

CENTERPOINT ENERGY INC

Form 424B5

August 07, 2017

Table of Contents

The information in this preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus is not complete and may be changed. This preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are not an offer to sell these securities and are not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.

Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(5)

Registration No. 333-215833

SUBJECT TO COMPLETION, DATED AUGUST 7, 2017

PRELIMINARY PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

(To Prospectus Dated January 31, 2017)

\$500,000,000

CenterPoint Energy, Inc.

% Senior Notes due 2022

This is an offering of \$500,000,000 aggregate principal amount of % Senior Notes due 2022 (the notes). The notes will bear interest at a rate of % per year from, and including, the date of issuance and will mature on , 2022. We will pay interest on the notes on and of each year, beginning on , 2018. The notes are subject to optional redemption prior to maturity at the applicable redemption prices described under the caption Description of the Notes Optional Redemption.

The notes will be unsecured and will rank equally with our other unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness. The notes will be structurally subordinated to all existing and future indebtedness and other liabilities of our subsidiaries.

Investing in the notes involves risks. See Risk Factors beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement and on page 5 of the accompanying prospectus.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

	Per Note	Total
Public Offering Price(1)	%	\$
Underwriting Discount	%	\$
Proceeds, before expenses, to CenterPoint Energy, Inc.(1)	%	\$

(1) Plus accrued interest from August , 2017, if settlement occurs after that date.

The underwriters expect to deliver the notes in book-entry form only on or about August , 2017, through the facilities of The Depository Trust Company.

Joint Book-Running Managers

Barclays

Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC
Senior Co-Manager

Morgan Stanley

MUFG

TD Securities

Co-Managers

Evercore ISI
Prospectus Supplement dated August , 2017

Ramirez & Co., Inc.

Table of Contents

This document consists of two parts, which should be read together. The first part is this prospectus supplement, which describes the specific terms of the notes, the specific terms of this offering and supplements and updates information contained in the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. The second part, the accompanying prospectus, provides more general information about the notes and other securities that may be offered from time to time using such prospectus, some of which general information does not apply to this offering. Generally, when we refer to the prospectus, we are referring to both parts of this document combined. You should read this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus together with any written communication prepared by us or on our behalf in connection with this offering together with the additional information described in this prospectus supplement under the headings **Where You Can Find More Information** and **Incorporation By Reference**.

We have not, and the underwriters have not, authorized anyone to provide any information or to make any representations other than those contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and any written communication prepared by us or on our behalf. We and the underwriters take no responsibility for, and can provide no assurance as to the reliability of, any other information that others may give you. We are not, and the underwriters are not, making an offer to sell the notes and are not soliciting an offer to buy the notes in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted. The information we have included in this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus is accurate only as of the date of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus, as the case may be, and any information we have incorporated by reference is accurate only as of the date of the document incorporated by reference. Our businesses, financial condition, results of operations and prospects may have changed since these respective dates.

Any information contained in this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus or in a document incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus will be deemed to be modified or superseded to the extent that a statement contained in this prospectus supplement or in any other subsequently filed document that is also incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement modifies or supersedes that statement. Any statement so modified or superseded will not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to constitute a part of the prospectus. See **Incorporation By Reference** in this prospectus supplement.

The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, National Association, in each of its capacities referenced herein, including, but not limited to, trustee, security registrar and paying agent, has not participated in the preparation of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus and assumes no responsibility for its content.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prospectus Supplement

	Page
<u>Summary</u>	S-1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	S-4
<u>Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges</u>	S-6
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	S-7
<u>Capitalization</u>	S-7
<u>Description of the Notes</u>	S-8
<u>Underwriting</u>	S-17
<u>Legal Matters</u>	S-18
<u>Experts</u>	S-18
<u>Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Information</u>	S-19
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	S-21
<u>Incorporation By Reference</u>	S-21

Prospectus

	Page
<u>About This Prospectus</u>	1
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	2
<u>Incorporation By Reference</u>	3
<u>About CenterPoint Energy, Inc.</u>	4
<u>Risk Factors</u>	5
<u>Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Information</u>	6
<u>Ratios of Earnings to Fixed Charges and Ratios of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock</u>	9
<u>Dividends</u>	10
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	11
<u>Description of Our Debt Securities</u>	21
<u>Description of Our Capital Stock</u>	25
<u>Description of Stock Purchase Contracts and Equity Units</u>	26
<u>Holding Company Structure</u>	27
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	30
<u>Legal Matters</u>	30
<u>Experts</u>	30

Table of Contents

SUMMARY

This summary highlights information from this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. It is not complete and may not contain all of the information that you should consider before investing in the notes. We encourage you to read this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference in their entirety before making an investment decision, including the information set forth under the heading Risk Factors. The terms we, our, and us refer to CenterPoint Energy, Inc. and its subsidiaries, unless the context indicates otherwise.

CENTERPOINT ENERGY, INC.

We are a public utility holding company. Our operating subsidiaries own and operate electric transmission and distribution and natural gas distribution facilities and supply natural gas to commercial and industrial customers and electric and natural gas utilities. We and our operating subsidiaries also own interests in Enable Midstream Partners, LP (Enable) as described below. As of the date this prospectus supplement, our indirect, wholly-owned subsidiaries include:

CenterPoint Energy Houston Electric, LLC (Houston Electric), which engages in the electric transmission and distribution business in the Texas Gulf Coast area that includes the city of Houston; and

CenterPoint Energy Resources Corp. (CERC Corp.), which, together with its subsidiaries, owns and operates natural gas distribution systems. A wholly-owned subsidiary of CERC Corp., CenterPoint Energy Services, Inc., obtains and offers competitive variable and fixed-price physical natural gas supplies and services primarily to commercial and industrial customers and electric and natural gas utilities.

As of the date of this prospectus supplement, we also owned an aggregate of 14,520,000 10% Series A Fixed-to-Floating Non-Cumulative Redeemable Perpetual Preferred Units (Series A Preferred Units) representing limited partner interests in Enable, which owns, operates and develops natural gas and crude oil infrastructure assets. As of the date of this prospectus supplement, CERC Corp. also owned approximately 54.1% of the common and subordinated units representing limited partner interests in Enable.

Our principal executive offices are located at 1111 Louisiana, Houston, Texas 77002 (telephone number: 713-207-1111).

Table of Contents

The Offering

Issuer	CenterPoint Energy, Inc.
Notes Offered	\$500,000,000 aggregate principal amount of % senior notes due 2022
Maturity Date	, 2022
Interest Payment Dates	and , commencing on , 2018
Ranking	The notes will:

be our general unsecured obligations;

rank equally in right of payment with our other existing and future unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness; and

be structurally subordinated to the liabilities of our subsidiaries.

As of June 30, 2017, we, on an unconsolidated basis, had approximately \$1.9 billion aggregate principal amount of indebtedness outstanding, \$1.8 billion of which was unsecured and unsubordinated. Excluding subsidiaries issuing transition and restoration bonds, as of June 30, 2017, our subsidiaries had approximately \$5.5 billion aggregate principal amount of third-party indebtedness outstanding, of which approximately \$2.9 billion was secured, as well as other liabilities.

Optional Redemption	We may redeem all or a part of the notes at any time and from time to time on any date prior to , 2022 (Par Call Date) by paying the greater of (a) 100% of the principal thereof and (b) the applicable make-whole amount based on U.S. treasury rates as specified in this prospectus supplement under Description of the Notes Optional Redemption plus, in each case, accrued and unpaid interest thereon, if any, to, but excluding, the redemption date. At any time on or after the Par Call Date we may redeem the notes by paying 100% of the principal amount thereof plus accrued and unpaid interest thereon, if any, to, but excluding, the redemption date. For additional information, please see Description of the Notes
---------------------	---

Optional Redemption beginning on page S-9 of this prospectus supplement.

Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets

The indenture restricts our ability to merge, consolidate or transfer substantially all of our assets. See Description of Our Debt Securities Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets on page 14 of the accompanying prospectus.

S-2

Table of Contents

Lack of Public Market for the Notes

There is no existing market for the notes. We cannot provide any assurance about:

the liquidity of any markets that may develop for the notes;

your ability to sell the notes; or

the prices at which you will be able to sell the notes.

Future trading prices of the notes will depend on many factors, including:

prevailing interest rates;

our operating results;

the ratings of the notes; and

the market for similar securities.

We do not intend to apply for listing of the notes on any securities exchange or for quotation of the notes on any dealer quotation system.

Risk Factors

You should consider carefully all the information set forth and incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and, in particular, you should evaluate the specific factors set forth under **Risk Factors** beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement before deciding whether to invest in the notes.

Governing Law	The indenture and the notes are governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of the State of New York.
Use of Proceeds	The net proceeds from this offering, after deducting the underwriting discount and estimated expenses of the offering payable by us, are expected to be approximately \$. We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for general corporate purposes, including the repayment of a portion of our outstanding commercial paper. See Use of Proceeds in this prospectus supplement.
Trustee	The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, National Association (as successor to JPMorgan Chase Bank).

S-3

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

In addition to the following information about risks, you should consider carefully the risk factors and risks arising from any legal proceedings identified or referenced in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2016 (2016 Form 10-K) and our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarterly periods ended June 30, 2017 (2nd Quarter 2017 Form 10-Q) and March 31, 2017, which are incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, as they may be amended, supplemented or superseded from time to time by other reports that we subsequently file with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the SEC), together with the other information contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, before making an investment in the notes.

Risks Related to the Notes

We cannot assure you that an active trading market will develop for the notes.

The notes will be a new issue of securities for which currently there is no established trading market. We do not intend to apply for the listing of the notes on any securities exchange or for quotation of the notes on any dealer quotation system. We cannot assure you that a trading market will develop for the notes. Even if a market for the notes does develop, we cannot assure you that there will be liquidity in that market or that the notes might not trade for less than their original value or face amount. The liquidity of any market for the notes will depend on the number of holders of the notes, the interest of securities dealers in making a market in the notes and other factors. If a liquid market for the notes does not develop, you may be unable to resell the notes for a long period of time, if at all. This means you may not be able to readily convert your notes into cash, and the notes may not be accepted as collateral for a loan.

Even if a market for the notes develops, trading prices could be higher or lower than the initial offering price. The price of the notes will depend on many factors, including prevailing interest rates, our operating results and the market for similar securities. Declines in the market prices for debt securities generally may also materially and adversely affect the liquidity of the notes, independent of our financial performance.

Our existing indebtedness, and any future indebtedness, may adversely affect our future financial and operating flexibility and our ability to service the notes.

As of June 30, 2017, we, on an unconsolidated basis, had approximately \$1.9 billion aggregate principal amount of indebtedness outstanding, \$1.8 billion of which was unsecured and unsubordinated. Our existing indebtedness and the additional debt we may incur in the future for, among other things, working capital, capital expenditures, acquisitions or operating activities may adversely affect our liquidity and, therefore, our ability to make principal and interest payments on the notes.

The indenture governing the notes will permit us to incur additional debt, which would be equal in right of payment to the notes. If we incur any additional indebtedness, including trade payables, that ranks equally with the notes, the holders of that debt would be entitled to share ratably with you in any proceeds distributed in connection with any insolvency, liquidation, reorganization, dissolution or other winding up of us. This may have the effect of reducing the amount of proceeds paid to you. If new debt is added to our current debt levels, the related risks that we now face could intensify.

The notes will be structurally subordinated to existing and future indebtedness and other liabilities of our subsidiaries.

Other than the Series A Preferred Units in Enable that we hold directly, we derive all our operating income from, and hold all our assets, including our other interests in Enable, through our subsidiaries. As a result, we will depend on distributions from our subsidiaries and Enable to meet our payment obligations under any debt

S-4

Table of Contents

securities, including the notes and our other obligations. In general, these subsidiaries are separate and distinct legal entities and have no obligation to pay any amounts due on our debt securities or to provide us with funds for our payment obligations, whether by dividends, distributions, loans or otherwise. In addition, provisions of applicable law, such as those limiting the legal sources of dividends, limit our subsidiaries' ability to make payments or other distributions to us, and our subsidiaries could agree to contractual restrictions on their ability to make distributions.

Our right to receive any assets of any subsidiary, and therefore the right of our creditors to participate in those assets, will be structurally subordinated to the claims of that subsidiary's creditors, including trade creditors. In addition, even if we were a creditor of any subsidiary, our rights as a creditor would be subordinated to any security interest in the assets of that subsidiary and any indebtedness of the subsidiary senior to that held by us. Excluding subsidiaries issuing transition and restoration bonds, as of June 30, 2017, our subsidiaries had approximately \$5.5 billion aggregate principal amount of third-party indebtedness outstanding, of which approximately \$2.9 billion was secured, as well as other liabilities.

The provisions of the notes will not necessarily protect you in the event of a highly leveraged transaction.

The terms of the notes will not necessarily afford you protection in the event of a highly leveraged transaction that may adversely affect you, including a reorganization, recapitalization, restructuring, merger or other similar transactions involving us or our subsidiaries, whether or not in connection with a change of control. The indenture does not limit the amount of debt we or our subsidiaries may issue. As a result, we could enter into any such transaction even though the transaction could adversely affect our capital structure or credit ratings or otherwise adversely affect the holders of the notes. If we incur secured debt, the notes will be effectively junior to such debt to the extent of the value of the collateral securing such debt. These transactions may not involve a change in voting power or beneficial ownership or result in a downgrade in the ratings of the notes. The indenture does not contain provisions that permit the holders of the notes to require us to redeem or repurchase the notes in the event of a takeover, recapitalization or similar transaction.

Table of Contents**RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES**

The following table sets forth our historical ratio of earnings to fixed charges for the periods indicated. The ratios are calculated pursuant to the applicable rules of the SEC.

	Six Months		Year Ended December 31,			
	Ended June 30,		2015(2)	2014(2)	2013(2)	2012(2)
	2017(1)	2016(2)				
Ratio of earnings to fixed charges	3.61	2.74	2.67	2.79	2.42	2.29

- (1) We do not believe that the ratio for the six-month period is necessarily indicative of the ratio for the twelve-month period due to the seasonal nature of our business.
- (2) Excluded from the computation of fixed charges for the years ended December 31, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012 is interest expense of \$-0-, \$-0-, and \$3 million and interest income of \$6 million and \$11 million, respectively, which is included in income tax expense.

Table of Contents**USE OF PROCEEDS**

We expect the net proceeds from this offering to be approximately \$ _____ after deducting the underwriting discount and estimated expenses of the offering payable by us. We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for general corporate purposes, including the repayment of a portion of our outstanding commercial paper, which commercial paper borrowings were issued for general corporate and working capital purposes. On June 30, 2017, we had \$970 million of commercial paper borrowings, which had a weighted-average maturity of 21 days and a weighted-average interest rate of 1.42%.

CAPITALIZATION

The following table sets forth our consolidated short-term debt and capitalization as of June 30, 2017. No adjustments have been made for:

the issuance of the notes in this offering or the use of proceeds therefrom, as discussed in Use of Proceeds above; or

any changes in short-term debt after June 30, 2017.

This table should be read in conjunction with our consolidated financial statements and related notes thereto and Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations included in our 2016 Form 10-K and our 2nd Quarter 2017 Form 10-Q.

	June 30, 2017	
	Actual	%
	(In millions)	
Short-Term Debt:		
Short-term borrowings	\$ 24	0.2%
Current portion of Transition and System Restoration Bond long-term debt	422	3.4
Indexed Debt, net (1)	118	1.0
Current portion of other long-term debt	550	4.5
Total Short-Term Debt	1,114	9.1
Long-Term Debt:		
Transition and System Restoration Bonds	1,638	13.4
Other	5,949	48.5
Total Long-Term Debt	7,587	61.9
Total Debt	8,701	70.9
Shareholders' Equity	3,563	29.1
Total Capitalization and Short-Term Debt (2)	\$ 12,264	100%(3)

- (1) As of June 30, 2017, the outstanding principal amount of 2.0% Zero-Premium Exchangeable Subordinated Notes due 2029 (ZENS) was approximately \$828 million and the contingent principal amount was approximately \$510 million. Interest is paid quarterly on the principal amount at 2% per year plus a pass-through of any dividend on the reference shares of Time Warner Inc., Charter Communications, Inc. and Time Inc. common stock. At maturity or upon redemption, holders of ZENS will receive cash equal to the higher of the contingent principal amount or the value of the reference shares.
- (2) Total Debt/Total Capitalization excluding transition and restoration bonds is 65.08%.
- (3) Figures do not total to 100% due to rounding.

S-7

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF THE NOTES

The following description of the particular terms of the notes (referred to in the accompanying prospectus as the debt securities) supplements, and to the extent inconsistent therewith replaces, the description of the general terms and provisions of the debt securities set forth in the accompanying prospectus, to which we refer you.

We will issue the notes under an indenture, dated as of May 19, 2003, as supplemented, and as to be further supplemented in connection with establishing the terms of the notes (the indenture), between us and The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, National Association (successor to JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association), as trustee. The following description is a summary of the material provisions of the notes and the indenture. This summary is not complete and is qualified in its entirety by reference to the indenture and the notes. For a complete description of the notes, you should refer to the indenture, including the form of supplemental indenture establishing the terms of the notes, copies of which are available from us. In addition, we have filed the current indenture and will file the supplemental indenture with the SEC. Please read [Where You Can Find More Information](#). For purposes of this summary, the terms we, our, ours and us refer to CenterPoint Energy, Inc. and not any of our subsidiaries.

We may issue additional series of debt securities from time to time under the indenture. There is no limitation on the amount of debt securities we may issue under the indenture. As of June 30, 2017, we did not have any amounts outstanding under the indenture.

We have included cross-references in the summary below to refer you to the section numbers of the indenture we are describing.

Ranking of the Notes

The notes will:

be our general unsecured obligations;

rank equally in right of payment with all of our other existing and future unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness; and

be structurally subordinated to all of the liabilities of our subsidiaries.

As of June 30, 2017, we, on an unconsolidated basis, had approximately \$1.9 billion aggregate principal amount of indebtedness outstanding, \$1.8 billion of which was unsecured and unsubordinated. Excluding subsidiaries issuing transition and restoration bonds, as of June 30, 2017, our subsidiaries had approximately \$5.5 billion aggregate principal amount of third-party indebtedness outstanding, of which approximately \$2.9 billion was secured, as well as other liabilities.

Subject to exceptions, and subject to compliance with the applicable requirements, set forth in the indenture, we may discharge our obligations under the indenture with respect to the notes as described below under [Defeasance](#).

Structural Subordination

We are a holding company that conducts substantially all of our operations through our subsidiaries. Our only significant assets are the capital stock of our subsidiaries and the Series A Preferred Units in Enable that we own. Our subsidiaries and our direct and indirect interest in Enable generate substantially all of our operating income and cash flow. As a result, dividends or advances from our subsidiaries and distributions from Enable are the principal source of funds necessary to meet our debt service obligations. Contractual provisions or laws, as well as our subsidiaries financial condition and operating requirements, may limit our ability to obtain cash from

S-8

Table of Contents

our subsidiaries that we may require to pay our debt service obligations, including payments on the notes. As a result, the notes will be structurally subordinated to all of the liabilities of our subsidiaries with regard to the assets and earnings of our subsidiaries.

Principal, Maturity and Interest

The notes will mature on _____, 2022 and are initially limited to \$500,000,000 in aggregate principal amount. However, we may issue additional notes of the same series as the notes from time to time, without the consent of the holders of the notes. The notes will be issued only in denominations of \$1,000 principal amount and integral multiples of \$1,000 principal amount.

Interest on the notes will:

accrue at the rate of _____ % per annum;

be payable semi-annually in arrears on each _____ and _____, with the initial interest payment date being _____, 2018;

be payable to the person in whose name the notes are registered at the close of business on the _____ and _____ immediately preceding the applicable interest payment date, which we refer to with respect to the notes as regular record dates ;

be computed on the basis of a 360-day year comprised of twelve 30-day months; and

be payable on overdue interest to the extent permitted by law at the same rate as interest is payable on principal.

If any interest payment date, the maturity date or any redemption date falls on a day that is not a business day, the required payment will be made on the next business day with the same force and effect as if made on the relevant interest payment date, maturity date or redemption date and no additional amounts will accrue on that payment for the period from and after the interest payment date, maturity date or redemption date, as the case may be, to the date of that payment on the next succeeding business day. Unless we default on a payment, no interest will accrue for the period from and after the applicable maturity date or redemption date.

Optional Redemption

The notes may be redeemed in whole at any time or in part from time to time, at our option, on any date prior to _____, 2022 (the Par Call Date) at a redemption price equal to the greater of:

100% of the principal amount of the notes to be redeemed; or

the sum of the present values of the remaining scheduled payments of principal and interest on the notes to be redeemed that would be due if such notes matured on the Par Call Date but for the redemption (not including any portion of such payments of interest accrued to the date of redemption) discounted to the date of redemption on a semiannual basis (assuming a 360-day year consisting of twelve 30-day months) at the applicable treasury rate plus basis points;
plus, in each case, accrued and unpaid interest thereon, if any, to, but excluding, the redemption date.

At any time on or after the Par Call Date, we may redeem the notes, in whole or in part, at our option, by paying 100% of the principal amount of the notes to be redeemed plus accrued and unpaid interest thereon, if any, to, but excluding, the redemption date.

treasury rate means, with respect to any redemption date:

the yield calculated on the third business day preceding the redemption date, as follows: for the latest day that appears in the most recent statistical release published by the Board of Governors of the

Table of Contents

Federal Reserve System designated as Selected Interest Rates (Daily) H.15 (or any successor publication) (H.15) under the caption Treasury Constant Maturities Nominal , the independent investment banker shall select two yields one for the maturity immediately before and one for the maturity immediately after the remaining maturity of the notes (assuming the notes matured on the Par Call Date) and shall interpolate on a straight-line basis using such yields; if there is no such maturity either before or after, the independent investment banker shall select the maturity closest to the Par Call Date that appears on the release; or

if such release (or any successor release) is not published during the week preceding the calculation date or does not contain such yields, the rate per annum equal to the semiannual equivalent yield to maturity of the applicable comparable treasury issue, calculated by the independent investment banker using a price for the comparable treasury issue (expressed as a percentage of its principal amount) equal to the comparable treasury price for such redemption date.

The treasury rate will be calculated by the independent investment banker on the third business day preceding the date fixed for redemption.

comparable treasury issue means the U.S. Treasury security selected by an independent investment banker as having an actual or interpolated maturity comparable to the remaining term (remaining life) of the notes to be redeemed (assuming for this purpose that the notes matured on the Par Call Date) that would be utilized, at the time of selection and in accordance with customary financial practice, in pricing new issues of corporate debt securities of comparable maturity to the remaining term of such notes.

comparable treasury price means (a) the average of four reference treasury dealer quotations for such redemption date, after excluding the highest and lowest reference treasury dealer quotations, or (b) if the independent investment banker obtains fewer than four such reference treasury dealer quotations, the average of all such quotations.

independent investment banker means one of Barclays Capital Inc., Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC, Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC or MUFG Securities Americas Inc. as specified by us, or, if these firms are unwilling or unable to select the comparable treasury issue, an independent investment banking institution of national standing appointed by us.

reference treasury dealer means each of (a) Barclays Capital Inc., Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC and Morgan Stanley and Co. LLC and a primary U.S. government securities dealer in the United States of America (a primary treasury dealer) designated by MUFG Securities Americas Inc. and their respective affiliates or successors, each of which is a primary treasury dealer, provided, however, that if any of the foregoing shall cease to be a primary treasury dealer, we will substitute therefor another primary treasury dealer and (b) any other primary treasury dealer selected by us after consultation with the independent investment banker.

reference treasury dealer quotations means, with respect to each reference treasury dealer and any redemption date, the average, as determined by the independent investment banker, of the bid and asked prices for the applicable comparable treasury issue (expressed in each case as a percentage of its principal amount) quoted in writing to the independent investment banker at 5:00 p.m., New York City time, on the third business day preceding such redemption date.

The trustee, at our written direction, will send a notice of redemption to each holder of notes to be redeemed by first-class mail (or in accordance with the procedures of The Depository Trust Company with respect to notes registered in the name of Cede & Co.) at least 15 and not more than 60 days prior to the date fixed for redemption. Unless we default on payment of the redemption price, interest will cease to accrue on the notes or portions thereof called for redemption on the date fixed for redemption. If fewer than all of the notes are to be redeemed, not more than

60 days prior to the redemption date, the particular notes or portions thereof for redemption will be selected from the outstanding notes not previously called by such method as the trustee deems fair and appropriate. In the case of a partial redemption of notes registered in the name of Cede & Co., the notes to be redeemed will be determined in accordance with the procedures of The Depository Trust Company.

S-10

Table of Contents

Sinking Fund

We are not obligated to make mandatory redemption or sinking fund payments with respect to the notes.

No Financial Covenants

The indenture does not contain financial covenants and does not restrict us from paying dividends, incurring additional indebtedness or issuing or repurchasing any of our other securities. The indenture also does not protect holders in the event of a highly leveraged transaction, except to the extent described in the accompanying prospectus under the heading *Description of Our Debt Securities – Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets*.

Certain Definitions

An *affiliate* of, or a person *affiliated* with, a specific person is a person that directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls, or is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person specified.

The term *control* (including the terms *controlled by* and *under common control with*) means the possession, direct or indirect, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of a person, whether through the ownership of voting shares, by contract, or otherwise.

Indebtedness, as applied to any person, means bonds, debentures, notes and other instruments or arrangements representing obligations created or assumed by such person, in respect of:

obligations for money borrowed, other than unamortized debt discount or premium;

obligations evidenced by a note or similar instrument given in connection with the acquisition of any business, properties or assets of any kind;

obligations as lessee under a capital lease; and

any amendments, renewals, extensions, modifications and refundings of any such indebtedness or obligations listed in the three immediately preceding bullet points.

All indebtedness of such type secured by a lien upon property owned by such person, although such person has not assumed or become liable for the payment of such indebtedness, is also deemed to be indebtedness of such person. All indebtedness for borrowed money incurred by any other persons which is directly guaranteed as to payment of principal by such person will for all purposes of the indenture be deemed to be indebtedness of such person, but no other contingent obligation of such person in respect of indebtedness incurred by any other persons shall be deemed indebtedness of such person.

Events of Default

Each of the following is an event of default under the indenture with respect to the notes:

our failure to pay the principal of or premium, if any, on the notes when due, including at maturity or upon redemption;

our failure to pay any interest on the notes for 30 days after the interest becomes due;

our failure to perform, or our breach in any material respect of, any other covenant or warranty in the indenture, other than a covenant or warranty included in the indenture solely for the benefit of another series of our debt securities issued under the indenture, for 90 days after either the trustee or holders of at least 33% in principal amount of the outstanding notes have given us written notice of the breach in the manner required by the indenture;

S-11

Table of Contents

the default by us in a scheduled payment at maturity, upon redemption or otherwise in the aggregate principal amount of \$125 million or more, after the expiration of any applicable grace period, of any Indebtedness, or the acceleration of any Indebtedness of us in such aggregate principal amount so that it becomes due and payable prior to the date on which it would otherwise have become due and payable and such payment default is not cured or such acceleration default is not rescinded within 30 days after notice to us in accordance with the terms of the Indebtedness; and

specified events involving bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization of us, CERC Corp. or Houston Electric; provided that any specified event involving CERC Corp. or Houston Electric will not be an event of default if, at the time such event occurs, CERC Corp. or Houston Electric, as the case may be, is not affiliated with us;

provided, however, that no event described in the third bullet point above will be an event of default until an officer of the trustee, assigned to and working in the trustee's corporate trust department, has actual knowledge of the event or until the trustee receives written notice of the event. (Section 501)

If an event of default occurs and is continuing with respect to the notes, either the trustee or the holders of at least 33% in principal amount of the outstanding notes may declare the principal amount of the notes due and immediately payable. To declare the principal amount of the notes due and immediately payable, the trustee or the holders must deliver a notice that satisfies the requirements of the indenture. Upon a declaration by the trustee or the holders, we will be obligated to pay the principal amount of the notes plus accrued and unpaid interest, if any.

This right does not apply if an event of default described in the fifth bullet point above occurs, or an event of default described in the fourth bullet point above that applies to all notes outstanding under the indenture occurs. If one of the events of default described in the fifth bullet point above occurs and is continuing, the notes then outstanding under the indenture will be due and payable immediately. In addition, if the event of default described in the fourth bullet point occurs and is continuing and is common to all notes outstanding under the indenture, either the trustee or holders of at least 33% in principal amount of all of the notes then outstanding under the indenture, treated as one class, may declare the principal amount of all of the notes then outstanding under the indenture due and payable immediately.

At any time after any declaration of acceleration of the notes, but before a judgment or decree for payment of the money due has been obtained by the trustee, the event of default giving rise to the declaration of acceleration will, without further act, be deemed to have been waived, and such declaration and its consequences will, without further act, be deemed to have been rescinded and annulled if:

we have paid or deposited with the trustee a sum sufficient to pay:

all overdue installments of interest on the notes,

the principal of (and premium, if any, on) the notes that have become due otherwise than by such declaration of acceleration and any interest thereon at the rate or rates prescribed therefor,

to the extent lawfully permitted, interest upon overdue interest, and

all sums paid or advanced by, and certain sums owed to, the trustee under the indenture; and

all events of default, other than the non-payment of the principal amount of the notes that became due solely by such declaration of acceleration, have been cured or waived as provided in the indenture. (Section 502) For more information regarding waiver of defaults, please read Description of Our Debt Securities Modification and Waiver in the accompanying prospectus.

If an event of default occurs and is continuing, the trustee will generally have no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the indenture at the request or direction of any of the holders, unless the holders

S-12

Table of Contents

offer reasonable indemnity to the trustee. (Section 603) The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding notes will generally have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee or exercising any trust or power conferred on the trustee for the notes, provided that:

the direction is not in conflict with any law or the indenture;

the trustee may take any other action it deems proper which is not inconsistent with the direction; and

the trustee will generally have the right to decline to follow the direction if an officer of the trustee determines, in good faith, that the proceeding would involve the trustee in personal liability or would otherwise be contrary to applicable law. (Section 512)

A holder of a note may only pursue a remedy under the indenture if:

the holder has previously given the trustee written notice of a continuing event of default for the notes;

holders of at least 33% in principal amount of the outstanding notes have made a written request to the trustee to pursue that remedy;

the holders have offered reasonable indemnity to the trustee;

the trustee fails to pursue that remedy within 60 days after receipt of the request; and

during that 60-day period, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the notes do not give the trustee a direction inconsistent with the request. (Section 507)

However, these limitations do not apply to a suit by a holder of a note demanding payment of the principal, premium, if any, or interest on a note on or after the date the payment is due. (Section 508)

We will be required to furnish to the trustee annually a statement by some of our officers regarding our performance or observance of any of the terms of the indenture and specifying all of our known defaults, if any. (Section 1004)

Satisfaction and Discharge

We may discharge our obligations under the indenture while notes remain outstanding if (1) all outstanding debt securities issued under the indenture have become due and payable, (2) all outstanding debt securities issued under the indenture have or will become due and payable at their scheduled maturity within one year, or (3) all outstanding debt securities issued under the indenture are scheduled for redemption in one year, and in each case, we have deposited with the trustee an amount sufficient to pay and discharge all outstanding debt securities issued under the indenture on

the date of their scheduled maturity or the scheduled date of redemption.

Defeasance

If we deposit with the trustee funds or government securities sufficient to make payments on the notes on the dates those payments are due and payable, then, at our option, either of the following will occur:

we will be discharged from our obligations with respect to the notes (legal defeasance); or

we will no longer have any obligation to comply with the events of default in the third bullet point under Events of Default above and the events of default described in the fourth bullet point under Events of Default and the restrictions described under Description of Our Debt Securities Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets in the accompanying prospectus will no longer apply to us, but some of our other obligations under the indenture and the notes, including our obligation to make payments on those notes, will survive.

S-13

Table of Contents

If we defease the notes, the holders of the notes will not be entitled to the benefits of the indenture, except for our obligations to:

register the transfer or exchange of the notes;

replace mutilated, destroyed, lost or stolen notes; and

maintain paying agencies and hold moneys for payment in trust.

We will be required to deliver to the trustee an opinion of counsel that the deposit and related defeasance would not cause the holders of the notes to recognize gain or loss for federal income tax purposes and that the holders would be subject to federal income tax on the same amounts, in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the deposit and related defeasance had not occurred. If we elect legal defeasance, that opinion of counsel must be based upon a ruling from the United States Internal Revenue Service or a change in law to that effect. (Sections 1401, 1402, 1403 and 1404)

Paying Agent and Registrar

We have designated the trustee as the sole paying agent and registrar for the notes.

Exchange and Transfer of the Notes

We will issue the notes in registered form, without coupons. We will only issue notes in denominations of integral multiples of \$1,000.

Holders may present notes for exchange or for registration of transfer at the office of the security registrar or at the office of any transfer agent we designate for that purpose. The security registrar or designated transfer agent will exchange or transfer the notes if it is satisfied with the documents of title and identity of the person making the request. We will not charge a service charge for any exchange or registration of transfer of notes. However, we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge payable for the exchange or registration of transfer. The trustee will serve as the security registrar. (Section 305) At any time we may:

designate additional transfer agents;

rescind the designation of any transfer agent; or

approve a change in the office of any transfer agent.

However, we are required to maintain a transfer agent in each place of payment for the notes at all times. (Sections 305 and 1002)

In the event we elect to redeem the notes, neither we nor the trustee will be required to register the transfer or exchange of the notes:

during the period beginning at the opening of business 15 days before the day we mail the notice of redemption for the notes and ending at the close of business on the day the notice is mailed; or

if we have selected the notes for redemption, in whole or in part, except for the unredeemed portion of the notes. (Section 305)

Regarding the Trustee

The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, National Association, successor to JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association, is the trustee, security registrar and paying agent under the indenture for the notes. As of June 30, 2017, the trustee served as trustee for approximately \$946 million aggregate principal amount of our

Table of Contents

debt securities. In addition, the trustee serves as trustee for debt securities issued by or on behalf of our subsidiaries, aggregating approximately \$4.8 billion as of June 30, 2017. We maintain brokerage relationships with the trustee and its affiliates, each of whom may maintain other relationships with us or our affiliates in the ordinary course of business.

Book-Entry Delivery and Settlement

We will issue the notes in the form of one or more global notes in definitive, fully registered form. The global notes will be registered in the name of Cede & Co., as nominee of The Depository Trust Company, and will remain in the custody of the trustee.

Beneficial interests in the global notes will be represented through book-entry accounts of financial institutions acting on behalf of beneficial owners as direct and indirect participants in DTC. Investors may hold interests in the global notes through DTC either directly if they are participants in DTC or indirectly through organizations that are participants in DTC. DTC has advised us as follows:

DTC is a limited-purpose trust company organized under the New York Banking Law, a banking organization within the meaning of the New York Banking Law, a member of the Federal Reserve System, a clearing corporation within the meaning of the New York Uniform Commercial Code and a clearing agency registered under Section 17A of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act).

DTC holds securities that its participants deposit with DTC and facilitates the settlement among participants of securities transactions, such as transfers and pledges, in deposited securities through electronic computerized book-entry changes in participants' accounts, thereby eliminating the need for physical movement of securities certificates.

Direct participants include securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations and other organizations.

DTC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation (DTCC). DTCC is owned by the users of its regulated subsidiaries.

Access to the DTC system is also available to others such as securities brokers and dealers, banks and trust companies that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a direct participant, either directly or indirectly.

The rules applicable to DTC and its direct and indirect participants are on file with the SEC.

We have provided the description of the operations and procedures of DTC in this prospectus supplement solely as a matter of convenience. These operations and procedures are solely within the control of DTC and are subject to change by it from time to time. Neither we nor the underwriters or the trustee takes any responsibility for these operations or procedures, and you are urged to contact DTC or its participants directly to discuss these matters.

We expect that under procedures established by DTC:

upon deposit of the global notes with DTC or its custodian, DTC will credit on its internal system the accounts of direct participants designated by the underwriters with portions of the principal amounts of the global notes; and

ownership of the notes will be shown on, and the transfer of ownership thereof will be effected only through, records maintained by DTC or its nominee, with respect to interests of direct participants, and the records of direct and indirect participants, with respect to interests of persons other than participants.

S-15

Table of Contents

The laws of some jurisdictions may require that purchasers of securities take physical delivery of those securities in definitive form. Accordingly, the ability to transfer interests in the notes represented by a global note to those persons may be limited. In addition, because DTC can act only on behalf of its participants, who in turn act on behalf of persons who hold interests through participants, the ability of a person having an interest in notes represented by a global note to pledge or transfer those interests to persons or entities that do not participate in DTC's system, or otherwise to take actions in respect of such interest, may be affected by the lack of a physical definitive security in respect of such interest.

So long as DTC or its nominee is the registered owner of a global note, DTC or that nominee will be considered the sole owner or holder of the notes represented by that global note for all purposes under the indenture and under the notes. Except as provided below, owners of beneficial interests in a global note will not be entitled to have notes represented by that global note registered in their names, will not receive or be entitled to receive physical delivery of certificated notes and will not be considered the owners or holders thereof under the indenture or under the notes for any purpose, including with respect to the giving of any direction, instruction or approval to the trustee. Accordingly, each holder owning a beneficial interest in a global note must rely on the procedures of DTC and, if that holder is not a direct or indirect participant, on the procedures of the participant through which that holder owns its interest, to exercise any rights of a holder of notes under the indenture or the global note.

Neither we nor the trustee will have any responsibility or liability for any aspect of the records relating to or payments made on account of notes by DTC, or for maintaining, supervising or reviewing any records of DTC relating to the notes.

Payments on the notes represented by the global notes will be made to DTC or its nominee, as the case may be, as the registered owner thereof. We expect that DTC or its nominee, upon receipt of any payment on the notes represented by a global note, will credit participants' accounts with payments in amounts proportionate to their respective beneficial interests in the global note as shown in the records of DTC or its nominee. We also expect that payments by participants to owners of beneficial interests in the global note held through such participants will be governed by standing instructions and customary practice as is now the case with securities held for the accounts of customers registered in the names of nominees for such customers. The participants will be responsible for those payments.

Initial settlement for the notes will be made in immediately available funds. Secondary market trading between DTC participants will occur in the ordinary way in accordance with DTC rules and will be settled in immediately available funds. Although DTC has agreed to the foregoing procedures to facilitate transfers of the notes among its participants, it is under no obligation to perform or continue to perform such procedures and such procedures may be changed or discontinued at any time.

Certificated Notes

Certificated notes will be issued to each person that DTC identifies as the beneficial owner of the notes represented by the global notes, upon surrender by DTC of the global notes, if (i) DTC or any successor depository (the depository) notifies us that it is no longer willing or able to act as a depository for the global notes or DTC ceases to be registered as a clearing agency under the Exchange Act, and a successor depository is not appointed within 90 days of such notice or cessation, (ii) we, at our option and subject to DTC procedures, notify the trustee in writing that we elect to cause the issuance of notes in definitive form under the indenture or (iii) upon the occurrence of certain other events as provided pursuant to the indenture.

Table of Contents**UNDERWRITING**

Subject to the terms and conditions set forth in an underwriting agreement between us and the underwriters named below for the notes, for whom Barclays Capital Inc., Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC, Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC and MUFG Securities Americas Inc. are acting as representatives, we have agreed to sell to each of the underwriters, and each of the underwriters has severally agreed to purchase from us, the principal amount of notes set forth opposite its name below.

Underwriter	Principal Amount of Notes
Barclays Capital Inc.	\$
Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC	
Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC	
MUFG Securities Americas Inc.	
TD Securities (USA) LLC	
Evercore Group L.L.C.	
Samuel A. Ramirez & Company, Inc.	
Total	\$

The underwriters are offering the notes, subject to prior sale, when, as and if issued to and accepted by them, subject to approval of legal matters by counsel, including the validity of the notes, and other conditions contained in the underwriting agreement, such as the receipt by the underwriters of officers' certificates and legal opinions. The underwriters reserve the right to withdraw, cancel or modify offers to the public and to reject orders in whole or in part.

The underwriters have advised us that they propose to initially offer the notes to the public at the offering price appearing on the cover page of this prospectus supplement and may also offer the notes to dealers at a price that represents a concession not in excess of _____ % of the principal amount of the notes. Any underwriter may allow, and any of these dealers may re-allow, a concession not in excess of _____ % of the principal amount of the notes. After the initial offering of the notes, the underwriters may from time to time vary the offering pricing and other selling terms.

The obligations of the underwriters, including their agreement to purchase the notes from us, are several and not joint. The underwriting agreement provides that the obligations of the underwriters are subject to certain conditions and that the underwriters will be obligated to purchase all of the notes if any are purchased. The underwriting agreement also provides that if an underwriter defaults, the purchase commitments of the non-defaulting underwriters under the agreement may be increased or the offering of notes may be terminated.

The notes will be a new issue of securities for which currently there is no established trading market. We do not intend to apply for listing of the notes on any securities exchange or for quotation of the notes on any dealer quotation system. The underwriters have advised us that they intend to make a market in the notes after the offering, although they are under no obligation to do so. The underwriters may discontinue any market-making activities at any time without any notice. We can give no assurance as to the liquidity of the trading market for the notes or that a public trading market for the notes will develop.

In connection with the offering of the notes, the underwriters may engage in transactions that stabilize, maintain or otherwise affect the price of the notes. Specifically, the underwriters may overallocate in connection with the offering of the notes, creating a syndicate short position. In addition, the underwriters may bid for, and purchase, the notes in the open market to cover short positions or to stabilize the price of the notes. Finally, the underwriters may reclaim selling concessions allowed for distributing the notes in the offering, if the underwriters repurchase previously distributed notes in transactions to cover short positions, in stabilization transactions or otherwise. Any of these activities may stabilize or maintain the market prices of the notes above independent market levels. The underwriters are not required to engage in any of these activities, and may end any of them at any time without notice.

S-17

Table of Contents

The underwriters may also impose a penalty bid. This occurs when a particular underwriter repays to the underwriters a portion of the underwriting discount recovered by it because the representatives have repurchased notes sold by or for the account of such underwriter in stabilizing or short covering transactions.

We estimate that our share of the total expenses of the offering, excluding the underwriting discount will be approximately \$1.2 million.

We have agreed to indemnify the several underwriters against, or contribute to payments that the underwriters may be required to make in respect of, certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended.

The underwriters and their affiliates are full service financial institutions engaged in various activities, which may include securities trading, commercial and investment banking, financial advisory, investment management, investment research, principal investment, hedging, financing and brokerage activities. In the ordinary course of their respective businesses, certain of the underwriters and/or their affiliates have engaged, and may in the future engage, in commercial banking, investment banking, trust or investment management transactions with us and our affiliates for which they have received, and will in the future receive, customary compensation.

In addition, in the ordinary course of their various business activities, the underwriters and their respective affiliates may make or hold a broad array of investments and actively trade debt and equity securities (or related derivative securities) and financial instruments (including bank loans) for their own account and for the accounts of their customers, and such investment and securities activities may involve securities and instruments of ours or our affiliates. If any of the underwriters and their affiliates has a lending relationship with us, certain of these underwriters or their affiliates routinely hedge and certain of these underwriters or their affiliates may hedge their credit exposure to us consistent with their customary risk management policies. Typically, such underwriters and their affiliates would hedge such exposure by entering into transactions which consist of either the purchase of credit default swaps or the creation of short positions in our securities, including potentially the notes offered hereby. Any credit default swaps or short positions could adversely affect future trading prices of the notes offered hereby. The underwriters and their respective affiliates may also make investment recommendations or publish or express independent research views in respect of such securities or financial instruments and may at any time hold, or recommend to clients that they acquire, long or short positions in such securities and instruments.

LEGAL MATTERS

Baker Botts L.L.P., Houston, Texas will pass on the validity of the notes offered in this prospectus supplement. Dana C. O'Brien, Esq., our Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, or Monica Karuturi, Esq., our Vice President and Associate General Counsel, Corporate and Securities, may pass on other legal matters for us. Hunton & Williams LLP, New York, New York will pass on certain legal matters for the underwriters.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements incorporated in this document by reference from our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, and the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting, have been audited by Deloitte & Touche LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, as stated in their reports, which are incorporated herein by reference. Such consolidated financial statements have been so incorporated in reliance upon the reports of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

Table of Contents

CAUTIONARY STATEMENT REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING INFORMATION

In this prospectus supplement, including the information we incorporate by reference, we make statements concerning our expectations, beliefs, plans, objectives, goals, strategies, future events or performance and underlying assumptions and other statements that are not historical facts. These statements are forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Actual results may differ materially from those expressed or implied by these statements. You can generally identify our forward-looking statements by the words anticipate, believe, continue, could, estimate, expect, forecast, goal, intend, may, objective, plan, potential, should, target, will or other similar words.

We have based our forward-looking statements on our management's beliefs and assumptions based on information reasonably available to our management at the time the statements are made. We caution you that assumptions, beliefs, expectations, intentions and projections about future events may and often do vary materially from actual results. Therefore, we cannot assure you that actual results will not differ materially from those expressed or implied by our forward-looking statements.

The following are some of the factors that could cause actual results to differ from those expressed or implied by our forward-looking statements:

the performance of Enable, the amount of cash distributions we receive from Enable, Enable's ability to redeem the Series A Preferred Units in certain circumstances and the value of our interest in Enable, and factors that may have a material impact on such performance, cash distributions and value, including factors such as:

competitive conditions in the midstream industry, and actions taken by Enable's customers and competitors, including the extent and timing of the entry of additional competition in the markets served by Enable;

the timing and extent of changes in the supply of natural gas and associated commodity prices, particularly prices of natural gas and natural gas liquids, the competitive effects of the available pipeline capacity in the regions served by Enable, and the effects of geographic and seasonal commodity price differentials, including the effects of these circumstances on re-contracting available capacity on Enable's interstate pipelines;

the demand for crude oil, natural gas, natural gas liquids and transportation and storage services;

environmental and other governmental regulations, including the availability of drilling permits and the regulation of hydraulic fracturing;

recording of non-cash goodwill, long-lived asset or other than temporary impairment charges by or related to Enable;

changes in tax status;

access to debt and equity capital; and

the availability and prices of raw materials and services for current and future construction projects;

industrial, commercial and residential growth in our service territories and changes in market demand, including the effects of energy efficiency measures and demographic patterns;

timely and appropriate rate actions that allow recovery of costs and a reasonable return on investment;

future economic conditions in regional and national markets and their effect on sales, prices and costs;

weather variations and other natural phenomena, including the impact of severe weather events on operations and capital;

S-19

Table of Contents

state and federal legislative and regulatory actions or developments affecting various aspects of our businesses (including the businesses of Enable), including, among others, energy deregulation or re-regulation, pipeline integrity and safety and changes in regulation and legislation pertaining to trade, health care, finance and actions regarding the rates charged by our regulated businesses;

tax reform and legislation;

our ability to mitigate weather impacts through normalization or rate mechanisms, and the effectiveness of such mechanisms;

the timing and extent of changes in commodity prices, particularly natural gas, and the effects of geographic and seasonal commodity price differentials;

problems with regulatory approval, construction, implementation of necessary technology or other issues with respect to major capital projects that result in delays or in cost overruns that cannot be recouped in rates;

local, state and federal legislative and regulatory actions or developments relating to the environment, including those related to global climate change;

the impact of unplanned facility outages;

any direct or indirect effects on our facilities, operations and financial condition resulting from terrorism, cyber-attacks, data security breaches or other attempts to disrupt our businesses or the businesses of third parties, or other catastrophic events such as fires, earthquakes, explosions, leaks, floods, droughts, hurricanes, pandemic health events or other occurrences;

our ability to invest planned capital and the timely recovery of our investment in capital;

our ability to control operation and maintenance costs;

actions by credit rating agencies;

the sufficiency of our insurance coverage, including availability, cost, coverage and terms;

the investment performance of our pension and postretirement benefit plans;

commercial bank and financial market conditions, our access to capital, the cost of such capital, and the results of our financing and refinancing efforts, including availability of funds in the debt capital markets;

changes in interest rates or rates of inflation;

inability of various counterparties to meet their obligations to us;

non-payment for our services due to financial distress of our customers;

the extent and effectiveness of our risk management and hedging activities, including, but not limited to, our financial hedges and weather hedges;

timely and appropriate regulatory actions allowing securitization or other recovery of costs associated with any future hurricanes or natural disasters;

our or Enable's potential business strategies and strategic initiatives, including restructurings, joint ventures and acquisitions or dispositions of assets or businesses (including a reduction of our interests in Enable, whether through our election to sell the common units we own in the public equity markets or otherwise, subject to certain limitations), which we cannot assure you will be completed or will have the anticipated benefits to us or Enable;

acquisition and merger activities involving us or our competitors;

our or Enable's ability to recruit, effectively transition and retain management and key employees and maintain good labor relations;

Table of Contents

the ability of GenOn Energy, Inc. (formerly known as RRI Energy, Inc., Reliant Energy, Inc. and Reliant Resources, Inc.), a wholly-owned subsidiary of NRG Energy, Inc. (NRG), and its subsidiaries, currently the subject of bankruptcy proceedings, to satisfy their obligations to us, including indemnity obligations;

the outcome of litigation;

the ability of retail electric providers (REP), including REP affiliates of NRG and Vistra Energy Corp., formerly known as TCEH Corp., to satisfy their obligations to us and our subsidiaries;

changes in technology, particularly with respect to efficient battery storage or the emergence or growth of new, developing or alternative sources of generation;

the timing and outcome of any audits, disputes and other proceedings related to taxes;

the effective tax rates;

the effect of changes in and application of accounting standards and pronouncements; and

other factors we discuss in Risk Factors beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement.

You should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements. Each forward-looking statement speaks only as of the date of the particular statement, and we undertake no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy any document we file with the SEC at the SEC's public reference room located at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. You may obtain further information regarding the operation of the SEC's public reference room by calling the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330. Our filings are also available to the public on the SEC's Internet site located at <http://www.sec.gov>. You can obtain information about us at the offices of the New York Stock Exchange, 20 Broad Street, New York, New York 10005.

This prospectus supplement, which includes information incorporated by reference (see Incorporation by Reference below), is part of a registration statement we have filed with the SEC relating to the securities we may offer. As permitted by SEC rules, this prospectus supplement does not contain all of the information we have included in the registration statement and the accompanying exhibits and schedules we file with the SEC. You may refer to the registration statement, the exhibits and the schedules for more information about us and our securities. The registration statement, exhibits and schedules are available at the SEC's public reference room or through its Internet site.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

We are incorporating by reference into this prospectus supplement certain information we file with the SEC. This means we are disclosing important information to you by referring you to the documents containing the information. The information we incorporate by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus supplement. Information that we file later with the SEC that is deemed incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement (but not information deemed to be furnished to and not filed with the SEC) will automatically update and supersede information previously included.

S-21

Table of Contents

We are incorporating by reference into this prospectus supplement the documents listed below and any subsequent filings we make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, as amended (excluding information deemed to be furnished and not filed with the SEC), until all the securities are sold:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2016, including the portions of our definitive proxy statement filed on Schedule 14A on March 16, 2017 that are incorporated by reference therein;

our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2017 and June 30, 2017; and

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed January 9, 2017, February 24, 2017, March 28, 2017, May 1, 2017, June 19, 2017 and June 29, 2017.

You may also obtain a copy of our filings with the SEC at no cost by writing to or telephoning us at the following address:

CenterPoint Energy, Inc.

Attn: Investor Relations

P.O. Box 4567

Houston, Texas 77210-4567

(713) 207-6500

S-22

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS

CenterPoint Energy, Inc.

1111 Louisiana

Houston, Texas 77002

(713) 207-1111

CENTERPOINT ENERGY, INC.

SENIOR DEBT SECURITIES

JUNIOR SUBORDINATED DEBT SECURITIES

COMMON STOCK

PREFERRED STOCK

STOCK PURCHASE CONTRACTS

EQUITY UNITS

We will provide additional terms of our securities in one or more supplements to this prospectus. You should read this prospectus and the related prospectus supplement carefully before you invest in our securities. No person may use this prospectus to offer and sell our securities unless a prospectus supplement accompanies this prospectus.

The Offering

We may offer from time to time:

senior debt securities;

junior subordinated debt securities;

common stock;

preferred stock;

stock purchase contracts; and

equity units.

Our common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange and the Chicago Stock Exchange under the symbol CNP.

Investing in our securities involves risks. See Risk Factors on page 5 of this prospectus.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is January 31, 2017.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>About This Prospectus</u>	1
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	2
<u>Incorporation By Reference</u>	3
<u>About CenterPoint Energy, Inc</u>	4
<u>Risk Factors</u>	5
<u>Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Information</u>	6
<u>Ratios of Earnings to Fixed Charges and Ratios of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock</u>	
<u>Dividends</u>	9
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	10
<u>Description of Our Debt Securities</u>	11
<u>Description of Our Capital Stock</u>	21
<u>Description of Stock Purchase Contracts and Equity Units</u>	25
<u>Holding Company Structure</u>	26
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	27
<u>Legal Matters</u>	30
<u>Experts</u>	30

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement we have filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) using a shelf registration process. Using this process, we may offer any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we use this prospectus to offer securities, we will file a supplement to this prospectus with the SEC that will describe the specific terms of the offering. The prospectus supplement may also add to, update or change the information contained in this prospectus. Before you invest, you should carefully read this prospectus, the applicable prospectus supplement and the information contained in the documents we refer to under the heading **Where You Can Find More Information**.

We have not authorized anyone to provide any information or make any representations other than those contained in this prospectus, any prospectus supplement and any communication from us or any underwriter specifying the final terms of a particular offering. We take no responsibility for, and can provide no assurance as to the reliability of, any other information that others may give you. We are not making an offer of these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information contained in this prospectus, any prospectus supplement or any communication from us or any underwriter specifying the final terms of a particular offering is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front of that document. Any information we have incorporated by reference is accurate only as of the date of the document incorporated by reference.

The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, National Association, in each of its capacities referenced herein, including, but not limited to, trustee, purchase contract agent, collateral agent, custodial agent, securities intermediary and paying agent, has not participated in the preparation of this prospectus and assumes no responsibility for its content.

Table of Contents

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy any document we file with the SEC at the SEC's public reference room located at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. You may obtain further information regarding the operation of the SEC's public reference room by calling the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330. Our filings are also available to the public on the SEC's Internet site located at <http://www.sec.gov>. You can obtain information about us at the offices of the New York Stock Exchange, 20 Broad Street, New York, New York 10005.

This prospectus, which includes information incorporated by reference (see **Incorporation by Reference** below), is part of a registration statement we have filed with the SEC relating to the securities we may offer. As permitted by SEC rules, this prospectus does not contain all of the information we have included in the registration statement and the accompanying exhibits and schedules we file with the SEC. You may refer to the registration statement, the exhibits and the schedules for more information about us and our securities. The registration statement, exhibits and schedules are available at the SEC's public reference room or through its Internet site.

Table of Contents

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

We are incorporating by reference into this prospectus certain information we file with the SEC. This means we are disclosing important information to you by referring you to the documents containing the information. The information we incorporate by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus. Information that we file later with the SEC that is deemed incorporated by reference into this prospectus (which does not include information deemed pursuant to the SEC's rules to be furnished to and not filed with the SEC) will automatically update and supersede information previously included.

We are incorporating by reference into this prospectus the documents listed below and any subsequent filings we make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (excluding information deemed pursuant to the SEC's rules to be furnished and not filed with the SEC) until all the securities are sold:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015,

our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the periods ended March 31, 2016, June 30, 2016 and September 30, 2016,

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on February 1, 2016, February 19, 2016, March 8, 2016, April 4, 2016, May 2, 2016, June 24, 2016, October 26, 2016, October 31, 2016, November 22, 2016 and January 9, 2017, and

the description of our common stock contained in our Current Report on Form 8-K filed on April 5, 2013, as amended by our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on July 30, 2014 and December 11, 2015 and Item 9B of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015, and we may further update that description from time to time.

You may also obtain a copy of our filings with the SEC at no cost by writing to or telephoning us at the following address:

CenterPoint Energy, Inc.

Attn: Investor Relations

P.O. Box 4567

Houston, Texas 77210-4567

(713) 207-6500

Table of Contents

ABOUT CENTERPOINT ENERGY, INC.

We are a public utility holding company. Our operating subsidiaries own and operate electric transmission and distribution facilities and natural gas distribution facilities, and we and our operating subsidiaries own interests in Enable Midstream Partners, LP (Enable). As of the date of this prospectus, our indirect, wholly-owned subsidiaries included:

Houston Electric, which engages in the electric transmission and distribution business in the Texas Gulf Coast area that includes the city of Houston, and

CERC Corp. (together with its subsidiaries), which owns and operates natural gas distribution systems. A wholly-owned subsidiary of CERC Corp. offers variable and fixed-price physical natural gas supplies primarily to commercial and industrial customers and electric and natural gas utilities. As of the date of this prospectus, CERC Corp. also owned approximately 54.1% of the limited partner interests in Enable, which owns, operates and develops natural gas and crude oil infrastructure assets.

Our principal executive offices are located at 1111 Louisiana, Houston, Texas 77002 (telephone number: (713) 207-1111).

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

Our businesses are influenced by many factors that are difficult to predict and that involve uncertainties that may materially affect actual operating results, cash flows and financial condition. These risk factors include those described as such in the documents that are incorporated by reference in this prospectus (which risk factors are incorporated herein by reference), and could include additional uncertainties not presently known to us or that we currently do not consider material. Before making an investment decision, you should carefully consider these risks as well as any other information we include or incorporate by reference in this prospectus or include in any applicable prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

CAUTIONARY STATEMENT REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING INFORMATION

In this prospectus, including the information we incorporate by reference, we make statements concerning our expectations, beliefs, plans, objectives, goals, strategies, future events or performance and underlying assumptions and other statements that are not historical facts. These statements are forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Actual results may differ materially from those expressed or implied by these statements. You can generally identify our forward-looking statements by the words anticipate, believe, continue, could, estimate, expect, forecast, goal, intend, may, objective, plan, potential, should, will or other similar words. We use the terms we and our in this section to mean CenterPoint Energy, Inc. and its subsidiaries.

We have based our forward-looking statements on our management's beliefs and assumptions based on information reasonably available to our management at the time the statements are made. We caution you that assumptions, beliefs, expectations, intentions and projections about future events may and often do vary materially from actual results. Therefore, we cannot assure you that actual results will not differ materially from those expressed or implied by our forward-looking statements.

The following are some of the factors that could cause actual results to differ from those expressed or implied by our forward-looking statements:

the performance of Enable, the amount of cash distributions we receive from Enable, Enable's ability to redeem the Series A Preferred Units in certain circumstances and the value of our interest in Enable, and factors that may have a material impact on such performance, cash distributions and value, including factors such as:

competitive conditions in the midstream industry, and actions taken by Enable's customers and competitors, including the extent and timing of the entry of additional competition in the markets served by Enable;

the timing and extent of changes in the supply of natural gas and associated commodity prices, particularly prices of natural gas and NGLs, the competitive effects of the available pipeline capacity in the regions served by Enable, and the effects of geographic and seasonal commodity price differentials, including the effects of these circumstances on re-contracting available capacity on Enable's interstate pipelines;

the demand for crude oil, natural gas, NGLs and transportation and storage services;

environmental and other governmental regulations, including the availability of drilling permits and the regulation of hydraulic fracturing;

recording of non-cash goodwill, long-lived asset or other than temporary impairment charges by or related to Enable;

changes in tax status;

access to debt and equity capital; and

the availability and prices of raw materials and services for current and future construction projects;

state and federal legislative and regulatory actions or developments affecting various aspects of our businesses (including the businesses of Enable), including, among others, energy deregulation or re-regulation, pipeline integrity and safety, health care reform, financial reform, tax legislation and actions regarding the rates charged by our regulated businesses;

timely and appropriate rate actions that allow recovery of costs and a reasonable return on investment;

industrial, commercial and residential growth in our service territories and changes in market demand, including the effects of energy efficiency measures and demographic patterns;

Table of Contents

future economic conditions in regional and national markets and their effect on sales, prices and costs;

weather variations and other natural phenomena, including the impact of severe weather events on operations and capital;

our ability to mitigate weather impacts through normalization or rate mechanisms, and the effectiveness of such mechanisms;

the timing and extent of changes in commodity prices, particularly natural gas, and the effects of geographic and seasonal commodity price differentials;

problems with regulatory approval, construction, implementation of necessary technology or other issues with respect to major capital projects that result in delays or in cost overruns that cannot be recouped in rates;

local, state and federal legislative and regulatory actions or developments relating to the environment, including those related to global climate change;

the impact of unplanned facility outages;

any direct or indirect effects on our facilities, operations and financial condition resulting from terrorism, cyber-attacks, data security breaches or other attempts to disrupt our businesses or the businesses of third parties, or other catastrophic events such as fires, earthquakes, explosions, leaks, floods, droughts, hurricanes, pandemic health events or other occurrences;

our ability to invest planned capital and the timely recovery of our investment in capital;

our ability to control operation and maintenance costs;

actions by credit rating agencies;

the sufficiency of our insurance coverage, including availability, cost, coverage and terms;

the investment performance of our pension and postretirement benefit plans;

commercial bank and financial market conditions, our access to capital, the cost of such capital, and the results of our financing and refinancing efforts, including availability of funds in the debt capital markets;

changes in interest rates or rates of inflation;

inability of various counterparties to meet their obligations to us;

non-payment for our services due to financial distress of our customers;

effectiveness of our risk management activities;

timely and appropriate regulatory actions allowing securitization or other recovery of costs associated with any future hurricanes or natural disasters;

our potential business strategies and strategic initiatives, including restructurings, joint ventures and acquisitions or dispositions of assets or businesses, which we cannot assure you will be completed or will have the anticipated benefits to us;

acquisition and merger activities involving us or our competitors;

our or Enable's ability to recruit, effectively transition and retain management and key employees and maintain good labor relations;

the ability of GenOn Energy, Inc. (formerly known as RRI Energy, Inc., Reliant Energy, Inc. and Reliant Resources, Inc.), a wholly-owned subsidiary of NRG Energy, Inc. (NRG), and its subsidiaries to satisfy their obligations to us, including indemnity obligations, or obligations in connection with the contractual arrangements pursuant to which we are their guarantor;

Table of Contents

the outcome of litigation;

the ability of retail electric providers (REPs), including REP affiliates of NRG and Energy Future Holdings Corp., to satisfy their obligations to us and our subsidiaries;

changes in technology, particularly with respect to efficient battery storage or the emergence or growth of new, developing or alternative sources of generation;

the timing and outcome of any audits, disputes and other proceedings related to taxes;

the effective tax rates;

the effect of changes in and application of accounting standards and pronouncements; and

other factors we discuss in **Risk Factors** in Item 1A of Part I of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015, which is incorporated herein by reference, and in other reports we file from time to time with the SEC that are incorporated by reference.

You should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements. Each forward-looking statement speaks only as of the date of the particular statement.

Table of Contents**RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES AND RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO COMBINED FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS**

The following table sets forth our ratios of earnings to fixed charges for each of the periods indicated. The ratios were calculated pursuant to applicable rules of the SEC.

	Year Ended December 31,					Nine Months Ended September 30,
	2011(1)	2012(1)	2013(1)	2014(1)	2015(1)	2016
Ratio of earnings to fixed charges	2.96	2.29	2.42	2.79	2.67	2.73(2)

- (1) Excluded from the computation of fixed charges for the years ended December 31, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 is interest income of \$12 million, interest income of \$11 million, interest income of \$6 million, interest expense of \$3 million and interest expense of \$-0-, respectively, which is included in income tax expense.
- (2) Excluded from the computation of fixed charges for the nine months ended September 30, 2016 is interest expense of \$-0-, which is included in income tax expense. We do not believe that the ratio for the nine-month period is necessarily indicative of the ratios for the twelve-month period due to the seasonal nature of our business.

We had no preferred stock outstanding for any period presented in the table above and, accordingly, our ratios of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends are the same as our ratios of earnings to fixed charges.

Table of Contents

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, we anticipate using any net proceeds from the sale of our securities offered by this prospectus for general corporate purposes. These purposes may include, but are not limited to:

working capital,

capital expenditures,

acquisitions,

the repayment or refinancing of debt, and

loans or advances to subsidiaries.

Pending any specific application, we may initially invest funds or apply them to the reduction of short-term indebtedness, commercial paper or debt under our revolving credit facility.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF OUR DEBT SECURITIES

The debt securities offered by this prospectus will be CenterPoint Energy's general unsecured obligations. CenterPoint Energy will issue senior debt securities (senior debt securities) under an indenture, dated as of May 19, 2003, between CenterPoint Energy and The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, National Association (successor in trust to JPMorgan Chase Bank), as trustee (as supplemented from time to time, the senior indenture) and junior subordinated debt securities (junior subordinated debt securities) under a separate indenture to be entered into between us and The Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, National Association, as trustee (as supplemented from time to time, the junior subordinated indenture). We will refer to the senior indenture and the junior subordinated indenture together as the indentures, and each as an indenture. The indentures will be substantially identical, except for provisions relating to subordination and covenants. We have filed, through incorporation by reference, the senior indenture and a form of the junior subordinated indenture as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. We have summarized selected provisions of the indentures and the debt securities below. This summary is not complete and is qualified in its entirety by reference to the indentures. References to section numbers in this description of our debt securities, unless otherwise indicated, are references to section numbers of the indentures.

You should carefully read the summary below, the applicable prospectus supplement and the provisions of the applicable indenture that may be important to you before investing in our senior debt securities or junior subordinated debt securities.

Provisions Applicable to Each Indenture

General. We may issue debt securities from time to time in one or more series under the applicable indenture. There is no limitation on the amount of debt securities we may issue under either indenture. We will describe the particular terms of each series of debt securities we offer in a supplement to this prospectus. The terms of our debt securities will include those set forth in the applicable indenture and those made a part of such indenture by the Trust Indenture Act of 1939 (Trust Indenture Act).

Subject to the exceptions, and subject to compliance with the applicable requirements set forth in the applicable indenture, we may discharge our obligations under the indentures with respect to our debt securities as described below under Defeasance.

Terms. We will describe the specific terms of the series of debt securities being offered in a supplement to this prospectus. These terms will include some or all of the following:

the title of the debt securities,

whether the debt securities are senior debt securities or junior subordinated debt securities,

any limit on the total principal amount of the debt securities,

the date or dates on which the principal of the debt securities will be payable or the method used to determine or extend those dates,

any interest rate on the debt securities, any date from which interest will accrue, any interest payment dates and regular record dates for interest payments, or the method used to determine any of the foregoing, the basis for calculating interest if other than a 360-day year of twelve 30-day months and any right to extend or defer interest payments and the duration of such extension or deferral,

the place or places where payments on the debt securities will be payable, the debt securities may be presented for registration of transfer or exchange, and notices and demands to or upon us relating to the debt securities may be made,

any provisions that would allow or obligate us to redeem or purchase the debt securities prior to their maturity,

Table of Contents

the denominations in which we will issue the debt securities, if other than denominations of an integral multiple of \$1,000,

any provisions that would determine payments on the debt securities by reference to an index or a formula,

any foreign currency, currencies or currency units in which payments on the debt securities will be payable and the manner for determining the equivalent amount in U.S. dollars (\$),

any provisions for payments on the debt securities in one or more currencies or currency units other than those in which the debt securities are stated to be payable,

the percentage of the principal amount at which the debt securities will be issued and the portion of the principal amount of the debt securities that will be payable if the maturity of the debt securities is accelerated, if other than the entire principal amount,

if the principal amount to be paid at the stated maturity of the debt securities is not determinable as of one or more dates prior to the stated maturity, the amount that will be deemed to be the principal amount as of any such date for any purpose,

any variation of the defeasance and covenant defeasance sections of the applicable indenture and the manner in which our election to defease the debt securities will be evidenced, if other than by a board resolution,

whether we will issue the debt securities in the form of temporary or permanent global securities, the depositories for the global securities, and provisions for exchanging or transferring the global securities,

whether the interest rate of the debt securities may be reset,

whether the stated maturity of the debt securities may be extended,

any addition to or change in the events of default for the debt securities and any change in the right of the trustee or the holders of the debt securities to declare the principal amount of the debt securities due and payable,

any addition to or change in the covenants in the applicable indenture,

any additions or changes to the applicable indenture necessary to issue the debt securities in bearer form, registrable or not registrable as to principal, and with or without interest coupons,

the appointment of any paying agents for the debt securities, if other than the trustee,

the terms of any right to convert or exchange the debt securities into any other securities or property,

the terms and conditions, if any, pursuant to which the debt securities are secured,

any restriction or condition on the transferability of the debt securities,

with respect to the junior subordinated indenture, any changes to the subordination provisions for the junior subordinated debt securities, and

any other terms of the debt securities consistent with the applicable indenture. (Section 301)

Any limit on the maximum total principal amount for any series of the debt securities may be increased by resolution of our board of directors. We may sell the debt securities, including original issue discount securities, at a substantial discount below their stated principal amount. If there are any special United States federal income tax considerations applicable to debt securities we sell at an original issue discount, we will describe them in the prospectus supplement. In addition, we will describe in the prospectus supplement any special United States federal income tax considerations and any other special considerations for any debt securities we sell which are denominated in a currency or currency unit other than U.S. dollars.

Table of Contents

Form, Exchange and Transfer. We will issue the debt securities in registered form, without coupons. Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, we will only issue debt securities in denominations of integral multiples of \$1,000. (Section 302)

Holders generally will be able to exchange debt securities for other debt securities of the same series with the same total principal amount and the same terms but in different authorized denominations. (Section 305)

Holders may present debt securities for exchange or for registration of transfer at the office of the security registrar or at the office of any transfer agent we designate for that purpose. The security registrar or designated transfer agent will exchange or transfer the debt securities if it is satisfied with the documents of title and identity of the person making the request. We will not charge a service charge for any exchange or registration of transfer of debt securities. However, we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge payable for the registration of transfer or exchange. Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, we will appoint the trustee as security registrar. We will identify any transfer agent in addition to the security registrar in the prospectus supplement. (Section 305) At any time we may:

designate additional transfer agents,

rescind the designation of any transfer agent, or

approve a change in the office of any transfer agent.

However, we are required to maintain a transfer agent in each place of payment for the debt securities at all times. (Sections 305 and 1002)

If we elect to redeem a series of debt securities, neither we nor the trustee will be required:

to issue, register the transfer of or exchange any debt securities of that series during the period beginning at the opening of business 15 days before the day we mail the notice of redemption for the series and ending at the close of business on the day the notice is mailed, or

to register the transfer or exchange of any debt security of that series if we have selected the series for redemption, in whole or in part, except for the unredeemed portion of the series. (Section 305)

Book-entry. We may issue the debt securities of a series in the form of one or more global debt securities that would be deposited with a depository or its nominee identified in the prospectus supplement. We may issue global debt securities in either temporary or permanent form. We will describe in the prospectus supplement the terms of any depository arrangement and the rights and limitations of owners of beneficial interests in any global debt security.

Payment and Paying Agents. Under both indentures, we will pay interest on the debt securities to the persons in whose names the debt securities are registered at the close of business on the regular record date for each interest payment. However, unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, we will pay the interest payable on the debt securities at their stated maturity to the persons to whom we pay the principal amount of the debt securities. The initial

payment of interest on any series of debt securities issued between a regular record date and the related interest payment date will be payable in the manner provided by the terms of the series, which we will describe in the prospectus supplement. (Section 307)

Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, we will pay principal, premium, if any, and interest on the debt securities at the offices of the paying agents we designate. However, except in the case of a global security, we may pay interest by:

check mailed to the address of the person entitled to the payment as it appears in the security register, or

by wire transfer in immediately available funds to the place and account designated in writing by the person entitled to the payment as specified in the security register.

Table of Contents

We will designate the trustee as the sole paying agent for the debt securities unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement. If we initially designate any other paying agents for a series of debt securities, we will identify them in the prospectus supplement. At any time, we may designate additional paying agents or rescind the designation of any paying agents. However, we are required to maintain a paying agent in each place of payment for the debt securities at all times. (Sections 307 and 1002)

Any money deposited with the trustee or any paying agent for the payment of principal, premium, if any, and interest on the debt securities that remains unclaimed for two years after the date the payments became due, may be repaid to us upon our request. After we have been repaid, holders entitled to those payments may only look to us for payment as our unsecured general creditors. The trustee and any paying agents will not be liable for those payments after we have been repaid. (Section 1003)

Restrictive Covenants. We will describe any restrictive covenants for any series of debt securities in the prospectus supplement.

Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets. Under both indentures, we may not consolidate with or merge into, or convey, transfer or lease our properties and assets substantially as an entirety to, any person, referred to as a successor person unless:

the successor person is a corporation, partnership, trust or other entity organized and validly existing under the laws of the United States of America or any state thereof or the District of Columbia,

the successor person expressly assumes our obligations with respect to the debt securities and the applicable indenture,

immediately after giving effect to the transaction, no event of default, and no event which, after notice or lapse of time or both, would become an event of default, would occur and be continuing, and

we have delivered to the trustee the certificates and opinions required under the applicable indenture. (Section 801)

As used in the indenture, the term corporation means a corporation, association, company, limited liability company, joint-stock company or business trust.

Events of Default. Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, each of the following will be an event of default under each indenture for a series of debt securities:

our failure to pay principal or premium, if any, on that series when due, including at maturity or upon redemption or acceleration,

our failure to pay any interest on that series for 30 days after the interest becomes due,

our failure to deposit any sinking fund payment, when due, relating to that series,

our failure to perform, or our breach in any material respect of, any other covenant or warranty in the applicable indenture, other than a covenant or warranty included in such indenture solely for the benefit of another series of debt securities, for 90 days after either the trustee or holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series have given us written notice of the breach in the manner required by the applicable indenture,

specified events involving our bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization, and

any other event of default we may provide for that series, provided, however, that no event described in the fourth bullet point above will be an event of default until an officer of the trustee, assigned to and working in the trustee's corporate trust department, has actual knowledge of the event or until the trustee receives written notice of the event at its corporate trust office. (Section 501)

Table of Contents

If an event of default for a series of debt securities occurs and is continuing, either the trustee or the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series may declare the principal amount of all the debt securities of that series due and immediately payable. To declare the principal amount of that series of debt securities due and immediately payable, the trustee or the holders must deliver a notice that satisfies the requirements of the applicable indenture. Upon a declaration by the trustee or the holders, we will be obligated to pay the principal amount of the series of debt securities.

The right described in the preceding paragraph does not apply if an event of default described in the fifth bullet point above occurs, or an event of default described in the sixth bullet point above that applies to all outstanding debt securities under the applicable indenture occurs. If one of the events of default described in the fifth bullet point above occurs with respect to the debt securities of any series, the debt securities of that series then outstanding under the applicable indenture will be due and payable immediately. If any of the events of default described in the sixth bullet point above that apply to all outstanding debt securities under an indenture occurs and is continuing, either the trustee or holders of at least 25% in principal amount of all of the debt securities then outstanding under the applicable indenture, treated as one class, may declare the principal amount of all of the debt securities then outstanding under such indenture to be due and payable immediately. To declare the principal amount of the debt securities due and immediately payable, the trustee or the holders must deliver a notice that satisfies the requirements of the applicable indenture. Upon a declaration by the trustee or the holders, we will be obligated to pay the principal amount of the debt securities.

However, after any declaration of acceleration of a series of debt securities, but before a judgment or decree for payment has been obtained, the event of default giving rise to the declaration of acceleration will, without further act, be deemed to have been waived, and such declaration and its consequences will, without further act, be deemed to have been rescinded and annulled if:

we have paid or deposited with the trustee a sum sufficient to pay:

all overdue interest,

the principal and premium, if any, due otherwise than by the declaration of acceleration and any interest on such amounts,

any interest on overdue interest, to the extent legally permitted, and

all amounts due to the trustee under the applicable indenture, and

all events of default with respect to that series of debt securities, other than the nonpayment of the principal which became due solely by virtue of the declaration of acceleration, have been cured or waived.
(Section 502)

If an event of default occurs and is continuing, the trustee will generally have no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the applicable indenture at the request or direction of any of the holders, unless the holders

offer reasonable indemnity to the trustee. (Section 603) The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series will generally have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee or exercising any trust or power conferred on the trustee for the debt securities of that series, provided that:

the direction is not in conflict with any law or the applicable indenture,

the trustee may take any other action it deems proper which is not inconsistent with the direction, and

the trustee will have the right to decline to follow the direction if an officer of the trustee determines, in good faith, that the proceeding would involve the trustee in personal liability or would otherwise be contrary to applicable law. (Section 512)

A holder of a debt security of any series may only pursue a remedy under the applicable indenture if:

the holder gives the trustee written notice of a continuing event of default for that series,

Table of Contents

holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series make a written request to the trustee to institute proceedings with respect to the event of default,

the holders offer reasonable indemnity to the trustee,

the trustee fails to pursue that remedy within 60 days after receipt of the notice, request and offer of indemnity, and

during that 60-day period, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the debt securities of that series do not give the trustee a direction inconsistent with the request. (Section 507)

However, these limitations do not apply to a suit by a holder of a debt security demanding payment of the principal, premium, if any, or interest on a debt security on or after the date the payment is due. (Section 508)

We will be required to furnish to the trustee annually a statement by some of our officers regarding our performance or observance of any of the terms of the applicable indenture and specifying all of our known defaults, if any. (Section 1004)

Modification and Waiver. We may enter into one or more supplemental indentures to either indenture with the trustee without the consent of the holders of the debt securities to:

evidence the succession of another corporation to us, or successive successions and the assumption of our covenants, agreements and obligations by a successor,

add to our covenants for the benefit of the holders of any series of debt securities or to surrender any of our rights or powers,

add events of default for any series of debt securities,

add to or change any provision of the applicable indenture to the extent necessary to issue debt securities in bearer form,

add to, change or eliminate any provision of the applicable indenture applying to one or more series of debt securities, including, for the junior subordinated indenture, the subordination provisions, provided that if such action adversely affects the interests of any holder of any series of debt securities issued thereunder, the addition, change or elimination will become effective with respect to that series only when no security of that series remains outstanding,

convey, transfer, assign, mortgage or pledge any property to or with the trustee or to surrender any right or power conferred upon us by the applicable indenture,

establish the form or terms of any series of debt securities,

provide for uncertificated securities in addition to certificated securities,

evidence and provide for successor trustees or to add to or change any provisions to the extent necessary to appoint a separate trustee or trustees for a specific series of debt securities,

correct any ambiguity, defect or inconsistency under the applicable indenture, provided that such action does not adversely affect the interests of the holders of any series of debt securities issued thereunder,

supplement any provisions of the applicable indenture necessary to defease and discharge any series of debt securities, provided that such action does not adversely affect the interests of the holders of any series of debt securities issued thereunder,

comply with the rules or regulations of any securities exchange or automated quotation system on which any debt securities are listed or traded, or

add, change or eliminate any provisions of the applicable indenture in accordance with any amendments to the Trust Indenture Act, provided that the action does not adversely affect the rights or interests of any holder of debt securities issued thereunder. (Section 901)

Table of Contents

We may enter into one or more supplemental indentures to either indenture with the trustee to add to, change or eliminate provisions of such indenture or to modify the rights of the holders of one or more series of debt securities if we obtain the consent of the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series affected by the supplemental indenture, treated as one class. However, without the consent of the holders of each outstanding debt security affected by the supplemental indenture, we may not enter into a supplemental indenture that:

changes the stated maturity of the principal of, or any installment of principal of or interest on, any debt security, except to the extent permitted by the applicable indenture,

reduces the principal amount of, or any premium or interest on, any debt security,

reduces the amount of principal of an original issue discount security or any other debt security payable upon acceleration of the maturity thereof,

changes the place or currency of payment of principal, premium, if any, or interest,

impairs the right to institute suit for the enforcement of any payment on any debt security,

reduces the percentage in principal amount of outstanding debt securities of any series, the consent of whose holders is required for modification of the applicable indenture, for waiver of compliance with certain provisions of such indenture or for waiver of certain defaults,

makes certain modifications to the provisions for modification of the applicable indenture and for certain waivers, except to increase the principal amount of debt securities necessary to consent to any such charge,

in the case of the junior subordinated indenture, modifies the subordination provisions in a manner adverse to the holders of the junior subordinated debt securities,

makes any change that adversely affects the right to convert or exchange any debt security or decreases the conversion or exchange rate or increases the conversion price of any convertible or exchangeable debt security, or

changes the terms and conditions pursuant to which any series of debt securities is secured in a manner adverse to the holders of the debt securities. (Section 902)

In addition, we may not modify the subordination provisions of any outstanding junior subordinated debt securities without the consent of each holder of our senior debt that would be adversely affected thereby. The term "senior debt" is defined below under "Provisions Applicable Solely to Junior Subordinated Debt Securities - Subordination."

Holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may waive past defaults or noncompliance with restrictive provisions of the applicable indenture with respect to such series. However, the consent of holders of each outstanding debt security of a series is required to:

waive any default in the payment of principal, premium, if any, or interest, or

waive any covenants and provisions of the applicable indenture that may not be amended without the consent of the holder of each outstanding debt security of the series affected. (Sections 513 and 1006)

To determine whether the holders of the requisite principal amount of the outstanding debt securities have taken an action under the applicable indenture as of a specified date:

the principal amount of an original issue discount security that will be deemed to be outstanding will be the amount of the principal that would be due and payable as of that date upon acceleration of the maturity to that date,

if, as of that date, the principal amount payable at the stated maturity of a debt security is not determinable, for example, because it is based on an index, the principal amount of the debt security

Table of Contents

deemed to be outstanding as of that date will be an amount determined in the manner prescribed for the debt security,

the principal amount of a debt security denominated in one or more foreign currencies or currency units that will be deemed to be outstanding will be the U.S. dollar equivalent, determined as of that date in the manner prescribed for the debt security, of the principal amount of the debt security or, in the case of a debt security described in the two preceding bullet points, of the amount described above, and

debt securities owned by us or any other obligor upon the debt securities or any of our or their affiliates will be disregarded and deemed not to be outstanding.

An original issue discount security means a debt security issued under either indenture which provides for an amount less than the principal amount thereof to be due and payable upon a declaration of acceleration of maturity. Some debt securities, including those for the payment or redemption of which money has been deposited or set aside in trust for the holders and those that have been fully defeased pursuant to Section 1402 of both indentures, will not be deemed to be outstanding. (Section 101)

We will generally be entitled to set any day as a record date for determining the holders of outstanding debt securities of any series entitled to give or take any direction, notice, consent, waiver or other action under the applicable indenture. In limited circumstances, the trustee will be entitled to set a record date for action by holders of outstanding debt securities. If a record date is set for any action to be taken by holders of a particular series, the action may be taken only by persons who are holders of outstanding debt securities of that series on the record date. To be effective, the action must be taken by holders of the requisite principal amount of debt securities within a specified period following the record date. For any particular record date, this period will be 180 days or such shorter period as we may specify, or the trustee may specify, if it set the record date. (Section 104)

Satisfaction and Discharge. We may discharge our obligations under either indenture while debt securities remain outstanding if (1) all outstanding debt securities issued under the applicable indenture have become due and payable, (2) all outstanding debt securities issued under the applicable indenture will become due and payable at their scheduled maturity within one year, or (3) all outstanding debt securities issued under the applicable indenture are scheduled for redemption in one year, and in each case, we have deposited with the trustee an amount sufficient to pay and discharge all outstanding debt securities issued under the applicable indenture on the date of their scheduled maturity or the scheduled date of redemption and we have paid all other sums payable under the applicable indenture.

Defeasance. When we use the term defeasance, we mean discharge from some or all of our obligations under either indenture. Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, if we deposit with the trustee funds or government securities sufficient to make payments on the debt securities of a series on the dates those payments are due and payable, then, at our option, either of the following will occur:

we will be discharged from our obligations with respect to the debt securities of that series (legal defeasance), or

we will no longer have any obligation to comply with the restrictive covenants under the applicable indenture, and the related events of default will no longer apply to us, but some of our other obligations

under the indenture and the debt securities of that series, including our obligation to make payments on those debt securities, will survive.

If we effect legal defeasance of a series of debt securities, the holders of the debt securities of the series affected will not be entitled to the benefits of the applicable indenture, except for our obligations to:

register the transfer or exchange of debt securities,

replace mutilated, destroyed, lost or stolen debt securities, and

maintain paying agencies and hold moneys for payment in trust.

Table of Contents

Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, we will be required to deliver to the trustee an opinion of counsel that the deposit and related defeasance would not cause the holders of the debt securities to recognize gain or loss for federal income tax purposes and that the holders would be subject to federal income tax on the same amounts, in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the deposit and related defeasance had not occurred. If we elect legal defeasance, that opinion of counsel must be based upon a ruling from the United States Internal Revenue Service or a change in law to that effect. (Sections 1401, 1402, 1403 and 1404)

Notices. Holders will receive notices by mail at their addresses as they appear in the security register or as otherwise specified in the applicable indenture. (Section 106)

Title. We may treat the person in whose name a debt security is registered on the applicable record date as the owner of the debt security for all purposes, whether or not it is overdue. (Section 309)

Governing Law. New York law will govern both indentures and the debt securities. (Section 112)

Regarding the Trustee. As of September 30, 2016, the trustee served as trustee for \$1.4 billion aggregate principal amount of our debt securities and \$118 million aggregate principal amount of pollution control bonds issued on our behalf. In addition, the trustee serves as trustee for debt securities of some of our subsidiaries. We and our affiliates maintain brokerage and other relationships with the trustee and its affiliates in the normal course of business.

If an event of default occurs under either indenture and is continuing, the trustee will be required to use the degree of care and skill of a prudent person in the conduct of that person's own affairs. The trustee will become obligated to exercise any of its powers under the applicable indenture at the request of any of the holders of any debt securities issued under such indenture only after those holders have offered the trustee indemnity satisfactory to it.

If the trustee becomes one of our creditors, its rights to obtain payment of claims in specified circumstances, or to realize for its own account on certain property received in respect of any such claim as security or otherwise will be limited under the terms of the applicable indenture. (Section 613) The trustee may engage in certain other transactions; however, if the trustee acquires any conflicting interest (within the meaning specified under the Trust Indenture Act), it will be required to eliminate the conflict or resign. (Section 608)

Provisions Applicable Solely to Senior Debt Securities

Ranking. Our senior debt securities will rank equally in right of payment with all of our other existing and future unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness.

Provisions Applicable Solely to Junior Subordinated Debt Securities

Subordination. The junior subordinated debt securities are subordinate and junior in right of payment, to the extent and in the manner stated in the junior subordinated indenture, to all of our senior indebtedness, as defined in the junior subordinated indenture.

Unless we inform you otherwise in a prospectus supplement, senior indebtedness means:

all indebtedness and obligations of, or guaranteed or assumed by, us for borrowed money or evidenced by bonds, debentures, notes or other similar instruments, whether existing on the date of the junior subordinated

indenture or subsequently created, incurred or assumed, and

all amendments, renewals, extensions, modifications and refundings of any indebtedness or obligations of that kind.

Table of Contents

Notwithstanding the foregoing, senior indebtedness excludes (i) our indebtedness to our subsidiaries, (ii) trade accounts payable and accrued liabilities arising in the ordinary course of business and (iii) the junior subordinated debt securities and any other indebtedness or obligations that would otherwise constitute indebtedness if it is specifically designated as being subordinate, or not superior, in right of payment to the junior subordinated debt securities. Senior indebtedness includes \$828 million of our 2.0% Zero-Premium Exchangeable Subordinated Notes due 2029.

We will describe additional provisions of our junior subordinated debt securities in a prospectus supplement applicable to the particular series of junior subordinated debt securities.

Defeasance. Upon the effectiveness of any defeasance or covenant defeasance permitted with respect to our junior subordinated securities, the junior subordinated debt securities then outstanding shall cease to be subordinated. See Provisions Applicable to Both Indentures Defeasance.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF OUR CAPITAL STOCK

The following descriptions are summaries of material terms of our common stock, preferred stock, articles of incorporation and bylaws. This summary is qualified by reference to our restated articles of incorporation and second amended and restated bylaws, each as amended to date, copies of which we have filed or incorporated by reference as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and by the provisions of applicable law. As of December 31, 2016, our authorized capital stock consisted of:

1,000,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, of which 430,682,504 shares were outstanding, excluding 166 shares held as treasury stock, and

20,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.01 per share, of which no shares were outstanding.

Common Stock

Voting Rights. Holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote for each share on all matters submitted to a vote of shareholders, including the election of directors. There are no cumulative voting rights. Subject to the voting rights expressly conferred to the holders of our preferred stock, the holders of our common stock possess exclusive full voting power for the election of directors and for all other purposes. Our bylaws provide that director nominees are elected by the vote of a majority of the votes cast with respect to the director by shareholders entitled to vote at the meeting in an uncontested election. An election is contested if, at a specified time before we file our definitive proxy statement with the SEC, the number of nominees exceeds the number of directors to be elected, in which case directors will be elected by the vote of a plurality of the votes cast by shareholders entitled to vote at the meeting.

Dividends. Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any of our outstanding preferred stock, the holders of our common stock are entitled to dividends when, as and if declared by the board of directors out of funds legally available for that purpose.

Liquidation Rights. If we are liquidated, terminated or wound up, the holders of our common stock will be entitled to a pro rata share in any distribution to shareholders, but only after satisfaction of all of our liabilities and of the prior rights of any outstanding class of our preferred stock, which may include the right to participate further with the holders of our common stock in the distribution of any of our remaining assets.

Preemptive Rights. Holders of our common stock are not entitled to any preemptive or conversion rights or other subscription rights.

Transfer Agent and Registrar. Broadridge Corporate Issuer Solutions, Inc. serves as transfer agent and registrar for our common stock.

Other Provisions. There are no redemption or sinking fund provisions applicable to our common stock. No personal liability will attach to holders of such shares under the laws of the State of Texas. Subject to the provisions of our articles of incorporation and bylaws imposing certain supermajority voting provisions, the rights of the holders of shares of our common stock may not be modified except by a vote of at least a majority of the shares outstanding, voting together as a single class.

Preferred Stock

Our board of directors may cause us to issue preferred stock from time to time in one or more series and may fix the number of shares and the terms of each series without the approval of our shareholders. Our board of directors may determine the terms of each series, including:

the designation of the series,

dividend rates and payment dates,

whether dividends will be cumulative, non-cumulative or partially cumulative, and related terms,

Table of Contents

redemption rights,

liquidation rights,

sinking fund provisions,

conversion rights,

voting rights, and

any other terms.

The prospectus supplement relating to any series of preferred stock will include specific terms relating to the offering. We will file the form of the preferred stock with the SEC before we issue any of it. The prospectus supplement for any offering of preferred stock will include some or all of the following terms:

the title of the preferred stock,

the maximum number of shares of the series,

the dividend rate or the method of calculating the dividend, the date from which dividends will accrue and whether dividends will be cumulative,

any liquidation preference,

any optional redemption provisions,

any sinking fund or other provisions that would obligate us to redeem or purchase the preferred stock,

any terms for the conversion or exchange of the preferred stock for other securities of us or any other entity,

any voting rights, and

any other preferences and relative, participating, optional or other special rights or any qualifications, limitations or restrictions on the rights of the shares.

The issuance of preferred stock, while providing desired flexibility in connection with possible acquisitions and other corporate purposes, could adversely affect the voting power of holders of our common stock. It could also affect the likelihood that holders of our common stock will receive dividend payments and payments upon liquidation. The issuance of shares of preferred stock, or the issuance of rights to purchase shares of preferred stock, could be used to discourage an attempt to obtain control of us. For example, if, in the exercise of its fiduciary obligations, our board were to determine that a takeover proposal was not in our best interest, the board could authorize the issuance of a series of preferred stock containing class voting rights that would enable the holder or holders of the series to prevent or make the change of control transaction more difficult. Alternatively, a change of control transaction deemed by the board to be in our best interest could be facilitated by issuing a series of preferred stock having sufficient voting rights to provide a required percentage vote of the shareholders.

Anti-Takeover Effects of Texas Laws and Our Charter and Bylaw Provisions

Some provisions of Texas law and our articles of incorporation and bylaws could make the following actions more difficult:

acquisition of us by means of a tender offer,

acquisition of control of us by means of a proxy contest or otherwise, or

removal of our incumbent officers and directors.

These provisions are designed to discourage coercive takeover practices and inadequate takeover bids. These provisions are also designed to encourage persons seeking to acquire control of us to first negotiate with our board of directors. We believe that the benefits of this increased protection gives us the potential ability to

Table of Contents

negotiate with the proponent of an unfriendly or unsolicited proposal to acquire or restructure us, and that the benefits of this increased protection outweigh the disadvantages of discouraging those proposals, because negotiation of those proposals could result in an improvement of their terms.

Charter and Bylaw Provisions

Election and Removal of Directors. The number of members of our board of directors will be fixed from time to time by resolution of the board of directors. Except for voting rights as may be provided to holders of preferred stock, at each annual meeting of shareholders, all directors are elected to hold office for a term expiring at the next succeeding annual meeting of shareholders and until their successors have been elected and qualified.

No director may be removed except for cause, and, subject to the voting rights expressly conferred to the holders of our preferred stock, directors may be removed for cause only by the holders of at least a majority of the shares of capital stock entitled to vote at an election of directors. Subject to the voting rights expressly conferred to the holders of our preferred stock, any vacancy occurring on the board of directors and any newly created directorship may be filled by a majority of the remaining directors in office or by election by the shareholders.

Shareholder Meetings. Our articles of incorporation and bylaws provide that special meetings of holders of common stock may be called only by the chairman of our board of directors, our chief executive officer, the president, the secretary, a majority of our board of directors or the holders of at least 50% of the shares of our capital stock outstanding and entitled to vote.

Modification of Articles of Incorporation. In general, amendments to our articles of incorporation that are recommended by the board of directors require the affirmative vote of holders of at least a majority of the voting power of all outstanding shares of capital stock entitled to vote in the election of directors. The provisions described above under *Election and Removal of Directors* and *Shareholder Meetings* may be amended only by the affirmative vote of holders of at least 66 2/3% of the voting power of all outstanding shares of capital stock entitled to vote in the election of directors. The provisions described below under *Modification of Bylaws* may be amended only by the affirmative vote of holders of at least 80% of the voting power of all outstanding shares of capital stock entitled to vote in the election of directors.

Modification of Bylaws. Our board of directors has the power to alter, amend or repeal the bylaws or adopt new bylaws by the affirmative vote of at least 80% of all directors then in office at any regular or special meeting of the board of directors called for that purpose. The shareholders also have the power to alter, amend or repeal the bylaws or adopt new bylaws by the affirmative vote of holders of at least 80% of the voting power of all outstanding shares of capital stock entitled to vote in the election of directors, voting together as a single class.

Other Limitations on Shareholder Actions. Our bylaws also impose some procedural requirements on shareholders who wish to:

make nominations in the election of directors,

propose that a director be removed,

propose any repeal or change in the bylaws, or

propose any other business to be brought before an annual or special meeting of shareholders.

Under these procedural requirements, a shareholder must deliver timely notice in proper written form to our secretary of the nomination or proposal along with evidence of:

the shareholder's status as a shareholder,

the number of shares beneficially owned by the shareholder,

Table of Contents

a list of the persons with whom the shareholder is acting in concert, and

the number of shares such persons beneficially own.

To be timely, a shareholder must deliver the notice:

in connection with an annual meeting of shareholders, not less than 90 days nor more than 180 days prior to the first anniversary of the date on which the immediately preceding year's annual meeting of shareholders was held; provided that if the date of the annual meeting is advanced by more than 30 days prior to or delayed by more than 60 days after the first anniversary of the preceding year's annual meeting of shareholders, not earlier than 180 days prior to the annual meeting and not later than the last to occur of (i) the 90th day prior to the annual meeting or (ii) the 10th day following the day on which we first make public announcement of the date of the annual meeting, or

in connection with the nomination of director candidates at a special meeting of shareholders, generally not less than 40 days nor more than 60 days prior to the date of the special meeting.

To submit a nomination for the board of directors, a shareholder must also submit information with respect to the nominee that we would be required to include in a proxy statement, as well as some other information. If a shareholder fails to follow the required procedures, the shareholder's nominee or proposal will be ineligible and will not be voted on by our shareholders.

In connection with a special meeting of shareholders, the only business that will be conducted is that stated in the notice of special meeting, or otherwise properly brought and made in proper written form before the meeting by or at the direction of the Chairman of the Meeting or the board of directors. Shareholders requesting a special meeting are permitted to make proposals for matters to be brought before the meeting in their request.

Limitation on Liability of Directors. Our articles of incorporation provide that no director will be personally liable to us or our shareholders for monetary damages for breach of fiduciary duty as a director, except as required by law as in effect from time to time. Currently, Texas law requires that liability be imposed for the following actions:

any breach of the director's duty of loyalty to us or our shareholders,

any act or omission not in good faith that constitutes a breach of duty of the director to the corporation or that involves intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law,

a transaction from which the director received an improper benefit, regardless of whether or not the benefit resulted from an action taken within the scope of a director's duties, and

an act or omission for which the liability of a director is expressly provided for by statute.

Our bylaws provide that we will indemnify our officers and directors and advance expenses to them in connection with proceedings and claims, to the fullest extent permitted by the Texas Business Organizations Code (TBOC). The bylaws authorize our board of directors to indemnify and advance expenses to people other than our officers and directors in certain circumstances.

Texas Anti-Takeover Law

We are subject to Section 21.606 of the TBOC. That section prohibits Texas public corporations from engaging in a wide range of specified transactions with any affiliated shareholder during the three-year period immediately following the affiliated shareholder's acquisition of shares in the absence of certain board of director or shareholder approvals. An affiliated shareholder of a corporation is any person, other than the corporation and any of its wholly owned subsidiaries, that is or was within the preceding three-year period the beneficial owner of 20% or more of the outstanding shares of stock entitled to vote generally in the election of directors. Section 21.606 may deter any potential unfriendly offers or other efforts to obtain control of us that are not approved by our board of directors. This may deprive our shareholders of opportunities to sell shares of our common stock at a premium to the prevailing market price.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF STOCK PURCHASE CONTRACTS AND EQUITY UNITS

We may issue stock purchase contracts, including contracts obligating holders to purchase from us, and obligating us to sell to the holders, a specified number of shares of common stock, preferred stock or other securities at a future date or dates. We may fix the price and number of securities subject to the stock purchase contracts at the time we issue the stock purchase contracts, or we may provide that the price and number of securities will be determined pursuant to a formula set forth in the stock purchase contracts. The stock purchase contracts may be issued separately or as part of units consisting of a stock purchase contract and our debt securities or debt obligations of third parties, including U.S. treasury securities, securing the obligations of the holders of the units to purchase the securities under the stock purchase contracts. We refer to these units as equity units. The stock purchase contracts may require holders to secure their obligations under the stock purchase contracts in a specified manner. The stock purchase contracts also may require us to make periodic payments to the holders of the equity units or vice versa, and those payments may be unsecured on some basis.

The applicable prospectus supplement will describe the terms of the stock purchase contracts or equity units offered by such prospectus supplement. The description in the prospectus supplement will not necessarily be complete, and reference will be made to the stock purchase contracts or equity units, and, if applicable, collateral or depositary arrangements, relating to the stock purchase contracts or equity units, which will be filed with the SEC or otherwise incorporated by reference in our previous filings each time we issue stock purchase contracts or equity units. Certain material United States federal income tax considerations applicable to the equity units and the stock purchase contracts will also be discussed in the prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

HOLDING COMPANY STRUCTURE

We are a holding company that conducts substantially all of our operations through our subsidiaries. Our only significant assets are the capital stock of our subsidiaries, and our subsidiaries generate substantially all of our operating income and cash flow. As a result, dividends or advances from our subsidiaries are the principal source of funds necessary to meet our debt service obligations. Contractual provisions or laws, as well as our subsidiaries financial condition and operating requirements, may limit our ability to obtain cash from our subsidiaries that we may require to pay our debt service obligations, including payments on the debt securities. In addition, the debt securities will be effectively subordinated to all of the liabilities of our subsidiaries with regard to the assets and earnings of our subsidiaries.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the offered securities in and outside the United States:

through underwriters or dealers,

directly to purchasers, including our affiliates,

through agents, or

through a combination of any of these methods.

The prospectus supplement will include the following information:

the terms of the offering,

the names of any underwriters or agents,

the name or names of any managing underwriter or underwriters,

the purchase price of the securities,

the net proceeds to us from the sale of the securities,

any delayed delivery arrangements,

any underwriting discounts, commissions and other items constituting underwriters' compensation,

any initial public offering price,

any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers, and

any commissions paid to agents.

Sale Through Underwriters or Dealers

If we use underwriters in the sale, the underwriters will acquire the securities for their own account. The underwriters may resell the securities from time to time in one or more transactions, including negotiated transactions, at a fixed public offering price or at varying prices determined at the time of sale. Underwriters may offer securities to the public either through underwriting syndicates represented by one or more managing underwriters or directly by one or more firms acting as underwriters. Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, the obligations of the underwriters to purchase the securities will be subject to certain conditions, and the underwriters will be obligated to purchase all the offered securities if they purchase any of them. The underwriters may change from time to time any initial public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers.

During and after an offering through underwriters, the underwriters may purchase and sell the securities in the open market. These transactions may include overallotment and stabilizing transactions and purchases to cover syndicate short positions created in connection with the offering. The underwriters also may impose a penalty bid, which means that selling concessions allowed to syndicate members or other broker-dealers for the offered securities sold for their account may be reclaimed by the syndicate if the offered securities are repurchased by the syndicate in stabilizing or covering transactions. These activities may stabilize, maintain or otherwise affect the market price of the offered securities, which may be higher than the price that might otherwise prevail in the open market. If commenced, the underwriters may discontinue these activities at any time.

If we use dealers in the sale of securities, we may sell the securities to them as principals. They may then resell those securities to the public at varying prices determined by the dealers at the time of resale. The dealers participating in any sale of the securities may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933 with respect to any sale of these securities. We will include in the prospectus supplement the names of the dealers and the terms of the transaction.

Table of Contents

To the extent that we make sales through one or more underwriters or agents in at-the-market offerings, we will do so pursuant to the terms of a sales agency agreement or other at-the-market offering arrangement between us and the underwriters or agents. If we engage in at-the-market sales pursuant to any such agreement, we will issue and sell common stock through one or more underwriters or agents, which may act on an agency basis or on a principal basis. During the term of any such agreement, we may sell common stock on a daily basis in exchange transactions or otherwise as we agree with the underwriters or agents. The agreement will provide that any common stock sold will be sold at prices related to the then prevailing market prices for such securities. Therefore, exact figures regarding proceeds that will be raised or commissions to be paid cannot be determined at this time. Pursuant to the terms of the agreement, we also may agree to sell, and the relevant underwriters or agents may agree to solicit offers to purchase, blocks of common stock. The terms of each such agreement will be set forth in more detail in the applicable prospectus supplement and any related free writing prospectus. In the event that any underwriter or agent acts as principal, or any broker-dealer acts as underwriter, it may engage in certain transactions that stabilize, maintain, or otherwise affect the price of common stock. We will describe any such activities in the prospectus supplement or any related free writing prospectus relating to the transaction.

Direct Sales and Sales Through Agents

We may sell the securities directly. In that event, no underwriters or agents would be involved. We may also sell the securities through agents we designate from time to time. In the prospectus supplement, we will name any agent involved in the offer or sale of the offered securities, and we will describe any commissions payable by us to the agent. Unless we inform you otherwise in the prospectus supplement, any agent will agree to use its reasonable best efforts to solicit purchases for the period of its appointment.

We may sell the securities directly to institutional investors or others who may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933 with respect to any sale of those securities. We will describe the terms of any such sales in the prospectus supplement.

Delayed Delivery Contracts

If we so indicate in the prospectus supplement, we may authorize agents, underwriters or dealers to solicit offers from certain types of institutions to purchase securities from us at the public offering price under delayed delivery contracts. These contracts would provide for payment and delivery on a specified date in the future. The contracts would be subject only to those conditions described in the prospectus supplement. The prospectus supplement will describe the commission payable for solicitation of those contracts.

Remarketing

We may offer and sell any of the offered securities in connection with a remarketing upon their purchase, in accordance with a redemption or repayment by their terms or otherwise by one or more remarketing firms acting as principals for their own accounts or as our agents. We will identify any remarketing firm, the terms of any remarketing agreement and the compensation to be paid to the remarketing firm in the prospectus supplement. Remarketing firms may be deemed underwriters under the Securities Act of 1933.

Derivative Transactions

We may enter into derivative transactions with third parties, or sell securities not covered by this prospectus to third parties in privately negotiated transactions. If the applicable prospectus supplement indicates, in connection with those derivatives, the third parties may sell securities covered by this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement,

including in short sale transactions. If so, the third parties may use securities pledged by us or borrowed from us or others to settle those sales or to close out any related open borrowings of securities, and may use securities received from us in settlement of those derivatives to close out any related open

Table of Contents

borrowings of securities. The third parties in these sale transactions will be underwriters and, if not identified in this prospectus, will be identified in the applicable prospectus supplement or in a post-effective amendment to the registration statement of which this prospectus forms a part.

General Information

We may have agreements with the remarketing firms, agents, dealers and underwriters to indemnify them against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act of 1933, or to contribute with respect to payments that the agents, dealers or underwriters may be required to make. Such firms, agents, dealers and underwriters may be customers of, engage in transactions with or perform services for us in the ordinary course of their businesses.

To the extent required, this prospectus may be amended or supplemented from time to time to describe a particular plan of distribution. The place and time of delivery for the securities in respect of which this prospectus is delivered will be set forth in the accompanying prospectus supplement.

Each series of offered securities will be a new issue, and other than the common stock, which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange and the Chicago Stock Exchange, will have no established trading market. We may elect to list any series of offered securities on an exchange, but we are not obligated to do so. It is possible that one or more underwriters may make a market in a series of offered securities. However, they will not be obligated to do so and may discontinue market making at any time without notice. We cannot assure you that a liquid trading market for any of our offered securities will develop.

Table of Contents

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the securities described in this prospectus will be passed upon for us by Baker Botts L.L.P., Houston, Texas. Dana C. O'Brien, Esq., our Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, or Monica Karuturi, Esq., our Vice President and Associate General Counsel, Corporate and Securities, may pass upon other legal matters for us. Each of Messrs. O'Brien and Karuturi is the beneficial owner of less than 1% of our common stock. Any underwriters will be advised regarding issues relating to any offering by Hunton & Williams LLP, New York, New York.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements and the related financial statement schedules, incorporated in this Prospectus by reference from CenterPoint Energy, Inc.'s Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2015 and the effectiveness of CenterPoint Energy, Inc.'s internal control over financial reporting, have been audited by Deloitte & Touche LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, as stated in their reports, which are incorporated herein by reference. Such consolidated financial statements and financial statement schedules have been so incorporated in reliance upon the reports of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

Table of Contents

\$500,000,000

CENTERPOINT ENERGY, INC.

% Senior Notes, due 2022

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

Joint Book-Running Managers

Barclays

Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC

Morgan Stanley

MUFG

Senior Co-Manager

TD Securities

Co-Managers

Evercore ISI

Ramirez & Co., Inc.

August , 2017