operations. In conducting this oversight, the Board receives regular reports from these officers and the service providers. For example, the Treasurer provides reports as to financial reporting matters and the President provides reports as to matters relating to the Trust’s operations. In addition, the Adviser provides regular reports on the investment strategy and performance of the Fund. The Board has appointed a CCO who administers the Trust’s compliance program and regularly reports to the Board as to compliance matters. These reports are provided as part of formal “Board Meetings” which are typically held quarterly, in person, and involve the Board’s review of recent operations. In addition, various members of the Board also meet with management in less formal settings, between formal “Board Meetings,” to discuss various topics. In all cases, however, the role of the Board and of any individual Trustee is one of oversight and not of management of the day-to-day affairs of the Trust and its oversight role does not make the Board a guarantor of the Trust’s investments, operations or activities.

Board Structure, Leadership

The Board has structured itself in a manner that it believes allows it to perform its oversight function effectively. It has established three standing committees, a Governance and Nominating Committee; an Audit Committee, which also serves as the Qualified Legal Compliance Committee; and a Valuation Committee which are discussed in greater detail below under “Trust Committees”. The Board is comprised of one Interested Trustee and three Independent Trustees, which are Trustees that are not affiliated with the Adviser, the principal underwriter, or their affiliates. The Governance and Nominating Committee, Audit Committee and Qualified Legal Compliance Committee are comprised entirely of Independent Trustees. The Chair of the Board is an Interested Trustee. The Board has determined not to appoint a lead Independent Trustee however; the Independent Trustees are advised by independent counsel. The President and Principal Executive Officer of the Trust is not a Trustee, but rather is a senior employee of the Administrator who routinely interacts with the unaffiliated investment advisers of the Trust and comprehensively manages the operational aspects of the funds in the Trust. The Trust has determined that it is appropriate to separate the Principal Executive Officer and Chair of the Board positions because the day-to-day responsibilities of the Principal Executive Officer are not consistent with the oversight role of the Trustees and because of the potential conflict of interest that may arise from the Administrator’s duties with the Trust. The Board reviews its structure and the structure of its committees annually. Given the specific characteristics of the Trust, as described above, the Board has determined that the structure of the Interested Chair, the composition of the Board,

and the function and composition of its various committees are appropriate means to address any potential conflicts of interest that may arise.

Board Oversight of Risk Management

As part of its oversight function, the Board receives and reviews various risk management reports and discusses these matters with appropriate management and other personnel. Because risk management is a broad concept comprised of many elements (e.g., investment risk, issuer and counterparty risk, compliance risk, operational risks, business continuity risks, etc.), the oversight of different types of risks is handled in different ways. For example, the Audit Committee meets with the Treasurer and the Trust's independent registered public accounting firm to discuss, among other things, the internal control structure of the Trust's financial reporting function. The Board meets regularly with the CCO to discuss compliance and operational risks and how they are managed. The Board also receives reports from the Adviser as to investment risks of the Fund. In addition to these reports, from time to time the Board receives reports from the Administrator and the Adviser as to enterprise risk management.

The Board oversees the Fund's liquidity risk through, among other things, receiving periodic reporting from the CCO. Additionally, as required by Rule 22e-4 under the 1940 Act, the Trust implemented a liquidity risk management program ("Liquidity Program") pursuant to the provisions of Rule 22e-4, as it relates to the Fund. The Board, including a majority of the Independent Trustees, approved the designation of a liquidity risk management program administrator (the "Liquidity Program Administrator") who is responsible for administering the Liquidity Program. The Board reviews, no less frequently than annually, a written report prepared by the Liquidity Program Administrator that addresses the operation of the Liquidity Program and assesses its adequacy and effectiveness of implementation.

Information about Each Trustee's Qualification, Experience, Attributes or Skills

The Board believes that each of the Trustees has the qualifications, experience, attributes and skills ("Trustee Attributes") appropriate to their continued service as Trustees of the Trust in light of the Trust's business and structure. The Board annually conducts a "self-assessment" wherein the effectiveness of the Board and individual Trustees is reviewed.

In addition to the information provided in the chart above, below is certain additional information concerning each particular Trustee and his/her Trustee Attributes. The information is not all-inclusive. Many Trustee Attributes involve intangible elements, such as intelligence, integrity, work ethic, the ability to work together, the ability to communicate effectively, the ability to exercise judgment, to ask incisive questions, and commitment to shareholder interests.

Koji Felton. Mr. Felton has served as a Trustee since 2015 and has substantial experience with the mutual fund industry and familiarity with federal securities laws and regulations. Mr. Felton's prior experience includes serving as Director and Counsel for KKR Credit Advisors LLC, the asset manager arm of Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. L.P. (2013 – 2015). Prior to that, Mr. Felton served as counsel in the Financial Services Group at Dechert LLP from (2011 – 2013), as well as in various capacities, and ultimately as Senior Vice President and Deputy General Counsel for mutual funds, at Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. (1998 – 2011). Mr. Felton also worked as a staff attorney and served as the Enforcement Branch Chief for the San Francisco District Office of the SEC (1992 – 1998). Mr. Felton began his career as a litigation associate specializing in securities and banking litigation at Shearman & Sterling (1986 – 1992).

Debra McGinty-Poteet. Ms. McGinty-Poteet has served as a Trustee since 2015 and has significant mutual fund industry experience, including her current and prior experience on mutual fund boards. Ms. McGinty-Poteet currently also serves an Independent Trustee for First Western Funds Trust. Prior to becoming a Trustee of the Trust, Ms. McGinty-Poteet served as the President and Interested Trustee for Brandes Investment Trust where she also oversaw the proprietary and sub-advisory mutual fund business for Brandes Investment Advisors (1999 – 2012). Ms. McGinty-Poteet previously served as Chief Operating Officer of North American Trust Company (1997 – 1998); Global Managing Director of Mutual Funds at Bank of America (1992 – 1996); and in various capacities, and ultimately as Global Head of Mutual Funds, at Security Pacific Bank (1982 – 1992).

Daniel Willey. Mr. Willey has served as a Trustee since 2015 and has significant work history and experience in the investment management industry. As a chief compliance officer, Mr. Willey has valuable experience in an oversight role and in working with regulatory compliance matters. Mr. Willey served as the Chief Compliance Officer of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (2009 – 2017). Prior to this role, Mr. Willey served as the Chief Operating and Chief Compliance Officer of Barrett Associates, Inc. (investment adviser and affiliate of Legg Mason) (2007 – 2009); President and Chief Executive Officer of TIMCO, Citigroup Asset Management (2004 – 2006); Head Equity Trader of TIMCO (1994 – 2004); Vice President, Shawmut National Bank (1992 – 1994); Investment Officer, State of Connecticut (1990 – 1992); Vice President, Bank of New England (Connecticut Bank & Trust) (1981 – 1990); Registered Representative, Tucker Anthony and R.L. Day, Inc. (1979 – 1981); and Assistant Analyst, The Travelers Insurance Company (1977 – 1979).

Jeanine Bajczyk. Ms. Bajczyk has served as a Trustee since 2020 and has experience, knowledge, and understanding of the mutual fund industry. Ms. Bajczyk currently serves as a Senior Vice President of U.S. Bank Global Fund Services, where she oversees the Regulatory Administration group and Blue Sky department. Ms. Bajczyk has served in various capacities since joining U.S. Bank Global Fund Services in 2006, and has extensive experience in the 1940 Act, securities law in general and SEC compliance and regulatory matters. In addition, Ms. Bajczyk has extensive experience in the oversight of regulatory examinations and providing support and assistance to mutual fund clients implementing new regulatory requirements. Prior to joining U.S. Bank Global Fund Services, Ms. Bajczyk was counsel at Wells Fargo Funds Management and Strong Financial Corporation.

Trust Committees

The Trust has three standing committees: the Governance and Nominating Committee, the Audit Committee, which also serves as the Qualified Legal Compliance Committee (“QLCC”) and the Valuation Committee.

The Governance and Nominating Committee, comprised of all the Independent Trustees, is responsible for making recommendations to the Board regarding various governance-related aspects of the Board’s responsibilities and seeking and reviewing candidates for consideration as nominees for Trustees and meets only as necessary. The Governance and Nominating Committee will consider nominees nominated by shareholders. Recommendations by shareholders for consideration by the Governance and Nominating Committee should be sent to the President of the Trust in writing together with the appropriate biographical information concerning each such proposed Nominee, and such recommendation must comply with the notice provisions set forth in the Trust Bylaws. In general, to comply with such procedures, such nominations, together with all required biographical information, must be delivered to and received by the President of the Trust at the principal executive offices of the Trust no less than 120 days and no more than 150 days prior to the shareholder meeting at which any such nominee would be voted on. The Governance and Nominating Committee met once during the Fund’s most recent fiscal year ended October 31, 2020.

The Audit Committee is comprised of all of the Independent Trustees. The Audit Committee generally meets on a quarterly basis with respect to the various series of the Trust, and may meet more frequently. The function of the Audit Committee, with respect to each series of the Trust, is to review the scope and results of the audit of such series’ financial statements and any matters bearing on the audit or the financial statements, and to ensure the integrity of the series’ pricing and financial reporting. The Audit Committee held four meetings during the Fund’s most recent fiscal year ended October 31, 2020.

The function of the QLCC is to receive reports from an attorney retained by the Trust of evidence of a material violation by the Trust or by any officer, director, employee or agent of the Trust.

The Board has delegated day-to-day valuation issues to a Valuation Committee that is comprised of certain officers of the Trust and the Interested Trustee of the Trust, and is overseen by the Board. The function of the Valuation Committee is to oversee and approve the fair value of securities held by any series of the Trust for which current and reliable market quotations are not readily available. Such securities are valued at their respective fair values as determined in good faith by the Valuation Committee. The actions of the Valuation Committee are subsequently

reviewed and ratified by the Board. The Valuation Committee meets as needed. The Valuation Committee held twelve meetings with respect to the Fund during the Fund’s most recent fiscal year ended October 31, 2020.

Trustee Ownership of Fund Shares and Other Interests

The following table sets forth the dollar range of equity securities beneficially owned by each director in the Fund as of December 31, 2020, which is also the valuation date:

Name of Person/ Position	Dollar Range of Equity Securities in the Fund	Aggregate Dollar Range of Equity Securities in All Registered Investment Companies Overseen by Director in Family of Investment Companies ⁽¹⁾
Koji Felton, Independent Trustee	\$10,001-\$50,000	\$10,001-\$50,000
Debra McGinty Poteet, Independent Trustee	None	None
Daniel Willey, Independent Trustee	None	None
Jeanine Bajczyk, Interested Trustee	None	None

⁽¹⁾ As of the date of this SAI, the Trust was comprised of 8 portfolios (including the Fund) managed by unaffiliated investment advisers. The term “Family of Investment Companies” applies only to the Fund. The Fund does not hold itself out as related to any other series within the Trust for investment purposes, nor does it share the same investment adviser with any other series within the Trust.

Compensation

Independent Trustees each receive an annual retainer of \$35,000. In addition, the Independent Trustees receive \$500 per any special meeting attended telephonically. Prior to January 1, 2021, Independent Trustees received an annual retainer of \$30,000. Independent Trustees receive additional fees from applicable portfolios for any special meetings at rates assessed by the Trustees depending on the length of the meeting and whether in-person attendance is required. Independent Trustees are also reimbursed for expenses in connection with each Board meeting attended. These reimbursements are allocated among applicable portfolios of the Trust. The Trust has no pension or retirement plan. No other entity affiliated with the Trust pays any compensation to the Trustees. The Trust does not pay any fees to, or reimburse expenses of the Interested Trustee. Set forth below is the compensation received by the following Independent Trustees from the Fund for the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020.

Name of Person/ Position	Aggregate Compensation From the Fund ⁽¹⁾	Pension or Retirement Benefits Accrued as Part of Fund Expenses	Estimated Annual Benefits Upon Retirement	Total Compensation from Fund and Fund Complex ⁽²⁾ Paid to Trustees
Koji Felton, Independent Trustee	\$3,552	None	None	\$3,552
Debra McGinty Poteet, Independent Trustee	\$3,552	None	None	\$3,552
Daniel Willey, Independent Trustee	\$3,552	None	None	\$3,552

⁽¹⁾ Trustees’ fees and expenses are allocated among the Fund and all other series comprising the Trust.

⁽²⁾ As of the date of this SAI, the Trust was comprised of 8 portfolios (including the Fund) managed by unaffiliated investment advisers. The term “Fund Complex” applies only to the Fund and not to other series of the Trust. For the fiscal period ended October 31, 2020, aggregate Independent Trustees’ fees and expenses amounted to \$87,750.

Codes of Ethics

The Trust, the Adviser and the Fund’s distributor have each adopted a code of ethics pursuant to Rule 17j-1 of the 1940 Act. These codes of ethics permit, subject to certain conditions, personnel of the Adviser and the Fund’s distributor to invest in securities that may be purchased or held by the Fund.

PROXY VOTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Board has adopted Proxy Voting Policies and Procedures (the “Trust Proxy Policies”) on behalf of the Trust which delegate the responsibility for voting proxies to the Adviser or its designee, subject to the Board’s continuing oversight. The Trust’s Proxy Policies require that the Adviser or its designee vote proxies received in a manner consistent with the best interests of the Fund and its shareholders. The Trust’s Proxy Policies also require the Adviser to present to the Board, at least annually, the Adviser’s proxy policies and a record of each proxy voted by the Adviser on behalf of the Fund, including a report on the resolution of all proxies identified by the Adviser as involving a conflict of interest.

The Adviser has adopted proxy policies, which may be amended from time to time. In voting proxies, the Adviser is guided by fiduciary principles. All proxies are to be voted solely in the best interests of the beneficial owners of the securities. The Adviser’s proxy policies are attached as Appendix A. In addition, the Adviser utilizes the services of Institutional Shareholders Services (“ISS”), a third party proxy voting vendor firm, to assist it in fulfilling its proxy voting obligations. A summary of the proxy voting policies of ISS are attached as Appendix B.

The Trust is required to file a Form N-PX, with the Fund’s complete proxy voting record for the 12 months ended June 30, no later than August 31 of each year. Form N-PX for the Fund is available without charge, upon request, by calling toll-free 866-530-2690 and on the SEC’s website at www.sec.gov.

CONTROL PERSONS, PRINCIPAL SHAREHOLDERS AND MANAGEMENT OWNERSHIP

A principal shareholder is any person who owns of record or beneficially owns 5% or more of the outstanding shares of a class of the Fund. A control person is any person who owns beneficially or through controlled companies more than 25% of the voting securities of the Fund or acknowledges the existence of control.

As of January 29, 2021, the following shareholders owned 5% or more of the outstanding shares of a Class of the Fund as listed below:

Investor Class

Name and Address	% Ownership	Type of Ownership
National Financial Services, LLC For the Exclusive Benefit of Our Customers Attn: Mutual Funds Dept., 4th Floor 499 Washington Blvd. Jersey City, NJ 07310-1995	94.91%	Record

Class K

Name and Address	% Ownership	Type of Ownership
National Financial Services, LLC For the Exclusive Benefit of Our Customers Attn: Mutual Funds Dept., 4th Floor 499 Washington Blvd. Jersey City, NJ 07310-1995	67.62%	Record
George A. Weiss TR 1 State Street Floor 20 Hartford, CT 06103-3110	20.82%	Beneficial

Since Class I and Class A are not offered to shareholders as of the date of this SAI, there are no principal shareholders or control persons of either Class as of the date of this SAI. As of January 29, 2021, the Trustees and officers of the Trust as a group did not own more than 1% of the outstanding shares of any Class of the Fund.

THE FUND'S INVESTMENT ADVISER

As stated in the Prospectus, investment advisory services are provided to the Fund by the Adviser, Weiss Multi-Strategy Advisers LLC, pursuant to an Investment Advisory Agreement (the "Advisory Agreement"). The Adviser is majority-owned by GWA, LLC, a Connecticut limited liability company. GWA, LLC, in turn, is majority-owned by Weiss Family Interests LLC, which is majority-owned by various Weiss family trusts. A substantial number of the Adviser's employees also own minority interests in GWA, LLC. As the investment adviser to the Fund, the Adviser oversees the provision of all management, administration, investment advisory and general services for the Fund.

As compensation, the Fund will pay the Adviser a monthly management fee (accrued daily) based upon the average daily net assets of the Fund at the annual rate of 1.50%.

The Advisory Agreement continues in effect for an initial two year period, and from year to year thereafter only if such continuance is specifically approved at least annually by the Board or by vote of a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities and by a majority of the Independent Trustees, who are not parties to the Advisory Agreement or interested persons of any such party, in each case cast in person at a meeting called for the purpose of voting on the Advisory Agreement. The Advisory Agreement is terminable without penalty by the Trust on behalf of the Fund on not more than 60 days', nor less than 30 days', written notice to the Adviser when authorized either by a majority vote of the Fund's shareholders or by a vote of a majority of the Trustees, or by the Adviser on not more than 60 days', nor less than 30 days', written notice to the Trust, and will automatically terminate in the event of its "assignment" (as defined in the 1940 Act). The Advisory Agreement provides that the Adviser shall not be liable under such agreement for any error of judgment or mistake of law or for any loss arising out of any investment or for any act or omission in the execution of portfolio transactions for the Fund, except for willful misfeasance, bad faith or gross negligence in the performance of its duties, or by reason of reckless disregard of its obligations and duties thereunder.

The Adviser has contractually agreed to waive a portion or all of its management fees and/or reimburse Fund expenses (excluding Rule 12b-1 fees, shareholder servicing fees, swap fees and expenses, dividends and interest on short positions, taxes, leverage interest, brokerage fees (including commissions, mark-ups and mark-downs), annual account fees for margin accounts, expenses incurred in connection with any merger or reorganization, or extraordinary expenses such as litigation) in order to limit the Total Annual Fund Operating Expenses for each share class to 1.50% of average daily net assets of the Fund (the "Expense Cap"). The Expense Cap will remain in effect through at least February 28, 2022, and may be terminated upon 60 days' written notice by the Board or the Adviser. The Adviser may request recoupment of previously waived fees and reimbursed expenses from the Fund for three years from the date they were waived or reimbursed, provided that after payment of the recoupment, Total Annual Fund Operating Expenses do not exceed the lesser of the Expense Cap: (i) in effect at the time of the waiver or reimbursement, or (ii) in effect at the time of recoupment.

For the fiscal years ended October 31, the Fund paid the following management fees to the Adviser:

Fiscal Year End	Investment Advisory Fees Accrued	Fund Expenses Waived or Reimbursed by Adviser	Net Fees Paid to Adviser
2020	\$1,423,139	\$969,449	\$453,690
2019	\$1,349,898	\$712,179	\$637,719
2018	\$1,055,467	\$693,183	\$362,284

Portfolio Managers.

Jordi Visser, Charles S. Crow IV, and Edward Olanow serve as portfolio managers for the Fund, and are each primarily responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund. These portfolio managers share joint responsibility for the day-to-day management of accounts other than the Fund. Information regarding these other jointly-managed accounts is set forth below as of October 31, 2020. No portfolio manager manages any other accounts.

Portfolio Manager	Type of Account Managed	Number of Accounts	Total Assets	Number of Accounts with Performance Based Fees	Assets of Accounts with Performance Based Fees
Edward Olanow	Other Registered Investment Companies	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Other Accounts	2	\$223.0 million	0	\$0
Jordi Visser	Other Registered Investment Companies	1	\$499.3 million	1	\$499.3 million
	Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Other Accounts	2	\$223.0 million	0	\$0
Charles Crow IV	Other Registered Investment Companies	1	\$499.3 million	1	\$499.3 million
	Other Pooled Investment Vehicles	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Other Accounts	2	\$223.0 million	0	\$0

Compensation.

Each portfolio manager receives a fixed salary and discretionary bonus for his service as portfolio manager. In addition, Mr. Visser holds an equity interest in the holding company that owns the Adviser. The aforementioned discretionary bonuses are determined by the Adviser in its sole discretion which takes into account such things as Adviser profitability, product profitability and overall employee contributions to the Adviser in the relevant fiscal years. Although Fund performance is not a direct factor in the determination of discretionary bonuses, Fund performance affects the Adviser's overall profitability, and therefore, indirectly, any such determination.

Conflicts of Interest.

In addition to investing capital for the Fund the Adviser also serves as investment adviser for other clients including privately offered funds and separately managed accounts.

The Adviser may give advice or take action with respect to its other clients that differs from the advice given or action taken with respect to the Fund, and the Adviser's obligation to determine suitability for each of its clients may result in seemingly contradictory advice with respect to a single security. For example, the Adviser may purchase a particular security for the Fund at a time when the Adviser is selling or establishing a short position in that same security on behalf of another client. Alternatively, the Adviser may take a short position in a security on behalf of the Fund while maintaining a long position in that same security on behalf of another client. Similarly, the Fund may purchase a security in its long-only portfolio at the same time it is selling or establishing a short position in the same security in the alpha portfolio.

The Adviser may have an incentive to favor certain other client accounts over the Fund because of proprietary investments in such other client accounts. Because the Adviser may allocate investment opportunities between the Fund and other client accounts, there may be competition amongst the other client accounts and the Fund for limited capacity opportunities. In addition, the Fund has a different fee structure than many of the Adviser's other clients, and as such the Adviser may have a conflict of interest in allocating investment opportunities among the Fund and such other clients. The Fund's fee structure may also create an incentive for the Adviser to moderate Fund returns in higher return environments, as there is the potential for the Adviser's operations to be less profitable in such environments.

Employees of the Adviser or its affiliates are permitted to engage in personal investment activities that may involve a conflict of interest with the investment activities of the Fund. The Adviser's compliance procedures require all employees to request permission from the Adviser's compliance officer for personal trades, subject to certain exceptions. The Adviser may change its policies or procedures with respect to such personal investment activities at any time.

The Adviser will use its best efforts in connection with the purposes and objectives of the Fund and will devote so much of its time and effort to the Fund as may, in its judgment, be necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Fund. The Adviser and its members, directors, officers and employees may conduct any other business, including any business with respect to investments, regardless of whether such business is in competition with the Fund. The Fund will not have any right to participate in any manner or have any interest in any such business engaged in by the Adviser or their members, directors, officers, employees or affiliates.

When it is determined that it would be appropriate for the Fund and one or more other investment accounts managed by the Adviser or its affiliates to participate in an investment opportunity, the Adviser will seek to execute orders for all of the participating investment accounts, including the Fund, on an equitable basis, taking into account such factors as the relative amounts of capital available for new investments and the investment programs and portfolio positions of the Fund and the affiliated entities for which participation is appropriate. Orders may be combined for all such accounts. If an order on behalf of more than one account cannot be fully executed under such accounts, or if an order is not filled at the same price, the order may be allocated on an average price basis. If an order on behalf of more than one account cannot be fully executed under prevailing market conditions, securities may be allocated among the different accounts on a basis that the Adviser or its affiliates consider equitable. Situations may occur where the Fund could be disadvantaged because of the investment activities conducted by the Adviser or its affiliates for other investment accounts.

In addition, if the Adviser determines that it is appropriate for the Fund to buy or sell a security, and for another fund or account to sell or buy that same security, the Adviser may, in accordance with Rule 17a-7 of the 1940 Act, and the Trust's policies and procedures adopted thereunder, arrange a "cross" trade between the Fund and such other fund or account, if the trade price is no less advantageous for both parties than an open market transaction would be. Transactions among the Fund and other managed accounts may also take place from time to time as necessary to rebalance various portfolio positions. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Fund will not engage in cross trades in violation of ERISA, to the extent applicable.

Additional information about potential conflicts of interest is set forth in Part 2A of the Adviser's Form ADV, which is available on the SEC's website (adviserinfo.sec.gov).

Ownership of the Fund.

The following table shows the dollar range of equity securities beneficially owned by the portfolio managers in the Fund as of October 31, 2020.

Name of Portfolio Manager	Dollar Range of Equity Securities Beneficially Owned in the Fund
Jordi Visser	None
Charles S. Crow IV	None
Edward Olanow	over \$1,000,000

SERVICE PROVIDERS**Administrator, Transfer Agent and Fund Accountant**

Pursuant to an administration agreement (the “Administration Agreement”), U.S. Bancorp Fund Services, LLC, doing business as U.S. Bank Global Fund Services (“Fund Services”), 615 East Michigan Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202, acts as the Administrator to the Fund. Fund Services provides certain services to the Fund including, among other responsibilities, coordinating the negotiation of contracts and fees with, and the monitoring of performance and billing of, the Fund’s independent contractors and agents; preparation for signature by an officer of the Trust of all documents required to be filed for compliance by the Trust and the Fund with applicable laws and regulations, excluding those of the securities laws of various states; arranging for the computation of performance data, including NAV and yield; responding to shareholder inquiries; and arranging for the maintenance of books and records of the Fund, and providing, at its own expense, office facilities, equipment and personnel necessary to carry out its duties. In this capacity, Fund Services does not have any responsibility or authority for the management of the Fund, the determination of investment policy, or for any matter pertaining to the distribution of the Fund’s shares.

Pursuant to the Administration Agreement, as compensation for its services, Fund Services receives from the Fund, a fee based on the Fund’s current average daily net assets, subject to a minimum annual fee. Fund Services also is entitled to certain out-of-pocket expenses. Fund Services also acts as fund accountant, transfer agent and dividend disbursing agent under separate agreements.

For services rendered to the Fund, Fund Services received \$228,400, \$197,395 and \$178,708 in fund administration and fund accounting fees during the fiscal years ended October 31, 2020, October 31, 2019 and October 31, 2018, respectively.

Custodian

U.S. Bank National Association is the custodian of the assets of the Fund (the “Custodian”) pursuant to a custody agreement between the Custodian and the Trust, whereby the Custodian provides for fees on a transactional basis plus out-of-pocket expenses. The Custodian’s address is 1555 N. Rivercenter Drive, Suite 302, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212. The Custodian does not participate in decisions relating to the purchase and sale of securities by the Fund. Fund Services, the Custodian, and the Fund’s principal underwriter are affiliated entities under the common control of U.S. Bancorp. The Custodian and its affiliates may participate in revenue sharing arrangements with the service providers of mutual funds in which the Fund may invest.

Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm and Legal Counsel

Cohen & Company, Ltd., 342 N. Water Street, Suite 830, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is the independent registered public accounting firm for the Fund.

Goodwin Procter LLP, 1900 N Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036, serves as legal counsel to the Trust.

EXECUTION OF PORTFOLIO TRANSACTIONS

The Adviser is authorized to determine the broker or dealer to be used for each securities transaction for the Fund. The Fund will not use an affiliated broker-dealer to execute trades on its behalf. In selecting brokers or dealers to execute transactions, the Adviser need not solicit competitive bids and does not have an obligation to seek the lowest available commission cost. It is not the Adviser's practice to negotiate "execution only" commission rates, thus the Fund may be deemed to be paying for research, brokerage or other services provided by the broker which are included in the commission rate.

Section 28(e) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, is a "safe harbor" that permits an investment manager to use commissions or "soft dollars" to obtain research and brokerage services that provide lawful and appropriate assistance in the investment decision-making process. The Adviser will limit the use of "soft dollars" to obtain research and brokerage services to services which constitute research and brokerage within the meaning of Section 28(e). Research services within Section 28(e) may include, but are not limited to, research reports (including market research); certain financial newsletters and trade journals; software providing analysis of securities portfolios; corporate governance research and rating services; attendance at certain seminars and conferences; discussions with research analysts; meetings with corporate executives; consultants' advice on portfolio strategy; data services (including services providing market data, company financial data and economic data); advice from brokers on order execution; and certain proxy services. Brokerage services within Section 28(e) may include, but are not limited to, services related to the execution, clearing and settlement of securities transactions and functions incidental thereto (i.e., connectivity services between an investment manager and a broker-dealer and other relevant parties such as custodians); trading software operated by a broker-dealer to route orders; software that provides trade analytics and trading strategies; software used to transmit orders; clearance and settlement in connection with a trade; electronic communication of allocation instructions; routing settlement instructions; post trade matching of trade information; and services required by the SEC or a self-regulatory organization such as comparison services, electronic confirms or trade affirmations.

In some instances, the Adviser may receive a product or service that may be used only partially for functions within Section 28(e) (e.g., an order management system, trade analytical software or proxy services). In such instances, the Adviser will make a good faith effort to determine the relative proportion of the product or service used to assist the Adviser in carrying out its investment decision-making or trade execution responsibilities and the relative proportion used for administrative or other purposes outside Section 28(e). The proportion of the product or service attributable to assisting the Adviser in carrying out its investment decision-making or trade execution responsibilities will be paid through brokerage commissions generated by client transactions and the proportion attributable to administrative or other purposes outside Section 28(e) will be paid for by the Adviser from its own resources.

Research and brokerage services obtained by the use of commissions arising from the Fund's portfolio transactions may be used by the Adviser in its other investment activities and thus, the Fund may not necessarily, in any particular instance, be the direct or indirect beneficiary of the research or brokerage services provided.

Although the Adviser will make a good faith determination that the amount of commissions paid is reasonable in light of the products or services provided by a broker, commission rates are generally negotiable and thus, selecting brokers on the basis of considerations that are not limited to the applicable commission rates may result in higher transaction costs than would otherwise be obtainable. The receipt of such products or services and the determination of the appropriate allocation in the case of "mixed use" products or services create a potential conflict of interest between the Adviser and its clients. In addition, the amount of commissions generated by a particular strategy may impact the compensation payable by the Adviser to the members of the investment team responsible for the strategy, which may provide an incentive for such members to cause the strategy to generate higher commissions.

In selecting brokers and negotiating commission rates, the Adviser may take into account the financial stability and reputation of brokerage firms, and the research, brokerage or other services provided by such brokers. The Adviser

may place transactions with a broker or dealer that (i) provides the Adviser (or an affiliate) with the opportunity to participate in capital introduction events sponsored by the broker-dealer, (ii) refers investors to the Fund or other products advised by the Adviser (or an affiliate), and/or (iii) provides other consulting services to the Adviser, if otherwise consistent with seeking best execution; provided the Adviser is not selecting the broker-dealer in recognition of the opportunity to participate in such capital introduction events or the referral of investors, or the receipt of consulting services.

When appropriate, the Adviser may, but is not required to, aggregate client orders to achieve more efficient execution or to provide for equitable treatment among accounts. Clients participating in aggregated trades will be allocated securities based on the average price achieved for such trades.

Consistent with its fiduciary duties, the Adviser's policy is to take the utmost care in making and implementing investment decisions for the Fund. In the event that a trade error is made on behalf of the Fund, the Investment Adviser will, when appropriate, attempt to break or otherwise correct the trade as promptly as practicable. However, to the extent an error cannot be corrected, the Fund will, to the maximum extent permitted under applicable law, generally bear all expenses and losses (or gains) arising in connection with such trade errors. The Investment Adviser and its affiliates, principals and employees will be indemnified by the Fund against all expenses and losses arising in connection with trade errors caused by such persons, provided that any such person will not be indemnified against any loss arising in connection with trade errors caused by gross negligence, willful malfeasance, bad faith, fraud or, to the extent applicable, violation of its fiduciary responsibilities under ERISA.

The Fund will maintain accounts at UBS Securities LLC, Citigroup Global Markets Inc., Morgan Stanley & Co. Incorporated and Goldman Sachs & Co., through which the Fund may settle and clear trades, borrow securities and maintain custody of its securities.

For the fiscal years ended October 31, 2020, October 31, 2019 and October 31, 2018, the Fund paid \$897,198, \$685,319 and \$764,560, respectively, in aggregate brokerage commissions.

The table below indicates the portion of the Fund's aggregate brokerage for the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020 (from the figures listed above) that was directed to brokers who, in addition to providing trade execution, also supplied the Fund with research services.

Dollar Value of Securities Traded	Related Soft Dollar Brokerage Commissions
\$1,875,310,156	\$151,981

As of October 31, 2020, the Fund owned securities issued by the following broker-dealers with whom the Fund transacted business during the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020:

Broker Dealer	Dollar Value
Citigroup, Inc.	\$20,876
Morgan Stanley	\$10,449

CAPITAL STOCK

Shares issued by the Fund have no preemptive, conversion, or subscription rights. Shares issued and sold by the Fund are deemed to be validly issued, fully paid and non-assessable by the Trust. Shareholders have equal and exclusive rights as to dividends and distributions as declared by the Fund and to the net assets of the Fund upon liquidation or dissolution. The Fund, as a separate series of the Trust, votes separately on matters affecting only the Fund (e.g., approval of the Advisory Agreement); all series of the Trust vote as a single class on matters affecting

all series jointly or the Trust as a whole (*e.g.*, election or removal of Trustees). Voting rights are not cumulative, so that the holders of more than 50% of the shares voting in any election of Trustees can, if they so choose, elect all of the Trustees. While the Trust is not required and does not intend to hold annual meetings of shareholders, such meetings may be called by the Board in its discretion, or upon demand by the holders of 10% or more of the outstanding shares of the Trust, for the purpose of electing or removing Trustees.

The Delaware Statutory Trust Act provides that a shareholder of a Delaware statutory trust shall be entitled to the same limitation of personal liability extended to shareholders of Delaware corporations. The Declaration of Trust further provides that Trustees shall have no power to bind any shareholder personally for the payment of any sum of money other than such as the shareholder may personally agree to pay.

DETERMINATION OF SHARE PRICE

The net asset value (“NAV”) of shares of the Fund will be determined once daily ordinarily as of the scheduled close of public trading on the NYSE (normally, 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on each day that the NYSE is open for trading. It is expected that the NYSE will be closed on Saturdays and Sundays and on New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents’ Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas. The Fund does not expect to determine the NAV of shares on any day when the NYSE is not open for trading even if there is sufficient trading in its portfolio securities on such days to materially affect the NAV per share.

In valuing the Fund’s assets for calculating NAV, readily marketable portfolio securities listed on a national securities exchange are valued at the last sale price on the business day as of which such value is being determined. If there has been no sale on such exchange on such day, the security is valued at the mean between the bid and asked prices on such day. Securities primarily traded in the Nasdaq National Market System (“Nasdaq”) for which market quotations are readily available shall be valued using the Nasdaq Official Closing Price (“NOCP”). If the NOCP is not available, such securities shall be valued at the last sale price on the day of valuation, or if there has been no sale on such day, at the mean between the bid and asked prices. Readily marketable securities traded only in the over-the market and not on Nasdaq are valued at the most recent trade price. All other assets of the Fund are valued in such manner as the Board in good faith deems appropriate to reflect their fair value.

Trading in foreign securities markets is normally completed well before the close of the NYSE. In addition, foreign securities trading may not take place on all days on which the NYSE is open for trading, and may occur in certain foreign markets on days on which the Fund’s NAV is not calculated. Events affecting the values of portfolio securities that occur between the time their prices are determined and the close of the NYSE will not be reflected in the calculation of NAV unless the Board deems that the particular event would affect NAV, in which case an adjustment will be made in such manner as the Board in good faith deems appropriate to determine fair market value. Assets or liabilities expressed in foreign currencies are translated, in determining NAV, into U.S. dollars based on the spot exchange rates, or at such other rates as the Adviser, pursuant to fair value procedures adopted by the Board, may determine to be appropriate.

Fair value represents a good faith approximation of the value of a security. Fair value determinations involve the consideration of a number of subjective factors, an analysis of applicable facts and circumstances and the exercise of judgment. As a result, it is possible that the fair value for a security determined in good faith in accordance with the Fund’s fair value procedures may differ from valuations for the same security determined by other funds using their own valuation procedures. Although the Fund’s fair value procedures are designed to value a security at the price the Fund may reasonably expect to receive upon its sale in an orderly transaction, there can be no assurance that any fair value determination thereunder would, in fact, approximate the amount that the Fund would actually realize upon the sale of the security or the price at which the security would trade if a reliable market price were readily available.

ADDITIONAL PURCHASE AND REDEMPTION INFORMATION

The information provided below supplements the information contained in the Prospectuses regarding the purchase and redemption of the Fund's shares.

How to Buy Shares

In addition to purchasing shares directly from the Fund, you may purchase shares through certain financial intermediaries and their agents that have made arrangements with the Fund and are authorized to buy and sell shares of the Fund (collectively, "Financial Intermediaries"). Investors should contact their Financial Intermediaries directly for appropriate instructions, as well as information pertaining to accounts and any service or transaction fees that may be charged. If you transmit your order to these Financial Intermediaries before the close of regular trading (generally, 4:00 p.m., Eastern Time) on a day that the NYSE is open for business, your order will be priced at the Fund's NAV, plus any applicable sales charge, next computed after it is received by the Financial Intermediaries. Investors should check with their Financial Intermediaries to determine if it participates in these arrangements.

The public offering price of the Fund's shares is the NAV, plus any applicable sales charge. Shares are purchased at the public offering price next determined after U.S. Bancorp Fund Services, LLC (the "Transfer Agent") receives your transaction request in good order, as discussed in the Fund's Prospectus. In order to receive that day's public offering price, the transfer agent must receive your transaction request in good order before the close of regular trading on the NYSE, generally, 4:00 p.m., Eastern Time.

The Trust reserves the right in its sole discretion (i) to suspend the continued offering of the Fund's shares, (ii) to reject purchase orders in whole or in part when in the judgment of the Adviser or the distributor such rejection is in the best interest of the Fund, and (iii) to reduce or waive the minimum for initial and subsequent investments for certain fiduciary accounts or under circumstances where certain economies can be achieved in sales of the Fund's shares.

In addition to cash purchases, the Fund's shares may be purchased by tendering payment in-kind in the form of shares of stock, bonds or other securities. Any securities used to buy the Fund's shares must be readily marketable; their acquisition consistent with the Fund's objective and otherwise acceptable to the Adviser and the Board.

Automatic Investment Plan

The Fund provides an Automatic Investment Plan ("AIP") for the convenience of investors who wish to purchase shares of the Fund on a regular basis. All record keeping and custodial costs of the AIP are paid by the Fund. The market value of the Fund's shares is subject to fluctuation. Prior to participating in the AIP the investor should keep in mind that this plan does not assure a profit nor protect against depreciation in declining markets.

How to Sell Shares and Delivery of Redemption Proceeds

You can sell your Fund shares any day the NYSE is open for regular trading, either directly to the Fund or through your Financial Intermediary.

Payments to shareholders for shares of the Fund redeemed directly from the Fund will be made as promptly as possible, but no later than seven days after receipt by the Transfer Agent of the written request in good order, with the appropriate documentation as stated in the Prospectus, except that the Fund may suspend the right of redemption or postpone the date of payment during any period when (a) trading on the NYSE is restricted as determined by the SEC or the NYSE is closed for other than weekends and holidays; (b) an emergency exists as determined by the SEC making disposal of portfolio securities or valuation of net assets of the Fund not reasonably practicable; or (c) for such other period as the SEC may permit for the protection of the Fund's shareholders. Under unusual circumstances, the Fund may suspend redemptions, or postpone payment for more than seven days, but only as authorized by SEC rules.

A redemption is generally treated for U.S. federal income tax purposes as a taxable sale of the redeemed shares, the consequences of which are described below in “Certain U.S. Federal Income Tax Information”.

The value of shares on redemption or repurchase may be more or less than the investor’s cost, depending upon the market value of the Fund’s portfolio securities at the time of redemption or repurchase.

Telephone Redemptions

Shareholders with telephone transaction privileges established on their account may redeem Fund shares by telephone. Upon receipt of any instructions or inquiries by telephone from the shareholder, the Fund or its authorized agents may carry out the instructions and/or respond to the inquiry consistent with the shareholder’s previously established account service options. For joint accounts, instructions or inquiries from either party will be carried out without prior notice to the other account owners. In acting upon telephone instructions, the Fund and its agents use procedures that are reasonably designed to ensure that such instructions are genuine. These include recording all telephone calls, requiring pertinent information about the account and sending written confirmation of each transaction to the registered owner.

The Transfer Agent will employ reasonable procedures to confirm that instructions communicated by telephone are genuine. If the Transfer Agent fails to employ reasonable procedures, the Fund and the Transfer Agent may be liable for any losses due to unauthorized or fraudulent instructions. If these procedures are followed, however, that to the extent permitted by applicable law, neither the Fund nor its agents will be liable for any loss, liability, cost or expense arising out of any redemption request, including any fraudulent or unauthorized request. For additional information, contact the Transfer Agent.

Redemptions In-Kind

The Trust has filed an election under Rule 18f-1 of the 1940 Act committing to pay in cash all redemptions by a shareholder of record up to amounts specified by the rule (in excess of the lesser of (1) \$250,000 or (2) 1% of the Fund’s assets). The Fund has reserved the right to pay the redemption price of its shares in excess of the amounts specified by the rule, either totally or partially, by a distribution in-kind of portfolio securities (instead of cash). The securities so distributed would be valued at the same amount as that assigned to them in calculating the NAV for the shares being sold. If a shareholder receives a distribution in-kind, the shareholder could incur brokerage or other charges in converting the securities to cash and will bear any market risks associated with such securities until they are converted into cash. An in-kind redemption is generally treated for U.S. federal income tax purposes as a taxable sale of the redeemed shares, the consequences of which are described below in “Certain U.S. Federal Income Tax Information”.

The Fund may not acquire an illiquid investment if, immediately after the acquisition, the Fund would have invested more than 15% of its net assets in illiquid investments that are assets. In the unlikely event the Fund were to elect to make an in-kind redemption, the Fund expects that it would follow the normal protocol of making such distribution by way of a pro rata distribution based on its entire portfolio. Because the Fund may hold illiquid investments, such distribution may contain a pro rata portion of such illiquid investments or the Fund may determine, based on a materiality assessment, not to include illiquid investments in the in-kind redemption. The Fund does not anticipate that it would ever selectively distribute a greater than pro rata portion of any illiquid investments to satisfy a redemption request. If such securities are included in the distribution, shareholders may not be able to liquidate such securities and may be required to hold such securities indefinitely. Shareholders’ ability to liquidate such securities distributed in-kind may be restricted by resale limitations or substantial restrictions on transfer imposed by the issuers of the securities or by law. Shareholders may only be able to liquidate such securities distributed in-kind at a substantial discount from their value, and there may be higher brokerage costs associated with any subsequent disposition of these securities by the recipient.

DISTRIBUTIONS AND TAX INFORMATION

Distributions

Dividends of net investment income and distributions of net capital gains from the sale of securities are generally made annually, as described in the Prospectus. The Fund typically distributes any undistributed net investment income on or about December 31 of each year. Any net capital gains realized through the period ended October 31 of each year will also typically be distributed by December 31 of each year.

All distributions generally reduce the NAV of the Fund's shares by the amount of the distribution. If you purchase shares prior to a distribution, the distribution will be taxable to you even though economically it may represent a return on your investment.

Each distribution by the Fund is accompanied by a brief explanation of the form and character of the distribution. In January of each year, the Fund will issue to each shareholder a statement addressing the U.S. federal income tax status of all distributions that relate to the previous year. You are responsible for the payment of taxes with respect to your investment in the Fund.

Tax Information

The following summary describes the material U.S. federal income tax consequences to United States Holders (as defined below) of shares in the Fund. This summary is based upon the Code, Treasury regulations promulgated thereunder, administrative pronouncements and judicial decisions, all as in effect as of the date of this SAI and all of which are subject to change, possibly with retroactive effect. This summary addresses only shares that are held as capital assets within the meaning of Section 1221 of the Code and does not address all of the tax consequences that may be relevant to shareholders in light of their particular circumstances or to certain types of Shareholders subject to special treatment under the Code, including, without limitation, certain financial institutions, dealers in securities or commodities, traders in securities who elect to apply a mark-to-market method of accounting, insurance companies, tax-exempt organizations, partnerships or S-corporations (and persons who own their interest in shares through a partnership or S-corporation), expatriates of the United States, persons who are subject to alternative minimum tax, persons that have a "functional currency" other than the United States dollar, persons who hold shares as a position in a "straddle" or as a part of a "hedging," "conversion" or "constructive sale" transaction for U.S. federal income tax purposes or persons who received their shares as compensation. This summary also does not address the state, local or foreign tax consequences of an investment in the Fund.

For purposes of this discussion, a "United States Holder" means a holder of shares that for U.S. federal income tax purposes is:

- a citizen or resident of the United States;
- a corporation (or other entity treated as a corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes) created or organized in the United States or under the laws of the United States, any State or the District of Columbia;
- an estate, the income of which is includable in gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes regardless of its source; or
- a trust whose administration is subject to the primary supervision of a United States court and which has one or more United States persons who have the authority to control all of its substantial decisions, or which has a valid election in effect under applicable Treasury regulations to be treated as a United States person.

If a partnership (or other entity treated as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes) holds shares, the tax treatment of a partner will generally depend upon the status of such person and the activities of the limited liability company or partnership. A shareholder that is a partnership should consult its own tax advisors regarding the treatment of its partners.

Prospective shareholders are urged to consult with their own tax advisors and financial planners regarding the U.S. federal income tax consequences of an investment in the Fund, the application of state, local, or foreign laws, and the effect of any possible changes in applicable tax laws on their investment in the Fund.

Tax Treatment of the Fund

Each series of the Trust is treated as a separate entity for U.S. federal income tax purposes. The Fund has elected to qualify and intends to continue to qualify annually as a regulated investment company under Subchapter M of the Code, requiring it to comply with all applicable requirements regarding its income, assets and distributions. Provided that the Fund qualifies as a regulated investment company, it is eligible for a dividends paid deduction, allowing it to offset dividends it pays to shareholders against its taxable income; if the Fund fails to qualify as a regulated investment company under Subchapter M, it will be taxed as a regular corporation.

The Fund's policy is to distribute to its shareholders all of its taxable income, including any net realized capital gains (taking into account any capital loss carry-forward of the Fund), each year in a manner that complies with the distribution requirements applicable to regulated investment companies under the Code, and results in the Fund not being subject to any U.S. federal income or excise taxes. In particular, in order to avoid the non-deductible 4% excise tax, the Fund must also distribute (or be deemed to have distributed) by December 31 of each calendar year (1) at least 98% of its ordinary income for such year, (2) at least 98.2% of the excess of its realized capital gains over its realized capital losses for the 12-month period ending on October 31 during such year and (3) any amounts from the prior calendar year that were not distributed and on which the Fund paid no federal income tax. However, the Fund can give no assurances that its distributions will be sufficient to eliminate all U.S. federal income taxes. The Fund is not required to consider tax consequences in making or disposing of investments.

In order to qualify as a regulated investment company, the Fund must, among other things, derive at least 90% of its gross income each year from dividends, interest, payments with respect to securities loans, gains from the sale or other disposition of stock or securities or foreign currencies, or other income (including, but not limited to, gains from options, futures or forward contracts) derived with respect to the business of investing in stock, securities or currencies, and net income derived from an interest in a qualified publicly traded partnership. The Fund must also satisfy the following two asset diversification tests. At the end of each quarter of each taxable year, (i) at least 50% of the value of the Fund's total assets must be represented by cash and cash items (including receivables), U.S. Government securities, the securities of other regulated investment companies, and other securities, with such other securities being limited in respect of any one issuer to an amount not greater than 5% of the value of the Fund's total assets and not more than 10% of the outstanding voting securities of such issuer, and (ii) not more than 25% of the value of the Fund's total assets may be invested in the securities of any one issuer (other than U.S. Government securities or the securities of other regulated investment companies), the securities of any two or more issuers (other than the securities of other regulated investment companies) that the Fund controls (by owning 20% or more of their outstanding voting stock) and which are determined under Treasury regulations to be engaged in the same or similar trades or businesses or related trades or businesses, or the securities of one or more qualified publicly traded partnerships. The Fund must also distribute each taxable year sufficient dividends to its shareholders to claim a dividends paid deduction equal to at least the sum of 90% of the Fund's investment company taxable income (as adjusted under Section 852(b)(2) of the Code, but not taking into account the Fund's dividends paid deduction; in the case of the Fund generally consisting of interest and dividend income, less expenses) and 90% of the Fund's net tax-exempt interest, if any.

The Fund's ordinary income generally consists of interest and dividend income, less expenses. Net realized capital gains for a fiscal period are computed by taking into account any capital loss carry-forward of the Fund. As of October 31, 2020, the Fund did not have any capital loss carryovers.

Distributions of net investment income and net short-term capital gains are taxable to shareholders as ordinary income. For individual shareholders, a portion of the distributions paid by the Fund may be qualified dividends currently eligible for federal income taxation at long-term capital gain rates to the extent the Fund reports the amount distributed as a qualifying dividend and certain holding period requirements are met. In the case of corporate shareholders, a portion of the distributions may qualify for the inter-corporate dividends-received deduction to the extent the Fund reports the amount distributed as a qualifying dividend and certain holding period requirements are met. The aggregate amount so reported to either individual or corporate shareholders cannot, however, exceed the aggregate amount of qualifying dividends received by the Fund for its taxable year. In view of

the Fund's investment policy, it is expected that dividends from domestic corporations will be part of the Fund's gross income and that, accordingly, part of the distributions by the Fund may be eligible for treatment as qualified dividend income by individual shareholders, or for the dividends-received deduction for corporate shareholders under federal tax law. However, the portion of the Fund's gross income attributable to qualifying dividends is largely dependent on the Fund's investment activities for a particular year and therefore cannot be predicted with any certainty. Qualified dividend treatment may be eliminated if the Fund shares held by an individual investor are held for less than 61 days, and the corporate dividends-received deduction may be eliminated if Fund shares held by a corporate investor are treated as debt-financed or are held for less than 46 days. Distributions will be taxable to you even if the share price of the Fund has declined.

The sale or exchange of Fund shares is a taxable transaction for federal income tax purposes. You will generally recognize a gain or loss on such transactions equal to the difference, if any, between the amount of your net sales proceeds and your adjusted tax basis in the Fund shares. Such gain or loss will be capital gain or loss if you held your Fund shares as capital assets. Any capital gain or loss will be treated as long-term capital gain or loss if you held the Fund shares for more than one year at the time of the sale or exchange. Any capital loss arising from the sale or exchange of shares held for six months or less, however, will be treated as long-term capital loss to the extent of the amount of net long-term capital gain distributions with regard to these shares.

Tax Treatment of United States Holders – Taxation of Distributions

Distributions paid out of the Fund's current and accumulated earnings and profits are generally dividends taxable at ordinary income rates to each shareholder. Dividends will be taxable to you even if the share price of the Fund has declined. Distributions in excess of the Fund's current and accumulated earnings and profits will first be treated as a nontaxable return of capital up to the amount of a shareholder's tax basis in its shares, and then as capital gain.

For individual shareholders, a portion of the dividends paid by the Fund may be qualified dividends currently eligible for U.S. federal income taxation at long-term capital gain rates to the extent the Fund reports the amount distributed as a qualifying dividend and certain shareholder level holding period requirements (discussed further below) are met. In the case of corporate shareholders, subject to certain limitations (not all of which are discussed herein), a portion of the distributions may qualify for the inter-corporate dividends-received deduction to the extent the Fund reports the amount distributed as a qualifying dividend and certain shareholder level holding period requirements (discussed further below) are met. The aggregate amount so reported to either individual or corporate shareholders cannot exceed the aggregate amount of qualifying dividends received by the Fund for its taxable year. Although no assurances can be provided, the Fund generally expects that dividends from domestic corporations will be part of the Fund's gross income and that, accordingly, part of the distributions by the Fund may be eligible for treatment as qualified dividend income by individual shareholders, or for the dividends-received deduction for corporate shareholders. Qualified dividend treatment may be eliminated if the Fund shares held by an individual investor are held for less than 61 days, and the corporate dividends-received deduction may be eliminated if Fund shares held by a corporate investor are treated as debt-financed or are held for less than 46 days.

Distributions properly reported by the Fund as capital gain dividends (Capital Gain Dividends) will be taxable to shareholders as long-term capital gain (to the extent such distributions do not exceed the Fund's actual net long-term capital gain for the taxable year), regardless of how long a shareholder has held Fund shares, and do not qualify as dividends for purposes of the dividends received deduction or as qualified dividend income. The Fund will report Capital Gain Dividends, if any, in written statements furnished to its shareholders.

Tax Treatment of United States Holders - Sales and Dispositions of Shares

The sale or exchange of Fund shares, including a redemption of Fund shares treated as a sale or exchange, is a taxable transaction for U.S. federal income tax purposes. A shareholder will generally recognize a capital gain or loss on any such transaction equal to the difference, if any, between the amount of its net sales proceeds and its adjusted tax basis in its Fund shares. Any capital gain or loss will be treated as long-term capital gain or loss if you held the Fund shares for more than one year at the time of the sale or exchange. Any capital loss arising from the

sale or exchange of shares held for six months or less, however, will be treated as long-term capital loss to the extent of the amount of net long-term capital gain distributions with regard to these shares.

Holders of “publicly offered” shares in a regulated investment company are generally entitled to treat proceeds from a redemption upon demand of their shares as distributions in part or full payment in exchange for such their shares. The definition of publicly offered for this purpose, however, requires the shares to be (a) continuously offered pursuant to a public offering (within the meaning of section 4 of the Securities Act of 1933), (b) regularly traded on an established securities market, or (c) held by or for no fewer than 500 persons at all times during the taxable year. Holders of any class of interests in the Fund that do not satisfy these requirements should consult their tax advisors in connection with a redemption of their shares.

Tax Treatment of United States Holders - Medicare Tax

A 3.8% Medicare tax is currently imposed on net investment income earned by certain individuals, estates and trusts. “Net investment income,” for these purposes, means investment income, including ordinary and Capital Gain dividends and net gains from taxable dispositions of Fund shares, reduced by the deductions properly allocable to such income. In the case of an individual, the tax will be imposed on the lesser of (1) the shareholder’s net investment income or (2) the amount by which the shareholder’s modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$250,000 (if the shareholder is married and filing jointly or a surviving spouse), \$125,000 (if the shareholder is married and filing separately) or \$200,000 (in any other case). This Medicare tax, if applicable, is reported by you on, and paid with, your U.S. federal income tax return.

Tax Treatment of Non-U.S. Shareholders

The foregoing discussion of U.S. federal income tax law relates solely to the application of that law to U.S. citizens or residents and U.S. domestic corporations, partnerships, trusts and estates. Each shareholder who is not a U.S. person should consider the U.S. and foreign tax consequences of ownership of shares of the Fund, including the possibility that such a shareholder may be subject to a U.S. withholding tax at a rate of 30% (or at a lower rate under an applicable income tax treaty) on amounts constituting ordinary income.

Backup Withholding

The Fund may be required to withhold 24% of certain payments to a shareholder unless the shareholder has completed and submitted to the Fund a Form W-9 providing the shareholder’s taxpayer identification number and certifying under penalties of perjury: (i) that such number is correct, (ii) that (A) the shareholder is exempt from backup withholding, (B) the shareholder has not been notified by the IRS that the shareholder is subject to backup withholding as a result of an under-reporting of interest or dividends, or (C) the IRS has notified the shareholder that the shareholder is no longer subject to backup withholding, and (iii) the shareholder is a U.S. citizen or other U.S. person (as defined in IRS Form W-9); or (b) an exception applies under applicable law and Treasury regulations. Backup withholding is not an additional tax, and any amounts withheld may be credited against a shareholder’s ultimate U.S. federal income tax liability if proper documentation is provided. The Fund reserves the right to refuse to open an account for any person failing to provide a certified taxpayer identification number.

FATCA and Similar Foreign Rules

The Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, (“FATCA”) provisions of the Code impose a withholding tax of 30% on certain types of U.S. sourced income (e.g., dividends, interest, and other types of passive income) paid, and will be required to impose a 30% withholding tax on proceeds from the sale or other disposition of property producing U.S. sourced income paid effective January 1, 2019 to (i) foreign financial institutions (“FFIs”), including non-U.S. investment funds, unless they agree to collect and disclose to the IRS information regarding their direct and indirect U.S. account holders and (ii) certain nonfinancial foreign entities (“NFFEs”), unless they certify certain information regarding their direct and indirect U.S. owners. FATCA withholding will apply to any shareholder that does not properly certify its status as a U.S. person, or, in the case of a non-U.S. shareholder, the basis for its exemption from

FATCA withholding. If the Fund is required to withhold amounts from payments pursuant to FATCA, investors will receive distributions that are reduced by such withholding amounts.

To implement FATCA, the U.S. government has entered into agreements with non-U.S. governments (and is otherwise bound via automatic exchange of information agreements in treaties) to provide reciprocal exchanges of taxpayer information to non-U.S. governments. The Fund will be required to perform due diligence reviews to classify non-U.S. entity investors for FATCA purposes. Shareholders agree to provide information necessary to allow the Fund to comply with the FATCA and similar foreign rules.

THE FUND'S PRINCIPAL UNDERWRITER AND DISTRIBUTOR

Quasar Distributors, LLC, 111 East Kilbourn Avenue, Suite 2200, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202 ("Quasar"), serves as the Fund's principal underwriter and distributor in a continuous public offering of the Fund's shares. Pursuant to a distribution agreement between the Fund and Quasar (the "Distribution Agreement"), Quasar acts as the Fund's principal underwriter and distributor and provides certain administrative services and arranges for the sale of the Fund's shares. Quasar is a registered broker-dealer under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, and is a member of FINRA.

The Distribution Agreement between the Fund and Quasar will continue in effect only if such continuance is specifically approved at least annually by the Board or by vote of a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities and, in either case, by a majority of the Independent Trustees. The Distribution Agreement is terminable without penalty by the Trust on behalf of the Fund on a 60-day written notice when authorized either by a majority vote of the Fund's shareholders or by vote of a majority of the Board, including a majority of the Independent Trustees, or by Quasar upon a 60-day written notice, and will automatically terminate in the event of its "assignment" (as defined in the 1940 Act).

Distribution Plan

The Fund has adopted a Distribution Plan (the "Plan") pursuant to Rule 12b-1 under the 1940 Act on behalf of Class A and Investor Class shares, under which the Fund pays the Distributor an amount which is accrued daily and paid quarterly, at an annual rate of up to 0.25% of the average daily net assets of the Class A and Investor Class shares of the Fund. Amounts paid under the Plan are paid to the Distributor to compensate it for costs of the services it provides and the expenses it bears in the distribution of the Fund's shares, including overhead and telephone expenses; printing and distribution of prospectuses and reports used in connection with the offering of the Fund's shares to prospective investors; and preparation, printing and distribution of sales literature and advertising materials. All or a portion of any payments to the Distributor under the Plan may be used to pay any registered securities dealer, financial institution or any other person who renders assistance in distributing or promoting the sale of Fund shares, or who provides certain shareholder services, pursuant to a written services agreement. The services provided by such dealers or financial institutions pursuant to the Plan are primarily designed to promote the sale of shares of the Fund and include the furnishing of office space and equipment, telephone facilities, personnel and assistance to the Fund in servicing shareholders, such as establishing and maintaining shareholders' accounts and records, processing purchase and redemption transactions, and answering routine client inquiries regarding the Fund.

Under the Plan, the Trustees will be furnished quarterly with information detailing the amount of expenses paid under the Plan and the purposes for which payments were made. The Plan may be terminated at any time by vote of a majority of the Trustees of the Trust who are not interested persons. Continuation of the Plan is considered by such Trustees no less frequently than annually. With the exception of the Distributor and the Adviser, in their capacities as the Fund's principal underwriter and distribution coordinator, respectively, no interested person has or had a direct or indirect financial interest in the Plan or any related agreement.

While there is no assurance that the expenditures of the Fund's assets to finance distribution of shares will have the anticipated results, the Board believes there is a reasonable likelihood that one or more of such benefits will result,

and because the Board is in a position to monitor the distribution expenses, it is able to determine the benefit of such expenditures in deciding whether to continue the Plan.

The following table reflects the principal types of activities for which payments under the Plan were made, including the dollar amount paid by the Fund, during the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020.

Advertising/ Marketing	Printing/ Postage	Payment to Distributor	Payment to Dealers	Compensation to Sales Personnel	Other	Total
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$13,976	\$0	\$0	\$13,976

Shareholder Servicing Plan

In addition, pursuant to a Shareholder Service Plan (the “Shareholder Servicing Plan”) adopted by the Trust on behalf of the Class A, Investor Class and Class I shares of the Fund, the Adviser is authorized to engage financial institutions, securities dealers and other industry professionals (each a “Shareholder Servicing Agent”) to provide personal shareholder services relating to the servicing and maintenance of shareholder accounts not otherwise provided to the Fund. Payments made pursuant to the Shareholder Servicing Plan shall not exceed 0.10% of the average daily NAV of the Fund’s Class A, Investor Class, and Class I shares.

Payments made under the Shareholder Servicing Plan shall be used to compensate Shareholder Servicing Agents for providing general shareholder liaison services, including, but not limited to: (i) answering inquiries from shareholders regarding account status and history, the manner in which purchases and redemptions of the Fund shares may be effected, and other matters pertaining to the Fund; (ii) assisting shareholders in designating and changing dividend options, account designations and addresses; (iii) arranging for wiring of funds and transmitting and receiving funds in connection with orders to purchase or redeem Fund shares; (iv) verifying and guaranteeing shareholder signatures in connection with orders to purchase or redeem Fund shares; (v) providing such other similar services related to the maintenance of shareholder accounts; and (vi) providing necessary personnel and facilities to conduct the activities described above. For the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020, the Fund made payments of \$5,591 under the Shareholder Servicing Plan.

MARKETING AND SUPPORT PAYMENTS

The Adviser, out of its own resources and without additional cost to the Fund or its shareholders, may provide additional cash payments or other compensation to certain financial intermediaries who sell shares of the Fund. Support payments may be structured in three ways: (1) as a percentage of net sales; (2) as a percentage of net assets; and/or (3) a flat fee. These payments may be divided into categories as follows:

Support Payments

Payments may be made by the Adviser to certain financial intermediaries in connection with the eligibility of the Fund to be offered in certain programs and/or in connection with meetings between the Fund’s representatives and Financial Intermediaries and their sales representatives. Such meetings may be held for various purposes, including providing education and training about the Fund and other general financial topics to assist financial intermediaries’ sales representatives in making informed recommendations to, and decisions on behalf of, their clients.

Entertainment, Conferences and Events

The Adviser also may pay cash or non-cash compensation to sales representatives of Financial Intermediaries in the form of (1) occasional gifts; (2) occasional meals, tickets or other entertainments; and/or (3) sponsorship support for the Financial Intermediaries’ client seminars and cooperative advertising. In addition, the Adviser pays for exhibit space or sponsorships at regional or national events of Financial Intermediaries.

The prospect of receiving, or the receipt of additional payments or other compensation as described above by Financial Intermediaries may provide such Financial Intermediaries and/or their salespersons with an incentive to favor sales of shares of the Fund, and other mutual funds whose affiliates make similar compensation available, over sale of shares of mutual funds (or non-mutual fund investments) not making such payments. You may wish to

take such payment arrangements into account when considering and evaluating any recommendations relating to Fund shares.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The audited financial statements and financial highlights of the Fund for the fiscal year ended October 31, 2020, as set forth in the Trust's [annual report to shareholders](#), including the notes thereto and the report of the Fund's independent registered public accounting firm, are incorporated by reference into this SAI. You can obtain a copy of the financial statements contained in the Fund's Annual or Semi-Annual Report without charge by calling the Fund at 866-530-2690.

APPENDIX A

Weiss Multi-Strategy Partners LLC

PROXY VOTING AND CLASS ACTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policies and Procedures

Proxy voting is an important right of shareholders and reasonable care and diligence must be undertaken to ensure that such rights are properly and timely exercised. When the Adviser has discretion to vote the proxies of its clients, it will vote those proxies in the best interest of its clients and in accordance with these policies and procedures.

1. Procedures regarding proxies received by the Adviser are as follows:
 - a. Keep a record of each proxy received;
 - b. Determine which accounts managed by the Adviser hold the security to which the proxy relates;
 - c. Except in the case of Germany the Adviser will vote in accordance with an independent third party recommendation unless an Investment Teams requests otherwise; and
 - d. The Adviser will retain a third party to assist it in coordinating and voting proxies with respect to client securities. The Adviser will vote proxies in accordance with the independent third party recommendations and the Head of Operations or Delegate will monitor the third party to assure that all proxies are being properly voted and appropriate records are being retained.
 - e. For Germany, Custodians will be placing a share-blocking flag on the ballot when applicable. Therefore, a 'Do Not Vote' will be placed on The Advisers ballots per The Advisers share-blocking voting strategy.
 - f. The Adviser has the ability to override the share-blocking and vote the ballot, however, the shares must be put on the Firm's Restricted List for 'NO TRADING' between the vote cutoff date and the de-registration date set by the issuers. This will ensure the liquidity of the shares.
2. Voting Guidelines
 - a. Generally, the Adviser will vote in accordance with the recommendations provided by an independent third party proxy recommendation service, except in situations where the Adviser's investment professionals determine that voting otherwise would be in the best interests of the Adviser's clients. Any proxies that are voted against the recommendation of the proxy recommendation service will be reviewed by the Adviser's Proxy Review Committee, which includes the General Counsel, Chief Compliance Officer, and Head of Operations and Delegates. In determining whether a proposal is in the best interests of clients, the Proxy Review Committee may take into account the factors which include the following, among others:
 - whether the proposal was recommended by management and the Adviser's opinion of management
 - whether the proposal acts to entrench existing management; and
 - whether the proposal fairly compensates management for past and future performance.

3. Conflicts of Interest

a. The Adviser may occasionally be subject to conflicts of interest in the voting of proxies, and will follow the third party service recommendation in that circumstance. Except as otherwise agreed with a Managed Account, the Adviser will apply the foregoing proxy voting policies and procedures to votes relating to positions held by the Managed Accounts.

4. Disclosure

a. Clients may contact the Chief Compliance Officer, via mail in order to obtain information on how the Adviser voted such client's proxies, and to request a copy of these policies and procedures. If a client requests this information, the Chief Compliance Officer or Delegate will prepare a written response to the client that lists, with respect to each voted proxy about which the client has inquired, (a) the name of the issuer; (b) the proposal voted upon, and (c) how the Adviser voted the client's proxy.

b. The Proxy Review Committee ensures that (a) relevant disclosure is provided to clients, and (b) necessary policies and procedures are maintained and implemented.

5. Recordkeeping

a. The Head of Operations or Delegate will maintain files relating to the Adviser's proxy voting procedures in an easily accessible place. Records will be maintained and preserved for five years from the end of the fiscal year during which the last entry was made on a record, with records for the most recent two years kept in the offices of the Adviser. Records of the following will be included in the files:

- Copies of this proxy voting policy and procedures, and any amendments thereto.
- A copy of each proxy statement that the Adviser receives, provided however that the Adviser may rely on obtaining a copy of proxy statements from the SEC's EDGAR system for those proxy statements that are so available.
- A record of each vote that the Adviser casts.
- A copy of any document the Adviser created that was material to making a decision how to vote proxies, or that memorializes that decision.
- A copy of each written client request for information on how the Adviser voted such client's proxies, and a copy of any written response to any (written or oral) client request for information on how the Adviser voted its proxies.



UNITED STATES

Proxy Voting Guidelines Benchmark Policy Recommendations

Effective for Meetings on or after February 1, 2021
Published November 19, 2020



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Coverage

The U.S. research team provides proxy analyses and voting recommendations for common shareholder meetings of publicly - traded U.S. - incorporated companies that are held in our institutional investor clients' portfolios and includes all S&P 1500 and Russell 3000 companies that are considered U.S. Domestic Issuers by the SEC. Coverage generally includes corporate actions for common equity holders, such as written consents and bankruptcies. ISS' U.S. coverage includes investment companies (including open-end funds, closed-end funds, exchange-traded funds, and unit investment trusts), limited partnerships ("LPs"), master limited partnerships ("MLPs"), limited liability companies ("LLCs"), and business development companies. ISS reviews its universe of coverage on an annual basis, and the coverage is subject to change based on client need and industry trends.

The U.S. research team also produces, for subscribing clients, research and recommendations for fixed income meetings, and meetings of certain preferred securities, including Auction Rate Preferred Securities ("ARPS") and Variable Rate Municipal Term Preferred securities ("VMTPs").

Foreign-incorporated companies

In addition to U.S. - incorporated companies, U.S. policies are applied to certain foreign-incorporated company analyses. Like the SEC, ISS distinguishes two types of companies that list but are not incorporated in the U.S.:

- U.S. Domestic Issuers – which have a majority of outstanding shares held in the U.S. and meet other criteria, as determined by the SEC, and are subject to the same disclosure and listing standards as U.S. incorporated companies – are generally covered under standard U.S. policy guidelines.
- Foreign Private Issuers (FPIs) – which do not meet the Domestic Issuer criteria and are exempt from most disclosure requirements (e.g., they do not file DEF14A reports) and listing standards (e.g., for required levels of board and committee independence) – are covered under a combination of policy guidelines:
 - FPI Guidelines (see the [Americas Regional Proxy Voting Guidelines](#)), which apply certain minimum independence and disclosure standards in the evaluation of key proxy ballot items, such as the election of directors and approval of financial reports; and
 - For other issues, guidelines for the market that is responsible for, or most relevant to, the item on the ballot.

In all cases – including with respect to other companies with cross-market features that may lead to ballot items related to multiple markets – items that are on the ballot solely due to the requirements of another market (listing, incorporation, or national code) may be evaluated under the policy of the relevant market, regardless of the “assigned” market coverage.

1. Board of Directors

Voting on Director Nominees in Uncontested Elections


Four fundamental principles apply when determining votes on director nominees:

Independence: Boards should be sufficiently independent from management (and significant shareholders) to ensure that they are able and motivated to effectively supervise management's performance for the benefit of all shareholders, including in setting and monitoring the execution of corporate strategy, with appropriate use of shareholder capital, and in setting and monitoring executive compensation programs that support that strategy. The chair of the board should ideally be an independent director, and all boards should have an independent leadership position or a similar role in order to help provide appropriate counterbalance to executive management, as well as having sufficiently independent committees that focus on key governance concerns such as audit, compensation, and nomination of directors.

Composition: Companies should ensure that directors add value to the board through their specific skills and expertise and by having sufficient time and commitment to serve effectively. Boards should be of a size appropriate to accommodate diversity, expertise, and independence, while ensuring active and collaborative participation by all members. Boards should be sufficiently diverse to ensure consideration of a wide range of perspectives.

Responsiveness: Directors should respond to investor input, such as that expressed through significant opposition to management proposals, significant support for shareholder proposals (whether binding or non-binding), and tender offers where a majority of shares are tendered.

Accountability: Boards should be sufficiently accountable to shareholders, including through transparency of the company's governance practices and regular board elections, by the provision of sufficient information for shareholders to be able to assess directors and board composition, and through the ability of shareholders to remove directors.

 **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for director nominees, except under the following circumstances (with new nominees¹ considered on case-by-case basis):

Independence

Vote against² or withhold from non-independent directors (Executive Directors and Non-Independent Non-Executive Directors per [ISS' Classification of Directors](#)) when:

- Independent directors comprise 50 percent or less of the board;
- The non-independent director serves on the audit, compensation, or nominating committee;
- The company lacks an audit, compensation, or nominating committee so that the full board functions as that committee; or
- The company lacks a formal nominating committee, even if the board attests that the independent directors fulfill the functions of such a committee.

¹ A "new nominee" is a director who is being presented for election by shareholders for the first time. Recommendations on new nominees who have served for less than one year are made on a case-by-case basis depending on the timing of their appointment and the problematic governance issue in question.

² In general, companies with a plurality vote standard use "Withhold" as the contrary vote option in director elections; companies with a majority vote standard use "Against". However, it will vary by company and the proxy must be checked to determine the valid contrary vote option for the particular company.

ISS Classification of Directors – U.S.

1. **Executive Director**
 - 1.1. Current officer¹ of the company or one of its affiliates².
2. **Non-Independent Non-Executive Director**
 - Board Identification
 - 2.1. Director identified as not independent by the board.
 - Controlling/Significant Shareholder
 - 2.2. Beneficial owner of more than 50 percent of the company's voting power (this may be aggregated if voting power is distributed among more than one member of a group).
 - Current Employment at Company or Related Company
 - 2.3. Non-officer employee of the firm (including employee representatives).
 - 2.4. Officer¹, former officer, or general or limited partner of a joint venture or partnership with the company.
 - Former Employment
 - 2.5. Former CEO of the company.^{3,4}
 - 2.6. Former non-CEO officer¹ of the company or an affiliate² within the past five years.
 - 2.7. Former officer¹ of an acquired company within the past five years.⁴
 - 2.8. Officer¹ of a former parent or predecessor firm at the time the company was sold or split off within the past five years.
 - 2.9. Former interim officer if the service was longer than 18 months. If the service was between 12 and 18 months an assessment of the interim officer's employment agreement will be made.⁵
 - Family Members
 - 2.10. Immediate family member⁶ of a current or former officer¹ of the company or its affiliates² within the last five years.
 - 2.11. Immediate family member⁶ of a current employee of company or its affiliates² where additional factors raise concern (which may include, but are not limited to, the following: a director related to numerous employees; the company or its affiliates employ relatives of numerous board members; or a non-Section 16 officer in a key strategic role).
 - Professional, Transactional, and Charitable Relationships
 - 2.12. Director who (or whose immediate family member⁶) currently provides professional services⁷ in excess of \$10,000 per year to: the company, an affiliate², or an individual officer of the company or an affiliate; or who is (or whose immediate family member⁶ is) a partner, employee, or controlling shareholder of an organization which provides the services.
 - 2.13. Director who (or whose immediate family member⁶) currently has any material transactional relationship⁸ with the company or its affiliates²; or who is (or whose immediate family member⁶ is) a partner in, or a controlling shareholder or an executive officer of, an organization which has the material transactional relationship⁸ (excluding investments in the company through a private placement).
 - 2.14. Director who (or whose immediate family member⁶) is a trustee, director, or employee of a charitable or non-profit organization that receives material grants or endowments⁸ from the company or its affiliates².
 - Other Relationships
 - 2.15. Party to a voting agreement⁹ to vote in line with management on proposals being brought to shareholder vote.
 - 2.16. Has (or an immediate family member⁶ has) an interlocking relationship as defined by the SEC involving members of the board of directors or its Compensation Committee.¹⁰
 - 2.17. Founder¹¹ of the company but not currently an employee.
 - 2.18. Director with pay comparable to Named Executive Officers.
 - 2.19. Any material¹² relationship with the company.
3. **Independent Director**
 - 3.1. No material¹² connection to the company other than a board seat.

Footnotes:

1. The definition of officer will generally follow that of a “Section 16 officer” (officers subject to Section 16 of the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934) and includes the chief executive, operating, financial, legal, technology, and accounting officers of a company (including the president, treasurer, secretary, controller, or any vice president in charge of a principal business unit, division, or policy function). Current interim officers are included in this category. For private companies, the equivalent positions are applicable. A non-employee director serving as an officer due to statutory requirements (e.g. corporate secretary) will generally be classified as a Non-Independent Non-Executive Director under “Any material relationship with the company.” However, if the company provides explicit disclosure that the director is not receiving additional compensation exceeding \$10,000 per year for serving in that capacity, then the director will be classified as an Independent Director.
2. “Affiliate” includes a subsidiary, sibling company, or parent company. ISS uses 50 percent control ownership by the parent company as the standard for applying its affiliate designation. The manager/advisor of an externally managed issuer (EMI) is considered an affiliate.
3. Includes any former CEO of the company prior to the company’s initial public offering (IPO).
4. When there is a former CEO of a special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) serving on the board of an acquired company, ISS will generally classify such directors as independent unless determined otherwise taking into account the following factors: the applicable listing standards determination of such director’s independence; any operating ties to the firm; and the existence of any other conflicting relationships or related party transactions.
5. ISS will look at the terms of the interim officer’s employment contract to determine if it contains severance pay, long-term health and pension benefits, or other such standard provisions typically contained in contracts of permanent, non-temporary CEOs. ISS will also consider if a formal search process was under way for a full-time officer at the time.
6. “Immediate family member” follows the SEC’s definition of such and covers spouses, parents, children, step-parents, step-children, siblings, in-laws, and any person (other than a tenant or employee) sharing the household of any director, nominee for director, executive officer, or significant shareholder of the company.
7. Professional services can be characterized as advisory in nature, generally involve access to sensitive company information or to strategic decision-making, and typically have a commission- or fee-based payment structure. Professional services generally include but are not limited to the following: investment banking/financial advisory services, commercial banking (beyond deposit services), investment services, insurance services, accounting/audit services, consulting services, marketing services, legal services, property management services, realtor services, lobbying services, executive search services, and IT consulting services. The following would generally be considered transactional relationships and not professional services: deposit services, IT tech support services, educational services, and construction services. The case of participation in a banking syndicate by a non-lead bank should be considered a transactional (and hence subject to the associated materiality test) rather than a professional relationship. “Of Counsel” relationships are only considered immaterial if the individual does not receive any form of compensation (in excess of \$10,000 per year) from, or is a retired partner of, the firm providing the professional service. The case of a company providing a professional service to one of its directors or to an entity with which one of its directors is affiliated, will be considered a transactional rather than a professional relationship. Insurance services and marketing services are assumed to be professional services unless the company explains why such services are not advisory.
8. A material transactional relationship, including grants to non-profit organizations, exists if the company makes annual payments to, or receives annual payments from, another entity, exceeding the greater of: \$200,000 or 5 percent of the recipient’s gross revenues, for a company that follows NASDAQ listing standards; or the greater of \$1,000,000 or 2 percent of the recipient’s gross revenues, for a company that follows NYSE listing standards. For a company that follows neither of the preceding standards, ISS will apply the NASDAQ-based materiality test. (The recipient is the party receiving the financial proceeds from the transaction).
9. Dissident directors who are parties to a voting agreement pursuant to a settlement or similar arrangement may be classified as Independent Directors if an analysis of the following factors indicates that the voting agreement does not compromise their alignment with all shareholders’ interests: the terms of the agreement; the duration of the standstill provision in the agreement; the limitations and requirements of actions that are agreed upon; if the dissident director nominee(s) is subject to the standstill; and if there any conflicting relationships or related party transactions.
10. Interlocks include: executive officers serving as directors on each other’s compensation or similar committees (or, in the absence of such a committee, on the board); or executive officers sitting on each other’s boards and at least one serves on the other’s compensation or similar committees (or, in the absence of such a committee, on the board).

11. The operating involvement of the founder with the company will be considered; if the founder was never employed by the company, ISS may deem him or her an Independent Director.

12. For purposes of ISS's director independence classification, "material" will be defined as a standard of relationship (financial, personal or otherwise) that a reasonable person might conclude could potentially influence one's objectivity in the boardroom in a manner that would have a meaningful impact on an individual's ability to satisfy requisite fiduciary standards on behalf of shareholders.

Composition

Attendance at Board and Committee Meetings: Generally vote against or withhold from directors (except nominees who served only part of the fiscal year³) who attend less than 75 percent of the aggregate of their board and committee meetings for the period for which they served, unless an acceptable reason for absences is disclosed in the proxy or another SEC filing. Acceptable reasons for director absences are generally limited to the following:

- Medical issues/illness;
- Family emergencies; and
- Missing only one meeting (when the total of all meetings is three or fewer).

In cases of chronic poor attendance without reasonable justification, in addition to voting against the director(s) with poor attendance, generally vote against or withhold from appropriate members of the nominating/governance committees or the full board.

If the proxy disclosure is unclear and insufficient to determine whether a director attended at least 75 percent of the aggregate of his/her board and committee meetings during his/her period of service, vote against or withhold from the director(s) in question.

Overboarded Directors: Generally vote against or withhold from individual directors who:

- Sit on more than five public company boards; or
- Are CEOs of public companies who sit on the boards of more than two public companies besides their own— withhold only at their outside boards⁴.

Gender Diversity: For companies in the Russell 3000 or S&P 1500 indices, generally vote against or withhold from the chair of the nominating committee (or other directors on a case-by-case basis) at companies where there are no women on the company's board. An exception will be made if there was a woman on the board at the

³ Nominees who served for only part of the fiscal year are generally exempted from the attendance policy.

⁴ Although all of a CEO's subsidiary boards with publicly-traded common stock will be counted as separate boards, ISS will not recommend a withhold vote for the CEO of a parent company board or any of the controlled (>50 percent ownership) subsidiaries of that parent but may do so at subsidiaries that are less than 50 percent controlled and boards outside the parent/subsidiary relationships.

preceding annual meeting and the board makes a firm commitment to return to a gender-diverse status within a year.

Racial and/or Ethnic Diversity: For companies in the Russell 3000 or S&P 1500 indices, highlight boards with no apparent racial and/or ethnic diversity⁵.

For companies in the Russell 3000 or S&P 1500 indices, effective for meetings on or after Feb. 1, 2022, generally vote against or withhold from the chair of the nominating committee (or other directors on a case-by-case basis) where the board has no apparent racially or ethnically diverse members. An exception will be made if there was racial and/or ethnic diversity on the board at the preceding annual meeting and the board makes a firm commitment to appoint at least one racial and/or ethnic diverse member within a year.

Responsiveness

Vote case-by-case on individual directors, committee members, or the entire board of directors as appropriate if:

- The board failed to act on a shareholder proposal that received the support of a majority of the shares cast in the previous year or failed to act on a management proposal seeking to ratify an existing charter/bylaw provision that received opposition of a majority of the shares cast in the previous year. Factors that will be considered are:
 - Disclosed outreach efforts by the board to shareholders in the wake of the vote;
 - Rationale provided in the proxy statement for the level of implementation;
 - The subject matter of the proposal;
 - The level of support for and opposition to the resolution in past meetings;
 - Actions taken by the board in response to the majority vote and its engagement with shareholders;
 - The continuation of the underlying issue as a voting item on the ballot (as either shareholder or management proposals); and
 - Other factors as appropriate.
- The board failed to act on takeover offers where the majority of shares are tendered;
- At the previous board election, any director received more than 50 percent withhold/against votes of the shares cast and the company has failed to address the issue(s) that caused the high withhold/against vote.

Vote case-by-case on Compensation Committee members (or, in exceptional cases, the full board) and the Say on Pay proposal if:

- The company's previous say-on-pay received the support of less than 70 percent of votes cast. Factors that will be considered are:
 - The company's response, including:
 - Disclosure of engagement efforts with major institutional investors, including the frequency and timing of engagements and the company participants (including whether independent directors participated);
 - Disclosure of the specific concerns voiced by dissenting shareholders that led to the say-on-pay opposition;
 - Disclosure of specific and meaningful actions taken to address shareholders' concerns;
 - Other recent compensation actions taken by the company;
 - Whether the issues raised are recurring or isolated;
 - The company's ownership structure; and

⁵ Aggregate diversity statistics provided by the board will only be considered if specific to racial and/or ethnic diversity.

- Whether the support level was less than 50 percent, which would warrant the highest degree of responsiveness.
- The board implements an advisory vote on executive compensation on a less frequent basis than the frequency that received the plurality of votes cast.

Accountability

Problematic Takeover Defenses/Governance Structure

Poison Pills: Vote against or withhold from all nominees (except new nominees¹, who should be considered case-by-case) if:

- The company has a poison pill that was not approved by shareholders⁶. However, vote case-by-case on nominees if the board adopts an initial pill with a term of one year or less, depending on the disclosed rationale for the adoption, and other factors as relevant (such as a commitment to put any renewal to a shareholder vote);
- The board makes a material adverse modification to an existing pill, including, but not limited to, extension, renewal, or lowering the trigger, without shareholder approval; or
- The pill, whether short-term⁷ or long-term, has a deadhand or slowhand feature.

Classified Board Structure: The board is classified, and a continuing director responsible for a problematic governance issue at the board/committee level that would warrant a withhold/against vote recommendation is not up for election. All appropriate nominees (except new) may be held accountable.

Removal of Shareholder Discretion on Classified Boards: The company has opted into, or failed to opt out of, state laws requiring a classified board structure.

Director Performance Evaluation: The board lacks mechanisms to promote accountability and oversight, coupled with sustained poor performance relative to peers. Sustained poor performance is measured by one-, three-, and five-year total shareholder returns in the bottom half of a company's four-digit GICS industry group (Russell 3000 companies only). Take into consideration the company's operational metrics and other factors as warranted. Problematic provisions include but are not limited to:

- A classified board structure;
- A supermajority vote requirement;
- Either a plurality vote standard in uncontested director elections, or a majority vote standard in contested elections;
- The inability of shareholders to call special meetings;
- The inability of shareholders to act by written consent;
- A multi-class capital structure; and/or
- A non-shareholder-approved poison pill.

Unilateral Bylaw/Charter Amendments and Problematic Capital Structures: Generally vote against or withhold from directors individually, committee members, or the entire board (except new nominees¹, who should be considered case-by-case) if the board amends the company's bylaws or charter without shareholder approval in a manner that materially diminishes shareholders' rights or that could adversely impact shareholders, considering the following factors:

⁶ Public shareholders only, approval prior to a company's becoming public is insufficient.

⁷ If the short-term pill with a deadhand or slowhand feature is enacted but expires before the next shareholder vote, ISS will generally still recommend withhold/against nominees at the next shareholder meeting following its adoption.

- The board's rationale for adopting the bylaw/charter amendment without shareholder ratification;
- Disclosure by the company of any significant engagement with shareholders regarding the amendment;
- The level of impairment of shareholders' rights caused by the board's unilateral amendment to the bylaws/charter;
- The board's track record with regard to unilateral board action on bylaw/charter amendments or other entrenchment provisions;
- The company's ownership structure;
- The company's existing governance provisions;
- The timing of the board's amendment to the bylaws/charter in connection with a significant business development; and
- Other factors, as deemed appropriate, that may be relevant to determine the impact of the amendment on shareholders.

Unless the adverse amendment is reversed or submitted to a binding shareholder vote, in subsequent years vote case-by-case on director nominees. Generally vote against (except new nominees¹, who should be considered case-by-case) if the directors:

- Classified the board;
- Adopted supermajority vote requirements to amend the bylaws or charter; or
- Eliminated shareholders' ability to amend bylaws.

Problematic Capital Structure - Newly Public Companies: For newly public companies⁸, generally vote against or withhold from the entire board (except new nominees¹, who should be considered case-by-case) if, prior to or in connection with the company's public offering, the company or its board implemented a multi-class capital structure in which the classes have unequal voting rights without subjecting the multi-class capital structure to a reasonable time-based sunset. In assessing the reasonableness of a time-based sunset provision, consideration will be given to the company's lifespan, its post-IPO ownership structure and the board's disclosed rationale for the sunset period selected. No sunset period of more than seven years from the date of the IPO will be considered to be reasonable.

Continue to vote against or withhold from incumbent directors in subsequent years, unless the problematic capital structure is reversed or removed.

Problematic Governance Structure - Newly Public Companies: For newly public companies⁸, generally vote against or withhold from directors individually, committee members, or the entire board (except new nominees¹, who should be considered case-by-case) if, prior to or in connection with the company's public offering, the company or its board adopted the following bylaw or charter provisions that are considered to be materially adverse to shareholder rights:

- Supermajority vote requirements to amend the bylaws or charter;
- A classified board structure; or
- Other egregious provisions.

A reasonable sunset provision will be considered a mitigating factor.

Unless the adverse provision is reversed or removed, vote case-by-case on director nominees in subsequent years.

⁸ Newly-public companies generally include companies that emerge from bankruptcy, spin-offs, direct listings, and those who complete a traditional initial public offering.

Management Proposals to Ratify Existing Charter or Bylaw Provisions: Vote against/withhold from individual directors, members of the governance committee, or the full board, where boards ask shareholders to ratify existing charter or bylaw provisions considering the following factors:

- The presence of a shareholder proposal addressing the same issue on the same ballot;
- The board's rationale for seeking ratification;
- Disclosure of actions to be taken by the board should the ratification proposal fail;
- Disclosure of shareholder engagement regarding the board's ratification request;
- The level of impairment to shareholders' rights caused by the existing provision;
- The history of management and shareholder proposals on the provision at the company's past meetings;
- Whether the current provision was adopted in response to the shareholder proposal;
- The company's ownership structure; and
- Previous use of ratification proposals to exclude shareholder proposals.

Restrictions on Shareholders' Rights

Restricting Binding Shareholder Proposals: Generally vote against or withhold from the members of the governance committee if:

- The company's governing documents impose undue restrictions on shareholders' ability to amend the bylaws. Such restrictions include but are not limited to: outright prohibition on the submission of binding shareholder proposals or share ownership requirements, subject matter restrictions, or time holding requirements in excess of SEC Rule 14a-8. Vote against or withhold on an ongoing basis.

Submission of management proposals to approve or ratify requirements in excess of SEC Rule 14a-8 for the submission of binding bylaw amendments will generally be viewed as an insufficient restoration of shareholders' rights. Generally continue to vote against or withhold on an ongoing basis until shareholders are provided with an unfettered ability to amend the bylaws or a proposal providing for such unfettered right is submitted for shareholder approval.

Problematic Audit-Related Practices

Generally vote against or withhold from the members of the Audit Committee if:

- The non-audit fees paid to the auditor are [excessive](#);
- The company receives an adverse opinion on the company's financial statements from its auditor; or
- There is persuasive evidence that the Audit Committee entered into an inappropriate indemnification agreement with its auditor that limits the ability of the company, or its shareholders, to pursue legitimate legal recourse against the audit firm.

Vote case-by-case on members of the Audit Committee and potentially the full board if:

- Poor accounting practices are identified that rise to a level of serious concern, such as: fraud; misapplication of GAAP; and material weaknesses identified in Section 404 disclosures. Examine the severity, breadth, chronological sequence, and duration, as well as the company's efforts at remediation or corrective actions, in determining whether withhold/against votes are warranted.

Problematic Compensation Practices

In the absence of an Advisory Vote on Executive Compensation (Say on Pay) ballot item or in egregious situations, vote against or withhold from the members of the Compensation Committee and potentially the full board if:

- There is an unmitigated misalignment between CEO pay and company performance ([pay for performance](#));
- The company maintains significant [problematic pay practices](#); or
- The board exhibits a significant level of [poor communication and responsiveness](#) to shareholders.

Generally vote against or withhold from the Compensation Committee chair, other committee members, or potentially the full board if:

- The company fails to include a Say on Pay ballot item when required under SEC provisions, or under the company's declared frequency of say on pay; or
- The company fails to include a Frequency of Say on Pay ballot item when required under SEC provisions.

Generally vote against members of the board committee responsible for approving/setting non-employee director compensation if there is a pattern (i.e. two or more years) of awarding excessive non-employee director compensation without disclosing a compelling rationale or other mitigating factors.

Problematic Pledging of Company Stock:

Vote against the members of the committee that oversees risks related to pledging, or the full board, where a significant level of pledged company stock by executives or directors raises concerns. The following factors will be considered:

- The presence of an anti-pledging policy, disclosed in the proxy statement, that prohibits future pledging activity;
- The magnitude of aggregate pledged shares in terms of total common shares outstanding, market value, and trading volume;
- Disclosure of progress or lack thereof in reducing the magnitude of aggregate pledged shares over time;
- Disclosure in the proxy statement that shares subject to stock ownership and holding requirements do not include pledged company stock; and
- Any other relevant factors.

Governance Failures

Under extraordinary circumstances, vote against or withhold from directors individually, committee members, or the entire board, due to:

- Material failures of governance, stewardship, risk oversight⁹, or fiduciary responsibilities at the company;
- Failure to replace management as appropriate; or
- Egregious actions related to a director's service on other boards that raise substantial doubt about his or her ability to effectively oversee management and serve the best interests of shareholders at any company.

Voting on Director Nominees in Contested Elections

Vote-No Campaigns



General Recommendation: In cases where companies are targeted in connection with public "vote-no" campaigns, evaluate director nominees under the existing governance policies for voting on director nominees in uncontested elections. Take into consideration the arguments submitted by shareholders and other publicly available information.

⁹ Examples of failure of risk oversight include but are not limited to: bribery; large or serial fines or sanctions from regulatory bodies; demonstrably poor risk oversight of environmental and social issues, including climate change; significant adverse legal judgments or settlement; or hedging of company stock.

Proxy Contests/Proxy Access

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on the election of directors in contested elections, considering the following factors:

- Long-term financial performance of the company relative to its industry;
- Management's track record;
- Background to the contested election;
- Nominee qualifications and any compensatory arrangements;
- Strategic plan of dissident slate and quality of the critique against management;
- Likelihood that the proposed goals and objectives can be achieved (both slates); and
- Stock ownership positions.

In the case of candidates nominated pursuant to proxy access, vote case-by-case considering any applicable factors listed above or additional factors which may be relevant, including those that are specific to the company, to the nominee(s) and/or to the nature of the election (such as whether there are more candidates than board seats).

Other Board-Related Proposals

Adopt Anti-Hedging/Pledging/Speculative Investments Policy

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals seeking a policy that prohibits named executive officers from engaging in derivative or speculative transactions involving company stock, including hedging, holding stock in a margin account, or pledging stock as collateral for a loan. However, the company's existing policies regarding responsible use of company stock will be considered.

Board Refreshment

Board refreshment is best implemented through an ongoing program of individual director evaluations, conducted annually, to ensure the evolving needs of the board are met and to bring in fresh perspectives, skills, and diversity as needed.

Term/Tenure Limits

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on management proposals regarding director term/tenure limits, considering:

- The rationale provided for adoption of the term/tenure limit;
- The robustness of the company's board evaluation process;
- Whether the limit is of sufficient length to allow for a broad range of director tenures;
- Whether the limit would disadvantage independent directors compared to non-independent directors; and
- Whether the board will impose the limit evenly, and not have the ability to waive it in a discriminatory manner.

Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals asking for the company to adopt director term/tenure limits, considering:

- The scope of the shareholder proposal; and
- Evidence of problematic issues at the company combined with, or exacerbated by, a lack of board refreshment.

Age Limits

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against management and shareholder proposals to limit the tenure of independent directors through mandatory retirement ages. Vote for proposals to remove mandatory age limits.

Board Size

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals seeking to fix the board size or designate a range for the board size.

Vote against proposals that give management the ability to alter the size of the board outside of a specified range without shareholder approval.

Classification/Declassification of the Board

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to classify (stagger) the board.

Vote for proposals to repeal classified boards and to elect all directors annually.

CEO Succession Planning

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals seeking disclosure on a CEO succession planning policy, considering, at a minimum, the following factors:

- The reasonableness/scope of the request; and
- The company's existing disclosure on its current CEO succession planning process.

Cumulative Voting

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against management proposals to eliminate cumulate voting, and for shareholder proposals to restore or provide for cumulative voting, unless:

- The company has proxy access¹⁰, thereby allowing shareholders to nominate directors to the company's ballot; and
- The company has adopted a majority vote standard, with a carve-out for plurality voting in situations where there are more nominees than seats, and a director resignation policy to address failed elections.

Vote for proposals for cumulative voting at controlled companies (insider voting power > 50%).

Director and Officer Indemnification and Liability Protection

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals on director and officer indemnification and liability protection.

Vote against proposals that would:

- Eliminate entirely directors' and officers' liability for monetary damages for violating the duty of care.
- Expand coverage beyond just legal expenses to liability for acts that are more serious violations of fiduciary obligation than mere carelessness.
- Expand the scope of indemnification to provide for mandatory indemnification of company officials in connection with acts that previously the company was permitted to provide indemnification for, at the discretion of the company's board (*i.e.*, "permissive indemnification"), but that previously the company was not required to indemnify.

Vote for only those proposals providing such expanded coverage in cases when a director's or officer's legal defense was unsuccessful if both of the following apply:

- If the director was found to have acted in good faith and in a manner that s/he reasonably believed was in the best interests of the company; and

¹⁰ A proxy access right that meets the [recommended guidelines](#).

- If only the director's legal expenses would be covered.

Establish/Amend Nominee Qualifications

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals that establish or amend director qualifications. Votes should be based on the reasonableness of the criteria and the degree to which they may preclude dissident nominees from joining the board.

Vote case-by-case on shareholder resolutions seeking a director nominee who possesses a particular subject matter expertise, considering:

- The company's board committee structure, existing subject matter expertise, and board nomination provisions relative to that of its peers;
- The company's existing board and management oversight mechanisms regarding the issue for which board oversight is sought;
- The company's disclosure and performance relating to the issue for which board oversight is sought and any significant related controversies; and
- The scope and structure of the proposal.

Establish Other Board Committee Proposals

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against shareholder proposals to establish a new board committee, as such proposals seek a specific oversight mechanism/structure that potentially limits a company's flexibility to determine an appropriate oversight mechanism for itself. However, the following factors will be considered:

- Existing oversight mechanisms (including current committee structure) regarding the issue for which board oversight is sought;
- Level of disclosure regarding the issue for which board oversight is sought;
- Company performance related to the issue for which board oversight is sought;
- Board committee structure compared to that of other companies in its industry sector; and
- The scope and structure of the proposal.

Filling Vacancies/Removal of Directors

- **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals that provide that directors may be removed only for cause.

Vote for proposals to restore shareholders' ability to remove directors with or without cause.

Vote against proposals that provide that only continuing directors may elect replacements to fill board vacancies.

Vote for proposals that permit shareholders to elect directors to fill board vacancies.

Independent Board Chair

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for shareholder proposals requiring that the board chair position be filled by an independent director, taking into consideration the following:

- The scope and rationale of the proposal;
- The company's current board leadership structure;
- The company's governance structure and practices;
- Company performance; and
- Any other relevant factors that may be applicable.

The following factors will increase the likelihood of a "for" recommendation:

- A majority non-independent board and/or the presence of non-independent directors on key board committees;

- A weak or poorly-defined lead independent director role that fails to serve as an appropriate counterbalance to a combined CEO/chair role;
- The presence of an executive or non-independent chair in addition to the CEO, a recent recombination of the role of CEO and chair, and/or departure from a structure with an independent chair;
- Evidence that the board has failed to oversee and address material risks facing the company;
- A material governance failure, particularly if the board has failed to adequately respond to shareholder concerns or if the board has materially diminished shareholder rights; or
- Evidence that the board has failed to intervene when management's interests are contrary to shareholders' interests.

Majority of Independent Directors/Establishment of Independent Committees

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for shareholder proposals asking that a majority or more of directors be independent unless the board composition already meets the proposed threshold by ISS' definition of Independent Director (See [ISS' Classification of Directors](#).)

Vote for shareholder proposals asking that board audit, compensation, and/or nominating committees be composed exclusively of independent directors unless they currently meet that standard.

Majority Vote Standard for the Election of Directors

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for management proposals to adopt a majority of votes cast standard for directors in uncontested elections. Vote against if no carve-out for a plurality vote standard in contested elections is included.

Generally vote for precatory and binding shareholder resolutions requesting that the board change the company's bylaws to stipulate that directors need to be elected with an affirmative majority of votes cast, provided it does not conflict with the state law where the company is incorporated. Binding resolutions need to allow for a carve-out for a plurality vote standard when there are more nominees than board seats.

Companies are strongly encouraged to also adopt a post-election policy (also known as a director resignation policy) that will provide guidelines so that the company will promptly address the situation of a holdover director.

Proxy Access

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for management and shareholder proposals for proxy access with the following provisions:
- **Ownership threshold:** maximum requirement not more than three percent (3%) of the voting power;
 - **Ownership duration:** maximum requirement not longer than three (3) years of continuous ownership for each member of the nominating group;
 - **Aggregation:** minimal or no limits on the number of shareholders permitted to form a nominating group;
 - **Cap:** cap on nominees of generally twenty-five percent (25%) of the board.

Review for reasonableness any other restrictions on the right of proxy access.
Generally vote against proposals that are more restrictive than these guidelines.

Require More Nominees than Open Seats

- **General Recommendation:** Vote against shareholder proposals that would require a company to nominate more candidates than the number of open board seats.

Shareholder Engagement Policy (Shareholder Advisory Committee)

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for shareholder proposals requesting that the board establish an internal mechanism/process, which may include a committee, in order to improve communications between directors and shareholders, unless the company has the following features, as appropriate:

- Established a communication structure that goes beyond the exchange requirements to facilitate the exchange of information between shareholders and members of the board;
- Effectively disclosed information with respect to this structure to its shareholders;
- Company has not ignored majority-supported shareholder proposals or a majority withhold vote on a director nominee; and
- The company has an independent chair or a lead director, according to [ISS' definition](#). This individual must be made available for periodic consultation and direct communication with major shareholders.

2. Audit-Related

Auditor Indemnification and Limitation of Liability

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on the issue of auditor indemnification and limitation of liability. Factors to be assessed include, but are not limited to:

- The terms of the auditor agreement—the degree to which these agreements impact shareholders' rights;
- The motivation and rationale for establishing the agreements;
- The quality of the company's disclosure; and
- The company's historical practices in the audit area.

Vote against or withhold from members of an audit committee in situations where there is persuasive evidence that the audit committee entered into an inappropriate indemnification agreement with its auditor that limits the ability of the company, or its shareholders, to pursue legitimate legal recourse against the audit firm.

Auditor Ratification

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to ratify auditors unless any of the following apply:

- An auditor has a financial interest in or association with the company, and is therefore not independent;
- There is reason to believe that the independent auditor has rendered an opinion that is neither accurate nor indicative of the company's financial position;
- Poor accounting practices are identified that rise to a serious level of concern, such as fraud or misapplication of GAAP; or
- Fees for non-audit services ("Other" fees) are excessive.

Non-audit fees are excessive if:

- Non-audit ("other") fees > audit fees + audit-related fees + tax compliance/preparation fees

Tax compliance and preparation include the preparation of original and amended tax returns and refund claims, and tax payment planning. All other services in the tax category, such as tax advice, planning, or consulting, should be added to "Other" fees. If the breakout of tax fees cannot be determined, add all tax fees to "Other" fees.

In circumstances where "Other" fees include fees related to significant one-time capital structure events (such as initial public offerings, bankruptcy emergence, and spin-offs) and the company makes public disclosure of the amount and nature of those fees that are an exception to the standard "non-audit fee" category, then such fees may be excluded from the non-audit fees considered in determining the ratio of non-audit to audit/audit-related fees/tax compliance and preparation for purposes of determining whether non-audit fees are excessive.

Shareholder Proposals Limiting Non-Audit Services

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals asking companies to prohibit or limit their auditors from engaging in non-audit services.

Shareholder Proposals on Audit Firm Rotation

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals asking for audit firm rotation, taking into account:

- The tenure of the audit firm;

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- The length of rotation specified in the proposal;
 - Any significant audit-related issues at the company;
 - The number of Audit Committee meetings held each year;
 - The number of financial experts serving on the committee; and
 - Whether the company has a periodic renewal process where the auditor is evaluated for both audit quality and competitive price.

3. Shareholder Rights & Defenses

Advance Notice Requirements for Shareholder Proposals/Nominations

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on advance notice proposals, giving support to those proposals which allow shareholders to submit proposals/nominations as close to the meeting date as reasonably possible and within the broadest window possible, recognizing the need to allow sufficient notice for company, regulatory, and shareholder review.

To be reasonable, the company's deadline for shareholder notice of a proposal/nominations must be no earlier than 120 days prior to the anniversary of the previous year's meeting and have a submittal window of no shorter than 30 days from the beginning of the notice period (also known as a 90-120 day window). The submittal window is the period under which shareholders must file their proposals/nominations prior to the deadline.

In general, support additional efforts by companies to ensure full disclosure in regard to a proponent's economic and voting position in the company so long as the informational requirements are reasonable and aimed at providing shareholders with the necessary information to review such proposals.

Amend Bylaws without Shareholder Consent

- **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals giving the board exclusive authority to amend the bylaws.

Vote case-by-case on proposals giving the board the ability to amend the bylaws in addition to shareholders, taking into account the following:

- Any impediments to shareholders' ability to amend the bylaws (i.e. supermajority voting requirements);
- The company's ownership structure and historical voting turnout;
- Whether the board could amend bylaws adopted by shareholders; and
- Whether shareholders would retain the ability to ratify any board-initiated amendments.

Control Share Acquisition Provisions

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to opt out of control share acquisition statutes unless doing so would enable the completion of a takeover that would be detrimental to shareholders.

Vote against proposals to amend the charter to include control share acquisition provisions.

Vote for proposals to restore voting rights to the control shares.

Control share acquisition statutes function by denying shares their voting rights when they contribute to ownership in excess of certain thresholds. Voting rights for those shares exceeding ownership limits may only be restored by approval of either a majority or supermajority of disinterested shares. Thus, control share acquisition statutes effectively require a hostile bidder to put its offer to a shareholder vote or risk voting disenfranchisement if the bidder continues buying up a large block of shares.

Control Share Cash-Out Provisions

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to opt out of control share cash-out statutes.

Control share cash-out statutes give dissident shareholders the right to "cash-out" of their position in a company at the expense of the shareholder who has taken a control position. In other words, when an investor crosses a

preset threshold level, remaining shareholders are given the right to sell their shares to the acquirer, who must buy them at the highest acquiring price.

Disgorgement Provisions

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to opt out of state disgorgement provisions.

Disgorgement provisions require an acquirer or potential acquirer of more than a certain percentage of a company's stock to disgorge, or pay back, to the company any profits realized from the sale of that company's stock purchased 24 months before achieving control status. All sales of company stock by the acquirer occurring within a certain period of time (between 18 months and 24 months) prior to the investor's gaining control status are subject to these recapture-of-profits provisions.

Fair Price Provisions

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to adopt fair price provisions (provisions that stipulate that an acquirer must pay the same price to acquire all shares as it paid to acquire the control shares), evaluating factors such as the vote required to approve the proposed acquisition, the vote required to repeal the fair price provision, and the mechanism for determining the fair price.

Generally vote against fair price provisions with shareholder vote requirements greater than a majority of disinterested shares.

Freeze-Out Provisions

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to opt out of state freeze-out provisions. Freeze-out provisions force an investor who surpasses a certain ownership threshold in a company to wait a specified period of time before gaining control of the company.

Greenmail

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to adopt anti-greenmail charter or bylaw amendments or otherwise restrict a company's ability to make greenmail payments.

Vote case-by-case on anti-greenmail proposals when they are bundled with other charter or bylaw amendments.

Greenmail payments are targeted share repurchases by management of company stock from individuals or groups seeking control of the company. Since only the hostile party receives payment, usually at a substantial premium over the market value of its shares, the practice discriminates against all other shareholders.

Shareholder Litigation Rights

Federal Forum Selection Provisions

Federal forum selection provisions require that U.S. federal courts be the sole forum for shareholders to litigate claims arising under federal securities law.

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for federal forum selection provisions in the charter or bylaws that specify "the district courts of the United States" as the exclusive forum for federal securities law matters, in the absence of serious concerns about corporate governance or board responsiveness to shareholders.

Vote against provisions that restrict the forum to a particular federal district court; unilateral adoption (without a shareholder vote) of such a provision will generally be considered a one-time failure under the [Unilateral Bylaw/Charter Amendments](#) policy.

Exclusive Forum Provisions for State Law Matters

Exclusive forum provisions in the charter or bylaws restrict shareholders' ability to bring derivative lawsuits against the company, for claims arising out of state corporate law, to the courts of a particular state (generally the state of incorporation).

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for charter or bylaw provisions that specify courts located within the state of Delaware as the exclusive forum for corporate law matters for Delaware corporations, in the absence of serious concerns about corporate governance or board responsiveness to shareholders.

For states other than Delaware, vote case-by-case on exclusive forum provisions, taking into consideration:

- The company's stated rationale for adopting such a provision;
- Disclosure of past harm from duplicative shareholder lawsuits in more than one forum;
- The breadth of application of the charter or bylaw provision, including the types of lawsuits to which it would apply and the definition of key terms; and
- Governance features such as shareholders' ability to repeal the provision at a later date (including the vote standard applied when shareholders attempt to amend the charter or bylaws) and their ability to hold directors accountable through annual director elections and a majority vote standard in uncontested elections.

Generally vote against provisions that specify a state other than the state of incorporation as the exclusive forum for corporate law matters, or that specify a particular local court within the state; unilateral adoption of such a provision will generally be considered a one-time failure under the [Unilateral Bylaw/Charter Amendments](#) policy.

Fee shifting

Fee-shifting provisions in the charter or bylaws require that a shareholder who sues a company unsuccessfully pay all litigation expenses of the defendant corporation and its directors and officers.

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against provisions that mandate fee-shifting whenever plaintiffs are not completely successful on the merits (i.e., including cases where the plaintiffs are partially successful).

Unilateral adoption of a fee-shifting provision will generally be considered an ongoing failure under the [Unilateral Bylaw/Charter Amendments](#) policy.

Net Operating Loss (NOL) Protective Amendments

- **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to adopt a protective amendment for the stated purpose of protecting a company's net operating losses (NOL) if the effective term of the protective amendment would exceed the shorter of three years and the exhaustion of the NOL.

Vote case-by-case, considering the following factors, for management proposals to adopt an NOL protective amendment that would remain in effect for the shorter of three years (or less) and the exhaustion of the NOL:

- The ownership threshold (NOL protective amendments generally prohibit stock ownership transfers that would result in a new 5-percent holder or increase the stock ownership percentage of an existing 5-percent holder);
- The value of the NOLs;

- Shareholder protection mechanisms (sunset provision or commitment to cause expiration of the protective amendment upon exhaustion or expiration of the NOL);
- The company's existing governance structure including: board independence, existing takeover defenses, track record of responsiveness to shareholders, and any other problematic governance concerns; and
- Any other factors that may be applicable.

Poison Pills (Shareholder Rights Plans)

Shareholder Proposals to Put Pill to a Vote and/or Adopt a Pill Policy

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote for shareholder proposals requesting that the company submit its poison pill to a shareholder vote or redeem it unless the company has: (1) A shareholder-approved poison pill in place; or (2) The company has adopted a policy concerning the adoption of a pill in the future specifying that the board will only adopt a shareholder rights plan if either:

- Shareholders have approved the adoption of the plan; or
- The board, in its exercise of its fiduciary responsibilities, determines that it is in the best interest of shareholders under the circumstances to adopt a pill without the delay in adoption that would result from seeking stockholder approval (i.e., the “fiduciary out” provision). A poison pill adopted under this fiduciary out will be put to a shareholder ratification vote within 12 months of adoption or expire. If the pill is not approved by a majority of the votes cast on this issue, the plan will immediately terminate.

If the shareholder proposal calls for a time period of less than 12 months for shareholder ratification after adoption, vote for the proposal, but add the caveat that a vote within 12 months would be considered sufficient implementation.

Management Proposals to Ratify a Poison Pill

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on management proposals on poison pill ratification, focusing on the features of the shareholder rights plan. Rights plans should contain the following attributes:

- No lower than a 20 percent trigger, flip-in or flip-over;
- A term of no more than three years;
- No deadhand, slowhand, no-hand, or similar feature that limits the ability of a future board to redeem the pill;
- Shareholder redemption feature (qualifying offer clause); if the board refuses to redeem the pill 90 days after a qualifying offer is announced, 10 percent of the shares may call a special meeting or seek a written consent to vote on rescinding the pill.

In addition, the rationale for adopting the pill should be thoroughly explained by the company. In examining the request for the pill, take into consideration the company's existing governance structure, including: board independence, existing takeover defenses, and any problematic governance concerns.

Management Proposals to Ratify a Pill to Preserve Net Operating Losses (NOLs)

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to adopt a poison pill for the stated purpose of protecting a company's net operating losses (NOL) if the term of the pill would exceed the shorter of three years and the exhaustion of the NOL.

Vote case-by-case on management proposals for poison pill ratification, considering the following factors, if the term of the pill would be the shorter of three years (or less) and the exhaustion of the NOL:

- The ownership threshold to transfer (NOL pills generally have a trigger slightly below 5 percent);
- The value of the NOLs;
- Shareholder protection mechanisms (sunset provision, or commitment to cause expiration of the pill upon exhaustion or expiration of NOLs);

- The company's existing governance structure including: board independence, existing takeover defenses, track record of responsiveness to shareholders, and any other problematic governance concerns; and
- Any other factors that may be applicable.

Proxy Voting Disclosure, Confidentiality, and Tabulation

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals regarding proxy voting mechanics, taking into consideration whether implementation of the proposal is likely to enhance or protect shareholder rights. Specific issues covered under the policy include, but are not limited to, confidential voting of individual proxies and ballots, confidentiality of running vote tallies, and the treatment of abstentions and/or broker non-votes in the company's vote-counting methodology.

While a variety of factors may be considered in each analysis, the guiding principles are: transparency, consistency, and fairness in the proxy voting process. The factors considered, as applicable to the proposal, may include:

- The scope and structure of the proposal;
- The company's stated confidential voting policy (or other relevant policies) and whether it ensures a "level playing field" by providing shareholder proponents with equal access to vote information prior to the annual meeting;
- The company's vote standard for management and shareholder proposals and whether it ensures consistency and fairness in the proxy voting process and maintains the integrity of vote results;
- Whether the company's disclosure regarding its vote counting method and other relevant voting policies with respect to management and shareholder proposals are consistent and clear;
- Any recent controversies or concerns related to the company's proxy voting mechanics;
- Any unintended consequences resulting from implementation of the proposal; and
- Any other factors that may be relevant.

Ratification Proposals: Management Proposals to Ratify Existing Charter or Bylaw Provisions

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against management proposals to ratify provisions of the company's existing charter or bylaws, unless these governance provisions align with best practice.

In addition, voting against/withhold from individual directors, members of the governance committee, or the full board may be warranted, considering:

- The presence of a shareholder proposal addressing the same issue on the same ballot;
- The board's rationale for seeking ratification;
- Disclosure of actions to be taken by the board should the ratification proposal fail;
- Disclosure of shareholder engagement regarding the board's ratification request;
- The level of impairment to shareholders' rights caused by the existing provision;
- The history of management and shareholder proposals on the provision at the company's past meetings;
- Whether the current provision was adopted in response to the shareholder proposal;
- The company's ownership structure; and
- Previous use of ratification proposals to exclude shareholder proposals.

Reimbursing Proxy Solicitation Expenses

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to reimburse proxy solicitation expenses.

When voting in conjunction with support of a dissident slate, vote for the reimbursement of all appropriate proxy solicitation expenses associated with the election.

Generally vote for shareholder proposals calling for the reimbursement of reasonable costs incurred in connection with nominating one or more candidates in a contested election where the following apply:

- The election of fewer than 50 percent of the directors to be elected is contested in the election;
- One or more of the dissident's candidates is elected;
- Shareholders are not permitted to cumulate their votes for directors; and
- The election occurred, and the expenses were incurred, after the adoption of this bylaw.

Reincorporation Proposals

➤ **General Recommendation:** Management or shareholder proposals to change a company's state of incorporation should be evaluated case-by-case, giving consideration to both financial and corporate governance concerns including the following:

- Reasons for reincorporation;
- Comparison of company's governance practices and provisions prior to and following the reincorporation; and
- Comparison of corporation laws of original state and destination state.

Vote for reincorporation when the economic factors outweigh any neutral or negative governance changes.

Shareholder Ability to Act by Written Consent

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against management and shareholder proposals to restrict or prohibit shareholders' ability to act by written consent.

Generally vote for management and shareholder proposals that provide shareholders with the ability to act by written consent, taking into account the following factors:

- Shareholders' current right to act by written consent;
- The consent threshold;
- The inclusion of exclusionary or prohibitive language;
- Investor ownership structure; and
- Shareholder support of, and management's response to, previous shareholder proposals.

Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals if, in addition to the considerations above, the company has the following governance and antitakeover provisions:

- An unfettered¹¹ right for shareholders to call special meetings at a 10 percent threshold;
- A majority vote standard in uncontested director elections;
- No non-shareholder-approved pill; and
- An annually elected board.

Shareholder Ability to Call Special Meetings

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote against management or shareholder proposals to restrict or prohibit shareholders' ability to call special meetings.

Generally vote for management or shareholder proposals that provide shareholders with the ability to call special meetings taking into account the following factors:

- Shareholders' current right to call special meetings;
- Minimum ownership threshold necessary to call special meetings (10 percent preferred);
- The inclusion of exclusionary or prohibitive language;

¹¹ "Unfettered" means no restrictions on agenda items, no restrictions on the number of shareholders who can group together to reach the 10 percent threshold, and only reasonable limits on when a meeting can be called: no greater than 30 days after the last annual meeting and no greater than 90 prior to the next annual meeting.

- Investor ownership structure; and
- Shareholder support of, and management's response to, previous shareholder proposals.

Stakeholder Provisions

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals that ask the board to consider non-shareholder constituencies or other non-financial effects when evaluating a merger or business combination.

State Antitakeover Statutes

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to opt in or out of state takeover statutes (including fair price provisions, stakeholder laws, poison pill endorsements, severance pay and labor contract provisions, and anti-greenmail provisions).

Supermajority Vote Requirements

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to require a supermajority shareholder vote.
- Vote for management or shareholder proposals to reduce supermajority vote requirements. However, for companies with shareholder(s) who have significant ownership levels, vote case-by-case, taking into account:
 - Ownership structure;
 - Quorum requirements; and
 - Vote requirements.

Virtual Shareholder Meetings

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for management proposals allowing for the convening of shareholder meetings by electronic means, so long as they do not preclude in-person meetings. Companies are encouraged to disclose the circumstances under which virtual-only¹² meetings would be held, and to allow for comparable rights and opportunities for shareholders to participate electronically as they would have during an in-person meeting.

Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals concerning virtual-only meetings, considering:

- Scope and rationale of the proposal; and
- Concerns identified with the company's prior meeting practices.

¹² Virtual-only shareholder meeting" refers to a meeting of shareholders that is held exclusively using technology without a corresponding in-person meeting.

4. Capital/Restructuring

Capital

Adjustments to Par Value of Common Stock

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for management proposals to reduce the par value of common stock unless the action is being taken to facilitate an anti-takeover device or some other negative corporate governance action.

Vote for management proposals to eliminate par value.

Common Stock Authorization

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to increase the number of authorized common shares where the primary purpose of the increase is to issue shares in connection with a transaction on the same ballot that warrants support.

Vote against proposals at companies with more than one class of common stock to increase the number of authorized shares of the class of common stock that has superior voting rights.

Vote against proposals to increase the number of authorized common shares if a vote for a reverse stock split on the same ballot is warranted despite the fact that the authorized shares would not be reduced proportionally.

Vote case-by-case on all other proposals to increase the number of shares of common stock authorized for issuance. Take into account company-specific factors that include, at a minimum, the following:

- Past Board Performance:
 - The company's use of authorized shares during the last three years;
- The Current Request:
 - Disclosure in the proxy statement of the specific purposes of the proposed increase;
 - Disclosure in the proxy statement of specific and severe risks to shareholders of not approving the request; and
 - The dilutive impact of the request as determined relative to an allowable increase calculated by ISS (typically 100 percent of existing authorized shares) that reflects the company's need for shares and total shareholder returns.

ISS will apply the relevant allowable increase below to requests to increase common stock that are for general corporate purposes (or to the general corporate purposes portion of a request that also includes a specific need):

- A. Most companies: **100 percent** of existing authorized shares.
- B. Companies with less than 50 percent of existing authorized shares either outstanding or reserved for issuance: **50 percent** of existing authorized shares.
- C. Companies with one- and three-year total shareholder returns (TSRs) in the bottom 10 percent of the U.S. market as of the end of the calendar quarter that is closest to their most recent fiscal year end: **50 percent** of existing authorized shares.
- D. Companies at which both conditions (B and C) above are both present: **25 percent** of existing authorized shares.

If there is an acquisition, private placement, or similar transaction on the ballot (not including equity incentive plans) that ISS is recommending FOR, the allowable increase will be the greater of (i) twice the amount needed to support the transactions on the ballot, and (ii) the allowable increase as calculated above.

Dual Class Structure

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals to create a new class of common stock unless:

- The company discloses a compelling rationale for the dual-class capital structure, such as:
- The company's auditor has concluded that there is substantial doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern; or
- The new class of shares will be transitory;
- The new class is intended for financing purposes with minimal or no dilution to current shareholders in both the short term and long term; and
- The new class is not designed to preserve or increase the voting power of an insider or significant shareholder.

Issue Stock for Use with Rights Plan

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals that increase authorized common stock for the explicit purpose of implementing a non-shareholder-approved shareholder rights plan (poison pill).

Preemptive Rights

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals that seek preemptive rights, taking into consideration:

- The size of the company;
- The shareholder base; and
- The liquidity of the stock.

Preferred Stock Authorization

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to increase the number of authorized preferred shares where the primary purpose of the increase is to issue shares in connection with a transaction on the same ballot that warrants support.

Vote against proposals at companies with more than one class or series of preferred stock to increase the number of authorized shares of the class or series of preferred stock that has superior voting rights.

Vote case-by-case on all other proposals to increase the number of shares of preferred stock authorized for issuance. Take into account company-specific factors that include, at a minimum, the following:


- Past Board Performance:
 - The company's use of authorized preferred shares during the last three years;
- The Current Request:
 - Disclosure in the proxy statement of the specific purposes for the proposed increase;
 - Disclosure in the proxy statement of specific and severe risks to shareholders of not approving the request;
 - In cases where the company has existing authorized preferred stock, the dilutive impact of the request as determined by an allowable increase calculated by ISS (typically 100 percent of existing authorized shares) that reflects the company's need for shares and total shareholder returns; and
 - Whether the shares requested are blank check preferred shares that can be used for antitakeover purposes.

Recapitalization Plans

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on recapitalizations (reclassifications of securities), taking into account the following:

- More simplified capital structure;
- Enhanced liquidity;
- Fairness of conversion terms;
- Impact on voting power and dividends;
- Reasons for the reclassification;
- Conflicts of interest; and
- Other alternatives considered.

Reverse Stock Splits


 **General Recommendation:** Vote for management proposals to implement a reverse stock split if:

- The number of authorized shares will be proportionately reduced; or
- The effective increase in authorized shares is equal to or less than the allowable increase calculated in accordance with ISS' Common Stock Authorization policy.

Vote case-by-case on proposals that do not meet either of the above conditions, taking into consideration the following factors:

- Stock exchange notification to the company of a potential delisting;
- Disclosure of substantial doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern without additional financing;
- The company's rationale; or
- Other factors as applicable.


Share Repurchase Programs

 **General Recommendation:** For U.S.-incorporated companies, and foreign-incorporated U.S. Domestic Issuers that are traded solely on U.S. exchanges, vote for management proposals to institute open-market share repurchase plans in which all shareholders may participate on equal terms, or to grant the board authority to conduct open-market repurchases, in the absence of company-specific concerns regarding:


- Greenmail,
- The use of buybacks to inappropriately manipulate incentive compensation metrics,
- Threats to the company's long-term viability, or
- Other company-specific factors as warranted.

Vote case-by-case on proposals to repurchase shares directly from specified shareholders, balancing the stated rationale against the possibility for the repurchase authority to be misused, such as to repurchase shares from insiders at a premium to market price.

Share Repurchase Programs Shareholder Proposals

 **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against shareholder proposals prohibiting executives from selling shares of company stock during periods in which the company has announced that it may or will be repurchasing shares of its stock. Vote for the proposal when there is a pattern of abuse by executives exercising options or selling shares during periods of share buybacks.

Stock Distributions: Splits and Dividends

 **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for management proposals to increase the common share authorization for stock split or stock dividend, provided that the effective increase in authorized shares is equal to or is less than the allowable increase calculated in accordance with ISS' Common Stock Authorization policy.

Tracking Stock

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on the creation of tracking stock, weighing the strategic value of the transaction against such factors as:

- Adverse governance changes;
- Excessive increases in authorized capital stock;
- Unfair method of distribution;
- Diminution of voting rights;
- Adverse conversion features;
- Negative impact on stock option plans; and
- Alternatives such as spin-off.

Restructuring

Appraisal Rights

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to restore or provide shareholders with rights of appraisal.

Asset Purchases

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on asset purchase proposals, considering the following factors:

- Purchase price;
- Fairness opinion;
- Financial and strategic benefits;
- How the deal was negotiated;
- Conflicts of interest;
- Other alternatives for the business;
- Non-completion risk.

Asset Sales

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on asset sales, considering the following factors:

- Impact on the balance sheet/working capital;
- Potential elimination of diseconomies;
- Anticipated financial and operating benefits;
- Anticipated use of funds;
- Value received for the asset;
- Fairness opinion;
- How the deal was negotiated;
- Conflicts of interest.

Bundled Proposals

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on bundled or “conditional” proxy proposals. In the case of items that are conditioned upon each other, examine the benefits and costs of the packaged items. In instances when the joint effect of the conditioned items is not in shareholders’ best interests, vote against the proposals. If the combined effect is positive, support such proposals.

Conversion of Securities

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals regarding conversion of securities. When evaluating these proposals, the investor should review the dilution to existing shareholders, the conversion price relative to market value, financial issues, control issues, termination penalties, and conflicts of interest.

Vote for the conversion if it is expected that the company will be subject to onerous penalties or will be forced to file for bankruptcy if the transaction is not approved.

Corporate Reorganization/Debt Restructuring/Prepackaged Bankruptcy Plans/Reverse Leveraged Buyouts/Wrap Plans

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to increase common and/or preferred shares and to issue shares as part of a debt restructuring plan, after evaluating:

- Dilution to existing shareholders' positions;
- Terms of the offer - discount/premium in purchase price to investor, including any fairness opinion; termination penalties; exit strategy;
- Financial issues - company's financial situation; degree of need for capital; use of proceeds; effect of the financing on the company's cost of capital;
- Management's efforts to pursue other alternatives;
- Control issues - change in management; change in control, guaranteed board and committee seats; standstill provisions; voting agreements; veto power over certain corporate actions; and
- Conflict of interest - arm's length transaction, managerial incentives.

Vote for the debt restructuring if it is expected that the company will file for bankruptcy if the transaction is not approved.

Formation of Holding Company

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals regarding the formation of a holding company, taking into consideration the following:

- The reasons for the change;
- Any financial or tax benefits;
- Regulatory benefits;
- Increases in capital structure; and
- Changes to the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the company.

Absent compelling financial reasons to recommend for the transaction, vote against the formation of a holding company if the transaction would include either of the following:

- Increases in common or preferred stock in excess of the allowable maximum (see discussion under "Capital"); or
- Adverse changes in shareholder rights.

Going Private and Going Dark Transactions (LBOs and Minority Squeeze-outs)

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on going private transactions, taking into account the following:

- Offer price/premium;
- Fairness opinion;
- How the deal was negotiated;

- Conflicts of interest;
- Other alternatives/offers considered; and
- Non-completion risk.

Vote case-by-case on going dark transactions, determining whether the transaction enhances shareholder value by taking into consideration:

- Whether the company has attained benefits from being publicly-traded (examination of trading volume, liquidity, and market research of the stock);
- Balanced interests of continuing vs. cashed-out shareholders, taking into account the following:
- Are all shareholders able to participate in the transaction?
- Will there be a liquid market for remaining shareholders following the transaction?
- Does the company have strong corporate governance?
- Will insiders reap the gains of control following the proposed transaction?
- Does the state of incorporation have laws requiring continued reporting that may benefit shareholders?

Joint Ventures

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to form joint ventures, taking into account the following:

-
- Percentage of assets/business contributed;
- Percentage ownership;
- Financial and strategic benefits;
- Governance structure;
- Conflicts of interest;
- Other alternatives; and
- Non-completion risk.

Liquidations

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on liquidations, taking into account the following:

- Management's efforts to pursue other alternatives;
- Appraisal value of assets; and
- The compensation plan for executives managing the liquidation.

Vote for the liquidation if the company will file for bankruptcy if the proposal is not approved.

Mergers and Acquisitions

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on mergers and acquisitions. Review and evaluate the merits and drawbacks of the proposed transaction, balancing various and sometimes countervailing factors including:

- *Valuation* - Is the value to be received by the target shareholders (or paid by the acquirer) reasonable? While the fairness opinion may provide an initial starting point for assessing valuation reasonableness, emphasis is placed on the offer premium, market reaction, and strategic rationale.
- *Market reaction* - How has the market responded to the proposed deal? A negative market reaction should cause closer scrutiny of a deal.
- *Strategic rationale* - Does the deal make sense strategically? From where is the value derived? Cost and revenue synergies should not be overly aggressive or optimistic, but reasonably achievable. Management should also have a favorable track record of successful integration of historical acquisitions.

- *Negotiations and process* - Were the terms of the transaction negotiated at arm's-length? Was the process fair and equitable? A fair process helps to ensure the best price for shareholders. Significant negotiation "wins" can also signify the deal makers' competency. The comprehensiveness of the sales process (e.g., full auction, partial auction, no auction) can also affect shareholder value.
- *Conflicts of interest* - Are insiders benefiting from the transaction disproportionately and inappropriately as compared to non-insider shareholders? As the result of potential conflicts, the directors and officers of the company may be more likely to vote to approve a merger than if they did not hold these interests. Consider whether these interests may have influenced these directors and officers to support or recommend the merger. The CIC figure presented in the "ISS Transaction Summary" section of this report is an aggregate figure that can in certain cases be a misleading indicator of the true value transfer from shareholders to insiders. Where such figure appears to be excessive, analyze the underlying assumptions to determine whether a potential conflict exists.
- *Governance* - Will the combined company have a better or worse governance profile than the current governance profiles of the respective parties to the transaction? If the governance profile is to change for the worse, the burden is on the company to prove that other issues (such as valuation) outweigh any deterioration in governance.

Private Placements/Warrants/Convertible Debentures



General Recommendation: Vote case-by-case on proposals regarding private placements, warrants, and convertible debentures taking into consideration:

- Dilution to existing shareholders' position: The amount and timing of shareholder ownership dilution should be weighed against the needs and proposed shareholder benefits of the capital infusion. Although newly issued common stock, absent preemptive rights, is typically dilutive to existing shareholders, share price appreciation is often the necessary event to trigger the exercise of "out of the money" warrants and convertible debt. In these instances from a value standpoint, the negative impact of dilution is mitigated by the increase in the company's stock price that must occur to trigger the dilutive event.
- Terms of the offer (discount/premium in purchase price to investor, including any fairness opinion, conversion features, termination penalties, exit strategy):
 - The terms of the offer should be weighed against the alternatives of the company and in light of company's financial condition. Ideally, the conversion price for convertible debt and the exercise price for warrants should be at a premium to the then prevailing stock price at the time of private placement.
 - When evaluating the magnitude of a private placement discount or premium, consider factors that influence the discount or premium, such as, liquidity, due diligence costs, control and monitoring costs, capital scarcity, information asymmetry, and anticipation of future performance.
- Financial issues:
 - The company's financial condition;
 - Degree of need for capital;
 - Use of proceeds;
 - Effect of the financing on the company's cost of capital;
 - Current and proposed cash burn rate;
 - Going concern viability and the state of the capital and credit markets.
- Management's efforts to pursue alternatives and whether the company engaged in a process to evaluate alternatives: A fair, unconstrained process helps to ensure the best price for shareholders. Financing alternatives can include joint ventures, partnership, merger, or sale of part or all of the company.
- Control issues:

- Change in management;
 - Change in control;
 - Guaranteed board and committee seats;
 - Standstill provisions;
 - Voting agreements;
 - Veto power over certain corporate actions; and
 - Minority versus majority ownership and corresponding minority discount or majority control premium.
- Conflicts of interest:
 - Conflicts of interest should be viewed from the perspective of the company and the investor.
 - Were the terms of the transaction negotiated at arm's length? Are managerial incentives aligned with shareholder interests?
 - Market reaction:
 - The market's response to the proposed deal. A negative market reaction is a cause for concern. Market reaction may be addressed by analyzing the one-day impact on the unaffected stock price.

Vote for the private placement, or for the issuance of warrants and/or convertible debentures in a private placement, if it is expected that the company will file for bankruptcy if the transaction is not approved.

Reorganization/Restructuring Plan (Bankruptcy)



General Recommendation: Vote case-by-case on proposals to common shareholders on bankruptcy plans of reorganization, considering the following factors including, but not limited to:

- Estimated value and financial prospects of the reorganized company;
- Percentage ownership of current shareholders in the reorganized company;
- Whether shareholders are adequately represented in the reorganization process (particularly through the existence of an Official Equity Committee);
- The cause(s) of the bankruptcy filing, and the extent to which the plan of reorganization addresses the cause(s);
- Existence of a superior alternative to the plan of reorganization; and
- Governance of the reorganized company.

Special Purpose Acquisition Corporations (SPACs)



General Recommendation: Vote case-by-case on SPAC mergers and acquisitions taking into account the following:

- *Valuation* - Is the value being paid by the SPAC reasonable? SPACs generally lack an independent fairness opinion and the financials on the target may be limited. Compare the conversion price with the intrinsic value of the target company provided in the fairness opinion. Also, evaluate the proportionate value of the combined entity attributable to the SPAC IPO shareholders versus the pre-merger value of SPAC. Additionally, a private company discount may be applied to the target, if it is a private entity.
- *Market reaction* - How has the market responded to the proposed deal? A negative market reaction may be a cause for concern. Market reaction may be addressed by analyzing the one-day impact on the unaffected stock price.
- *Deal timing* - A main driver for most transactions is that the SPAC charter typically requires the deal to be complete within 18 to 24 months, or the SPAC is to be liquidated. Evaluate the valuation, market reaction, and potential conflicts of interest for deals that are announced close to the liquidation date.
- *Negotiations and process* - What was the process undertaken to identify potential target companies within specified industry or location specified in charter? Consider the background of the sponsors.
- *Conflicts of interest* - How are sponsors benefiting from the transaction compared to IPO shareholders? Potential conflicts could arise if a fairness opinion is issued by the insiders to qualify the deal rather than a

third party or if management is encouraged to pay a higher price for the target because of an 80 percent rule (the charter requires that the fair market value of the target is at least equal to 80 percent of net assets of the SPAC). Also, there may be sense of urgency by the management team of the SPAC to close the deal since its charter typically requires a transaction to be completed within the 18-24 month timeframe.

- *Voting agreements* - Are the sponsors entering into any voting agreements/tender offers with shareholders who are likely to vote against the proposed merger or exercise conversion rights?
- *Governance* - What is the impact of having the SPAC CEO or founder on key committees following the proposed merger?

Special Purpose Acquisition Corporations (SPACs) - Proposals for Extensions

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on SPAC extension proposals taking into account the length of the requested extension, the status of any pending transaction(s) or progression of the acquisition process, any added incentive for non-redeeming shareholders, and any prior extension requests.

- *Length of request:* Typically, extension requests range from two to six months, depending on the progression of the SPAC's acquisition process.
- *Pending transaction(s) or progression of the acquisition process:* Sometimes an initial business combination was already put to a shareholder vote, but, for varying reasons, the transaction could not be consummated by the termination date and the SPAC is requesting an extension. Other times, the SPAC has entered into a definitive transaction agreement, but needs additional time to consummate or hold the shareholder meeting.
- *Added incentive for non-redeeming shareholders:* Sometimes the SPAC sponsor (or other insiders) will contribute, typically as a loan to the company, additional funds that will be added to the redemption value of each public share as long as such shares are not redeemed in connection with the extension request. The purpose of the "equity kicker" is to incentivize shareholders to hold their shares through the end of the requested extension or until the time the transaction is put to a shareholder vote, rather than electing redemption at the extension proposal meeting.
- *Prior extension requests:* Some SPACs request additional time beyond the extension period sought in prior extension requests.

Spin-offs

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on spin-offs, considering:

- Tax and regulatory advantages;
- Planned use of the sale proceeds;
- Valuation of spinoff;
- Fairness opinion;
- Benefits to the parent company;
- Conflicts of interest;
- Managerial incentives;
- Corporate governance changes;
- Changes in the capital structure.

Value Maximization Shareholder Proposals

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals seeking to maximize shareholder value by:

- Hiring a financial advisor to explore strategic alternatives;
- Selling the company; or
- Liquidating the company and distributing the proceeds to shareholders.

These proposals should be evaluated based on the following factors:

- Prolonged poor performance with no turnaround in sight;
- Signs of entrenched board and management (such as the adoption of takeover defenses);

-
- Strategic plan in place for improving value;
 - Likelihood of receiving reasonable value in a sale or dissolution; and
 - The company actively exploring its strategic options, including retaining a financial advisor.


5. Compensation

Executive Pay Evaluation

Underlying all evaluations are five global principles that most investors expect corporations to adhere to in designing and administering executive and director compensation programs:

1. Maintain appropriate pay-for-performance alignment, with emphasis on long-term shareholder value: This principle encompasses overall executive pay practices, which must be designed to attract, retain, and appropriately motivate the key employees who drive shareholder value creation over the long term. It will take into consideration, among other factors, the link between pay and performance; the mix between fixed and variable pay; performance goals; and equity-based plan costs;
2. Avoid arrangements that risk “pay for failure”: This principle addresses the appropriateness of long or indefinite contracts, excessive severance packages, and guaranteed compensation;
3. Maintain an independent and effective compensation committee: This principle promotes oversight of executive pay programs by directors with appropriate skills, knowledge, experience, and a sound process for compensation decision-making (e.g., including access to independent expertise and advice when needed);
4. Provide shareholders with clear, comprehensive compensation disclosures: This principle underscores the importance of informative and timely disclosures that enable shareholders to evaluate executive pay practices fully and fairly;
5. Avoid inappropriate pay to non-executive directors: This principle recognizes the interests of shareholders in ensuring that compensation to outside directors is reasonable and does not compromise their independence and ability to make appropriate judgments in overseeing managers’ pay and performance. At the market level, it may incorporate a variety of generally accepted best practices.

Advisory Votes on Executive Compensation—Management Proposals (Say-on-Pay)

 **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on ballot items related to executive pay and practices, as well as certain aspects of outside director compensation.

Vote against Advisory Votes on Executive Compensation (Say-on-Pay or “SOP”) if:

- There is an unmitigated misalignment between CEO pay and company performance (pay for performance);
- The company maintains significant problematic pay practices;
- The board exhibits a significant level of [poor communication and responsiveness](#) to shareholders.

Vote against or withhold from the members of the Compensation Committee and potentially the full board if:

- There is no SOP on the ballot, and an against vote on an SOP would otherwise be warranted due to pay-for-performance misalignment, problematic pay practices, or the lack of adequate responsiveness on compensation issues raised previously, or a combination thereof;
- The board fails to respond adequately to a previous SOP proposal that received less than 70 percent support of votes cast;
- The company has recently practiced or approved problematic pay practices, such as option repricing or option backdating; or
- The situation is egregious.

Primary Evaluation Factors for Executive Pay

Pay-for-Performance Evaluation

ISS annually conducts a pay-for-performance analysis to identify strong or satisfactory alignment between pay and performance over a sustained period. With respect to companies in the S&P1500, Russell 3000, or Russell 3000E Indices¹³, this analysis considers the following:

1. Peer Group¹⁴ Alignment:
 - The degree of alignment between the company's annualized TSR rank and the CEO's annualized total pay rank within a peer group, each measured over a three-year period.
 - The rankings of CEO total pay and company financial performance within a peer group, each measured over a three-year period.
 - The multiple of the CEO's total pay relative to the peer group median in the most recent fiscal year.
2. Absolute Alignment¹⁵ – the absolute alignment between the trend in CEO pay and company TSR over the prior five fiscal years – i.e., the difference between the trend in annual pay changes and the trend in annualized TSR during the period.

If the above analysis demonstrates significant unsatisfactory long-term pay-for-performance alignment or, in the case of companies outside the Russell indices, a misalignment between pay and performance is otherwise suggested, our analysis may include any of the following qualitative factors, as relevant to an evaluation of how various pay elements may work to encourage or to undermine long-term value creation and alignment with shareholder interests:

- The ratio of performance- to time-based incentive awards;
- The overall ratio of performance-based compensation to fixed or discretionary pay;
- The rigor of performance goals;
- The complexity and risks around pay program design;
- The transparency and clarity of disclosure;
- The company's peer group benchmarking practices;
- Financial/operational results, both absolute and relative to peers;
- Special circumstances related to, for example, a new CEO in the prior FY or anomalous equity grant practices (e.g., bi-annual awards);
- Realizable pay¹⁶ compared to grant pay; and
- Any other factors deemed relevant.

Problematic Pay Practices

The focus is on executive compensation practices that contravene the global pay principles, including:

- Problematic practices related to non-performance-based compensation elements;

¹³ The [Russell 3000E](#) Index includes approximately 4,000 of the largest U.S. equity securities.

¹⁴ The revised peer group is generally comprised of 14-24 companies that are selected using market cap, revenue (or assets for certain financial firms), GICS industry group, and company's selected peers' GICS industry group, with size constraints, via a process designed to select peers that are comparable to the subject company in terms of revenue/assets and industry, and also within a market-cap bucket that is reflective of the company's. For Oil, Gas & Consumable Fuels companies, market cap is the only size determinant.

¹⁵ Only Russell 3000 Index companies are subject to the Absolute Alignment analysis.

¹⁶ ISS research reports include realizable pay for S&P1500 companies.

- Incentives that may motivate excessive risk-taking or present a windfall risk; and
- Pay decisions that circumvent pay-for-performance, such as options backdating or waiving performance requirements.

Problematic Pay Practices related to Non-Performance-Based Compensation Elements

Pay elements that are not directly based on performance are generally evaluated case-by-case considering the context of a company's overall pay program and demonstrated pay-for-performance philosophy. Please refer to ISS' [U.S. Compensation Policies FAQ](#) document for detail on specific pay practices that have been identified as potentially problematic and may lead to negative recommendations if they are deemed to be inappropriate or unjustified relative to executive pay best practices. The list below highlights the problematic practices that carry significant weight in this overall consideration and may result in adverse vote recommendations:

- Repricing or replacing of underwater stock options/SARs without prior shareholder approval (including cash buyouts and voluntary surrender of underwater options);
- Extraordinary perquisites or tax gross-ups;
- New or materially amended agreements that provide for:
 - Excessive termination or CIC severance payments (generally exceeding 3 times base salary and average/target/most recent bonus);
 - CIC severance payments without involuntary job loss or substantial diminution of duties ("single" or "modified single" triggers) or in connection with a problematic Good Reason definition;
 - CIC excise tax gross-up entitlements (including "modified" gross-ups);
 - Multi-year guaranteed awards that are not at risk due to rigorous performance conditions;
- Liberal CIC definition combined with any single-trigger CIC benefits;
- Insufficient executive compensation disclosure by externally-managed issuers (EMIs) such that a reasonable assessment of pay programs and practices applicable to the EMI's executives is not possible;
- Any other provision or practice deemed to be egregious and present a significant risk to investors.

Options Backdating

The following factors should be examined case-by-case to allow for distinctions to be made between "sloppy" plan administration versus deliberate action or fraud:

- Reason and motive for the options backdating issue, such as inadvertent vs. deliberate grant date changes;
- Duration of options backdating;
- Size of restatement due to options backdating;
- Corrective actions taken by the board or compensation committee, such as canceling or re-pricing backdated options, the recouping of option gains on backdated grants; and
- Adoption of a grant policy that prohibits backdating and creates a fixed grant schedule or window period for equity grants in the future.

Compensation Committee Communications and Responsiveness

Consider the following factors case-by-case when evaluating ballot items related to executive pay on the board's responsiveness to investor input and engagement on compensation issues:

- Failure to respond to majority-supported shareholder proposals on executive pay topics; or
- Failure to adequately respond to the company's previous say-on-pay proposal that received the support of less than 70 percent of votes cast, taking into account:
 - Disclosure of engagement efforts with major institutional investors, including the frequency and timing of engagements and the company participants (including whether independent directors participated);

- Disclosure of the specific concerns voiced by dissenting shareholders that led to the say-on-pay opposition;
- Disclosure of specific and meaningful actions taken to address shareholders' concerns;
- Other recent compensation actions taken by the company;
- Whether the issues raised are recurring or isolated;
- The company's ownership structure; and
- Whether the support level was less than 50 percent, which would warrant the highest degree of responsiveness.

Frequency of Advisory Vote on Executive Compensation ("Say When on Pay")

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for annual advisory votes on compensation, which provide the most consistent and clear communication channel for shareholder concerns about companies' executive pay programs.

Voting on Golden Parachutes in an Acquisition, Merger, Consolidation, or Proposed Sale

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on say on Golden Parachute proposals, including consideration of existing change-in-control arrangements maintained with named executive officers but also considering new or extended arrangements.

Features that may result in an "against" recommendation include one or more of the following, depending on the number, magnitude, and/or timing of issue(s):

- Single- or modified-single-trigger cash severance;
- Single-trigger acceleration of unvested equity awards;
- Full acceleration of equity awards granted shortly before the change in control;
- Acceleration of performance awards above the target level of performance without compelling rationale;
- Excessive cash severance (generally >3x base salary and bonus);
- Excise tax gross-ups triggered and payable;
- Excessive golden parachute payments (on an absolute basis or as a percentage of transaction equity value); or
- Recent amendments that incorporate any problematic features (such as those above) or recent actions (such as extraordinary equity grants) that may make packages so attractive as to influence merger agreements that may not be in the best interests of shareholders; or
- The company's assertion that a proposed transaction is conditioned on shareholder approval of the golden parachute advisory vote.

Recent amendment(s) that incorporate problematic features will tend to carry more weight on the overall analysis. However, the presence of multiple legacy problematic features will also be closely scrutinized.

In cases where the golden parachute vote is incorporated into a company's advisory vote on compensation (management say-on-pay), ISS will evaluate the say-on-pay proposal in accordance with these guidelines, which may give higher weight to that component of the overall evaluation.

Equity-Based and Other Incentive Plans

Please refer to ISS' [U.S. Equity Compensation Plans FAQ](#) document for additional details on the Equity Plan Scorecard policy.

▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on certain equity-based compensation plans¹⁷ depending on a combination of certain plan features and equity grant practices, where positive factors may counterbalance negative factors, and vice versa, as evaluated using an "Equity Plan Scorecard" (EPSC) approach with three pillars:

- **Plan Cost:** The total estimated cost of the company's equity plans relative to industry/market cap peers, measured by the company's estimated Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) in relation to peers and considering both:
 - SVT based on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants, plus outstanding unvested/unexercised grants; and
 - SVT based only on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants.
- **Plan Features:**
 - Quality of disclosure around vesting upon a change in control (CIC);
 - Discretionary vesting authority;
 - Liberal share recycling on various award types;
 - Lack of minimum vesting period for grants made under the plan;
 - Dividends payable prior to award vesting.
- **Grant Practices:**
 - The company's three-year burn rate relative to its industry/market cap peers;
 - Vesting requirements in CEO's recent equity grants (3-year look-back);
 - The estimated duration of the plan (based on the sum of shares remaining available and the new shares requested, divided by the average annual shares granted in the prior three years);
 - The proportion of the CEO's most recent equity grants/awards subject to performance conditions;
 - Whether the company maintains a sufficient claw-back policy;
 - Whether the company maintains sufficient post-exercise/vesting share-holding requirements.

Generally vote against the plan proposal if the combination of above factors indicates that the plan is not, overall, in shareholders' interests, or if any of the following egregious factors ("overriding factors") apply:

- Awards may vest in connection with a liberal change-of-control definition;
- The plan would permit repricing or cash buyout of underwater options without shareholder approval (either by expressly permitting it – for NYSE and Nasdaq listed companies – or by not prohibiting it when the company has a history of repricing – for non-listed companies);
- The plan is a vehicle for problematic pay practices or a significant pay-for-performance disconnect under certain circumstances;
- The plan is excessively dilutive to shareholders' holdings;
- The plan contains an evergreen (automatic share replenishment) feature; or
- Any other plan features are determined to have a significant negative impact on shareholder interests.

Further Information on certain EPSC Factors:

Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT)

The cost of the equity plans is expressed as Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT), which is measured using a binomial option pricing model that assesses the amount of shareholders' equity flowing out of the company to employees and directors. SVT is expressed as both a dollar amount and as a percentage of market value, and includes the new

¹⁷ Proposals evaluated under the EPSC policy generally include those to approve or amend (1) stock option plans for employees and/or employees and directors, (2) restricted stock plans for employees and/or employees and directors, and (3) omnibus stock incentive plans for employees and/or employees and directors; amended plans will be further evaluated case-by-case.

shares proposed, shares available under existing plans, and shares granted but unexercised (using two measures, in the case of plans subject to the Equity Plan Scorecard evaluation, as noted above). All award types are valued. For omnibus plans, unless limitations are placed on the most expensive types of awards (for example, full-value awards), the assumption is made that all awards to be granted will be the most expensive types.

For proposals that are not subject to the Equity Plan Scorecard evaluation, Shareholder Value Transfer is reasonable if it falls below a company-specific benchmark. The benchmark is determined as follows: The top quartile performers in each industry group (using the Global Industry Classification Standard: GICS) are identified. Benchmark SVT levels for each industry are established based on these top performers' historic SVT. Regression analyses are run on each industry group to identify the variables most strongly correlated to SVT. The benchmark industry SVT level is then adjusted upwards or downwards for the specific company by plugging the company-specific performance measures, size and cash compensation into the industry cap equations to arrive at the company's benchmark.¹⁸

Three-Year Burn Rate

Burn-rate benchmarks (utilized in Equity Plan Scorecard evaluations) are calculated as the greater of: (1) the mean (μ) plus one standard deviation (σ) of the company's GICS group segmented by S&P 500, Russell 3000 index (less the S&P500), and non-Russell 3000 index; and (2) two percent of weighted common shares outstanding. In addition, year-over-year burn-rate benchmark changes will be limited to a maximum of two (2) percentage points plus or minus the prior year's burn-rate benchmark. See the [U.S. Equity Compensation Plans FAQ](#) for the benchmarks.

Egregious Factors

Liberal Change in Control Definition

Generally vote against equity plans if the plan has a liberal definition of change in control and the equity awards could vest upon such liberal definition of change in control, even though an actual change in control may not occur. Examples of such a definition include, but are not limited to, announcement or commencement of a tender offer, provisions for acceleration upon a "potential" takeover, shareholder approval of a merger or other transactions, or similar language.

Repricing Provisions

Vote against plans that expressly permit the repricing or exchange of underwater stock options/stock appreciate rights (SARs) without prior shareholder approval. "Repricing" typically includes the ability to do any of the following:

- Amend the terms of outstanding options or SARs to reduce the exercise price of such outstanding options or SARs;
- Cancel outstanding options or SARs in exchange for options or SARs with an exercise price that is less than the exercise price of the original options or SARs;
- Cancel underwater options in exchange for stock awards; or
- Provide cash buyouts of underwater options.

¹⁸ For plans evaluated under the Equity Plan Scorecard policy, the company's SVT benchmark is considered along with other factors.

While the above cover most types of repricing, ISS may view other provisions as akin to repricing depending on the facts and circumstances.

Also, vote against or withhold from members of the Compensation Committee who approved repricing (as defined above or otherwise determined by ISS), without prior shareholder approval, even if such repricings are allowed in their equity plan.

Vote against plans that do not expressly prohibit repricing or cash buyout of underwater options without shareholder approval if the company has a history of repricing/buyouts without shareholder approval, and the applicable listing standards would not preclude them from doing so.

Problematic Pay Practices or Significant Pay-for-Performance Disconnect

If the equity plan on the ballot is a vehicle for [problematic pay practices](#), vote against the plan.

ISS may recommend a vote against the equity plan if the plan is determined to be a vehicle for pay-for-performance misalignment. Considerations in voting against the equity plan may include, but are not limited to:

- Severity of the pay-for-performance misalignment;
- Whether problematic equity grant practices are driving the misalignment; and/or
- Whether equity plan awards have been heavily concentrated to the CEO and/or the other NEOs.

Amending Cash and Equity Plans (including Approval for Tax Deductibility (162(m)))



General Recommendation: Vote case-by-case on amendments to cash and equity incentive plans.

Generally vote for proposals to amend executive cash, stock, or cash and stock incentive plans if the proposal:

- Addresses administrative features only; or
- Seeks approval for Section 162(m) purposes only, and the plan administering committee consists entirely of independent directors, per [ISS' Classification of Directors](#). Note that if the company is presenting the plan to shareholders for the first time for any reason (including after the company's initial public offering), or if the proposal is bundled with other material plan amendments, then the recommendation will be case-by-case (see below).

Vote against proposals to amend executive cash, stock, or cash and stock incentive plans if the proposal:

- Seeks approval for Section 162(m) purposes only, and the plan administering committee does not consist entirely of independent directors, per [ISS' Classification of Directors](#).

Vote case-by-case on all other proposals to amend cash incentive plans. This includes plans presented to shareholders for the first time after the company's IPO and/or proposals that bundle material amendment(s) other than those for Section 162(m) purposes.

Vote case-by-case on all other proposals to amend equity incentive plans, considering the following:

- If the proposal requests additional shares and/or the amendments include a term extension or addition of full value awards as an award type, the recommendation will be based on the Equity Plan Scorecard evaluation as well as an analysis of the overall impact of the amendments.
- If the plan is being presented to shareholders for the first time (including after the company's IPO), whether or not additional shares are being requested, the recommendation will be based on the Equity Plan Scorecard evaluation as well as an analysis of the overall impact of any amendments.

- If there is no request for additional shares and the amendments do not include a term extension or addition of full value awards as an award type, then the recommendation will be based entirely on an analysis of the overall impact of the amendments, and the EPSC evaluation will be shown only for informational purposes.

In the first two case-by-case evaluation scenarios, the EPSC evaluation/score is the more heavily weighted consideration.

Specific Treatment of Certain Award Types in Equity Plan Evaluations

Dividend Equivalent Rights

Options that have Dividend Equivalent Rights (DERs) associated with them will have a higher calculated award value than those without DERs under the binomial model, based on the value of these dividend streams. The higher value will be applied to new shares, shares available under existing plans, and shares awarded but not exercised per the plan specifications. DERs transfer more shareholder equity to employees and non-employee directors and this cost should be captured.

Operating Partnership (OP) Units in Equity Plan Analysis of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)

For Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), include the common shares issuable upon conversion of outstanding Operating Partnership (OP) units in the share count for the purposes of determining: (1) market capitalization in the Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) analysis and (2) shares outstanding in the burn rate analysis.

Other Compensation Plans

401(k) Employee Benefit Plans

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to implement a 401(k) savings plan for employees.

Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs)

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to implement an ESOP or increase authorized shares for existing ESOPs, unless the number of shares allocated to the ESOP is excessive (more than five percent of outstanding shares).

Employee Stock Purchase Plans—Qualified Plans

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on qualified employee stock purchase plans. Vote for employee stock purchase plans where all of the following apply:

- Purchase price is at least 85 percent of fair market value;
- Offering period is 27 months or less; and
- The number of shares allocated to the plan is 10 percent or less of the outstanding shares.

Vote against qualified employee stock purchase plans where when the plan features do not meet all of the above criteria.

Employee Stock Purchase Plans—Non-Qualified Plans


- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on nonqualified employee stock purchase plans. Vote for nonqualified employee stock purchase plans with all the following features:

- Broad-based participation;
- Limits on employee contribution, which may be a fixed dollar amount or expressed as a percent of base salary;
- Company matching contribution up to 25 percent of employee's contribution, which is effectively a discount of 20 percent from market value; and

- No discount on the stock price on the date of purchase when there is a company matching contribution.

Vote against nonqualified employee stock purchase plans when the plan features do not meet all of the above criteria. If the matching contribution or effective discount exceeds the above, ISS may evaluate the SVT cost of the plan as part of the assessment.

Option Exchange Programs/Repricing Options

 **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on management proposals seeking approval to exchange/reprice options taking into consideration:


- Historic trading patterns--the stock price should not be so volatile that the options are likely to be back “in-the-money” over the near term;
- Rationale for the re-pricing--was the stock price decline beyond management's control?;
- Is this a value-for-value exchange?;
- Are surrendered stock options added back to the plan reserve?;
- Timing--repricing should occur at least one year out from any precipitous drop in company's stock price;
- Option vesting--does the new option vest immediately or is there a black-out period?;
- Term of the option--the term should remain the same as that of the replaced option;
- Exercise price--should be set at fair market or a premium to market;
- Participants--executive officers and directors must be excluded.

If the surrendered options are added back to the equity plans for re-issuance, then also take into consideration the company's total cost of equity plans and its three-year average burn rate.

In addition to the above considerations, evaluate the intent, rationale, and timing of the repricing proposal. The proposal should clearly articulate why the board is choosing to conduct an exchange program at this point in time. Repricing underwater options after a recent precipitous drop in the company's stock price demonstrates poor timing and warrants additional scrutiny. Also, consider the terms of the surrendered options, such as the grant date, exercise price and vesting schedule. Grant dates of surrendered options should be far enough back (two to three years) so as not to suggest that repricings are being done to take advantage of short-term downward price movements. Similarly, the exercise price of surrendered options should be above the 52-week high for the stock price.

Vote for shareholder proposals to put option repricings to a shareholder vote.


Stock Plans in Lieu of Cash

 **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on plans that provide participants with the option of taking all or a portion of their cash compensation in the form of stock.

Vote for non-employee director-only equity plans that provide a dollar-for-dollar cash-for-stock exchange.

Vote case-by-case on plans which do not provide a dollar-for-dollar cash for stock exchange. In cases where the exchange is not dollar-for-dollar, the request for new or additional shares for such equity program will be considered using the binomial option pricing model. In an effort to capture the total cost of total compensation, ISS will not make any adjustments to carve out the in-lieu-of cash compensation.

Transfer Stock Option (TSO) Programs

 **General Recommendation:** One-time Transfers: Vote against or withhold from compensation committee members if they fail to submit one-time transfers to shareholders for approval.

Vote case-by-case on one-time transfers. Vote for if:

- Executive officers and non-employee directors are excluded from participating;
- Stock options are purchased by third-party financial institutions at a discount to their fair value using option pricing models such as Black-Scholes or a Binomial Option Valuation or other appropriate financial models; and
- There is a two-year minimum holding period for sale proceeds (cash or stock) for all participants.

Additionally, management should provide a clear explanation of why options are being transferred to a third-party institution and whether the events leading up to a decline in stock price were beyond management's control. A review of the company's historic stock price volatility should indicate if the options are likely to be back "in-the-money" over the near term.


Ongoing TSO program: Vote against equity plan proposals if the details of ongoing TSO programs are not provided to shareholders. Since TSOs will be one of the award types under a stock plan, the ongoing TSO program, structure and mechanics must be disclosed to shareholders. The specific criteria to be considered in evaluating these proposals include, but not limited to, the following:

- Eligibility;
- Vesting;
- Bid-price;
- Term of options;
- Cost of the program and impact of the TSOs on company's total option expense; and
- Option repricing policy.

Amendments to existing plans that allow for introduction of transferability of stock options should make clear that only options granted post-amendment shall be transferable.

Director Compensation

Shareholder Ratification of Director Pay Programs

 **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on management proposals seeking ratification of non-employee director compensation, based on the following factors:

- If the equity plan under which non-employee director grants are made is on the ballot, whether or not it warrants support; and
- An assessment of the following qualitative factors:
 - The relative magnitude of director compensation as compared to companies of a similar profile;
 - The presence of problematic pay practices relating to director compensation;
 - Director stock ownership guidelines and holding requirements;
 - Equity award vesting schedules;
 - The mix of cash and equity-based compensation;
 - Meaningful limits on director compensation;
 - The availability of retirement benefits or perquisites; and
 - The quality of disclosure surrounding director compensation.

Equity Plans for Non-Employee Directors

 **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on compensation plans for non-employee directors, based on:


- The total estimated cost of the company's equity plans relative to industry/market cap peers, measured by the company's estimated Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) based on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants, plus outstanding unvested/unexercised grants;
- The company's three-year burn rate relative to its industry/market cap peers (in certain circumstances); and

- The presence of any egregious plan features (such as an option repricing provision or liberal CIC vesting risk).

On occasion, non-employee director stock plans will exceed the plan cost or burn-rate benchmarks when combined with employee or executive stock plans. In such cases, vote case-by-case on the plan taking into consideration the following qualitative factors:


- The relative magnitude of director compensation as compared to companies of a similar profile;
- The presence of problematic pay practices relating to director compensation;
- Director stock ownership guidelines and holding requirements;
- Equity award vesting schedules;
- The mix of cash and equity-based compensation;
- Meaningful limits on director compensation;
- The availability of retirement benefits or perquisites; and
- The quality of disclosure surrounding director compensation.

Non-Employee Director Retirement Plans


-  **General Recommendation:** Vote against retirement plans for non-employee directors. Vote for shareholder proposals to eliminate retirement plans for non-employee directors.

Shareholder Proposals on Compensation


Bonus Banking/Bonus Banking “Plus”

-  **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals seeking deferral of a portion of annual bonus pay, with ultimate payout linked to sustained results for the performance metrics on which the bonus was earned (whether for the named executive officers or a wider group of employees), taking into account the following factors:
- The company’s past practices regarding equity and cash compensation;
 - Whether the company has a holding period or stock ownership requirements in place, such as a meaningful retention ratio (at least 50 percent for full tenure); and
 - Whether the company has a rigorous claw-back policy in place.

Compensation Consultants—Disclosure of Board or Company’s Utilization

-  **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for shareholder proposals seeking disclosure regarding the company, board, or compensation committee’s use of compensation consultants, such as company name, business relationship(s), and fees paid.

Disclosure/Setting Levels or Types of Compensation for Executives and Directors

-  **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for shareholder proposals seeking additional disclosure of executive and director pay information, provided the information requested is relevant to shareholders' needs, would not put the company at a competitive disadvantage relative to its industry, and is not unduly burdensome to the company.

Generally vote against shareholder proposals seeking to set absolute levels on compensation or otherwise dictate the amount or form of compensation (such as types of compensation elements or specific metrics) to be used for executive or directors.

Generally vote against shareholder proposals that mandate a minimum amount of stock that directors must own in order to qualify as a director or to remain on the board.

Vote case-by-case on all other shareholder proposals regarding executive and director pay, taking into account relevant factors, including but not limited to: company performance, pay level and design versus peers, history of compensation concerns or pay-for-performance disconnect, and/or the scope and prescriptive nature of the proposal.

Golden Coffins/Executive Death Benefits

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals calling for companies to adopt a policy of obtaining shareholder approval for any future agreements and corporate policies that could oblige the company to make payments or awards following the death of a senior executive in the form of unearned salary or bonuses, accelerated vesting or the continuation in force of unvested equity grants, perquisites and other payments or awards made in lieu of compensation. This would not apply to any benefit programs or equity plan proposals for which the broad-based employee population is eligible.

Hold Equity Past Retirement or for a Significant Period of Time

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals asking companies to adopt policies requiring senior executive officers to retain a portion of net shares acquired through compensation plans. The following factors will be taken into account:
- The percentage/ratio of net shares required to be retained;
 - The time period required to retain the shares;
 - Whether the company has equity retention, holding period, and/or stock ownership requirements in place and the robustness of such requirements;
 - Whether the company has any other policies aimed at mitigating risk taking by executives;
 - Executives' actual stock ownership and the degree to which it meets or exceeds the proponent's suggested holding period/retention ratio or the company's existing requirements; and
 - Problematic pay practices, current and past, which may demonstrate a short-term versus long-term focus.

Pay Disparity

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals calling for an analysis of the pay disparity between corporate executives and other non-executive employees. The following factors will be considered:
- The company's current level of disclosure of its executive compensation setting process, including how the company considers pay disparity;
 - If any problematic pay practices or pay-for-performance concerns have been identified at the company; and
 - The level of shareholder support for the company's pay programs.

Generally vote against proposals calling for the company to use the pay disparity analysis or pay ratio in a specific way to set or limit executive pay.


Pay for Performance/Performance-Based Awards

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals requesting that a significant amount of future long-term incentive compensation awarded to senior executives shall be performance-based and requesting that the board adopt and disclose challenging performance metrics to shareholders, based on the following analytical steps:
- First, vote for shareholder proposals advocating the use of performance-based equity awards, such as performance contingent options or restricted stock, indexed options or premium-priced options, unless the proposal is overly restrictive or if the company has demonstrated that it is using a "substantial" portion of performance-based awards for its top executives. Standard stock options and performance-accelerated awards do not meet the criteria to be considered as performance-based awards. Further, premium-priced options should have a meaningful premium to be considered performance-based awards.

- Second, assess the rigor of the company's performance-based equity program. If the bar set for the performance-based program is too low based on the company's historical or peer group comparison, generally vote for the proposal. Furthermore, if target performance results in an above target payout, vote for the shareholder proposal due to program's poor design. If the company does not disclose the performance metric of the performance-based equity program, vote for the shareholder proposal regardless of the outcome of the first step to the test.

In general, vote for the shareholder proposal if the company does not meet both of the above two steps.

Pay for Superior Performance


 **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals that request the board establish a pay-for-superior performance standard in the company's executive compensation plan for senior executives. These proposals generally include the following principles:

- Set compensation targets for the plan's annual and long-term incentive pay components at or below the peer group median;
- Deliver a majority of the plan's target long-term compensation through performance-vested, not simply time-vested, equity awards;
- Provide the strategic rationale and relative weightings of the financial and non-financial performance metrics or criteria used in the annual and performance-vested long-term incentive components of the plan;
- Establish performance targets for each plan financial metric relative to the performance of the company's peer companies;
- Limit payment under the annual and performance-vested long-term incentive components of the plan to when the company's performance on its selected financial performance metrics exceeds peer group median performance.

Consider the following factors in evaluating this proposal:


- What aspects of the company's annual and long-term equity incentive programs are performance driven?
- If the annual and long-term equity incentive programs are performance driven, are the performance criteria and hurdle rates disclosed to shareholders or are they benchmarked against a disclosed peer group?
- Can shareholders assess the correlation between pay and performance based on the current disclosure?
- What type of industry and stage of business cycle does the company belong to?

Pre-Arranged Trading Plans (10b5-1 Plans)

 **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for shareholder proposals calling for certain principles regarding the use of prearranged trading plans (10b5-1 plans) for executives. These principles include:

- Adoption, amendment, or termination of a 10b5-1 Plan must be disclosed within two business days in a Form 8-K;
- Amendment or early termination of a 10b5-1 Plan is allowed only under extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the board;
- Ninety days must elapse between adoption or amendment of a 10b5-1 Plan and initial trading under the plan;
- Reports on Form 4 must identify transactions made pursuant to a 10b5-1 Plan;
- An executive may not trade in company stock outside the 10b5-1 Plan;
- Trades under a 10b5-1 Plan must be handled by a broker who does not handle other securities transactions for the executive.

Prohibit Outside CEOs from Serving on Compensation Committees

 **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals seeking a policy to prohibit any outside CEO from serving on a company's compensation committee, unless the company has demonstrated problematic pay practices that raise concerns about the performance and composition of the committee.

Recoupment of Incentive or Stock Compensation in Specified Circumstances

- **General Recommendation:** : Vote case-by-case on proposals to recoup incentive cash or stock compensation made to senior executives if it is later determined that the figures upon which incentive compensation is earned turn out to have been in error, or if the senior executive has breached company policy or has engaged in misconduct that may be significantly detrimental to the company's financial position or reputation, or if the senior executive failed to manage or monitor risks that subsequently led to significant financial or reputational harm to the company. Many companies have adopted policies that permit recoupment in cases where an executive's fraud, misconduct, or negligence significantly contributed to a restatement of financial results that led to the awarding of unearned incentive compensation. However, such policies may be narrow given that not all misconduct or negligence may result in significant financial restatements. Misconduct, negligence or lack of sufficient oversight by senior executives may lead to significant financial loss or reputational damage that may have long-lasting impact.

In considering whether to support such shareholder proposals, ISS will take into consideration the following factors:

- If the company has adopted a formal recoupment policy;
- The rigor of the recoupment policy focusing on how and under what circumstances the company may recoup incentive or stock compensation;
- Whether the company has chronic restatement history or material financial problems;
- Whether the company's policy substantially addresses the concerns raised by the proponent;
- Disclosure of recoupment of incentive or stock compensation from senior executives or lack thereof; or
- Any other relevant factors.

Severance Agreements for Executives/Golden Parachutes

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for shareholder proposals requiring that golden parachutes or executive severance agreements be submitted for shareholder ratification, unless the proposal requires shareholder approval *prior* to entering into employment contracts.

Vote case-by-case on proposals to ratify or cancel golden parachutes. An acceptable parachute should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- The triggering mechanism should be beyond the control of management;
- The amount should not exceed three times base amount (defined as the average annual taxable W-2 compensation during the five years prior to the year in which the change of control occurs);
- Change-in-control payments should be double-triggered, i.e., (1) after a change in control has taken place, and (2) termination of the executive as a result of the change in control. Change in control is defined as a change in the company ownership structure.

Share Buyback Impact on Incentive Program Metrics

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals requesting the company exclude the impact of share buybacks from the calculation of incentive program metrics, considering the following factors:
- The frequency and timing of the company's share buybacks;
 - The use of per-share metrics in incentive plans;
 - The effect of recent buybacks on incentive metric results and payouts; and
 - Whether there is any indication of metric result manipulation.

Supplemental Executive Retirement Plans (SERPs)

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for shareholder proposals requesting to put extraordinary benefits contained in SERP agreements to a shareholder vote unless the company's executive pension plans do not contain excessive benefits beyond what is offered under employee-wide plans.

Generally vote for shareholder proposals requesting to limit the executive benefits provided under the company's supplemental executive retirement plan (SERP) by limiting covered compensation to a senior executive's annual salary or those pay elements covered for the general employee population.

Tax Gross-Up Proposals

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals calling for companies to adopt a policy of not providing tax gross-up payments to executives, except in situations where gross-ups are provided pursuant to a plan, policy, or arrangement applicable to management employees of the company, such as a relocation or expatriate tax equalization policy.

Termination of Employment Prior to Severance Payment/Eliminating Accelerated Vesting of Unvested Equity

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals seeking a policy requiring termination of employment prior to severance payment and/or eliminating accelerated vesting of unvested equity.

The following factors will be considered:

- The company's current treatment of equity upon employment termination and/or in change-in-control situations (i.e., vesting is double triggered and/or pro rata, does it allow for the assumption of equity by acquiring company, the treatment of performance shares, etc.);
- Current employment agreements, including potential poor pay practices such as gross-ups embedded in those agreements.

Generally vote for proposals seeking a policy that prohibits automatic acceleration of the vesting of equity awards to senior executives upon a voluntary termination of employment or in the event of a change in control (except for pro rata vesting considering the time elapsed and attainment of any related performance goals between the award date and the change in control).

6. Routine/Miscellaneous

Adjourn Meeting

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals to provide management with the authority to adjourn an annual or special meeting absent compelling reasons to support the proposal.

Vote for proposals that relate specifically to soliciting votes for a merger or transaction if supporting that merger or transaction. Vote against proposals if the wording is too vague or if the proposal includes "other business."

Amend Quorum Requirements

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to reduce quorum requirements for shareholder meetings below a majority of the shares outstanding unless there are compelling reasons to support the proposal.

Amend Minor Bylaws

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote for bylaw or charter changes that are of a housekeeping nature (updates or corrections).

Change Company Name

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals to change the corporate name unless there is compelling evidence that the change would adversely impact shareholder value.

Change Date, Time, or Location of Annual Meeting

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote for management proposals to change the date, time, or location of the annual meeting unless the proposed change is unreasonable.

Vote against shareholder proposals to change the date, time, or location of the annual meeting unless the current scheduling or location is unreasonable.

Other Business

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to approve other business when it appears as a voting item.

7. Social and Environmental Issues

Global Approach

Issues covered under the policy include a wide range of topics, including consumer and product safety, environment and energy, labor standards and human rights, workplace and board diversity, and corporate political issues. While a variety of factors goes into each analysis, the overall principle guiding all vote recommendations focuses on how the proposal may enhance or protect shareholder value in either the short or long term.

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote case-by-case, examining primarily whether implementation of the proposal is likely to enhance or protect shareholder value. The following factors will be considered:
- If the issues presented in the proposal are more appropriately or effectively dealt with through legislation or government regulation;
 - If the company has already responded in an appropriate and sufficient manner to the issue(s) raised in the proposal;
 - Whether the proposal's request is unduly burdensome (scope or timeframe) or overly prescriptive;
 - The company's approach compared with any industry standard practices for addressing the issue(s) raised by the proposal;
 - Whether there are significant controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's environmental or social practices;
 - If the proposal requests increased disclosure or greater transparency, whether reasonable and sufficient information is currently available to shareholders from the company or from other publicly available sources; and
 - If the proposal requests increased disclosure or greater transparency, whether implementation would reveal proprietary or confidential information that could place the company at a competitive disadvantage.

Endorsement of Principles

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals seeking a company's endorsement of principles that support a particular public policy position. Endorsing a set of principles may require a company to take a stand on an issue that is beyond its own control and may limit its flexibility with respect to future developments. Management and the board should be afforded the flexibility to make decisions on specific public policy positions based on their own assessment of the most beneficial strategies for the company.

Animal Welfare

Animal Welfare Policies

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals seeking a report on a company's animal welfare standards, or animal welfare-related risks, unless:
- The company has already published a set of animal welfare standards and monitors compliance;
 - The company's standards are comparable to industry peers; and
 - There are no recent significant fines, litigation, or controversies related to the company's and/or its suppliers' treatment of animals.

Animal Testing

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals to phase out the use of animals in product testing, unless:

- The company is conducting animal testing programs that are unnecessary or not required by regulation;
- The company is conducting animal testing when suitable alternatives are commonly accepted and used by industry peers; or
- There are recent, significant fines or litigation related to the company's treatment of animals.

Animal Slaughter

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals requesting the implementation of Controlled Atmosphere Killing (CAK) methods at company and/or supplier operations unless such methods are required by legislation or generally accepted as the industry standard.

Vote case-by-case on proposals requesting a report on the feasibility of implementing CAK methods at company and/or supplier operations considering the availability of existing research conducted by the company or industry groups on this topic and any fines or litigation related to current animal processing procedures at the company.

Consumer Issues

Genetically Modified Ingredients

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals requesting that a company voluntarily label genetically engineered (GE) ingredients in its products. The labeling of products with GE ingredients is best left to the appropriate regulatory authorities.

Vote case-by-case on proposals asking for a report on the feasibility of labeling products containing GE ingredients, taking into account:

- The potential impact of such labeling on the company's business;
- The quality of the company's disclosure on GE product labeling, related voluntary initiatives, and how this disclosure compares with industry peer disclosure; and
- Company's current disclosure on the feasibility of GE product labeling.

Generally vote against proposals seeking a report on the social, health, and environmental effects of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Studies of this sort are better undertaken by regulators and the scientific community.

Generally vote against proposals to eliminate GE ingredients from the company's products, or proposals asking for reports outlining the steps necessary to eliminate GE ingredients from the company's products. Such decisions are more appropriately made by management with consideration of current regulations.

Reports on Potentially Controversial Business/Financial Practices

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on requests for reports on a company's potentially controversial business or financial practices or products, taking into account:

- Whether the company has adequately disclosed mechanisms in place to prevent abuses;
- Whether the company has adequately disclosed the financial risks of the products/practices in question;
- Whether the company has been subject to violations of related laws or serious controversies; and
- Peer companies' policies/practices in this area.

Pharmaceutical Pricing, Access to Medicines, and Prescription Drug Reimportation

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals requesting that companies implement specific price restraints on pharmaceutical products unless the company fails to adhere to legislative guidelines or industry norms in its product pricing practices.

Vote case-by-case on proposals requesting that a company report on its product pricing or access to medicine policies, considering:

- The potential for reputational, market, and regulatory risk exposure;
- Existing disclosure of relevant policies;
- Deviation from established industry norms;
- Relevant company initiatives to provide research and/or products to disadvantaged consumers;
- Whether the proposal focuses on specific products or geographic regions;
- The potential burden and scope of the requested report;
- Recent significant controversies, litigation, or fines at the company.

Generally vote for proposals requesting that a company report on the financial and legal impact of its prescription drug reimportation policies unless such information is already publicly disclosed.

Generally vote against proposals requesting that companies adopt specific policies to encourage or constrain prescription drug reimportation. Such matters are more appropriately the province of legislative activity and may place the company at a competitive disadvantage relative to its peers.

Product Safety and Toxic/Hazardous Materials

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals requesting that a company report on its policies, initiatives/procedures, and oversight mechanisms related to toxic/hazardous materials or product safety in its supply chain, unless:

- The company already discloses similar information through existing reports such as a supplier code of conduct and/or a sustainability report;
- The company has formally committed to the implementation of a toxic/hazardous materials and/or product safety and supply chain reporting and monitoring program based on industry norms or similar standards within a specified time frame; and
- The company has not been recently involved in relevant significant controversies, fines, or litigation.

Vote case-by-case on resolutions requesting that companies develop a feasibility assessment to phase-out of certain toxic/hazardous materials, or evaluate and disclose the potential financial and legal risks associated with utilizing certain materials, considering:

- The company's current level of disclosure regarding its product safety policies, initiatives, and oversight mechanisms;
- Current regulations in the markets in which the company operates; and
- Recent significant controversies, litigation, or fines stemming from toxic/hazardous materials at the company.

Generally vote against resolutions requiring that a company reformulate its products.

Tobacco-Related Proposals

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on resolutions regarding the advertisement of tobacco products, considering:

- Recent related fines, controversies, or significant litigation;
- Whether the company complies with relevant laws and regulations on the marketing of tobacco;

- Whether the company's advertising restrictions deviate from those of industry peers;
- Whether the company entered into the Master Settlement Agreement, which restricts marketing of tobacco to youth; and
- Whether restrictions on marketing to youth extend to foreign countries.

Vote case-by-case on proposals regarding second-hand smoke, considering;


- Whether the company complies with all laws and regulations;
- The degree that voluntary restrictions beyond those mandated by law might hurt the company's competitiveness; and
- The risk of any health-related liabilities.

Generally vote against resolutions to cease production of tobacco-related products, to avoid selling products to tobacco companies, to spin-off tobacco-related businesses, or prohibit investment in tobacco equities. Such business decisions are better left to company management or portfolio managers.

Generally vote against proposals regarding tobacco product warnings. Such decisions are better left to public health authorities.

Climate Change

Climate Change/Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

 **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for resolutions requesting that a company disclose information on the financial, physical, or regulatory risks it faces related to climate change on its operations and investments or on how the company identifies, measures, and manages such risks, considering:

- Whether the company already provides current, publicly-available information on the impact that climate change may have on the company as well as associated company policies and procedures to address related risks and/or opportunities;
- The company's level of disclosure compared to industry peers; and
- Whether there are significant controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's climate change-related performance.

Generally vote for proposals requesting a report on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from company operations and/or products and operations, unless:

- The company already discloses current, publicly-available information on the impacts that GHG emissions may have on the company as well as associated company policies and procedures to address related risks and/or opportunities;
- The company's level of disclosure is comparable to that of industry peers; and
- There are no significant, controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's GHG emissions.

Vote case-by-case on proposals that call for the adoption of GHG reduction goals from products and operations, taking into account:

- Whether the company provides disclosure of year-over-year GHG emissions performance data;
- Whether company disclosure lags behind industry peers;
- The company's actual GHG emissions performance;
- The company's current GHG emission policies, oversight mechanisms, and related initiatives; and

- Whether the company has been the subject of recent, significant violations, fines, litigation, or controversy related to GHG emissions.

Energy Efficiency

▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals requesting that a company report on its energy efficiency policies, unless:

- The company complies with applicable energy efficiency regulations and laws, and discloses its participation in energy efficiency policies and programs, including disclosure of benchmark data, targets, and performance measures; or
- The proponent requests adoption of specific energy efficiency goals within specific timelines.

Renewable Energy

▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for requests for reports on the feasibility of developing renewable energy resources unless the report would be duplicative of existing disclosure or irrelevant to the company's line of business.

Generally vote against proposals requesting that the company invest in renewable energy resources. Such decisions are best left to management's evaluation of the feasibility and financial impact that such programs may have on the company.

Generally vote against proposals that call for the adoption of renewable energy goals, taking into account:

- The scope and structure of the proposal;
- The company's current level of disclosure on renewable energy use and GHG emissions; and
- The company's disclosure of policies, practices, and oversight implemented to manage GHG emissions and mitigate climate change risks.

Diversity

Board Diversity

▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for requests for reports on a company's efforts to diversify the board, unless:

- The gender and racial minority representation of the company's board is reasonably inclusive in relation to companies of similar size and business; and
- The board already reports on its nominating procedures and gender and racial minority initiatives on the board and within the company.

Vote case-by-case on proposals asking a company to increase the gender and racial minority representation on its board, taking into account:

- The degree of existing gender and racial minority diversity on the company's board and among its executive officers;
- The level of gender and racial minority representation that exists at the company's industry peers;
- The company's established process for addressing gender and racial minority board representation;
- Whether the proposal includes an overly prescriptive request to amend nominating committee charter language;
- The independence of the company's nominating committee;
- Whether the company uses an outside search firm to identify potential director nominees; and
- Whether the company has had recent controversies, fines, or litigation regarding equal employment practices.

Equality of Opportunity

▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals requesting a company disclose its diversity policies or initiatives, or proposals requesting disclosure of a company's comprehensive workforce diversity data, including requests for EEO-1 data, unless:

- The company publicly discloses equal opportunity policies and initiatives in a comprehensive manner;
- The company already publicly discloses comprehensive workforce diversity data; and
- The company has no recent significant EEO-related violations or litigation.

Generally vote against proposals seeking information on the diversity efforts of suppliers and service providers. Such requests may pose a significant burden on the company.

Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, and Domestic Partner Benefits

▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals seeking to amend a company's EEO statement or diversity policies to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity, unless the change would be unduly burdensome.

Generally vote against proposals to extend company benefits to, or eliminate benefits from, domestic partners. Decisions regarding benefits should be left to the discretion of the company.

Gender, Race/Ethnicity Pay Gap

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on requests for reports on a company's pay data by gender or race/ethnicity, or a report on a company's policies and goals to reduce any gender or race/ethnicity pay gaps, taking into account:

- The company's current policies and disclosure related to both its diversity and inclusion policies and practices and its compensation philosophy on fair and equitable compensation practices;
- Whether the company has been the subject of recent controversy, litigation, or regulatory actions related to gender, race, or ethnicity pay gap issues;
- The company's disclosure regarding gender, race, or ethnicity pay gap policies or initiatives compared to its industry peers; and
- Local laws regarding categorization of race and/or ethnicity and definitions of ethnic and/or racial minorities.

Environment and Sustainability

Facility and Workplace Safety

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on requests for workplace safety reports, including reports on accident risk reduction efforts, taking into account:

- The company's current level of disclosure of its workplace health and safety performance data, health and safety management policies, initiatives, and oversight mechanisms;
- The nature of the company's business, specifically regarding company and employee exposure to health and safety risks;
- Recent significant controversies, fines, or violations related to workplace health and safety; and
- The company's workplace health and safety performance relative to industry peers.

Vote case-by-case on resolutions requesting that a company report on safety and/or security risks associated with its operations and/or facilities, considering:

- The company's compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines;

- The company's current level of disclosure regarding its security and safety policies, procedures, and compliance monitoring; and
- The existence of recent, significant violations, fines, or controversy regarding the safety and security of the company's operations and/or facilities.

General Environmental Proposals and Community Impact Assessments

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on requests for reports on policies and/or the potential (community) social and/or environmental impact of company operations, considering:

- Current disclosure of applicable policies and risk assessment report(s) and risk management procedures;
- The impact of regulatory non-compliance, litigation, remediation, or reputational loss that may be associated with failure to manage the company's operations in question, including the management of relevant community and stakeholder relations;
- The nature, purpose, and scope of the company's operations in the specific region(s);
- The degree to which company policies and procedures are consistent with industry norms; and
- The scope of the resolution.

Hydraulic Fracturing

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals requesting greater disclosure of a company's (natural gas) hydraulic fracturing operations, including measures the company has taken to manage and mitigate the potential community and environmental impacts of those operations, considering:

- The company's current level of disclosure of relevant policies and oversight mechanisms;
- The company's current level of such disclosure relative to its industry peers;
- Potential relevant local, state, or national regulatory developments; and
- Controversies, fines, or litigation related to the company's hydraulic fracturing operations.

Operations in Protected Areas

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for requests for reports on potential environmental damage as a result of company operations in protected regions, unless:

- Operations in the specified regions are not permitted by current laws or regulations;
- The company does not currently have operations or plans to develop operations in these protected regions; or
- The company's disclosure of its operations and environmental policies in these regions is comparable to industry peers.

Recycling

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to report on an existing recycling program, or adopt a new recycling program, taking into account:

- The nature of the company's business;
- The current level of disclosure of the company's existing related programs;
- The timetable and methods of program implementation prescribed by the proposal;
- The company's ability to address the issues raised in the proposal; and
- How the company's recycling programs compare to similar programs of its industry peers.

Sustainability Reporting

➤ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals requesting that a company report on its policies, initiatives, and oversight mechanisms related to social, economic, and environmental sustainability, unless:

- The company already discloses similar information through existing reports or policies such as an environment, health, and safety (EHS) report; a comprehensive code of corporate conduct; and/or a diversity report; or
- The company has formally committed to the implementation of a reporting program based on Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines or a similar standard within a specified time frame.

Water Issues

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals requesting a company report on, or adopt a new policy on, water-related risks and concerns, taking into account:

- The company's current disclosure of relevant policies, initiatives, oversight mechanisms, and water usage metrics;
- Whether or not the company's existing water-related policies and practices are consistent with relevant internationally recognized standards and national/local regulations;
- The potential financial impact or risk to the company associated with water-related concerns or issues; and
- Recent, significant company controversies, fines, or litigation regarding water use by the company and its suppliers.

General Corporate Issues

Charitable Contributions

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals restricting a company from making charitable contributions. Charitable contributions are generally useful for assisting worthwhile causes and for creating goodwill in the community. In the absence of bad faith, self-dealing, or gross negligence, management should determine which, and if, contributions are in the best interests of the company.

Data Security, Privacy, and Internet Issues

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals requesting the disclosure or implementation of data security, privacy, or information access and management policies and procedures, considering:

- The level of disclosure of company policies and procedures relating to data security, privacy, freedom of speech, information access and management, and Internet censorship;
- Engagement in dialogue with governments or relevant groups with respect to data security, privacy, or the free flow of information on the Internet;
- The scope of business involvement and of investment in countries whose governments censor or monitor the Internet and other telecommunications;
- Applicable market-specific laws or regulations that may be imposed on the company; and
- Controversies, fines, or litigation related to data security, privacy, freedom of speech, or Internet censorship.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Compensation-Related Proposals

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to link, or report on linking, executive compensation to sustainability (environmental and social) criteria, considering:

- The scope and prescriptive nature of the proposal;
- Whether the company has significant and/or persistent controversies or regulatory violations regarding social and/or environmental issues;
- Whether the company has management systems and oversight mechanisms in place regarding its social and environmental performance;
- The degree to which industry peers have incorporated similar non-financial performance criteria in their executive compensation practices; and
- The company's current level of disclosure regarding its environmental and social performance.

Human Rights, Human Capital Management, and International Operations

Human Rights Proposals

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals requesting a report on company or company supplier labor and/or human rights standards and policies unless such information is already publicly disclosed.

Vote case-by-case on proposals to implement company or company supplier labor and/or human rights standards and policies, considering:

- The degree to which existing relevant policies and practices are disclosed;
- Whether or not existing relevant policies are consistent with internationally recognized standards;
- Whether company facilities and those of its suppliers are monitored and how;
- Company participation in fair labor organizations or other internationally recognized human rights initiatives;
- Scope and nature of business conducted in markets known to have higher risk of workplace labor/human rights abuse;
- Recent, significant company controversies, fines, or litigation regarding human rights at the company or its suppliers;
- The scope of the request; and
- Deviation from industry sector peer company standards and practices.

Vote case-by-case on proposals requesting that a company conduct an assessment of the human rights risks in its operations or in its supply chain, or report on its human rights risk assessment process, considering:

- The degree to which existing relevant policies and practices are disclosed, including information on the implementation of these policies and any related oversight mechanisms;
- The company's industry and whether the company or its suppliers operate in countries or areas where there is a history of human rights concerns;
- Recent significant controversies, fines, or litigation regarding human rights involving the company or its suppliers, and whether the company has taken remedial steps; and
- Whether the proposal is unduly burdensome or overly prescriptive.

Mandatory Arbitration

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on requests for a report on a company's use of mandatory arbitration on employment-related claims, taking into account:

- The company's current policies and practices related to the use of mandatory arbitration agreements on workplace claims;
- Whether the company has been the subject of recent controversy, litigation, or regulatory actions related to the use of mandatory arbitration agreements on workplace claims; and
- The company's disclosure of its policies and practices related to the use of mandatory arbitration agreements compared to its peers.

Operations in High Risk Markets

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on requests for a report on a company's potential financial and reputational risks associated with operations in "high-risk" markets, such as a terrorism-sponsoring state or politically/socially unstable region, taking into account:

- The nature, purpose, and scope of the operations and business involved that could be affected by social or political disruption;

- Current disclosure of applicable risk assessment(s) and risk management procedures;
- Compliance with U.S. sanctions and laws;
- Consideration of other international policies, standards, and laws; and
- Whether the company has been recently involved in recent, significant controversies, fines, or litigation related to its operations in "high-risk" markets.

Outsourcing/Offshoring

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals calling for companies to report on the risks associated with outsourcing/plant closures, considering:

- Controversies surrounding operations in the relevant market(s);
- The value of the requested report to shareholders;
- The company's current level of disclosure of relevant information on outsourcing and plant closure procedures; and
- The company's existing human rights standards relative to industry peers.

Sexual Harassment

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on requests for a report on company actions taken to strengthen policies and oversight to prevent workplace sexual harassment, or a report on risks posed by a company's failure to prevent workplace sexual harassment, taking into account:

- The company's current policies, practices, oversight mechanisms related to preventing workplace sexual harassment;
- Whether the company has been the subject of recent controversy, litigation, or regulatory actions related to workplace sexual harassment issues; and
- The company's disclosure regarding workplace sexual harassment policies or initiatives compared to its industry peers.

Weapons and Military Sales

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote against reports on foreign military sales or offsets. Such disclosures may involve sensitive and confidential information. Moreover, companies must comply with government controls and reporting on foreign military sales.

Generally vote against proposals asking a company to cease production or report on the risks associated with the use of depleted uranium munitions or nuclear weapons components and delivery systems, including disengaging from current and proposed contracts. Such contracts are monitored by government agencies, serve multiple military and non-military uses, and withdrawal from these contracts could have a negative impact on the company's business.

Political Activities

Lobbying

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals requesting information on a company's lobbying (including direct, indirect, and grassroots lobbying) activities, policies, or procedures, considering:

- The company's current disclosure of relevant lobbying policies, and management and board oversight;
- The company's disclosure regarding trade associations or other groups that it supports, or is a member of, that engage in lobbying activities; and
- Recent significant controversies, fines, or litigation regarding the company's lobbying-related activities.

Political Contributions

► **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals requesting greater disclosure of a company's political contributions and trade association spending policies and activities, considering:

- The company's policies, and management and board oversight related to its direct political contributions and payments to trade associations or other groups that may be used for political purposes;
- The company's disclosure regarding its support of, and participation in, trade associations or other groups that may make political contributions; and
- Recent significant controversies, fines, or litigation related to the company's political contributions or political activities.

Vote against proposals barring a company from making political contributions. Businesses are affected by legislation at the federal, state, and local level; barring political contributions can put the company at a competitive disadvantage.

Vote against proposals to publish in newspapers and other media a company's political contributions. Such publications could present significant cost to the company without providing commensurate value to shareholders.

Political Ties

► **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against proposals asking a company to affirm political nonpartisanship in the workplace, so long as:

- There are no recent, significant controversies, fines, or litigation regarding the company's political contributions or trade association spending; and
- The company has procedures in place to ensure that employee contributions to company-sponsored political action committees (PACs) are strictly voluntary and prohibit coercion.

Vote against proposals asking for a list of company executives, directors, consultants, legal counsels, lobbyists, or investment bankers that have prior government service and whether such service had a bearing on the business of the company. Such a list would be burdensome to prepare without providing any meaningful information to shareholders.

8. Mutual Fund Proxies

Election of Directors

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on the election of directors and trustees, following the same guidelines for uncontested directors for public company shareholder meetings. However, mutual fund boards do not usually have compensation committees, so do not withhold for the lack of this committee.

Closed End Funds- Unilateral Opt-In to Control Share Acquisition Statutes

- **General Recommendation:** For closed-end management investment companies (CEFs), vote against or withhold from nominating/governance committee members (or other directors on a case-by-case basis) at CEFs that have not provided a compelling rationale for opting-in to a Control Share Acquisition statute, nor submitted a by-law amendment to a shareholder vote.

Converting Closed-end Fund to Open-end Fund

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on conversion proposals, considering the following factors:
- Past performance as a closed-end fund;
 - Market in which the fund invests;
 - Measures taken by the board to address the discount; and
 - Past shareholder activism, board activity, and votes on related proposals.

Proxy Contests

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proxy contests, considering the following factors:
- Past performance relative to its peers;
 - Market in which the fund invests;
 - Measures taken by the board to address the issues;
 - Past shareholder activism, board activity, and votes on related proposals;
 - Strategy of the incumbents versus the dissidents;
 - Independence of directors;
 - Experience and skills of director candidates;
 - Governance profile of the company;
 - Evidence of management entrenchment.

Investment Advisory Agreements

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on investment advisory agreements, considering the following factors:
- Proposed and current fee schedules;
 - Fund category/investment objective;
 - Performance benchmarks;
 - Share price performance as compared with peers;
 - Resulting fees relative to peers;
 - Assignments (where the advisor undergoes a change of control).

Approving New Classes or Series of Shares

- **General Recommendation:** Vote for the establishment of new classes or series of shares.

Preferred Stock Proposals

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on the authorization for or increase in preferred shares, considering the following factors:

- Stated specific financing purpose;
- Possible dilution for common shares;
- Whether the shares can be used for antitakeover purposes.

1940 Act Policies

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on policies under the Investment Advisor Act of 1940, considering the following factors:

- Potential competitiveness;
- Regulatory developments;
- Current and potential returns; and
- Current and potential risk.

Generally vote for these amendments as long as the proposed changes do not fundamentally alter the investment focus of the fund and do comply with the current SEC interpretation.

Changing a Fundamental Restriction to a Nonfundamental Restriction

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to change a fundamental restriction to a non-fundamental restriction, considering the following factors:

- The fund's target investments;
- The reasons given by the fund for the change; and
- The projected impact of the change on the portfolio.

Change Fundamental Investment Objective to Nonfundamental

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to change a fund's fundamental investment objective to non-fundamental.

Name Change Proposals

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on name change proposals, considering the following factors:

- Political/economic changes in the target market;
- Consolidation in the target market; and
- Current asset composition.

Change in Fund's Subclassification

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on changes in a fund's sub-classification, considering the following factors:

- Potential competitiveness;
- Current and potential returns;
- Risk of concentration;
- Consolidation in target industry.

Business Development Companies—Authorization to Sell Shares of Common Stock at a Price below Net Asset Value

➤ **General Recommendation:** Vote for proposals authorizing the board to issue shares below Net Asset Value (NAV) if:

- The proposal to allow share issuances below NAV has an expiration date no more than one year from the date shareholders approve the underlying proposal, as required under the Investment Company Act of 1940;
- The sale is deemed to be in the best interests of shareholders by (1) a majority of the company's independent directors and (2) a majority of the company's directors who have no financial interest in the issuance; and

- The company has demonstrated responsible past use of share issuances by either:
- Outperforming peers in its 8-digit GICS group as measured by one- and three-year median TSRs; or
- Providing disclosure that its past share issuances were priced at levels that resulted in only small or moderate discounts to NAV and economic dilution to existing non-participating shareholders.

Disposition of Assets/Termination/Liquidation

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to dispose of assets, to terminate or liquidate, considering the following factors:

- Strategies employed to salvage the company;
- The fund's past performance;
- The terms of the liquidation.

Changes to the Charter Document

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on changes to the charter document, considering the following factors:

- The degree of change implied by the proposal;
- The efficiencies that could result;
- The state of incorporation;
- Regulatory standards and implications.

Vote against any of the following changes:

- Removal of shareholder approval requirement to reorganize or terminate the trust or any of its series;
- Removal of shareholder approval requirement for amendments to the new declaration of trust;
- Removal of shareholder approval requirement to amend the fund's management contract, allowing the contract to be modified by the investment manager and the trust management, as permitted by the 1940 Act;
- Allow the trustees to impose other fees in addition to sales charges on investment in a fund, such as deferred sales charges and redemption fees that may be imposed upon redemption of a fund's shares;
- Removal of shareholder approval requirement to engage in and terminate subadvisory arrangements;
- Removal of shareholder approval requirement to change the domicile of the fund.

Changing the Domicile of a Fund

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on re-incorporations, considering the following factors:

- Regulations of both states;
- Required fundamental policies of both states;
- The increased flexibility available.

Authorizing the Board to Hire and Terminate Subadvisers Without Shareholder Approval

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote against proposals authorizing the board to hire or terminate subadvisers without shareholder approval if the investment adviser currently employs only one subadviser.

Distribution Agreements

▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on distribution agreement proposals, considering the following factors:

- Fees charged to comparably sized funds with similar objectives;
- The proposed distributor's reputation and past performance;
- The competitiveness of the fund in the industry;
- The terms of the agreement.

Master-Feeder Structure

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote for the establishment of a master-feeder structure.

Mergers

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on merger proposals, considering the following factors:

- Resulting fee structure;
- Performance of both funds;
- Continuity of management personnel;
- Changes in corporate governance and their impact on shareholder rights.

Shareholder Proposals for Mutual Funds

Establish Director Ownership Requirement

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against shareholder proposals that mandate a specific minimum amount of stock that directors must own in order to qualify as a director or to remain on the board.

Reimburse Shareholder for Expenses Incurred

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals to reimburse proxy solicitation expenses. When supporting the dissidents, vote for the reimbursement of the proxy solicitation expenses.

Terminate the Investment Advisor

- ▷ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to terminate the investment advisor, considering the following factors:

- Performance of the fund's Net Asset Value (NAV);
- The fund's history of shareholder relations;
- The performance of other funds under the advisor's management.

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