

VanEck Vectors ETF Trust  
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PROSPECTUS  
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VanEck Vectors Real Asset Allocation ETF (RAAX)

Principal U.S. Listing Exchange for the Fund: NYSE Arca, Inc.

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”) and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (“CFTC”) have not approved or disapproved these securities or passed upon the accuracy or adequacy of this Prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense

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**SUMMARY INFORMATION****VANECK VECTORS® REAL ASSET ALLOCATION ETF****Investment Objective**

The investment objective of VanEck Vectors® Real Asset Allocation ETF (the “Fund”) is long-term total return. In pursuing long-term total return, the Fund seeks to maximize “real returns” (as defined below) while seeking to reduce downside risk during sustained market declines.

**Fund Fees and Expenses**

The following tables describe the fees and expenses that you may pay if you buy and hold shares of the Fund (“Shares”).

<b>Shareholder Fees</b> (fees paid directly from your investment)	None
<b>Annual Fund Operating Expenses</b> (expenses that you pay each year as a percentage of the value of your investment)	
Management Fee	0.50%
Other Expenses <sup>(a)</sup>	0.12%
Acquired Fund Fees and Expenses <sup>(b)</sup>	0.19%
Total Annual Fund Operating Expenses	0.81%
Fee Waivers and Expense Reimbursement <sup>(c)</sup>	- 0.07%
Total Annual Fund Operating Expenses After Fee Waiver and Expense Reimbursement <sup>(c)</sup>	0.74%

<sup>(a)</sup> “Other Expenses” are based on estimated amounts for the current fiscal year and reflect estimated expenses at both the Fund and the Fund’s wholly-owned subsidiary (the “Subsidiary”) levels.

<sup>(b)</sup> “Acquired Fund Fees and Expenses” include fees and expenses incurred indirectly by the Fund as a result of investments in other investment companies, including funds which invest exclusively in money market instruments. Because acquired fund fees and expenses are not borne directly by the Fund, they will not be reflected in the expense information in the Fund’s financial statements and the information presented in the table will differ from that presented in the Fund’s financial highlights included in the Fund’s reports to shareholders. Acquired fund fees

and expenses do not include fees and expenses associated with investments in investment companies managed by Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation (the “Adviser”) or its affiliates where the Adviser has agreed to waive the management fee it charges to the Fund by any amount the Adviser collects as a management fee from such investment company.

The Adviser has agreed to waive fees and/or pay Fund and Subsidiary expenses in an amount equal to the fees paid to the Adviser by the Subsidiary and to the extent necessary to prevent the operating expenses of the Fund (excluding acquired fund fees and expenses, interest expense, trading expenses, taxes and extraordinary expenses of<sup>(c)</sup> the Fund and Subsidiary) from exceeding 0.55% of the Fund’s average daily net assets per year until at least February 1, 2020. During such time, the expense limitation is expected to continue until the Fund’s Board of Trustees acts to discontinue all or a portion of such expense limitation.

### **Expense Example**

This example is intended to help you compare the cost of investing in the Fund with the cost of investing in other funds. This example does not take into account brokerage commissions that you pay when purchasing or selling Shares of the Fund.

The example assumes that you invest \$10,000 in the Fund for the time periods indicated and then redeem all of your Shares at the end of those periods. The example also assumes that your investment has a 5% annual return and that the Fund's operating expenses remain the same (except that the example incorporates the fee waiver and/or expense reimbursement arrangement for only the first year). Although your actual costs may be higher or lower, based on these assumptions, your costs would be:

**YEAR EXPENSES**

1	\$76
3	\$252

**Portfolio Turnover**

The Fund will pay transaction costs, such as commissions, when it purchases and sells securities (or "turns over" its portfolio). A higher portfolio turnover will cause the Fund to incur additional transaction costs and may result in higher taxes when Fund Shares are held in a taxable account. These costs, which are not reflected in annual fund operating expenses or in the example, may affect the Fund's performance. Because the Fund is newly organized, no portfolio turnover figures are available.

**Principal Investment Strategies**

The Fund is an actively managed exchange-traded fund ("ETF") that seeks to achieve its investment objective by investing, under normal circumstances, primarily in (i) exchange traded products that provide exposure to real assets through investment in domestic and foreign equity and debt securities, master limited partnerships ("MLPs"), and physical commodities, including ETFs and non-1940 Act (defined herein) commodity pools or commodity trusts and exchange traded notes ("ETNs") (collectively, "ETPs"); and (ii) cash or cash equivalents. Real assets include commodities (such as gold), real estate, natural resources and infrastructure, as well as companies that own, operate, or derive a significant portion of their value from real assets or the production thereof. The investments held by the ETPs may include physical assets and equity securities of companies of any market capitalization, debt securities of any credit quality (including high-yield (or "junk") securities), duration and maturity and emerging market securities. The Fund seeks to maximize "real returns" while seeking to reduce downside risk during sustained market declines. The Fund seeks to reduce downside risk by primarily allocating a significant portion, at times as much as 100%, of the Fund's assets to cash and cash equivalents based on the model described below. "Real returns" are defined as total returns adjusted for the effects of inflation.

The Adviser uses a proprietary, rules-based real asset allocation model (the "Real Asset Model"). The Real Asset Model considers various inputs to guide asset allocation decisions and select real asset investments (and to thereby select ETPs that provide exposure to those real asset classes) that the Adviser believes will offer positive expected returns. The Real Asset Model uses various indicators, such as technical, macroeconomic, and sentiment indicators to generate allocation signals among real asset investments. These signals are used as an input to guide which ETPs to allocate to

as well as to guide the total cash or cash equivalent allocation.

The indicators used by the Real Asset Model include, but are not limited to, equity price trends, commodity price trends, volatility (the measure of variation of returns for a given security or market index), investor sentiment (investor attitude towards a particular security or financial market as revealed through market activity or investor surveys), and macroeconomic supply and demand (the relationship between the consumption and production of assets, and its effect on price levels). The Adviser anticipates that the Real Asset Model will evolve over time and may incorporate additional indicators. The Adviser allocates the Fund's assets to those ETPs that it believes will have returns that, in the aggregate, closely correlate (before fees and expenses) to the returns of the Real Asset Model. The Real Asset Model typically adjusts its allocation signals on a monthly basis.

A significant portion, at times as much as 100%, of the Fund's assets may be held in cash or cash equivalents including, but not limited to, money market instruments, U.S. Treasury bills, treasury inflation-protected securities, interests in

short-term investment funds or shares of money market or short-term bond funds. The Adviser currently anticipates investing in 1- to 3-month U.S. Treasury Bills when a portion of the Fund's assets are allocated to cash or cash equivalents. The Fund may engage in active and frequent trading of portfolio securities.

The Fund will invest in certain ETPs through a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Fund organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands (the "Subsidiary"). The Subsidiary is a limited company, is wholly-owned and controlled by the Fund and is advised by the Adviser. The Fund's investment in the Subsidiary may not exceed 25% of the value of the Fund's total assets at each quarter-end of the Fund's fiscal year. The Fund's investment in the Subsidiary, via the Subsidiary's investment in ETPs, is expected to provide the Fund with exposure to physical commodities and futures and derivatives of physical commodities ("Commodities Instruments") within the limits of the federal tax laws, which limit the ability of investment companies like the Fund to invest directly in such instruments. The Subsidiary has the same investment objective as the Fund and will follow the same general investment policies and restrictions, except that unlike the Fund, it may invest, via its investment in ETPs, without limit in Commodities Instruments.

Except as noted, for purposes of this Prospectus, references to the Fund's investment strategies and risks include those of its Subsidiary. The Fund complies with the provisions of the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (the "1940 Act"), governing investment policies (Section 8) and capital structure and leverage (Section 18) on an aggregate basis with the Subsidiary. The Subsidiary will comply with the 1940 Act provisions governing affiliate transactions and custody of assets.

The Fund is classified as a non-diversified fund under the 1940 Act and, therefore, may invest a greater percentage of its assets in a particular issuer.

### **Principal Risks of Investing in the Fund**

**Investors in the Fund should be willing to accept a high degree of volatility in the price of the Fund's Shares and the possibility of significant losses. An investment in the Fund involves a substantial degree of risk. An investment in the Fund is not a deposit with a bank and is not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other government agency. Therefore, you should consider carefully the following risks before investing in the Fund, each of which could significantly and adversely affect the value of an investment in the Fund.**

The following risks apply to the Fund, unless otherwise noted.

*Fund of Funds Risk.* The performance of the Fund is dependent on the performance of underlying funds. The Fund is subject to the risks of the underlying funds' investments. In addition, the Fund's shareholders will indirectly bear the expenses of the underlying funds, absorbing duplicative levels of fees with respect to investments in the underlying

funds. In addition, at times certain segments of the market represented by the underlying funds may be out of favor and underperform other segments. The Fund, via the Subsidiary's investment in ETPs, may invest in ETFs and ETNs. ETNs are senior, unsecured notes linked to an index. Like ETFs, they may be bought and sold on a securities exchange. However, while ETF shares represent an interest in the ETF's underlying assets, ETNs are structured products that are an obligation of the issuing bank, broker-dealer or other intermediary, whereby the intermediary agrees to pay a return based on the target index less any fees. ETNs combine certain aspects of bonds and ETFs. Investors can hold an ETN until maturity. Investments in other ETFs and ETNs will subject the Fund to the additional fees and expenses of the underlying ETF or ETN. At the same time, the Fund would continue to pay its own fees and other expenses. The ETNs in which the Fund invests may include ETNs that invest in equity and debt securities, as well as other asset categories. Additionally, the value of an ETN may be influenced by time to maturity, level of supply and demand, volatility and lack of liquidity in the underlying market (*e.g.*, the commodities market), changes in interest rates or the issuer's credit rating, and other economic, legal, political or geographic events. ETNs are also subject to counterparty risk.

*Affiliated Fund Risk.* In managing the Fund, the Adviser will have the ability to select underlying funds which it believes will achieve the Fund's investment objective. The Adviser may be subject to potential conflicts of interest in selecting underlying funds because the Adviser may, due to its own financial interest or other business considerations, have had an incentive to invest in funds managed by the Adviser or its affiliates in lieu of investing in funds managed or sponsored by others.

*Risk of U.S. Treasury Bills.* Direct obligations of the U.S. Treasury have historically involved little risk of loss of principal if held to maturity. However, due to fluctuations in interest rates, the market value of such securities may vary.

*Subsidiary Investment Risk.* Changes in the laws of the United States and/or the Cayman Islands, under which the Fund and the Subsidiary are organized, respectively, could result in the inability of the Fund to operate as intended and could negatively affect the Fund and its shareholders. The Subsidiary is not registered under the 1940 Act and is not subject to all the investor protections of the 1940 Act. Thus, the Fund, as an investor in the Subsidiary, will not have the protections offered to investors in registered investment companies.



*Commodity Regulatory Risk (with respect to investments in the Subsidiary).* Changes in the laws or regulations of the United States or the Cayman Islands, including any changes to applicable tax laws and regulations, could impair the ability of the Fund to achieve its investment objective and could increase the operating expenses of the Fund or the Subsidiary. Based on the Fund's and its Subsidiary's current investment strategies, the Fund and the Subsidiary are each a "commodity pool" and the Adviser is considered a "commodity pool operator" ("CPO") with respect to the Fund and the Subsidiary under the Commodity Exchange Act of 1936, as amended ("CEA"). Accordingly, the Fund and the Adviser are subject to dual regulation by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission ("CFTC") and the Securities Exchange Commission ("SEC"). Pursuant to certain CFTC regulations, the Fund and the Adviser have elected to meet the requirements of certain CFTC regulations by complying with specific SEC rules and regulations relating to disclosure and reporting requirements. The CFTC could deem the Fund or the Adviser in violation of an applicable CFTC regulation if the Fund or the Adviser failed to comply with a related SEC regulatory requirement. In addition, the Fund and the Adviser will remain subject to certain CFTC-mandated disclosure, reporting and recordkeeping regulations with respect to the Fund and the Subsidiary. Compliance with the CFTC regulations could increase the Fund's expenses, adversely affecting the Fund's total return.

*Tax Risk (with respect to investments in the Subsidiary).* The Fund must derive at least 90% of its gross income from certain qualifying sources of income in order to qualify as a regulated investment company ("RIC") under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"). The Internal Revenue Service (the "IRS") issued a revenue ruling in December 2005, which concluded that income and gains from certain commodity-linked derivatives are not qualifying income under Subchapter M of the Code. As a result, the Fund's ability to invest directly in commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps or in certain exchange traded trusts that hold commodities as part of its investment strategy is limited by the requirement that it receive no more than ten percent (10%) of its gross income from such investments. However, in Revenue Ruling 2006-31, the IRS indicated that income from alternative investment instruments that create commodity exposure may be considered qualifying income under the Code. The Fund has not obtained a ruling from the IRS with respect to its investments or its structure. In the absence of such a ruling, the Fund expects to invest its assets in the Subsidiary, consistent with applicable law and the advice of Counsel, in a manner that should permit the Fund to treat income allocable from the Subsidiary as qualifying income. The IRS has proposed regulations that, if finalized, would generally treat a fund's income inclusion with respect to an investment in a non-U.S. company generating investment income as qualifying income only if there is a current-year distribution out of the earnings and profits of the non-U.S. company that are attributable to such income inclusion. The proposed regulations, if adopted, would apply to taxable years beginning on or after 90 days after the regulations are published as final. The Fund intends to treat its income from the Subsidiary as qualifying income without any such ruling from the IRS. There can be no assurance that the IRS will not change its position with respect to some or all of these issues or if the IRS did so, that a court would not sustain the IRS's position. Furthermore, the tax treatment of the Fund's investments in the Subsidiary may be adversely affected by future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations.

*Liquidity Risk.* The Subsidiary invests in ETPs that invest in Commodities Instruments, which may be less liquid than other types of investments. The illiquidity of Commodities Instruments could have a negative effect on the Fund's ability to achieve its investment objective and may result in losses to Fund shareholders. In stressed market conditions, the liquidity of the Fund's shares may begin to mirror those of the underlying portfolio holdings, which can be significantly less liquid than the Fund's shares.

*Gap Risk.* The Fund and the Subsidiary are subject to the risk that a commodity price will change from one level to another with no trading in between. Usually, such movements occur when there are adverse news announcements,

which can cause a commodity price to drop substantially from the previous day's closing price.

*Risk of Cash Transactions.* Unlike other ETFs, the Fund expects to effect its creations and redemptions partially for cash, rather than in-kind securities. Therefore, it may be required to sell portfolio securities and subsequently recognize gains on such sales that the Fund might not have recognized if it were to distribute portfolio securities in kind. As such, investments in Shares may be less tax-efficient than an investment in a conventional ETF.

*High Portfolio Turnover Risk.* The Fund may engage in active and frequent trading of its portfolio securities. High portfolio turnover may result in increased transaction costs to the Fund, including brokerage commissions, dealer mark-ups and other transaction costs on the sale of the securities and on reinvestment in other securities. High portfolio turnover may also result in higher taxes when Fund Shares are held in a taxable account.

*Model and Data Risk.* Given the complexity of the investments and strategies of the Fund, the Adviser relies heavily on quantitative models and information and data ("Models and Data"). Models and Data are used to construct sets of transactions and investments, and to provide risk management insights. When

Models and Data prove to be incorrect or incomplete, any decisions made in reliance thereon expose the Fund to potential risks.

*Management Risk.* The Fund is subject to management risk because it is an actively managed ETF. In managing the Fund's portfolio, the Adviser will apply investment techniques and risk analyses in making investment decisions for the Fund, but there can be no guarantee that these will produce the desired results.

*Operational Risk.* The Fund is exposed to operational risk arising from a number of factors, including, but not limited to, human error, processing and communication errors, errors of the Fund's service providers, counterparties or other third parties, failed or inadequate processes and technology or system failures.

*Authorized Participant Concentration Risk.* The Fund may have a limited number of financial institutions that act as Authorized Participants ("APs"), none of which are obligated to engage in creation and/or redemption transactions. To the extent that those APs exit the business, or are unable to process creation and/or redemption orders, and no other AP is able to step forward to create and redeem, there may be a significantly diminished trading market for Shares or Shares may trade like closed-end funds at a discount (or premium) to net asset value ("NAV") and possibly face trading halts and/or de-listing. The AP concentration risk may be heightened in scenarios where APs have limited or diminished access to the capital required to post collateral.

*Absence of Prior Active Market.* The Fund is a newly organized series of an investment company and thus has no operating history. While the Fund's Shares are expected to be listed on NYSE Arca, Inc. ("NYSE Arca"), there can be no assurance that active trading markets for the Shares will develop or be maintained, especially for recently organized Funds. Further, secondary markets may be subject to irregular trading activity, market dislocations, wide bid/ask spreads and extended trade settlement periods in times of market stress because market makers and APs may step away from making a market in the Shares and in executing creation and redemption orders, which could cause a material deviation in the Fund's market price from its NAV.

*Trading Issues.* Trading in Shares on NYSE Arca may be halted due to market conditions or for reasons that, in the view of NYSE Arca, make trading in Shares inadvisable. In addition, trading in Shares on NYSE Arca is subject to trading halts caused by extraordinary market volatility pursuant to NYSE Arca's "circuit breaker" rules. There can be no assurance that the requirements of NYSE Arca necessary to maintain the listing of the Fund will continue to be met or will remain unchanged.

*Market Risk.* Both the Fund and the ETPs in which the Fund (via the Subsidiary's investment in ETPs) may invest are subject to market risk. The prices of the securities in the Fund or an ETP are subject to the risks associated with investing in the securities market, including general economic conditions and sudden and unpredictable drops in value. An investment in the Fund or an ETP may lose money.

*Fund Shares Trading, Premium/Discount Risk and Liquidity of Fund Shares.* The market prices of the Shares may fluctuate in response to the Fund's NAV, the intraday value of the Fund's holdings and supply and demand for Shares. The Adviser cannot predict whether Shares will trade above, below, or at their most recent NAV. Disruptions to creations and redemptions, the existence of market volatility or potential lack of an active trading market for Shares (including through a trading halt), as well as other factors, may result in Shares trading at a significant premium or discount to NAV or to the intraday value of the Fund's holdings. If a shareholder purchases Shares at a time when the market price is at a premium to the NAV or sells Shares at a time when the market price is at a discount to the NAV, the shareholder may pay significantly more or receive significantly less than the underlying value of the Shares that were bought or sold or the shareholder may be unable to sell his or her Shares. The securities held by the Fund may be traded in markets that close at a different time than NYSE Arca. Liquidity in those securities may be reduced after the applicable closing times. Accordingly, during the time when NYSE Arca is open but after the applicable market closing, fixing or settlement times, bid-ask spreads on NYSE Arca and the resulting premium or discount to the Shares' NAV may widen. Additionally, in stressed market conditions, the market for the Fund's Shares may become less liquid in response to deteriorating liquidity in the markets for the Fund's underlying portfolio holdings. There are various methods by which investors can purchase and sell Shares. Investors should consult their financial intermediary before purchasing or selling Shares of the Fund.

*Non-Diversified Risk.* The Fund is classified as a “non-diversified” fund under the 1940 Act. Therefore, the Fund may invest a relatively high percentage of its assets in a smaller number of issuers or may invest a larger proportion of its assets in a single issuer. Moreover, the gains and losses on a single investment may have a greater impact on the Fund’s NAV and may make the Fund more volatile than more diversified funds.

*Risk of ETPs.* The Fund may be subject to the following risks as a result of its investments in ETPs:

*Commodities Risk.* Commodities include, among other things, energy products, agricultural products, industrial metals, precious metals and livestock. The commodities markets may fluctuate widely based on a variety of factors, including overall market movements, economic events and policies, changes in interest rates or inflation rates, changes in monetary and exchange control programs, war, acts of terrorism, natural disasters and technological developments. Variables such as disease, drought, floods, weather, trade, embargoes, tariffs and other political events, in particular, may have a larger impact on commodity prices than on traditional securities. These additional variables may create additional investment risks that subject an ETP’s investments to greater volatility than investments in traditional securities. The prices of commodities can also fluctuate widely due to supply and demand disruptions in major producing or consuming regions. Because certain commodities may be produced in a limited number of countries and may be controlled by a small number of producers, political, economic and supply-related events in such countries could have a disproportionate impact on the prices of such commodities. These factors may affect the value of an ETP in varying ways, and different factors may cause the value and the volatility of an ETP to move in inconsistent directions at inconsistent rates.

*Risk of Investing in Gold.* Certain of the ETPs may focus their investments in gold. Investments related to gold are considered speculative and are affected by a variety of factors. The price of gold has fluctuated in recent years and may continue to fluctuate substantially over short periods of time, so an ETP’s share price may be more volatile than other types of investments. Fluctuation in the price of gold may be due to a number of factors, including changes in inflation and changes in industrial and commercial demand for metals. Additionally, increased environmental or labor costs may depress the value of gold investments. In times of significant inflation or great economic uncertainty, gold and other precious metals may outperform traditional investments such as bonds and stocks. However, in times of stable economic growth, traditional equity and debt investments could offer greater appreciation potential and the value of gold and other precious metals may be adversely affected, which could in turn affect an ETP’s returns.

*Risk of Investing in Natural Resources Companies.* Certain of the ETPs will be sensitive to, and their performance will depend to a greater extent on, the overall condition of the natural resources sector. Investments in natural resources and the natural resources sector, which include agriculture, alternatives (e.g., water and alternative energy), base and industrial metals, energy, forest products and precious metals, can be significantly affected by events relating to these industries, including international political and economic developments, embargoes, tariffs, inflation, weather and natural disasters, livestock diseases, limits on exploration, often rapid changes in the supply and demand for natural resources and other factors. An ETP’s portfolio securities may experience substantial price fluctuations as a result of these factors and may move independently of the trends of operating companies. Companies engaged in the sectors listed above may be adversely affected by changes in government policies and regulations, technological advances and/or obsolescence, environmental damage claims, energy conservation efforts, the success of exploration projects, limitations on the liquidity of certain natural resources and commodities and competition from new market entrants. Changes in general economic conditions, including commodity price volatility, changes in exchange rates, imposition

of import controls, rising interest rates, prices of raw materials and other commodities, depletion of resources and labor relations, could adversely affect an ETP's portfolio companies.

*Risk of Investing in MLPs.* MLP units may trade infrequently and in limited volume. Investments in MLPs could also expose an ETP to volatility risk, because units of MLPs may be subject to more abrupt or erratic price movements than securities of larger or more broadly based companies. Holders of MLP units are subject to certain risks inherent in the structure of MLPs,

including (i) tax risks, (ii) the limited ability to elect or remove management or the general partner or managing member, (iii) limited voting rights, (iv) conflicts of interest between the general partner or managing member and its affiliates and the limited partners or members, (v) dilution risks and risks related to the general partner's right to require unit-holders to sell their common units at an undesirable time or price, resulting from regulatory changes or other reasons and (vi) cash flow risks, as described below. Holders of units of MLPs have more limited control rights and limited rights to vote on matters affecting the MLP as compared to holders of stock of a corporation. For example, MLP unit holders may not elect the general partner or the directors of the general partner and the MLP unit holders have limited ability to remove an MLP's general partner. MLPs are controlled by their general partners, which generally have conflicts of interest and limited fiduciary duties to the MLP, which may permit the general partner to favor its own interests over the MLPs. The amount of cash that each individual MLP can distribute to its partners will depend on the amount of cash it generates from operations, which will vary from quarter to quarter depending on factors affecting the particular business lines of the MLP. Available cash will also depend on the MLPs' level of operating costs (including incentive distributions to the general partner), level of capital expenditures, debt service requirements, acquisition costs (if any), fluctuations in working capital needs and other factors.

*Risk of Investing in the Real Estate Sector.* Companies in the real estate sector include companies that invest in real estate, such as REITs and real estate management and development companies. Companies that invest in real estate are subject to the risks of owning real estate directly as well as to risks that relate specifically to the way that such companies operate, including management risk (such companies are dependent upon the management skills of a few key individuals and may have limited financial resources). Adverse economic, business or political developments affecting real estate could have a major effect on the values of an ETP's investments. Investing in real estate is subject to such risks as decreases in real estate values, overbuilding, increased competition and other risks related to local or general economic conditions, increases in operating costs and property taxes, changes in zoning laws, casualty or condemnation losses, possible environmental liabilities, regulatory limitations on rent, possible lack of availability of mortgage financing, market saturation, fluctuations in rental income and the value of underlying properties and extended vacancies of properties. Certain real estate securities have a relatively small market capitalization, which may tend to increase the volatility of the market price of these securities. Real estate securities have limited diversification and are, therefore, subject to risks inherent in operating and financing a limited number of projects. Real estate securities are also subject to heavy cash flow dependency and defaults by borrowers or tenants.

*Infrastructure Risk.* Infrastructure-related companies are subject to a variety of factors that may adversely affect their business or operations including high interest costs, costs associated with compliance with and changes in environmental and other regulations, difficulty in raising capital, increased competition, and uncertainty concerning the availability of fuel at reasonable prices and other factors. Infrastructure-related securities may be issued by companies that are highly leveraged, less creditworthy or financially distressed (also known as junk bonds). These investments are considered to be speculative and are subject to greater risk of loss, greater sensitivity to interest rate and economic changes, valuation difficulties, and potential illiquidity.

*Equity Securities Risk.* The value of equity securities may fall due to general market and economic conditions, perceptions regarding the markets in which the issuers of securities held by an ETP participate, or factors relating to specific issuers in which an ETP invests. Equity securities are subordinated to preferred securities and debt in a company's capital structure with respect to priority in right to a share of corporate income, and therefore will be subject to greater dividend risk than preferred securities or debt instruments. In addition, while broad market measures of equity securities have historically generated higher average returns than fixed income securities, equity securities have generally also experienced significantly more volatility in those





returns, although under certain market conditions fixed income securities may have comparable or greater price volatility.

*Risk of Investing in Small- and Medium-Capitalization Companies.* Small- and medium-capitalization companies may be more volatile and more likely than large-capitalization companies to have narrower product lines, fewer financial resources, less management depth and experience and less competitive strength. In addition, these companies often have greater price volatility, lower trading volume and less liquidity than larger more established companies. Returns on investments in securities of small-capitalization and medium-capitalization companies could trail the returns on investments in securities of large-capitalization companies.

*Risk of Investing in Foreign Securities.* Investments in the securities of foreign issuers involve risks beyond those associated with investments in U.S. securities. These additional risks include greater market volatility, the availability of less reliable financial information, higher transactional and custody costs, taxation by foreign governments, decreased market liquidity and political instability. Because certain foreign securities markets may be limited in size, the activity of large traders may have an undue influence on the prices of securities that trade in such markets. An ETP may invest in securities of issuers located in countries whose economies are heavily dependent upon trading with key partners. Any reduction in this trading may have an adverse impact on the ETP's investments. The risks of investing in emerging market countries are greater than risks associated with investments in foreign developed countries.

*Risk of Investing in Emerging Market Issuers.* Investments in securities of emerging market issuers are exposed to a number of risks that may make these investments volatile in price or difficult to trade. Emerging markets are more likely than developed markets to experience problems with the clearing and settling of trades, as well as the holding of securities by local banks, agents and depositories. Political risks may include unstable governments, nationalization, restrictions on foreign ownership, laws that prevent investors from getting their money out of a country and legal systems that do not protect property rights as well as the laws of the United States. Market risks may include economies that concentrate in only a few industries, securities issues that are held by only a few investors, liquidity issues and limited trading capacity in local exchanges and the possibility that markets or issues may be manipulated by foreign nationals who have inside information.

*Foreign Currency Risk.* The Fund may be exposed to non-U.S. dollar denominated securities through certain ETPs. Because an ETP's assets may be invested in securities denominated in foreign currencies, the income received by the ETP from these investments will generally be in foreign currencies. The ETP's exposure to foreign currencies and changes in the value of foreign currencies versus the U.S. dollar may result in reduced returns for the ETP. Moreover, an ETP may incur costs in connection with conversions between U.S. dollars and foreign currencies. The value of certain foreign countries' currencies may be subject to a high degree of fluctuation. This fluctuation may be due to changes in interest rates, investors' expectations concerning inflation and interest rates, the country's debt levels and trade deficit, the effects of monetary policies issued by the United States, foreign governments, central banks or supranational entities, the imposition of currency controls or other national or global political or economic developments. The economies of certain emerging market countries can be significantly affected by currency devaluations. Certain emerging market countries may also have managed currencies which are maintained at artificial levels relative to the U.S. dollar rather than at levels determined by the market. This type of system could lead to sudden and large adjustments in the currency, which in turn, can have a negative effect on the Fund and its investments.

*Credit Risk.* Debt securities are subject to credit risk. Credit risk refers to the possibility that the issuer or guarantor of a security will be unable and/or unwilling to make timely interest payments and/or repay the principal on its debt or to otherwise honor its obligations and/or default completely on securities. Debt securities are subject to varying degrees of credit risk, depending on the issuer's financial condition and on the terms of the securities, which may be reflected in credit ratings. There is a possibility that the credit rating of a debt security may be downgraded after purchase or the perception of an issuer's credit worthiness may decline, which may adversely affect the value of the security.

*High Yield Securities Risk.* Securities rated below investment grade are commonly referred to as high yield securities or "junk bonds." High yield securities are often issued by issuers that are restructuring, are smaller or less creditworthy than other issuers, or are more highly indebted than other issuers. High yield securities are subject to greater risk of loss of income and principal than higher rated securities and are considered speculative. The prices of high yield securities are likely to be more sensitive to adverse economic changes or individual issuer developments than higher rated securities. During an economic downturn or substantial period of rising interest rates, issuers of high yield securities may experience financial stress that would adversely affect

their ability to service their principal and interest payment obligations, to meet their projected business goals or to obtain additional financing. In the event of a default, an ETP may incur additional expenses to seek recovery. The secondary market for high yield securities may be less liquid than the markets for higher quality securities and, as such, may have an adverse effect on the market prices of and an ETP's ability to arrive at a fair value for certain securities. The illiquidity of the market also could make it difficult for an ETP to sell certain securities in connection with a rebalancing of its index, if applicable. In addition, periods of economic uncertainty and change may result in an increased volatility of market prices of high yield securities and a corresponding volatility in an ETP's NAV.

*Interest Rate Risk.* Debt securities are also subject to interest rate risk. Interest rate risk refers to fluctuations in the value of a debt security resulting from changes in the general level of interest rates. When the general level of interest rates goes up, the prices of most debt securities go down. When the general level of interest rates goes down, the prices of most debt securities go up. The historically low interest rate environment increases the risk associated with rising interest rates, including the potential for periods of volatility and increased redemptions. An ETP may face a heightened level of interest rate risk, since the U.S. Federal Reserve Board recently ended its quantitative easing program and has begun to raise rates. In addition, debt securities with longer durations tend to be more sensitive to interest rate changes, usually making them more volatile than debt securities with shorter durations.

*Call Risk.* An ETP may invest in callable debt securities. If interest rates fall, it is possible that issuers of callable securities will "call" (or prepay) their debt securities before their maturity date. If a call were exercised by the issuer during or following a period of declining interest rates, the ETP is likely to have to replace such called security with a lower yielding security or securities with greater risks or other less favorable features. If that were to happen, it would decrease the ETP's net investment income.

*Concentration Risk.* Certain of the ETPs may be concentrated in a particular sector or sectors or industry or group of industries. To the extent that an ETP is concentrated in a particular sector or sectors or industry or group of industries, the ETP will be subject to the risk that economic, political or other conditions that have a negative effect on that sector or sectors or industry or group of industries will negatively impact the ETP to a greater extent than if the ETP's assets were invested in a wider variety of sectors or industries.

*Derivatives Risk.* The use of derivatives, including Commodities Instruments, presents risks different from, and possibly greater than, the risks associated with investing directly in traditional securities. The use of derivatives can lead to losses because of adverse movements in the price or value of the underlying security, commodity, asset, index or reference rate. Derivative strategies often involve leverage, which may exaggerate a loss, potentially causing the Fund or an ETP to lose more money than it would have lost had it invested in the underlying security. Also, a liquid secondary market may not always exist for the Fund's or an ETP's derivative positions at times when the Fund or ETP might wish to terminate or sell such positions. Over the counter instruments may be illiquid, and transactions in derivatives traded in the over-the-counter market are subject to counterparty risk.

## Performance

The Fund has not yet commenced operations and therefore does not have a performance history. Once available, the Fund's performance information will be accessible on the Fund's website at [www.vaneck.com](http://www.vaneck.com).

## Portfolio Management

*Investment Adviser.* Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation.

*Portfolio Managers.* The following individuals are primarily and jointly responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund's portfolio:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title with Adviser</b>	<b>Date Began Managing the Fund</b>
David Schassler	Portfolio Manager	April 2018
Barak Laks	Deputy Portfolio Manager	April 2018

## Purchase and Sale of Fund Shares

The Fund issues and redeems Shares at NAV only in a large specified number of Shares, each called a "Creation Unit," or multiples thereof. A Creation Unit consists of 50,000 Shares.

Individual Shares of the Fund may only be purchased and sold in secondary market transactions through brokers. Shares of the Fund are expected to be approved for listing, subject to notice of issuance, on NYSE Arca and because Shares will trade at market prices rather than NAV, Shares of the Fund may trade at a price greater than or less than or equal to NAV.

**Tax Information**

The Fund's distributions are taxable and will generally be taxed as both ordinary income and capital gains. As a result of the Fund's investment strategies, it is expected that distributions by the Fund will generally be taxable as ordinary income.

**Payments to Broker-Dealers and Other Financial Intermediaries**

The Adviser and its related companies may pay broker-dealers or other financial intermediaries (such as a bank) for the sale of the Fund Shares and related services. These payments may create a conflict of interest by influencing your broker-dealer or other intermediary or its employees or associated persons to recommend the Fund over another investment. Ask your financial adviser or visit your financial intermediary's website for more information.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FUND'S INVESTMENT STRATEGIES AND RISKS**

### **Principal Investment Strategies**

VanEck Vectors Real Asset Allocation ETF (the “Fund”) is an actively managed exchange-traded fund (“ETF”) that seeks to achieve its investment objective by investing, under normal circumstances, primarily in (i) exchange traded products that provide exposure to real assets through investment in domestic and foreign equity and debt securities, master limited partnerships (“MLPs”), and physical commodities, including ETFs and non-1940 Act (defined herein) commodity pools or commodity trusts and exchange traded notes (“ETNs”) (collectively, “ETPs”); and (ii) cash or cash equivalents. Real assets include commodities (such as gold), real estate, natural resources and infrastructure, as well as companies that own, operate, or derive a significant portion of their value from real assets or the production thereof. The investments held by the ETPs may include physical assets and equity securities of companies of any market capitalization, debt securities of any credit quality (including high-yield (or “junk”) securities), duration and maturity and emerging market securities. The Fund seeks to maximize “real returns” while seeking to reduce downside risk during sustained market declines. The Fund seeks to reduce downside risk by primarily allocating a significant portion, at times as much as 100%, of the Fund’s assets to cash and cash equivalents based on the model described below. “Real returns” are defined as total returns adjusted for the effects of inflation.

Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation (the “Adviser”) uses a proprietary, rules-based real asset allocation model (the “Real Asset Model”). The Real Asset Model considers various inputs to guide asset allocation decisions and select real asset investments (and to thereby select ETPs that provide exposure to those real asset classes) that the Adviser believes will offer positive expected returns. The Real Asset Model uses various indicators, such as technical, macroeconomic, and sentiment indicators to generate allocation signals among real asset investments. These signals are used as an input to guide which ETPs to allocate to as well as to guide the total cash or cash equivalent allocation.

The indicators used by the Real Asset Model include, but are not limited to, equity price trends, commodity price trends, volatility (the measure of variation of returns for a given security or market index), investor sentiment (investor attitude towards a particular security or financial market as revealed through market activity and investor surveys), and macroeconomic supply and demand (the relationship between the consumption and production of assets, and its effect on price levels). The Adviser anticipates that the Real Asset Model will evolve over time and may incorporate additional indicators. The Adviser allocates the Fund’s assets to those ETPs that it believes will have returns that, in the aggregate, closely correlate (before fees and expenses) to the returns of the Real Asset Model. The Real Asset Model typically adjusts its allocation signals on a monthly basis.

A significant portion, at times as much as 100%, of the Fund’s assets may be held in cash or cash equivalents including, but not limited to, money market instruments, U.S. Treasury bills, treasury inflation-protected securities, interests in short-term investment funds or shares of money market or short-term bond funds. The Adviser currently anticipates investing in 1- to 3-month U.S. Treasury Bills when a portion of the Fund’s assets are allocated to cash or cash equivalents. The Fund may engage in active and frequent trading of portfolio securities.

The Fund will invest in certain ETPs through a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Fund organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands (the “Subsidiary”). The Subsidiary is a limited company, is wholly-owned and controlled by the Fund and is advised by the Adviser. The Fund’s investment in the Subsidiary may not exceed 25% of the value of the Fund’s total assets at each quarter-end of the Fund’s fiscal year. The Fund’s investment in the Subsidiary, via the Subsidiary’s investment in ETPs, is expected to provide the Fund with exposure to physical commodities and futures and derivatives of physical commodities (“Commodities Instruments”) within the limits of the federal tax laws, which limit the ability of investment companies like the Fund to invest directly in such instruments. The Subsidiary has the same investment objective as the Fund and will follow the same general investment policies and restrictions, except that unlike the Fund, it may invest, via its investment in ETPs, without limit in Commodities Instruments.

Except as noted, for purposes of this Prospectus, references to the Fund’s investment strategies and risks include those of its Subsidiary.

## Fundamental and Non-Fundamental Policies

The Fund's investment objective and each of its other investment policies are non-fundamental policies that may be changed by the Board of Trustees without shareholder approval, except as noted in the Statement of Additional Information ("SAI") under the section entitled "Investment Policies and Restrictions—Investment Restrictions." Shareholders will be given notice of material changes to the Fund's investment objective or other non-fundamental investment policies.

## Risks of Investing in the Fund

The following section provides additional information regarding the principal risks identified under "Principal Risks of Investing in the Fund" in the Fund's "Summary Information" section followed by additional risk information.

**Investors in the Fund should be willing to accept a high degree of volatility in the price of the Fund's shares ("Shares") and the possibility of significant losses. An investment in the Fund involves a substantial degree of risk. An investment in the Fund is not a deposit with a bank and is not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other government agency. Therefore, you should consider carefully the following risks before investing in the Fund, each of which could significantly and adversely affect the value of an investment in the Fund.**

The following risks apply to the Fund, unless otherwise noted.

*Fund of Funds Risk.* The performance of the Fund is dependent on the performance of underlying funds. The Fund is subject to the risks of the underlying funds' investments. In addition, the Fund's shareholders will indirectly bear the expenses of the underlying funds, absorbing duplicative levels of fees with respect to investments in the underlying funds. In addition, at times certain segments of the market represented by the underlying funds may be out of favor and underperform other segments. The Fund, via the Subsidiary's investment in ETPs, may invest in ETFs and ETNs. ETNs are senior, unsecured notes linked to an index. Like ETFs, they may be bought and sold on a securities exchange. However, while ETF shares represent an interest in the ETF's underlying assets, ETNs are structured products that are an obligation of the issuing bank, broker-dealer or other intermediary, whereby the intermediary agrees to pay a return based on the target index less any fees. ETNs combine certain aspects of bonds and ETFs. Investors can hold an ETN until maturity. Investments in other ETFs and ETNs will subject the Fund to the additional fees and expenses of the underlying ETF or ETN. At the same time, the Fund would continue to pay its own fees and other expenses. The ETNs in which the Fund invests may include ETPs that invest in equity and debt securities, as well as other asset categories. Additionally, the value of an ETN may be influenced by time to maturity, level of supply and demand, volatility and lack of liquidity in the underlying market (*e.g.*, the commodities market), changes in interest rates or the issuer's credit rating, and other economic, legal, political or geographic events. ETNs are also subject to counterparty risk.



*Affiliated Fund Risk.* In managing the Fund, the Adviser will have the ability to select underlying funds which it believes will achieve the Fund's investment objective. The Adviser may be subject to potential conflicts of interest in selecting underlying funds because the Adviser may, due to its own financial interest or other business considerations, have had an incentive to invest in funds managed by the Adviser or its affiliates in lieu of investing in funds managed or sponsored by others.

*Risk of U.S. Treasury Bills.* Direct obligations of the U.S. Treasury have historically involved little risk of loss of principal if held to maturity. However, due to fluctuations in interest rates, the market value of such securities may vary.

*Subsidiary Investment Risk.* Changes in the laws of the United States and/or the Cayman Islands, under which the Fund and the Subsidiary are organized, respectively, could result in the inability of the Fund to operate as intended and could negatively affect the Fund and its shareholders. The Subsidiary is not registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (“1940 Act”) and is not subject to the investor protections of the 1940 Act. Thus, the Fund, as an investor in the Subsidiary, will not have all the protections offered to investors in registered investment companies.

*Commodity Regulatory Risk (with respect to investments in the Subsidiary).* Changes in the laws or regulations of the United States or the Cayman Islands, including any changes to applicable tax laws and regulations, could impair the ability of the Fund to achieve its investment objective and could increase the operating expenses of the Fund or the Subsidiary. Based on the Fund’s and its Subsidiary’s current investment strategies, the Fund and the Subsidiary are each a “commodity pool” and the Adviser is considered a commodity pool operator (“CPO”) with respect to the Fund and the Subsidiary under the Commodity Exchange Act of 1936, as amended (“CEA”). Accordingly, the Fund and the Adviser are subject to dual regulation by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (“CFTC”) and the Securities Exchange Commission (“SEC”). Pursuant to certain CFTC regulations, the Fund and the Adviser have elected to meet the requirements of certain CFTC regulations by complying with specific SEC rules and regulations relating to disclosure and reporting requirements. The CFTC could deem the Fund or the Adviser in violation of an applicable CFTC regulation if the Fund or the Adviser failed to comply with a related SEC regulatory requirement. In addition, the Fund and the Adviser will remain subject to certain CFTC-mandated disclosure, reporting and recordkeeping regulations with respect to the Fund and the Subsidiary. Compliance with the CFTC regulations could increase the Fund’s expenses, adversely affecting the Fund’s total return.

*Tax Risk (with respect to investments in the Subsidiary).* The Fund must derive at least 90% of its gross income from certain qualifying sources of income in order to qualify as a regulated investment company (“RIC”) under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”). The Internal Revenue Service (the “IRS”) issued a revenue ruling in December 2005, which concluded that income and gains from certain commodity-linked derivatives are not qualifying income under Subchapter M of the Code. As a result, the Fund’s ability to invest directly in commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps or in certain exchange traded trusts that hold commodities as part of its investment strategy is limited by the requirement that it receive no more than ten percent (10%) of its gross income from such investments. However, in Revenue Ruling 2006-31, the IRS indicated that income from alternative investment instruments that create commodity exposure may be considered qualifying income under the Code. The IRS subsequently issued private letter rulings to other taxpayers in which the IRS specifically concluded that that income derived from a fund’s investment in a controlled foreign corporation (“CFC”) also will constitute qualifying income to the fund, even if the CFC itself owns commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps. A private letter ruling cannot be used or cited as precedent and is binding on the IRS only for the taxpayer that receives it. The Fund has not obtained a ruling from the IRS with respect to its investments or its structure. The IRS has currently suspended the issuance of private letter rulings relating to the tax treatment of income generated by investments in a subsidiary. In the absence of such a ruling, the Fund expects to invest its assets in the Subsidiary, consistent with applicable law and the advice of Counsel, in a manner that should permit the Fund to treat income allocable from the Subsidiary as qualifying income. The IRS has proposed regulations that, if finalized, would generally treat a fund’s income inclusion with respect to an investment in a non-U.S. company generating investment income as qualifying income only if there is a current-year

distribution out of the earnings and profits of the non-U.S. company that are attributable to such income inclusion. The proposed regulations, if adopted, would apply to taxable years beginning on or after 90 days after the regulations are published as final. The Fund intends to treat its income from the Subsidiary as qualifying income without any such ruling from the IRS. There can be no assurance that the IRS will not change its position with respect to some or all of these issues or if the IRS did so, that a court would not sustain the IRS's position. Furthermore, the tax

treatment of the Fund's investments in the Subsidiary may be adversely affected by future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations. If the IRS were to change its position or otherwise determine that income derived from the Fund's investment in the Subsidiary does not constitute qualifying income and if such positions were upheld, or if future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations were to adversely affect the tax treatment of such investments, the Fund might cease to qualify as a RIC and would be required to reduce its exposure to such investments which could result in difficulty in implementing its investment strategy. If the Fund did not qualify as a RIC for any taxable year, the Fund's taxable income would be subject to tax at the Fund level at regular corporate tax rates (without reduction for distributions to shareholders) and to a further tax at the shareholder level when such income is distributed. In such event, in order to re-qualify for taxation as a RIC, the Fund may be required to recognize unrealized gains, pay substantial taxes and interest and make certain distributions.

*Liquidity Risk.* The Subsidiary invests in ETPs that invest in Commodities Instruments, which may be less liquid than other types of investments. The illiquidity of Commodities Instruments could have a negative effect on the Fund's ability to achieve its investment objective and may result in losses to Fund shareholders. In stressed market conditions, the liquidity of the Fund's shares may begin to mirror those of the underlying portfolio holdings, which can be significantly less liquid than the Fund's shares.

*Gap Risk.* The Fund and the Subsidiary are subject to the risk that a commodity price will change from one level to another with no trading in between. Usually, such movements occur when there are adverse news announcements, which can cause a commodity price to drop substantially from the previous day's closing price.

*Risk of Cash Transactions.* Unlike most other ETFs, the Fund expects to effect its creations and redemptions partially for cash, rather than in-kind securities. As a result, an investment in the Fund may be less tax-efficient than an investment in a more conventional ETF. Other ETFs generally are able to make in-kind redemptions and avoid realizing gains in connection with transactions designed to raise cash to meet redemption requests. Because the Fund currently intends to effect a portion of redemptions for cash, rather than in-kind distributions, it may be required to sell portfolio securities in order to obtain the cash needed to distribute redemption proceeds, which involves transaction costs. If the Fund recognizes gain on these sales, this generally will cause the Fund to recognize gain it might not otherwise have recognized if it were to distribute portfolio securities in-kind, or to recognize such gain sooner than would otherwise be required. The Fund generally intends to distribute these gains to shareholders to avoid being taxed on this gain at the Fund level and otherwise comply with the special tax rules that apply to it. This strategy may cause shareholders to be subject to tax on gains they would not otherwise be subject to, or at an earlier date than, if they had made an investment in a different ETF. Additionally, transactions may have to be carried out over several days if the securities market is relatively illiquid and may involve considerable transaction fees and taxes.

*High Portfolio Turnover Risk.* The Fund may engage in active and frequent trading of its portfolio securities. High portfolio turnover may result in increased transaction costs to the Fund, including brokerage commissions, dealer mark-ups and other transaction costs on the sale of the securities and on

reinvestment in other securities. High portfolio turnover may also result in higher taxes when Fund Shares are held in a taxable account.

*Model and Data Risk.* Given the complexity of the investments and strategies of the Fund, the Adviser relies heavily on quantitative models and information and data (“Models and Data”). Models and Data are used to construct sets of transactions and investments, and to provide risk management insights. When Models and Data prove to be incorrect or incomplete, any decisions made in reliance thereon expose the Fund to potential risks. Some of the models used by the Adviser for the Fund are predictive in nature. The use of predictive models has inherent risks. Because predictive models are usually constructed based on historical data, the success of relying on such models may depend heavily on the accuracy and reliability of the supplied historical data. All models rely on correct market data inputs. If incorrect market data is entered into even a well-founded model, the resulting information will be incorrect. However, even if market data is input correctly, “model prices” will often differ substantially from market prices, especially for instruments with complex characteristics, such as derivative instruments.

*Management Risk.* The Fund is subject to management risk because it is an actively managed ETF. In managing the Fund’s portfolio, the Adviser will apply investment techniques and risk analyses in making investment decisions for the Fund, but there can be no guarantee that these will produce the desired results.

*Operational Risk.* The Fund is exposed to operational risk arising from a number of factors, including, but not limited to, human error, processing and communication errors, errors of the Fund’s service providers, counterparties or other third parties, failed or inadequate processes and technology or system failures.

*Authorized Participant Concentration Risk.* The Fund may have a limited number of financial institutions that act as Authorized Participants (“APs”), none of which are obligated to engage in creation and/or redemption transactions. To the extent that those APs exit the business, or are unable to or choose not to process creation and/or redemption orders, and no other AP is able to step forward to create and redeem, there may be a significantly diminished trading market for Shares or Shares may trade like closed-end funds at a discount (or premium) to net asset value (“NAV”) and possibly face trading halts and/or de-listing. The AP concentration risk may be heightened in scenarios where APs have limited or diminished access to the capital required to post collateral.

*Absence of Prior Active Market.* The Fund is a newly organized series of an investment company and thus has no operating history. While the Fund’s Shares are expected to be listed on NYSE Arca, Inc. (“NYSE Arca”), there can be no assurance that active trading markets for the Shares will develop or be maintained especially for recently organized Funds. Further, secondary markets may be subject to irregular trading activity, market dislocations, wide bid/ask spreads and extended trade settlement periods in times of market stress because market makers and APs may step away from making a market in the Shares and in executing creation and redemption orders, which could cause a material deviation in the Fund’s market price from its NAV.

*Trading Issues.* Trading in Shares on NYSE Arca may be halted due to market conditions or for reasons that, in the view of NYSE Arca, make trading in Shares inadvisable. In addition, trading in Shares on NYSE Arca is subject to trading halts caused by extraordinary market volatility pursuant to NYSE Arca's "circuit breaker" rules. There can be no assurance that the requirements of NYSE Arca necessary to maintain the listing of the Fund will continue to be met or will remain unchanged.

*Market Risk.* Both the Fund and the ETPs in which the Fund (via the Subsidiary's investment in ETPs) may invest are subject to market risk. The prices of the securities in the Fund or an ETP are subject to the risks associated with investing in the securities market, including general economic conditions and sudden and unpredictable drops in value. An investment in the Fund or an ETP may lose money.

*Fund Shares Trading, Premium/Discount Risk and Liquidity of Fund Shares.* The market prices of the Shares may fluctuate in response to the Fund's NAV, the intraday value of the Fund's holdings and supply and demand for Shares. The Adviser cannot predict whether Shares will trade above, below, or at their most recent NAV. Disruptions to creations and redemptions, the existence of market volatility or

potential lack of an active trading market for Shares (including through a trading halt), as well as other factors, may result in Shares trading at a significant premium or discount to NAV or to the intraday value of the Fund's holdings. If a shareholder purchases Shares at a time when the market price is at a premium to the NAV or sells Shares at a time when the market price is at a discount to the NAV, the shareholder may pay significantly more or receive significantly less than the underlying value of the Shares that were bought or sold or the shareholder may be unable to sell his or her Shares. Additionally, in stressed market conditions, the market for the Fund's Shares may become less liquid in response to deteriorating liquidity in the markets for the Fund's underlying portfolio holdings. There are various methods by which investors can purchase and sell Shares. Investors should consult their financial intermediary before purchasing or selling Shares of the Fund.

*Non-Diversified Risk.* The Fund is a separate investment portfolio of VanEck Vectors ETF Trust (the "Trust"), which is an open-end investment company registered under the 1940 Act. The Fund is classified as a "non-diversified" fund under the 1940 Act. Moreover, the Fund is subject to the risk that it will be more volatile than a diversified fund because the Fund may invest its assets in a smaller number of issuers or may invest a larger proportion of its assets in a single issuer. As a result, the gains and losses on a single investment may have a greater impact on each the Fund's NAV and may make the Fund more volatile than more diversified funds.

*Risk of ETPs.* The Fund may be subject to the following risks as a result of its investments in ETPs:

*Commodities Risk.* Commodities include, among other things, energy products, agricultural products, industrial metals, precious metals and livestock. The commodities markets may fluctuate widely based on a variety of factors, including overall market movements, economic events and policies, changes in interest rates or inflation rates, changes in monetary and exchange control programs, war, acts of terrorism, natural disasters and technological developments. Variables such as disease, drought, floods, weather, trade, embargoes, tariffs and other political events, in particular, may have a larger impact on commodity prices than on traditional securities. These additional variables may create additional investment risks that subject an ETP's investments to greater volatility than investments in traditional securities. The prices of commodities can also fluctuate widely due to supply and demand disruptions in major producing or consuming regions. Because certain commodities may be produced in a limited number of countries and may be controlled by a small number of producers, political, economic and supply-related events in such countries could have a disproportionate impact on the prices of such commodities. These factors may affect the value of an ETP in varying ways, and different factors may cause the value and the volatility of an ETP to move in inconsistent directions at inconsistent rates.

*Risk of Investing in Gold.* Certain of the ETPs may focus their investments in gold. Investments related to gold are considered speculative and are affected by a variety of factors. The price of gold has fluctuated in recent years and may continue to fluctuate. These prices may fluctuate substantially over short periods of time so an ETP's share price may be more volatile than other types of investments. Fluctuation in the prices of gold may be due to a number of factors, including changes in inflation and changes in industrial and commercial demand for metals. Additionally, increased environmental or labor costs may depress the value of metal investments. In times of significant inflation or great economic uncertainty, gold and other precious metals may outperform traditional investments such as bonds and stocks. However, in times of stable economic growth, traditional equity and debt investments could offer greater appreciation potential and the value of gold and other precious metals may be adversely affected, which could in turn affect an ETP's returns. A significant portion of the world's gold reserves are held by governments, central banks and related institutions. The production, purchase and sale of gold by governments or central banks or other larger holders can be negatively affected by various economic, financial, social and political factors, which may be unpredictable and may have a significant adverse impact on the supply and price of gold. Additionally, the United States or foreign governments may pass laws or regulations limiting metal investments for strategic or other policy reasons. The principal supplies of metal industries also may be concentrated in a small number of countries and regions. Economic, social and political conditions in those countries that are the largest producers of gold may have a direct negative effect on the production and marketing of gold and silver and on sales of central bank gold holdings. The price of gold also can be significantly adversely affected by events relating to international political developments, the success of exploration projects, commodity prices, tax and government regulations and intervention (including government restrictions on private ownership of gold and mining land), changes expectations regarding inflation in various countries and investment speculation.

*Risk of Investing in Natural Resources Companies.* Certain of the ETPs will be sensitive to, and their performance will depend to a greater extent on, the overall condition of the natural resources sector. Investments in natural resources and the natural resources sector, which include agriculture, alternatives (e.g., water and alternative energy), base and industrial metals, energy, forest products and precious metals, can be significantly affected by events relating to these industries, including international political and economic developments, embargoes, tariffs, inflation, weather and natural disasters, livestock diseases, limits on exploration, often rapid changes in the supply and demand for natural resources and other factors. An ETP's portfolio securities may experience substantial price fluctuations as a result of these factors, and may move independently of the trends of operating companies. Companies engaged in the sectors listed above may be adversely affected by changes in government policies and regulations, technological advances and/or obsolescence, environmental damage claims, energy conservation efforts, the success of exploration projects, limitations on the liquidity of certain natural resources and commodities and competition from new market entrants. Changes in general economic conditions, including commodity price volatility, changes in exchange rates, imposition of import controls, rising interest rates, prices of raw materials and other commodities, depletion of resources and labor relations, could adversely affect an ETP's portfolio companies.

*Risk of Investing in MLPs.* MLP units may trade infrequently and in limited volume. Investments in MLPs could also expose an ETP to volatility risk, because units of MLPs may be subject to more abrupt or erratic price movements than securities of larger or more broadly based companies. Holders of MLP units are subject to certain risks inherent in the structure of MLPs, including (i) tax risks (described further below), (ii) the limited ability to elect or remove management or the general partner or managing member (iii) limited voting rights, (iv) conflicts of interest between the general partner or managing member and its affiliates and the limited partners or members, (v) dilution risks and risks related to the general partner's right to require unit-holders to sell their common units at an undesirable time or price, resulting from regulatory changes or other reasons and (vi) cash flow risks, as described below. Holders of units of MLPs have more limited control rights and limited rights to vote on matters affecting the MLP as compared to holders of stock of a corporation. For example, MLP unit holders may not elect the general partner or the directors of



the general partner and the MLP unit holders have limited ability to remove an MLP's general partner. MLPs are controlled by their general partners, which generally have conflicts of interest and limited fiduciary duties to the MLP, which may permit the general partner to favor its own interests over the MLPs. The amount of cash that each individual MLP can distribute to its partners will depend on the amount of cash it generates from operations, which will vary from quarter to quarter depending on factors affecting the particular business lines of the MLP. Available cash will also depend on the MLPs' level of operating costs (including incentive distributions to the general partner), level of capital expenditures, debt service requirements, acquisition costs (if any), fluctuations in working capital needs and other factors.

Some MLPs may be treated as "passive foreign investment companies" or "controlled foreign corporations" corporations for U.S. federal income tax purposes. The manner and extent of an ETP's investments in MLPs may be limited by its intention to qualify as a RIC under the Code (which would increase the risk of tracking error), and any such investments by the ETP may adversely affect the ability of the ETP to so qualify. If any of the MLPs owned by an ETP were treated as entities other than partnerships for U.S. federal income tax purposes, it could result in a reduction of the value of an investment in the ETP.

*Risk of Investing in the Real Estate Sector.* Companies in the real estate sector include companies that invest in real estate, such as REITs and real estate management and development companies. Companies that invest in real estate are subject to the risks of owning real estate directly as well as to risks that relate specifically to the way that such companies operate, including management risk (such companies are dependent upon the management skills of a few key individuals and may have limited financial resources). Adverse economic, business or political developments affecting real estate could have a major effect on the values of an ETP's investments. Investing in real estate is subject to such risks as decreases in real estate values, overbuilding, increased competition and other risks related to local or general economic conditions, increases in operating costs and property taxes, changes in zoning laws, casualty or condemnation losses, possible environmental liabilities, regulatory limitations on rent, possible lack of availability of mortgage financing, market saturation, fluctuations in rental income and the value of underlying properties and extended vacancies of properties. Certain real estate securities have a relatively small market capitalization, which may tend to increase the volatility of the market price of these securities. Real estate securities have limited diversification and are, therefore, subject to risks inherent in operating and financing a limited number of projects. Real estate securities are also subject to heavy cash flow dependency and defaults by borrowers or tenants.

*Infrastructure Risk.* Infrastructure-related companies are subject to a variety of factors that may adversely affect their business or operations including high interest costs, costs associated with compliance with and changes in environmental and other regulations, difficulty in raising capital in adequate amounts on reasonable terms in periods of high inflation and unsettled markets, the effects of surplus capacity, increased competition from other providers of services, and uncertainty concerning the availability of fuel at reasonable prices, the effects of energy conservation policies, and other factors. Additionally, infrastructure-related entities may be subject to regulation by various governmental authorities and may also be affected by governmental regulation of rates charged to customers, government budgetary constraints, service interruption due to environmental, operational or other mishaps and the imposition of special tariffs and changes in tax laws, regulatory policies and accounting standards. Other factors that may affect the operations of infrastructure-related companies include innovations in technology that could render the way in which a company delivers a product or service obsolete, significant changes to the number of ultimate end-users of a company's products, increased susceptibility to terrorist acts or political actions, risks of environmental damage due to a company's operations or an accident, and general changes in market sentiment towards infrastructure and utilities assets. Infrastructure-related securities may be issued by companies that are highly leveraged, less creditworthy or financially distressed (also known as junk bonds). These investments are considered to be speculative and are subject to greater risk of loss, greater sensitivity to interest rate and economic changes, valuation difficulties, and potential illiquidity.

*Equity Securities Risk.* The value of the equity securities held by an ETP may fall due to general market and economic conditions, perceptions regarding the markets in which the issuers of securities held by an ETP participate, or factors relating to specific issuers in which an ETP invests. For example, an adverse event, such as an unfavorable earnings report, may result in a decline in the value of equity securities of an issuer held by an ETP; the price of the equity securities of an issuer may be particularly sensitive to general movements in the securities markets; or a drop in the securities markets may depress the price of most or all of the equities securities held by an ETP. In addition, the equity securities of an issuer in an ETP's portfolio may decline in price if the issuer fails to make anticipated dividend payments. Equity securities are subordinated to preferred securities and debt in a company's capital structure with respect to priority in right to a share of corporate income, and therefore will be subject to greater dividend risk than preferred securities or debt instruments. In addition, while broad market measures of equity securities have historically generated higher average returns than fixed income securities, equity securities have generally also experienced significantly more volatility in those returns, although under certain market conditions fixed income securities may have comparable or greater price volatility.



*Risk of Investing in Small- and Medium-Capitalization Companies.* An ETP may invest in small- and/or medium-capitalization companies and, therefore will be subject to certain risks associated with small- and medium-capitalization companies. These companies are often subject to less analyst coverage and may be in early and less predictable periods of their corporate existences, with little or no record of profitability. In addition, these companies often have greater price volatility, lower trading volume and less liquidity than larger more established companies. These companies tend to have smaller revenues, narrower product lines, less management depth and experience, smaller shares of their product or service markets, fewer financial resources and less competitive strength than large-capitalization companies. Returns on investments in securities of small- and medium-capitalization companies could trail the returns on investments in securities of larger companies.

*Risk of Investing in Foreign Securities.* Investments in the securities of foreign issuers involve risks beyond those associated with investments in U.S. securities. These additional risks include greater market volatility, the availability of less reliable financial information, higher transactional and custody costs, taxation by foreign governments, decreased market liquidity and political instability. Because certain foreign securities markets may be limited in size, the activity of large traders may have an undue influence on the prices of securities that trade in such markets.

Certain foreign markets that have historically been considered relatively stable may become volatile in response to changed conditions or new developments. Increased interconnectivity of world economies and financial markets increases the possibility that adverse developments and conditions in one country or region will affect the stability of economies and financial markets in other countries or regions. An ETP may invest in countries whose economies are heavily dependent upon trading with key partners. Any reduction in this trading may have an adverse impact on the ETP's investments. Because an ETP may invest in securities denominated in foreign currencies and some of the income received by the ETP may be in foreign currency, changes in currency exchange rates may negatively impact the ETP's return. The risks of investing in emerging market countries are greater than risks associated with investments in foreign developed countries.

Foreign issuers are often subject to less stringent requirements regarding accounting, auditing, financial reporting and record keeping than are U.S. issuers, and therefore, not all material information may be available or reliable. Securities exchanges or foreign governments may adopt rules or regulations that may negatively impact an ETP's ability to invest in foreign securities or may prevent an ETP from repatriating its investments.

*Risk of Investing in Emerging Market Issuers.* Investments in securities of emerging market issuers are exposed to a number of risks that may make these investments volatile in price or difficult to trade. Emerging markets are more likely than developed markets to experience problems with the clearing and settling of trades, as well as the holding of securities by local banks, agents and depositories. Political risks may include unstable governments, nationalization, restrictions on foreign ownership, laws that prevent investors from getting their money out of a country and legal systems that do not protect property rights as well as the laws of the United States. Market risks may include economies that concentrate in only a few industries, securities issues that are held by only a few investors, liquidity issues and limited trading capacity in local exchanges and the possibility that markets or issues may be manipulated by foreign nationals who have inside information.

*Credit Risk.* Debt securities are subject to credit risk. Credit risk refers to the possibility that the issuer or guarantor of a security will be unable and/or unwilling to make timely interest payments and/or repay the principal on its debt or to otherwise honor its obligations and/or default completely on securities. Debt securities are subject to varying degrees of credit risk, depending on the issuer's financial condition and on the terms of the securities, which may be reflected in credit ratings. There is a possibility that the credit rating of a debt security may be downgraded after purchase or the perception of an issuer's credit worthiness may decline, which may adversely affect the value of the security.

*High Yield Securities Risk.* Securities rated below investment grade are commonly referred to as high yield securities or "junk bonds." High yield securities are often issued by issuers that are restructuring, are smaller or less creditworthy than other issuers, or are more highly indebted than other issuers. High yield securities are subject to greater risk of loss of income and principal than higher rated securities and are considered speculative. The prices of high yield securities are likely to be more sensitive to adverse economic changes or individual issuer developments than higher rated securities. During an economic downturn or substantial period of rising interest rates, high yield security issuers may experience financial stress that would adversely affect their ability to service their principal and interest payment obligations, to meet their projected business goals or to obtain additional financing. In the event of a default, an ETP may incur additional expenses to seek recovery. The secondary market for high yield securities may be less liquid than the markets for higher quality securities and, as such, may have an adverse effect on the market prices of and an ETP's ability to arrive at a fair value for certain securities. The illiquidity of the market also could make it difficult for an ETP to sell certain securities in connection with a rebalancing of its index, if applicable. In addition, periods of economic uncertainty and change may result in an increased volatility of market prices of high yield securities and a corresponding volatility in an ETP's NAV. In addition, adverse publicity and investor perceptions may decrease the values and liquidity of high yield securities.

*Foreign Currency Risk.* The Fund may be exposed to non-U.S. dollar denominated securities through certain ETPs. Because an ETP's assets may be invested in securities denominated in foreign currencies, the income received by the ETP from these investments will generally be in foreign currencies. The ETP's exposure to foreign currencies and changes in the value of foreign currencies versus the U.S. dollar may result in reduced returns for the ETP. Moreover, an ETP may incur costs in connection with conversions between U.S. dollars and foreign currencies. The value of certain foreign countries' currencies may be subject to a high degree of fluctuation. This fluctuation may be due to changes in interest rates, investors' expectations concerning inflation and interest rates, the country's debt levels and trade deficit, the effects of monetary policies issued by the United States, foreign governments, central banks or supranational entities, the imposition of currency controls or other national or global political or economic developments. The economies of certain emerging market countries can be significantly affected by currency devaluations. Certain emerging market countries may also have managed currencies which are maintained at artificial levels relative to the U.S. dollar rather than at levels determined by the market. This type of system could lead to sudden and large adjustments in the currency, which in turn, can have a negative effect on the Fund and its investments.

*Interest Rate Risk.* Debt securities are also subject to interest rate risk. Interest rate risk refers to fluctuations in the value of a security resulting from changes in the general level of interest rates. When the general level of interest rates goes up, the prices of most debt securities go down. When the general level of interest rates goes down, the prices of most debt securities go up. Many factors can cause interest rates to rise, including central bank monetary policy, rising inflation rates and general economic conditions. The historically low interest rate environment increases the risk associated with rising interest rates, including the potential for periods of volatility and increased redemptions.



Following quantitative easing measures taken in response to the Great Recession, the U.S. Federal Reserve held, as of July 2017, \$4.5 trillion in assets comprised principally of Treasury securities, a traditional part of the balance sheet, and mortgage-backed securities. The Federal Reserve Board ended its quantitative easing program in 2014 and began raising rates in December 2015. In June 2017, the Federal Reserve Board signaled intentions to cut its balance sheet by allowing at least some securities to retire upon maturity, thereby reducing the money supply. As a result of these measures, an ETP may face a heightened interest rate risk.

In addition, debt securities with longer durations tend to be more sensitive to interest rate changes, usually making them more volatile than debt securities with shorter durations. To the extent an ETP invests a substantial portion of its assets in debt securities with longer-term maturities, rising interest rates may cause the value of an ETP's investments to decline significantly.

*Call Risk.* An ETP may invest in callable debt securities. If interest rates fall, it is possible that issuers of callable securities will "call" (or prepay) their debt securities before their maturity date. If a call were exercised by the issuer during or following a period of declining interest rates, the ETP is likely to have to replace such called security with a lower yielding security or securities with greater risks or other less favorable features. If that were to happen, it would decrease the ETP's net investment income. An ETP also may fail to recover additional amounts (i.e., premiums) paid for securities with higher interest rates, resulting in an unexpected capital loss.

*Concentration Risk.* Certain of the ETPs may be concentrated in a particular sector or sectors or industry or group of industries. To the extent that an ETP is concentrated in a particular sector or sectors or industry or group of industries, the ETP will be subject to the risk that economic, political or other conditions that have a negative effect on that sector or sectors or industry or group of industries will negatively impact the ETP to a greater extent than if the ETP's assets were invested in a wider variety of sectors or industries.

*Derivatives Risk.* The use of derivatives, including Commodities Instruments, presents risks different from, and possibly greater than, the risks associated with investing directly in traditional securities. The use of derivatives can lead to losses because of adverse movements in the price or value of the underlying security, commodity, asset, index or reference rate. Derivative strategies often involve leverage, which may exaggerate a loss, potentially causing the Fund or an ETP to lose more money than it would have lost had it invested in the underlying security. Also, a liquid secondary market may not always exist for the Fund's or an ETP's derivative positions at times when the Fund or ETP might wish to terminate or sell such positions. Over the counter instruments may be illiquid, and transactions in derivatives traded in the over-the-counter market are subject to counterparty risk.

### **Additional Non-Principal Investment Strategies**

The Fund may also invest in securities issued by other investment companies, equity securities, fixed income securities and money market instruments, including repurchase agreements or other funds which invest exclusively in money market instruments. For temporary defensive purposes, the Fund may invest without limit in money market

instruments, including repurchase agreements or other funds which invest exclusively in money market instruments. The Fund may also pursue temporary defensive positions in anticipation of or in an attempt to respond to adverse market, economic, political or other conditions. Such a position could have the effect of reducing any benefit the Fund may receive from a market increase.

### **Borrowing Money**

The Fund may borrow money from a bank up to a limit of one-third of the market value of its assets. The Fund intends to enter into a credit facility to borrow money for temporary, emergency or other purposes, including the funding of shareholder redemption requests, trade settlements and as necessary to distribute to shareholders any income required to maintain the Fund's status as a regulated investment company. To the extent that the Fund borrows money, it may be leveraged. Leveraging generally exaggerates the effect on NAV of any increase or decrease in the market value of the Fund's portfolio securities. Leverage generally has the effect of increasing the amount of loss or gain the Fund might realize, and may increase volatility in the value of the Fund's investments.

### **Lending Portfolio Securities**

The Fund may lend its portfolio securities to brokers, dealers and other financial institutions desiring to borrow securities to complete transactions and for other purposes. In connection with such loans, the Fund receives liquid collateral equal to at least 102% of the value of the portfolio securities being loaned. This collateral is marked-to-market on a daily basis. Although the Fund will receive collateral in connection with all loans of its securities holdings, the Fund would be exposed to a risk of loss should a borrower fail to return the borrowed securities (*e.g.*, the Fund would have to buy replacement securities and the loaned securities may have appreciated beyond the value of the collateral held by the Fund) or become insolvent. The Fund may pay fees to the party arranging the loan of securities. In addition, the Fund will bear the risk of loss of any cash collateral that it invests.



## **Additional Non-Principal Risks**

*Futures Risk.* All futures and futures-related products are highly volatile. Futures contracts involve the risk of mispricing or improper valuation and the risk that changes in the value of a futures contract may not correlate perfectly with the underlying indicator. Even a well-conceived futures transaction may be unsuccessful due to market events. Price movements are influenced by, among other things, changing supply and demand relationships; climate; government agricultural, trade, fiscal, monetary and exchange control programs and policies; national and international political and economic events; crop diseases; the purchasing and marketing programs of different nations; and changes in interest rates. In addition, governments from time to time intervene, directly and by regulation, in certain markets, particularly those in currencies.

*Borrowing and Leverage Risk.* To the extent that the Fund borrows money or utilizes certain derivatives, it may be leveraged. The utilization of leverage, such as borrowings, involves certain risks to the Fund's shareholders and generally exaggerates the effect on NAV of any increase or decrease in the market value of the Fund's portfolio securities.

*Temporary Defensive Strategy.* When the Fund utilizes a temporary defensive strategy, it may not achieve its investment objective.

*Investment Restrictions.* The 1940 Act places limits on the percentage of the total outstanding stock of another investment company that may be owned by the Fund; however, exemptive relief from the SEC permits the Fund to invest in other unaffiliated investment companies in excess of this limitation if certain conditions are met (the "Exemptive Relief"). The Fund is subject to the conditions set forth in the Exemptive Relief and certain additional provisions of the 1940 Act that limit the amount that the Fund and its affiliates, in the aggregate, can invest in the outstanding voting securities of any one investment company. The Fund and its affiliates may not actively acquire "control" of an investment company, which is presumed once ownership of an investment company's outstanding voting securities exceeds 25%. Also, to comply with provisions of the 1940 Act and the Exemptive Relief, the Adviser may be required to vote shares of an investment company in the same general proportion as shares held by other shareholders of the investment company.

## **PORTFOLIO HOLDINGS**

A description of the Fund's policies and procedures with respect to the disclosure of the Fund's portfolio securities is available in the Fund's SAI.

## **MANAGEMENT OF THE FUND**

*Board of Trustees.* The Board of Trustees of the Trust has responsibility for the general oversight of the management of the Fund, including general supervision of the Adviser and other service providers, but is not involved in the day-to-day management of the Trust. A list of the Trustees and the Trust officers, and their present positions and principal occupations, is provided in the Fund's SAI.

*Investment Adviser.* Under the terms of an investment management agreement between the Trust and Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation with respect to the Fund (the "Investment Management Agreement"), Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation will serve as the adviser to the Fund and, subject to the supervision of the Board of Trustees, will be responsible for the day-to-day investment management of the Fund. The Adviser has been an investment adviser since 1995 and also acts as adviser or sub-adviser to mutual funds, other ETFs, other pooled investment vehicles and separate accounts. The Adviser is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Van Eck Associates Corporation ("VEAC"). As of December 31, 2017, VEAC managed approximately \$44.15 billion in assets. VEAC has been an investment adviser since 1955 and also acts as adviser or sub-adviser to mutual funds, other ETFs, other pooled investment vehicles and separate accounts. The Adviser's principal business address is 666 Third Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, New York 10017.

A discussion regarding the Board of Trustees' approval of the Investment Management Agreement will be available in the Trust's semi-annual report for the period ending March 31, 2018.

For the services provided to the Fund under the Investment Management Agreement, the Fund will pay the Adviser monthly fees based on a percentage of the Fund's average daily net assets at the annual rate of 0.50%. For purposes of calculating the fees for the Fund, the net assets of the Fund include the value of

the Fund's interest in the Subsidiary. Pursuant to a management agreement between the Adviser and the Subsidiary (the "Subsidiary Investment Management Agreement"), the Adviser will receive certain fees for managing the Subsidiary's assets and the Adviser will waive or credit such amounts against the fees payable to the Adviser by the Fund. From time to time, the Adviser may waive all or a portion of its fee. Until at least February 1, 2020, the Adviser has agreed to waive fees and/or pay Fund or Subsidiary expenses to the extent necessary to prevent the operating expenses of the Fund (excluding acquired fund fees and expenses, interest expense, trading expenses, taxes and extraordinary expenses of the Fund and the Subsidiary) from exceeding 0.55% of its average daily net assets per year.

The Fund is responsible for all of its expenses, including the investment advisory fees, costs of transfer agency, custody, legal, audit and other services, interest, taxes, any distribution fees or expenses, offering fees or expenses and extraordinary expenses.

*Manager of Managers Structure.* The Adviser and the Trust may rely on an exemptive order (the "Order") from the SEC that permits the Adviser to enter into investment sub-advisory agreements with unaffiliated sub-advisers without obtaining shareholder approval. The Adviser, subject to the review and approval of the Board of Trustees, may select one or more sub-advisers for the Fund and supervise, monitor and evaluate the performance of each sub-adviser.

The Order also permits the Adviser, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees, to replace sub-advisers and amend investment sub-advisory agreements, including applicable fee arrangements, without shareholder approval whenever the Adviser and the Board of Trustees believe such action will benefit the Fund and its shareholders. The Adviser thus would have the responsibility (subject to the oversight of the Board of Trustees) to recommend the hiring and replacement of sub-advisers as well as the discretion to terminate any sub-adviser and reallocate the Fund's assets for management among any other sub-adviser(s) and itself. This means that the Adviser would be able to reduce the sub-advisory fees and retain a larger portion of the management fee, or increase the sub-advisory fees and retain a smaller portion of the management fee. The Adviser would compensate each sub-adviser out of its management fee.

*Administrator, Custodian and Transfer Agent.* Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation is the administrator for the Fund (the "Administrator"), and The Bank of New York Mellon is the custodian of the Fund's assets and provides transfer agency and fund accounting services to the Fund. The Administrator is responsible for certain clerical, recordkeeping and/or bookkeeping services which are required to be provided pursuant to the Investment Management Agreement.

*Distributor.* Van Eck Securities Corporation is the distributor ("Distributor") of the Shares. The Distributor will not distribute Shares in less than a specified number of Shares, each called a "Creation Unit," and does not maintain a secondary market in the Shares. The Shares are expected to be traded in the secondary market.

## **PORTFOLIO MANAGERS**

The portfolio managers who currently share joint responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Fund's portfolio are David Schassler and Barak Laks.

Mr. Schassler has been employed by the Adviser as a portfolio manager since May 2016, a deputy portfolio manager from 2015 to 2016 and a director of manager research from 2012 to 2015. Mr. Schassler graduated from the State University of New York College at Cortland in 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts and from the NYU Stern School of Business in 2012 with a Masters of Business Administration.

Mr. Laks has been employed by the Adviser as a deputy portfolio manager since 2017. Prior to joining the Adviser, Mr. Laks served as Chief Marketing Officer of two hedge funds from 2013 to 2016 and as Chief Investment Officer of two multi-strategy funds of hedge funds from 2000 to 2012. Mr. Laks also served as a business strategist at an asset manager from 2012 to 2013. Mr. Laks graduated from Yale University in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and Economics and from New York University in 2007 with a Master of Science in Mathematics and in 2009 with a Master of Science in Mathematics in Finance.

See the Fund's SAI for additional information about the portfolio managers' compensation, other accounts managed by the portfolio managers and their respective ownership of Shares.

## SHAREHOLDER INFORMATION

### Determination of NAV

The NAV per Share for the Fund is computed by dividing the value of the net assets of the Fund (i.e., the value of its total assets less total liabilities) by the total number of Shares outstanding. Expenses and fees, including the management fee, are accrued daily and taken into account for purposes of determining NAV. The NAV of the Fund is determined each business day as of the close of trading (ordinarily 4:00 p.m., Eastern time) on the New York Stock Exchange.

The values of the Fund's portfolio securities are based on the securities' closing prices on the markets on which the securities trade, when available. Due to the time differences between the United States and certain countries in which the Fund invests, securities on these exchanges may not trade at times when Shares of the Fund will trade. In the absence of a last reported sales price, or if no sales were reported, and for other assets for which market quotes are not readily available, values may be based on quotes obtained from a quotation reporting system, established market makers or by an outside independent pricing service. Debt instruments with remaining maturities of more than 60 days are valued at the evaluated mean price provided by an outside independent pricing service. If an outside independent pricing service is unable to provide a valuation, the instrument is valued at the mean of the highest bid and the lowest asked quotes obtained from one or more brokers or dealers selected by the Adviser. Prices obtained by an outside independent pricing service may use information provided by market makers or estimates of market values obtained from yield data related to investments or securities with similar characteristics and may use a computerized grid matrix of securities and its evaluations in determining what it believes is the fair value of the portfolio securities. Short-term debt instruments having a maturity of 60 days or less are valued at amortized cost. Any assets or liabilities denominated in currencies other than the U.S. dollar are converted into U.S. dollars at the current market rates on the date of valuation as quoted by one or more sources. If a market quotation for a security or other asset is not readily available or the Adviser believes it does not otherwise accurately reflect the market value of the security or asset at the time the Fund calculates its NAV, the security or asset will be fair valued by the Adviser in accordance with the Trust's valuation policies and procedures approved by the Board of Trustees. The Fund may also use fair value pricing in a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to, situations when the value of a security in the Fund's portfolio has been materially affected by events occurring after the close of the market on which the security is principally traded (such as a corporate action or other news that may materially affect the price of a security) or trading in a security has been suspended or halted. In addition, the Fund currently expects that it will fair value certain of the foreign equity securities held by the Fund, if any, each day the Fund calculates its NAV, except those securities principally traded on exchanges that close at the same time the Fund calculates its NAV.

Accordingly, the Fund's NAV may reflect certain portfolio securities' fair values rather than their market prices at the time the exchanges on which they principally trade close. Fair value pricing involves subjective judgments and it is possible that a fair value determination for a security or other asset is materially different than the value that could be realized upon the sale of such security or asset. With respect to securities that are principally traded on foreign exchanges, the value of the Fund's portfolio securities may change on days when you will not be able to purchase or sell your Shares.

## **Intraday Value**

The trading prices of the Fund's Shares in the secondary market generally differ from the Fund's daily NAV and are affected by market forces such as the supply of and demand for Fund Shares and underlying securities held by the Fund, economic conditions and other factors. Information regarding the intraday value of the Fund's Shares ("IIV") is disseminated every 15 seconds throughout each trading day by NYSE Arca

or by market data vendors or other information providers. The IIV is based on the current market value of the securities and/or cash required to be deposited in exchange for a Creation Unit. The IIV does not necessarily reflect the precise composition of the current portfolio of securities held by the Fund at a particular point in time or the best possible valuation of the current portfolio. Therefore, the IIV should not be viewed as a “real-time” update of the Fund’s NAV, which is computed only once a day. The IIV is generally determined by using current market quotations and/or price quotations obtained from broker-dealers and other market intermediaries that may trade in the portfolio securities held by the Fund and valuations based on current market rates. The Fund is not involved in, or responsible for, the calculation or dissemination of the IIV and makes no warranty as to its accuracy.

### **Rule 144A and Other Unregistered Securities**

An AP (*i.e.*, a person eligible to place orders with the Distributor to create or redeem Creation Units of the Fund) that is not a “qualified institutional buyer,” as such term is defined under Rule 144A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the “Securities Act”), will not be able to receive, as part of a redemption, restricted securities eligible for resale under Rule 144A or other unregistered securities.

### **Buying and Selling Exchange-Traded Shares**

The Shares of the Fund are expected to be approved for listing on NYSE Arca subject to notice of issuance. If you buy or sell Shares in the secondary market, you will incur customary brokerage commissions and charges and may pay some or all of the “spread,” which is any difference between the bid price and the ask price. The spread varies over time for the Fund’s Shares based on the Fund’s trading volume and market liquidity, and is generally lower if the Fund has high trading volume and market liquidity, and generally higher if the Fund has little trading volume and market liquidity (which is often the case for funds that are newly launched or small in size). In times of severe market disruption or low trading volume in the Fund’s Shares, this spread can increase significantly. Shares of the Fund are bought and sold in the secondary market at the market price. It is anticipated that the Shares will trade in the secondary market at prices that may differ to varying degrees from the NAV of the Shares. Shares may trade at a premium or discount to NAV. During periods of disruptions to creations and redemptions or the existence of extreme market volatility, the market prices of Shares are more likely to differ significantly from the Shares’ NAV.

The Depository Trust Company (“DTC”) serves as securities depository for the Shares. (The Shares may be held only in book-entry form; stock certificates will not be issued.) DTC, or its nominee, is the record or registered owner of all outstanding Shares. Beneficial ownership of Shares will be shown on the records of DTC or its participants (described below). Beneficial owners of Shares are not entitled to have Shares registered in their names, will not receive or be entitled to receive physical delivery of certificates in definitive form and are not considered the registered holder thereof. Accordingly, to exercise any rights of a holder of Shares, each beneficial owner must rely on the procedures of: (i) DTC; (ii) “DTC Participants,” *i.e.*, securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations and certain other organizations, some of whom (and/or their representatives) own DTC; and (iii) “Indirect Participants,” *i.e.*, brokers, dealers, banks and trust companies that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a DTC Participant, either directly or indirectly, through which such beneficial owner holds its interests. The Trust understands that under existing industry practice, in the event the Trust requests any action of holders of Shares, or a

beneficial owner desires to take any action that DTC, as the record owner of all outstanding Shares, is entitled to take, DTC would authorize the DTC Participants to take such action and that the DTC Participants would authorize the Indirect Participants and beneficial owners acting through such DTC Participants to take such action and would otherwise act upon the instructions of beneficial owners owning through them. As described above, the Trust recognizes DTC or its nominee as the owner of all Shares for all purposes. For more information, see the section entitled "Book Entry Only System" in the Fund's SAI.



The NYSE Arca is open for trading Monday through Friday and is closed on weekends and the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Because non-U.S. exchanges may be open on days when the Fund does not price its Shares, the value of the securities in the Fund's portfolio may change on days when shareholders will not be able to purchase or sell the Fund's Shares.

The right of redemption by an AP may be suspended or the date of payment postponed (1) for any period during which NYSE Arca is closed (other than customary weekend and holiday closings); (2) for any period during which trading on the NYSE Arca is suspended or restricted; (3) for any period during which an emergency exists as a result of which disposal of the Shares of the Fund or determination of its NAV is not reasonably practicable; or (4) in such other circumstance as is permitted by the SEC.

*Market Timing and Related Matters.* The Fund imposes no restrictions on the frequency of purchases and redemptions. Frequent purchases and redemptions of Fund Shares may attempt to take advantage of a potential arbitrage opportunity presented by a lag between a change in the value of the Fund's portfolio securities after the close of the primary markets for the Fund's portfolio securities and the reflection of that change in the Fund's NAV ("market timing"). The Board of Trustees considered the nature of the Fund (*i.e.*, a fund whose shares are expected to trade intraday), that the Adviser monitors the trading activity APs for patterns of abusive trading, that the Fund reserves the right to reject orders that may be disruptive to the management of or otherwise not in the Fund's best interests, and that the Fund may fair value certain of its securities. Given this structure, the Board of Trustees determined that it is not necessary to impose restrictions on the frequency of purchases and redemptions for the Fund at the present time.

## **Distributions**

### *Net Investment Income and Capital Gains.*

As a shareholder of the Fund, you are entitled to your share of the Fund's distributions of net investment income and net realized capital gains on its investments. The Fund pays out substantially all of its net earnings to its shareholders as "distributions."

The Fund typically earns income dividends from stocks and interest from debt securities. These amounts, net of expenses, are typically passed along to Fund shareholders as dividends from net investment income. The Fund realizes capital gains from writing options and capital gains or losses whenever it sells securities. Any net realized long-term capital gains they are anticipated, are distributed to shareholders as "capital gain distributions." Distributions from the Fund's net investment income, including net short-term capital gains, if any, are taxable to you as ordinary income. Any long-term capital gains distributions you receive from the Fund are taxable as long-term capital gain.

Net investment income, if any, is expected to be distributed to shareholders at least annually, and net realized capital gains, if any, are expected to be distributed annually. Dividends may be declared and paid more frequently to comply with the distribution requirements of the Code. In addition, in situations where the Fund acquires investment securities after the beginning of a dividend period, the Fund may elect to distribute at least annually amounts representing the full dividend yield net of expenses on the underlying investment securities, as if the Fund owned the underlying investment securities for the entire dividend period. If the Fund so elects, some portion of each distribution may result in a return of capital, which, for tax purposes, is treated as a return of your investment in Shares. You will be notified regarding the portion of the distribution which represents a return of capital.

Distributions in cash may be reinvested automatically in additional Shares of the Fund only if the broker through which you purchased Shares makes such option available.

## Tax Information

As with any investment, you should consider how your Fund investment will be taxed. The tax information in this Prospectus is provided as general information. You should consult your own tax professional about the tax consequences of an investment in the Fund, including the possible application of foreign, state and local taxes. Unless your investment in the Fund is through a tax-exempt entity or tax-deferred retirement account, such as a 401(k) plan, you need to be aware of the possible tax consequences when: (i) the Fund makes distributions, (ii) you sell Shares in the secondary market or (iii) you create or redeem Creation Units.

*Taxes on Distributions.* As noted above, the Fund expects to distribute net investment income, if any, at least annually, and any net realized long-term or short-term capital gains, if any, annually. As a result of the Fund's investment strategies, it is expected that any distributions by the Fund will be taxable as ordinary income and capital gains. The Fund may also pay a special distribution at any time to comply with U.S. federal tax requirements.

In general, your distributions are subject to U.S. federal income tax when they are paid, whether you take them in cash or reinvest in the Fund. Distributions from the Fund's net investment income, including net short-term gains, if any, are taxable to you as ordinary income. Whether distributions of capital gains represent long-term or short-term capital gains is determined by how long the Fund owned the investments that generated them, rather than how long you have owned your Shares. Distributions of net short-term capital gains in excess of net long-term capital losses, if any, are generally taxable as ordinary income. Distributions of net long-term capital gains in excess of net short-term capital losses, if any, that are properly reported as capital gain dividends are generally taxable as long-term capital gains. Long-term capital gains of a non-corporate shareholder are generally taxable at a maximum rate of 15% or 20%, depending on whether the shareholder's income exceeds certain threshold amounts.

The Fund may receive dividends, the distribution of which the Fund may report as qualified dividends. In the event that the Fund receives such a dividend and reports the distribution of such dividend as a qualified dividend, the dividend may be taxed at the maximum capital gains rates, provided holding period and other requirements are met at both the shareholder and the Fund level. Given the investment strategies of the Fund, it is not anticipated that a significant portion of the Fund's distributions will be eligible to designated as qualified dividends.

Distributions in excess of the Fund's current and accumulated earnings and profits are treated as a tax-free return of your investment to the extent of your basis in the Shares, and generally as capital gain thereafter. A return of capital, which for tax purposes is treated as a return of your investment, reduces your basis in Shares, thus reducing any loss or increasing any gain on a subsequent taxable disposition of Shares. A distribution will reduce the Fund's NAV per Share and may be taxable to you as ordinary income or capital gain even though, from an economic standpoint, the distribution may constitute a return of capital.

Dividends, interest and gains from non-U.S. investments of the Fund may give rise to withholding and other taxes imposed by foreign countries. Tax conventions between certain countries and the United States may, in some cases,

reduce or eliminate such taxes.

If more than 50% of the Fund's total assets at the end of its taxable year consist of foreign securities, the Fund may elect to "pass through" to its investors certain foreign income taxes paid by the Fund, with the result that each investor will (i) include in gross income, as an additional dividend, even though not actually received, the investor's pro rata share of the Fund's foreign income taxes, and (ii) either deduct (in calculating U.S. taxable income) or credit (in calculating U.S. federal income), subject to certain holding period and other limitations, the investor's pro rata share of the Fund's foreign income taxes. It is not anticipated that the Fund will be eligible to make this election.

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*Backup Withholding.* The Fund may be required to withhold a percentage of your distributions and proceeds if you have not provided a taxpayer identification number or social security number or otherwise established a basis for exemption from backup withholding. The backup withholding rate for individuals is currently 24%. This is not an additional tax and may be refunded, or credited against your U.S. federal income tax liability, provided certain required information is furnished to the IRS.

*Taxes on the Sale or Cash Redemption of Exchange Listed Shares.* Currently, any capital gain or loss realized upon a sale of Shares is generally treated as long term capital gain or loss if the Shares have been held for more than one year and as a short-term capital gain or loss if held for one year or less. However, any capital loss on a sale of Shares held for six months or less is treated as long-term capital loss to the extent that capital gain dividends were paid with respect to such Shares. The ability to deduct capital losses may be limited. To the extent that a shareholder's Shares are redeemed for cash, this is normally treated as a sale for tax purposes.

*Taxes on Creations and Redemptions of Creation Units.* A person who exchanges securities for Creation Units generally will recognize a gain or loss. The gain or loss will be equal to the difference between the market value of the Creation Units at the time of exchange and the sum of the exchanger's aggregate basis in the securities surrendered and the amount of any cash paid for such Creation Units. A person who exchanges Creation Units for securities will generally recognize a gain or loss equal to the difference between the exchanger's basis in the Creation Units and the sum of the aggregate market value of the securities received. The IRS, however, may assert that a loss realized upon an exchange of primarily securities for Creation Units cannot be deducted currently under the rules governing "wash sales," or on the basis that there has been no significant change in economic position. Persons exchanging securities for Creation Units or redeeming Creation Units should consult their own tax adviser with respect to whether wash sale rules apply and when a loss might be deductible and the tax treatment of any creation or redemption transaction. Under current U.S. federal income tax laws, any capital gain or loss realized upon a redemption (or creation) of Creation Units is generally treated as long-term capital gain or loss if the Shares (or securities surrendered) have been held for more than one year and as a short-term capital gain or loss if the Shares (or securities surrendered) have been held for one year or less.

If you create or redeem Creation Units, you will be sent a confirmation statement showing how many Shares you created or sold and at what price.

*Investment in the Subsidiary and commodity index-linked structured notes.* The Fund must derive at least 90% of its gross income from certain qualifying sources of income in order to qualify as a RIC under the Code. The IRS issued a revenue ruling in December 2005 which concluded that income and gains from certain commodity-linked derivatives is not qualifying income under Subchapter M of the Code. As a result, the Fund's ability to invest directly in commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps or in certain exchange traded trusts that hold commodities as part of its investment strategy is limited by the requirement that it receive no more than ten percent (10%) of its gross income from such investments.

However, in Revenue Ruling 2006-31, the IRS indicated that income from alternative investment instruments (such as certain structured notes) that create commodity exposure may be considered qualifying income under the Code. The

IRS subsequently issued private letter rulings to other taxpayers in which the IRS specifically concluded that that income derived from a fund's investment in a CFC also will constitute qualifying income to the fund, even if the CFC itself owns commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps. A private letter ruling cannot be used or cited as precedent and is binding on the IRS only for the taxpayer that receives it. The Fund has not obtained a ruling from the IRS with respect to its investments or its structure.

The IRS has currently suspended the issuance of private letter rulings relating to the tax treatment of income and gains generated by investments in commodity index-linked notes and income generated by investments in a subsidiary. The IRS also recently issued proposed regulations that, if finalized, would generally treat a fund's income inclusion with respect to an investment in a non-U.S. company generating investment income as qualifying income only if there is a current-year distribution out of the earnings and profits of the non-U.S. company that are attributable to such income inclusion. The proposed regulations, if adopted, would apply to taxable years beginning on or after 90 days after the regulations are published as final.

Based on the principles underlying private letter rulings previously issued to other taxpayers, the Fund intends to treat its income from the Subsidiary as qualifying income without any such ruling from the IRS. There can be no assurance that the IRS will not change its position with respect to some or all of these issues or if the IRS did so, that a court would not sustain the IRS's position. Furthermore, the tax treatment of the Fund's investments in the Subsidiary may be adversely affected by future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations.

If the IRS were to change its position or otherwise determine that income derived from the Fund's investment in the Subsidiary does not constitute qualifying income and if such positions were upheld, or if future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations were to adversely affect the tax treatment of such investments, the Fund might cease to qualify as a RIC and would be required to reduce its exposure to such investments which could result in difficulty in implementing its investment strategy. If the Fund did not qualify as a RIC for any taxable year, the Fund's taxable income would be subject to tax at the Fund level at regular corporate tax rates (without reduction for distributions to shareholders) and to a further tax at the shareholder level when such income is distributed. In such event, in order to re-qualify for taxation as a RIC, the Fund may be required to recognize unrealized gains, pay substantial taxes and interest and make certain distributions.

*Medicare Tax.* An additional 3.8% Medicare tax is imposed on certain net investment income (including ordinary dividends and capital gain distributions received from the Fund and net gains from redemptions or other taxable dispositions of Fund Shares) of U.S. individuals, estates and trusts to the extent that such person's "modified adjusted gross income" (in the case of an individual) or "adjusted gross income" (in the case of an estate or trust) exceeds certain threshold amounts.

*Non-U.S. Shareholders.* If you are not a citizen or resident alien of the United States or if you are a non-U.S. entity, the Fund's ordinary income dividends (which include distributions of net short-term capital gains) will generally be subject to a 30% U.S. withholding tax, unless a lower treaty rate applies or unless such income is effectively connected with a U.S. trade or business.

As part of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, ("FATCA"), the Fund may be required to withhold 30% on certain types of U.S. sourced income (e.g., dividends, interest, and other types of passive income), and after January 1, 2019 proceeds from the sale or other disposition of property producing U.S. sourced income to (i) foreign financial institutions ("FFIs"), including non-U.S. investment funds, unless they agree to collect and disclose to the IRS information regarding their direct and indirect U.S. account holders and (ii) certain nonfinancial foreign entities ("NFFEs"), unless they certify certain information regarding their direct and indirect U.S. owners. To avoid possible

withholding, FFIs will need to enter into agreements with the IRS which state that they will provide the IRS information, including the names, account numbers and balances, addresses and taxpayer identification numbers of U.S. account holders and comply with due diligence procedures with respect to the identification of U.S. accounts as well as agree to withhold tax on certain types of withholdable payments made to non-compliant foreign financial institutions or to applicable foreign account holders who fail to provide the required information to the IRS, or similar account information and required documentation to a local revenue authority, should an applicable intergovernmental agreement be implemented. NFFEs will need to provide certain information



regarding each substantial U.S. owner or certifications of no substantial U.S. ownership, unless certain exceptions apply, or agree to provide certain information to the IRS.

While some parts of the FATCA rules have not been finalized, the Fund may be subject to the FATCA withholding obligation, and also will be required to perform due diligence reviews to classify foreign entity investors for FATCA purposes. Investors are required to agree to provide information necessary to allow the Fund to comply with the FATCA rules. If the Fund is required to withhold amounts from payments pursuant to FATCA, investors will receive distributions that are reduced by such withholding amounts.

Non-U.S. shareholders are advised to consult their tax advisors with respect to the particular tax consequences to them of an investment in the Fund, including the possible applicability of the U.S. estate tax.

The foregoing discussion summarizes some of the consequences under current U.S. federal income tax law of an investment in the Fund. It is not a substitute for personal tax advice. Consult your own tax advisor about the potential tax consequences of an investment in the Fund under all applicable tax laws.

**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

The Fund has not yet commenced operations as of the date of this Prospectus and therefore does not have a financial history.

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**PREMIUM/DISCOUNT INFORMATION**

The Fund has not yet commenced operations and, therefore, does not have information about the differences between the Fund's daily market price on NYSE Arca and its NAV. Information regarding how often the closing trading price of the Shares of the Fund was above (*i.e.*, at a premium) or below (*i.e.*, at a discount) the NAV of the Fund for the most recently completed year and the most recently completed quarter(s), as well as for each of the four previous calendar quarters, when available, can be found at [www.vaneck.com](http://www.vaneck.com).

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Continuous Offering**

The method by which Creation Units are created and traded may raise certain issues under applicable securities laws. Because new Creation Units are issued and sold by the Trust on an ongoing basis, a “distribution,” as such term is used in the Securities Act, may occur at any point. Broker dealers and other persons are cautioned that some activities on their part may, depending on the circumstances, result in their being deemed participants in a distribution in a manner which could render them statutory underwriters and subject them to the prospectus delivery and liability provisions of the Securities Act.

For example, a broker dealer firm or its client may be deemed a statutory underwriter if it takes Creation Units after placing an order with the Distributor, breaks them down into constituent Shares, and sells such Shares directly to customers, or if it chooses to couple the creation of a supply of new Shares with an active selling effort involving solicitation of secondary market demand for Shares. A determination of whether one is an underwriter for purposes of the Securities Act must take into account all the facts and circumstances pertaining to the activities of the broker dealer or its client in the particular case, and the examples mentioned above should not be considered a complete description of all the activities that could lead to a categorization as an underwriter.

Broker dealers who are not “underwriters” but are participating in a distribution (as contrasted to ordinary secondary trading transactions), and thus dealing with Shares that are part of an “unsold allotment” within the meaning of Section 4(3)(C) of the Securities Act, would be unable to take advantage of the prospectus delivery exemption provided by Section 4(3) of the Securities Act. This is because the prospectus delivery exemption in Section 4(3) of the Securities Act is not available in respect of such transactions as a result of Section 24(d) of the 1940 Act. As a result, broker dealer firms should note that dealers who are not underwriters but are participating in a distribution (as contrasted with ordinary secondary market transactions) and thus dealing with the Shares that are part of an overallotment within the meaning of Section 4(3)(A) of the Securities Act would be unable to take advantage of the prospectus delivery exemption provided by Section 4(3) of the Securities Act. Firms that incur a prospectus delivery obligation with respect to Shares are reminded that, under Rule 153 of the Securities Act, a prospectus delivery obligation under Section 5(b)(2) of the Securities Act owed to an exchange member in connection with a sale on NYSE Arca is satisfied by the fact that the prospectus is available at NYSE Arca upon request. The prospectus delivery mechanism provided in Rule 153 is only available with respect to transactions on an exchange.

In addition, certain affiliates of the Fund and the Adviser may purchase and resell Fund shares pursuant to this Prospectus.

### **Other Information**

The Trust was organized as a Delaware statutory trust on March 15, 2001. Its Declaration of Trust currently permits the Trust to issue an unlimited number of Shares of beneficial interest. If shareholders are required to vote on any matters, each Share outstanding would be entitled to one vote. Annual meetings of shareholders will not be held except as required by the 1940 Act and other applicable law. See the Fund's SAI for more information concerning the Trust's form of organization. Section 12(d)(1) of the 1940 Act restricts investments by investment companies in the securities of other investment companies, including Shares of the Fund. Registered investment companies are not permitted to invest in the Fund beyond the limits set forth in Section 12(d)(1).

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The Prospectus, SAI and any other Fund communication do not create any contractual obligations between the Fund's shareholders and the Trust, the Fund, the Adviser and/or the Trustees. Further, shareholders are not intended third-party beneficiaries of any contracts entered into by (or on behalf of) the Fund, including contracts with the Adviser or other parties who provide services to the Fund.

Dechert LLP serves as counsel to the Trust, including the Fund. Ernst & Young LLP serves as the Trust's independent registered public accounting firm and will audit the Fund's financial statements annually.

## **Additional Information**

This Prospectus does not contain all the information included in the Registration Statement filed with the SEC with respect to the Fund's Shares. Information about the Fund can be reviewed and copied at the SEC's Public Reference Room and information on the operation of the Public Reference Room may be obtained by calling the SEC at 1.202.551.8090. The Fund's Registration Statement, including this Prospectus, the Fund's SAI and the exhibits may be examined at the offices of the SEC (100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549) or on the EDGAR database at the SEC's website (<http://www.sec.gov>), and copies may be obtained, after paying a duplicating fee, by electronic request at the following email address: [publicinfo@sec.gov](mailto:publicinfo@sec.gov), or by writing the SEC's Public Reference Section, Washington, DC 20549-1520. These documents and other information concerning the Trust also may be inspected at the offices of NYSE Arca (20 Broad Street, New York, New York 10005).

The SAI for the Fund, which has been filed with the SEC, provides more information about the Fund. The SAI for the Fund is incorporated herein by reference and is legally part of this Prospectus. Additional information about the Fund's investments will be available in the Fund's annual and semi-annual reports to shareholders. In the Fund's annual report, when available, you will find a discussion of the market conditions and investment strategies that significantly affected the Fund's performance during its last fiscal year. The SAI and the Fund's annual and semi-annual reports may be obtained without charge by writing to the Fund at Van Eck Securities Corporation, the Fund's distributor, at 666 Third Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10017 or by calling the distributor at the following number: Investor Information: 800.826.2333.

Shareholder inquiries may be directed to the Fund in writing to 666 Third Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, New York 10017 or by calling 800.826.2333.

The Fund's SAI is available at [www.vaneck.com](http://www.vaneck.com).

(Investment Company Act file no. 811-10325)

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For more detailed information about the Fund, see the SAI dated April 9, 2018, as may be supplemented from time to time, which is incorporated by reference into this Prospectus. Additional information about the Fund's investments will be available in the Fund's annual and semi-annual reports to shareholders. In the Fund's annual report, when available, you will find a discussion of the market conditions and investment strategies that significantly affected the Fund's performance during its last fiscal year.

Call VanEck at 800.826.2333 to request, free of charge, the annual or semi-annual reports, when available, the SAI, or other information about the Fund or to make shareholder inquiries. You may also obtain the SAI or the Fund's annual or semi-annual reports, when available, by visiting the VanEck website at [www.vaneck.com](http://www.vaneck.com).

Information about the Fund (including the SAI) can also be reviewed and copied at the SEC Public Reference Room in Washington, D.C. Information about the operation of the Public Reference Room may be obtained by calling 202.551.8090.

Reports and other information about the Fund are available on the EDGAR Database on the SEC's internet site at <http://www.sec.gov>. In addition, copies of this information may be obtained, after paying a duplicating fee, by electronic request at the following email address: [publicinfo@sec.gov](mailto:publicinfo@sec.gov), or by writing the SEC's Public Reference Section, Washington, DC 20549-0102.

Transfer Agent: The Bank of New York Mellon  
SEC Registration Number: 333-123257  
1940 Act Registration Number: 811-10325

**800.823.2333**  
**vaneck.com**



**VANECK VECTORS ETF TRUST**

**STATEMENT OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Dated April 9, 2018

This Statement of Additional Information (“SAI”) is not a prospectus. It should be read in conjunction with the Prospectus dated April 9, 2018 (the “Prospectus”) for the VanEck Vectors® ETF Trust (the “Trust”), relating to the series of the Trust listed below, as it may be revised from time to time.

<b><u>Fund</u></b>	<b><u>Principal U.S. Listing Exchange</u></b>	<b><u>Ticker</u></b>
VanEck Vectors Real Asset Allocation ETF	NYSE Arca, Inc.	RAAX

A copy of the Prospectus may be obtained without charge by writing to the Trust or the Distributor. The Trust’s address is 666 Third Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10017. Capitalized terms used herein that are not defined have the same meaning as in the Prospectus, unless otherwise noted.

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## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TRUST**

The Trust is an open-end management investment company. The Trust currently consists of 57 investment portfolios. This SAI relates to one investment portfolio, VanEck Vectors Real Asset Allocation ETF (the “Fund”). The Fund is classified as a non-diversified fund under the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (“1940 Act”), and, as a result, is not required to meet certain diversification requirements under the 1940 Act. The Trust was organized as a Delaware statutory trust on March 15, 2001. The shares of the Fund are referred to herein as “Shares.”

The Fund will offer and issue Shares at their net asset value (“NAV”) only in aggregations of a specified number of Shares (each, a “Creation Unit”). Similarly, Shares will be redeemable by the Fund only in Creation Units. Creation Units will be issued and redeemed partially for cash. The Shares of the Fund are expected to be approved for listing, subject to notice of issuance, on NYSE Arca, Inc. (“NYSE Arca” or the “Exchange”), and Shares of the Fund will trade in the secondary market at market prices that may differ from the Shares’ NAV. A Creation Unit consists of 50,000 Shares. The Trust reserves the right to permit or require a “cash” option for creations and redemptions of Shares of the Fund (subject to applicable legal requirements) to the extent such Shares are not created and redeemed in cash.

## **INVESTMENT POLICIES AND RESTRICTIONS**

### **General**

The Fund is a “fund of funds,” meaning that it invests all or a portion of its assets in exchange traded products that are registered under the federal securities laws (“Exchange Traded Products”), including exchange-traded funds (“ETFs”) and exchange traded notes (“ETNs”). The performance of the Fund is dependent on the performance of the Exchange Traded Products. The Fund will be subject to the risks of the Exchange Traded Products’ investments.

### **Repurchase Agreements**

The Fund may invest in repurchase agreements with commercial banks, brokers or dealers to generate income from its excess cash balances and to invest securities lending cash collateral. A repurchase agreement is an agreement under which the Fund acquires a money market instrument (generally a security issued by the U.S. Government or an agency thereof, a banker’s acceptance or a certificate of deposit) from a seller, subject to resale to the seller at an agreed upon price and date (normally, the next business day). A repurchase agreement may be considered a loan collateralized by securities. The resale price reflects an agreed upon interest rate effective for the period the instrument is held by the Fund and is unrelated to the interest rate on the underlying instrument.

In these repurchase agreement transactions, the securities acquired by the Fund (including accrued interest earned thereon) must have a total value at least equal to the value of the repurchase agreement and are held by the Trust’s custodian bank until repurchased. In addition, the Trust’s Board of Trustees (“Board” or “Trustees”) has established guidelines and standards for review of the creditworthiness of any bank, broker or dealer counterparty to a repurchase agreement with the Fund. No more than an aggregate of 15% of the Fund’s net assets will be invested in repurchase agreements having maturities longer than seven days.

The use of repurchase agreements involves certain risks. For example, if the other party to the agreement defaults on its obligation to repurchase the underlying security at a time when the value of the security has declined, the Fund may incur a loss upon disposition of the security. If the other party to the agreement becomes insolvent and subject to liquidation or reorganization under the Bankruptcy Code or other laws, a court may determine that the underlying security is collateral not within the control of the Fund and, therefore, the Fund may incur delays in disposing of the security and/or may not be able to substantiate its interest in the underlying security and may be deemed an unsecured creditor of the other party to the agreement.

### **Futures Contracts and Options**

Futures contracts generally provide for the future purchase or sale of a specified instrument, index or commodity at a specified future time and at a specified price. Stock index futures contracts and other types of futures contracts are settled daily with a payment by the Fund (or exchange) to an exchange (or Fund) of a cash amount based on the difference between the level of the stock index or other underlying instrument specified in the contract from one day to the next. Futures contracts are standardized as to maturity date and underlying instrument and are traded on futures exchanges. The Fund may use futures contracts and options on futures contracts that Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation (“VEARA” or the “Adviser”) believes to be appropriate.

An option is a contract that provides the holder of the option the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell shares or other assets at a fixed price, within a specified period of time. An American call option gives the option



holder the right, but not the obligation, to buy the underlying security from the option writer at the option exercise price at any time prior to the expiration of the option. A European call option gives the option holder the right, but not the obligation, to buy the underlying security from the option writer only on the option expiration date. An American put option gives the option holder the right, but not the obligation, to sell the underlying security to the option writer at the option exercise price at any time prior to the expiration of the option. A European put option gives the option holder the right to sell the underlying security to the option writer at the option exercise price only on the option expiration date.

Although futures contracts (other than cash settled futures contracts including most stock index futures contracts) by their terms call for actual delivery or acceptance of the underlying instrument or commodity, in most cases the contracts are closed out before the maturity date without the making or taking of delivery. Closing out an open futures position is done by taking an opposite position (buying the same contract which was previously sold or selling the same contract previously purchased) in an identical contract to terminate the position. Brokerage commissions are incurred when a futures contract position is opened or closed.

Futures traders are required to make a good faith margin deposit in cash or government securities with a broker or custodian to initiate and maintain open positions in futures contracts. A margin deposit is intended to assure completion of the contract (delivery or acceptance of the underlying instrument or commodity or payment of the cash settlement amount) if it is not terminated prior to the specified delivery date. Brokers may establish deposit requirements that are higher than the exchange minimums. Futures contracts are customarily purchased and sold on margin deposits which may range upward from less than 5% of the value of the contract being traded.

After a futures contract position is opened, the value of the contract is marked-to-market daily. If the futures contract price changes to the extent that the margin on deposit does not satisfy margin requirements, payment of additional "variation" margin will be required.

Conversely, a change in the contract value may reduce the required margin, resulting in a repayment of excess margin to the contract holder. Variation margin payments are made to and from the futures broker for as long as the contract remains open. In such case, the Fund would expect to earn interest income on its margin deposits.

The Fund may use futures contracts and options thereon, together with positions in cash and money market instruments. Positions in futures contracts and options may be closed out only on an exchange that provides a secondary market therefor. However, there can be no assurance that a liquid secondary market will exist for any particular futures contract or option at any specific time. Thus, it may not be possible to close a futures or options position. In the event of adverse price movements, the Fund would continue to be required to make daily cash payments to maintain its required margin. In such situations, if the Fund has insufficient cash, it may have to sell portfolio securities to meet daily margin requirements at a time when it may be disadvantageous to do so. In addition, the Fund may be required to make delivery of the instruments underlying futures contracts it has sold.

The Fund will seek to minimize the risk that it will be unable to close out a futures or options contract by only entering into futures and options for which there appears to be a liquid secondary market.

The risk of loss in trading futures contracts or uncovered call options in some strategies (e.g., selling uncovered stock index futures contracts) is potentially unlimited. The Fund does not plan to use futures and options contracts in this way. The risk of a futures position may still be large as traditionally measured due to the low margin deposits required. In many cases, a relatively small price movement in a

futures contract may result in immediate and substantial loss or gain to the investor relative to the size of a required margin deposit.

Utilization of futures transactions by the Fund involves the risk of loss by the Fund of margin deposits in the event of the bankruptcy or other similar insolvency with respect to a broker with whom the Fund has an open position in the futures contract or option.

Certain financial futures exchanges limit the amount of fluctuation permitted in futures contract prices during a single trading day. The daily limit establishes the maximum amount that the price of a futures contract may vary either up or down from the previous day's settlement price at the end of a trading session. Once the daily limit has been reached in a particular type of contract, no trades may be made on that day at a price beyond that limit. The daily limit governs only price movements during a particular trading day and therefore does not limit potential losses, because the limit may prevent the liquidation of unfavorable positions. Futures contract prices have occasionally moved to the daily limit for several consecutive trading days with little or no trading, thereby preventing prompt liquidation of future positions and subjecting some futures traders to substantial losses.

Except as otherwise specified in the Fund's Prospectus or this SAI, there are no limitations on the extent to which the Fund may engage in transactions involving futures and options thereon. The Fund will take steps to prevent its futures positions from "leveraging" its securities holdings. When the Fund has a long futures position requiring physical settlement, it will maintain with its custodian bank, cash or liquid securities having a value equal to the notional value of the contract (less any margin deposited in connection with the position). When the Fund has a short futures position requiring physical settlement, the Fund will maintain with its custodian bank assets substantially identical to those underlying the contract or cash and liquid securities (or a combination of the foregoing) having a value equal to the net obligation of the Fund under the contract (less the value of any margin deposits in connection with the position).

## Swaps

Over-the-counter ("OTC") swap agreements are contracts between parties in which one party agrees to make payments to the other party based on the change in market value or level of a specified index or asset. In return, the other party agrees to make payments to the first party based on the return of a different specified index or asset, usually an interest rate. Although OTC swap agreements entail the risk that a party will default on its payment obligations thereunder, the Fund seeks to reduce this risk generally by receiving (or paying) collateral daily and entering into agreements that involve payments no less frequently than quarterly. The net amount of the excess, if any, of the Fund's obligations over its entitlements with respect to each swap is accrued on a daily basis and an amount of cash or highly liquid securities having an aggregate value at least equal to the accrued excess is maintained in an account at the Trust's custodian bank.

The Fund may enter into interest rate swaps. Interest rate swaps are typically exchange-traded contracts in which a party agrees to make periodic payments on certain referenced interest rates (e.g., a fixed rate or a floating rate) applied

to a specified notional amount. The use of such swap agreements involves certain risks. For example, if the counterparty under an OTC swap agreement defaults on its obligation to make payments due from it as a result of its bankruptcy or otherwise, the Fund may lose such payments altogether or collect only a portion thereof, which collection could involve costs or delays.

The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the “Dodd-Frank Act”) and related regulatory developments require the clearing and exchange-trading of certain standardized OTC derivative instruments that the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (“CFTC”) and Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”) defined as “swaps” and “security-based swaps,” respectively. Mandatory exchange-trading and clearing is occurring on a phased-in basis based on the type of market participant and CFTC approval of contracts for central clearing and exchange trading. In a cleared swap, the Fund’s ultimate counterparty is a central clearinghouse rather than a swap dealer, bank or other financial institution. The Fund enters into cleared swaps through an executing broker. Such transactions are then submitted for clearing and, if cleared, will be held at regulated futures commission merchants (“FCMs”) that are members of the clearinghouse that serves as the central counterparty. When the Fund enters into a cleared swap, it must deliver to the central counterparty (via an FCM) an amount referred to as “initial margin.” Initial margin requirements are determined by the central counterparty, but an FCM may require additional initial margin above the amount required by the central counterparty. During the term of the swap agreement, a “variation margin” amount may also be required to be paid by the Fund or may be received by the Fund in accordance with margin controls set for such accounts, depending upon changes in the price of the underlying reference asset subject to the swap agreement. At the conclusion of the term of the swap agreement, if the Fund has a loss equal to or greater than the margin amount, the margin amount is paid to the FCM along with any loss in excess of the margin amount. If the Fund has a loss of less than the margin amount, the excess margin is returned to the Fund. If the Fund has a gain, the full margin amount and the amount of the gain is paid to the Fund.

Central clearing is designed to reduce counterparty credit risk compared to uncleared swaps because central clearing interposes the central clearinghouse as the counterparty to each participant’s swap, but it does not eliminate those risks completely. There is also a risk of loss by the Fund of the initial and variation margin deposits in the event of bankruptcy of the FCM with which the Fund has an open position in a swap contract. The assets of the Fund may not be fully protected in the event of the bankruptcy of the FCM or central counterparty because the Fund might be limited to recovering only a pro rata share of all available funds and margin segregated on behalf of an FCM’s customers or central counterparty’s clearing members. If the FCM does not provide accurate reporting, the Fund is also subject to the risk that the FCM could use the Fund’s assets, which are held in an omnibus account with assets belonging to the FCM’s other customers, to satisfy its own financial obligations or the payment obligations of another customer to the central counterparty. Certain swaps have begun trading on exchanges called swap execution facilities. Exchange-trading is expected to, but may not necessarily, increase the liquidity of swaps trading.

In addition, with respect to cleared swaps, the Fund may not be able to obtain as favorable terms as it would be able to negotiate for an uncleared swap. In addition, an FCM may unilaterally impose position limits or additional margin requirements for certain types of swaps in which the Fund may invest. Central counterparties and FCMs generally can require termination of existing cleared swap transactions at any time, and can also require increases in margin above the margin that is required at the initiation of the swap agreement. Margin requirements for cleared swaps vary on a number of factors, and the margin

required under the rules of the clearinghouse and FCM may be in excess of the collateral required to be posted by a Fund to support its obligations under a similar uncleared swap. However, regulators recently adopted rules imposing certain margin requirements, including minimums and required daily margin transfers, on uncleared swaps. The Fund is also subject to the risk that, after entering into a cleared swap with an executing broker, no FCM or central counterparty is willing or able to clear the transaction. In such an event, the central counterparty would void the trade. Before the Fund can enter into a new trade, market conditions may become less favorable to the Fund.

The Adviser will continue to monitor developments regarding trading and execution of cleared swaps on exchanges, particularly to the extent regulatory changes affect the Fund's ability to enter into swap agreements and the costs and risks associated with such investments.

### **Warrants and Subscription Rights**

Warrants are equity securities in the form of options issued by a corporation which give the holder the right, but not the obligation, to purchase stock, usually at a price that is higher than the market price at the time the warrant is issued. A purchaser takes the risk that the warrant may expire worthless because the market price of the common stock fails to rise above the price set by the warrant.

### **Currency Forwards**

A currency forward transaction is a contract to buy or sell a specified quantity of currency at a specified date in the future at a specified price which may be any fixed number of days from the date of the contract agreed upon by the parties. Currency forward contracts may be used to increase or reduce exposure to currency price movements.

The use of currency forward transactions involves certain risks. For example, if the counterparty under the contract defaults on its obligation to make payments due from it as a result of its bankruptcy or otherwise, the Fund may lose such payments altogether or collect only a portion thereof, which collection could involve costs or delays.

### **Convertible Securities**

A convertible security is a bond, debenture, note, preferred stock, right, warrant or other security that may be converted into or exchanged for a prescribed amount of common stock or other security of the same or a different issuer or into cash within a particular period of time at a specified price or formula. A convertible security generally entitles the holder to receive interest paid or accrued on debt securities or the dividend paid on preferred stock until the convertible security matures or is redeemed, converted or exchanged. Before conversion, convertible securities

generally have characteristics similar to both debt and equity securities. The value of convertible securities tends to decline as interest rates rise and, because of the conversion feature, tends to vary with fluctuations in the market value of the underlying securities. Convertible securities ordinarily provide a stream of income with generally higher yields than those of common stock of the same or similar issuers. Convertible securities generally rank senior to common stock in a corporation's capital structure but are usually subordinated to comparable nonconvertible securities. Convertible securities generally do not participate directly in any dividend increases or decreases of the underlying securities although the market prices of convertible securities may be affected by any dividend changes or other changes in the underlying securities.

## Structured Notes

A structured note is a derivative security for which the amount of principal repayment and/or interest payments is based on the movement of one or more “factors.” These factors include, but are not limited to, currency exchange rates, interest rates (such as the prime lending rate or LIBOR), referenced bonds and stock indices. Some of these factors may or may not correlate to the total rate of return on one or more underlying instruments referenced in such notes. Investments in structured notes involve risks including interest rate risk, credit risk and market risk. Depending on the factor(s) used and the use of multipliers or deflators, changes in interest rates and movement of such factor(s) may cause significant price fluctuations. Structured notes may be less liquid than other types of securities and more volatile than the reference factor underlying the note.

## Participation Notes

Participation notes (“P-Notes”) are issued by banks or broker-dealers and are designed to offer a return linked to the performance of a particular underlying equity security or market. P-Notes can have the characteristics or take the form of various instruments, including, but not limited to, certificates or warrants. The holder of a P-Note that is linked to a particular underlying security is entitled to receive any dividends paid in connection with the underlying security. However, the holder of a P-Note generally does not receive voting rights as it would if it directly owned the underlying security. P-Notes constitute direct, general and unsecured contractual obligations of the banks or broker-dealers that issue them, which therefore subject the Fund to counterparty risk, as discussed below. Investments in P-Notes involve certain risks in addition to those associated with a direct investment in the underlying foreign securities or foreign securities markets whose return they seek to replicate. For instance, there can be no assurance that the trading price of a P-Note will equal the value of the underlying foreign security or foreign securities market that it seeks to replicate. As the purchaser of a P-Note, the Fund is relying on the creditworthiness of the counterparty issuing the P-Note and has no rights under a P-Note against the issuer of the underlying security. Therefore, if such counterparty were to become insolvent, the Fund would lose its investment. The risk that the Fund may lose its investments due to the insolvency of a single counterparty may be amplified to the extent the Fund purchases P-Notes issued by one issuer or a small number of issuers. P-Notes also include transaction costs in addition to those applicable to a direct investment in securities.

Due to liquidity and transfer restrictions, the secondary markets on which P-Notes are traded may be less liquid than the markets for other securities, which may lead to the absence of readily available market quotations for securities in the Fund’s portfolio and may cause the value of the P-Notes to decline. The ability of the Fund to value its securities becomes more difficult and the Adviser’s judgment in the application of fair value procedures may play a greater role in the valuation of the Fund’s securities due to reduced availability of reliable objective pricing data. Consequently, while such determinations will be made in good faith, it may nevertheless be more difficult for the Fund to accurately assign a daily value to such securities.

## Future Developments

The Fund may take advantage of opportunities in the area of options, futures contracts, options on futures contracts, warrants, swaps and any other investments which are not presently contemplated for use or which are not currently available, but which may be developed, to the extent such investments are considered suitable for the Fund by the Adviser.



## Investment Restrictions

The Trust has adopted the following investment restrictions as fundamental policies with respect to the Fund. These restrictions cannot be changed without the approval of the holders of a majority of the Fund's outstanding voting securities. For purposes of the 1940 Act, a majority of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund means the vote, at an annual or a special meeting of the security holders of the Trust, of the lesser of (1) 67% or more of the voting securities of the Fund present at such meeting, if the holders of more than 50% of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund are present or represented by proxy, or (2) more than 50% of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund. Under these restrictions:

1. The Fund may not make loans, except that the Fund may (i) lend portfolio securities, (ii) enter into repurchase agreements, (iii) purchase all or a portion of an issue of debt securities, bank loan or participation interests, bank certificates of deposit, bankers' acceptances, debentures or other securities, whether or not the purchase is made upon the original issuance of the securities and (iv) participate in an interfund lending program with other registered investment companies;
2. The Fund may not borrow money, except as permitted under the 1940 Act, and as interpreted or modified by regulation from time to time;
3. The Fund may not issue senior securities, except as permitted under the 1940 Act, and as interpreted or modified by regulation from time to time;

4. The Fund may not purchase or sell real estate, except that the Fund may (i) invest in securities of issuers that invest in real estate or interests therein; (ii) invest in mortgage-related securities and other securities that are secured by real estate or interests therein; and (iii) hold and sell real estate acquired by the Fund as a result of the ownership of securities;

5. The Fund may not engage in the business of underwriting securities issued by others, except to the extent that the Fund may be considered an underwriter within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act"), in the disposition of restricted securities or in connection with its investments in other investment companies;

6. The Fund may not purchase or sell commodities, unless acquired as a result of owning securities or other instruments, but it may purchase, sell or enter into financial options and futures, forward and spot currency contracts, swap transactions and other financial contracts or derivative instruments and may invest in securities or other instruments backed by commodities; and

7. The Fund may not purchase any security if, as a result of that purchase, 25% or more of its total assets would be invested in securities of issuers having their principal business activities in the same industry. This limit does not apply to securities issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Government, its agencies or instrumentalities.

In addition to the investment restrictions adopted as fundamental policies as set forth above, the Fund observes the following non-fundamental investment restrictions, which may be changed by the Board without a shareholder vote. Under these restrictions:

1. The Fund will not invest in securities which are “illiquid” securities if the result is that more than 15% of the Fund’s net assets would be invested in such securities.

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2. The Fund will not make short sales of securities.

The Fund will not purchase any security on margin, except for such short-term loans as are necessary for clearance of securities transactions. The deposit or payment by the Fund or initial or variation margin in connection with futures contracts, options on futures contracts or other derivative instruments shall not constitute the purchase of a security on margin.

The Fund will not participate in a joint or joint-and-several basis in any trading account in securities, although transactions for the Fund and any other account under common or affiliated management may be combined or allocated between the Fund and such account.

The Fund will not purchase securities of open-end or closed-end investment companies except in compliance with the 1940 Act or an exemption or other relief applicable to the Fund from the provisions of the 1940 Act, as amended from time to time.

If a percentage limitation is adhered to at the time of investment or contract, a later increase or decrease in percentage resulting from any change in value or total or net assets will not result in a violation of such restriction, except that the percentage limitation with respect to the borrowing of money described above in fundamental restriction 2 will be continuously complied with.

With respect to fundamental restriction 2, the 1940 Act permits the Fund to borrow money from banks in an amount up to one-third of its total assets (including the amount borrowed) less its liabilities (not including any borrowings but including the fair market value at the time of computation of any other senior securities then outstanding). The Fund may also borrow an additional 5% of its total assets without regard to the foregoing limitation for temporary purposes such as clearance of portfolio transactions. Practices and investments that may involve leverage but are not considered to be borrowings are not subject to the policy.

With respect to fundamental restriction 3, the 1940 Act prohibits the Fund from issuing senior securities, except that the Fund may borrow money in amounts of up to one-third of the Fund's total assets from banks for any purpose. The Fund may also borrow money or engage in economically similar transactions if those transactions do not constitute "senior securities" under the 1940 Act. The policy above will be interpreted not to prevent collateral arrangements with respect to swaps, options, forward or futures contracts or other derivatives, or the posting of initial or variation margin.

With respect to fundamental restriction 7, investment companies are not considered to be part of an industry. In accordance with the Fund's principal investment strategies as set forth in its Prospectus, the Fund may invest its assets in underlying investment companies. Although the Fund does not have a policy to concentrate its investments in a particular industry, 25% or more of the Fund's total assets may be indirectly exposed to a particular industry or group of related industries through its investment in one or more underlying investment companies.

The Fund may invest its remaining assets in securities, which may include but may not be limited to, money market instruments or funds which reinvest exclusively in money market instruments, stocks that are in the relevant market

and/or in combinations of certain stock index futures contracts, options on such futures contracts, stock options, stock index options, options on the Shares, and stock index swaps and swaptions. These investments may be made to invest uncommitted cash balances or, in limited circumstances, to assist in meeting shareholder redemptions of Creation Units. The Fund may also invest in money market instruments for cash management purposes or as part of a temporary defensive strategy to protect against potential stock market declines.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RISKS**

A discussion of the risks associated with an investment in the Fund is contained in the Prospectus under the headings “Summary Information—Principal Risks of Investing in the Fund” and “Additional Information About the Fund’s Investment Strategies and Risks—Risks of Investing in the Fund.” The discussion below supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, such sections of the Prospectus.

### **General**

Investment in the Fund should be made with an understanding that the value of the Fund’s portfolio securities may fluctuate in accordance with changes in the financial condition of the issuers of the portfolio securities, the value of securities generally and other factors.

Under normal circumstances, the Fund, through a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Fund (the “Subsidiary”), invests in Exchange Traded Products that invest in physical commodities and futures and derivatives of physical commodities (“Commodities Instruments”).

*Cayman Subsidiary:* The Fund may invest up to 25% of the value of its total assets at each quarter-end of the Fund’s fiscal year in the Subsidiary. The Subsidiary may invest in Commodities Instruments, as described under “Commodities Instruments” below. Because the Fund may invest a substantial portion of its assets in the Subsidiary, which may hold certain of the investments described in the Prospectus and this SAI, the Fund may be considered to be investing indirectly in those investments through the Subsidiary. Therefore, except as otherwise noted, for purposes of this disclosure, references to the Fund’s investments strategies and risks include those of the Subsidiary.

The Subsidiary is not registered under the 1940 Act and is not directly subject to its investor protections, except as noted in the Prospectus or this SAI. However, the Subsidiary is wholly-owned and controlled by the Fund and is advised by the Adviser. The Trust’s Board of Trustees has oversight responsibility for the investment activities of the Fund, including its investment in the Subsidiary, and the Fund’s role as the sole shareholder of the Subsidiary. The Subsidiary will also enter into separate contracts for the provision of custody, transfer agency, and accounting agent services with the same service providers or with affiliates of the same service providers that provide those services to the Fund.

Changes in the laws of the United States (where the Fund is organized) and/or the Cayman Islands (where the Subsidiary is incorporated) could prevent the Fund and/or the Subsidiary from operating as described in the Prospectus and this SAI and could negatively affect the Fund and its shareholders. For example, the Cayman Islands currently does not impose certain taxes on the Subsidiary, including income and capital gains tax, among others. If Cayman Islands laws were changed to require the Subsidiary to pay Cayman Islands taxes, the investment returns of

the Fund would likely decrease.

The financial statements of the Subsidiary will be consolidated with the Fund's financial statements in the Fund's annual and semi-annual reports.

*Commodities Instruments:* The Fund gains exposure to Commodities Instruments primarily through the Subsidiary. Additional information on the Subsidiary is set forth under "Cayman Subsidiary" above. Additional information regarding specific Commodities Instruments is set forth below. The Fund, either directly or through the Subsidiary, may also gain exposure to Commodities Instruments through investment in certain investment companies, including ETFs, and in ETNs.

The Fund may invest up to 25% of its total assets in the Subsidiary, portions of which will be committed as "initial" and "variation" margin to secure the Subsidiary's positions in Commodities

Instruments. These assets are placed in accounts maintained by the Subsidiary at the Subsidiary's clearing broker or FCM, and are held in cash or invested in U.S. Treasury bills and other direct or guaranteed debt obligations of the U.S. government maturing within less than one year at the time of investment.

In the event that the securities are not listed on a national securities exchange, the principal trading market for some may be in the OTC market. The existence of a liquid trading market for certain securities may depend on whether dealers will make a market in such securities. There can be no assurance that a market will be made or maintained or that any such market will be or remain liquid. The price at which securities may be sold and the value of the Fund's Shares will be adversely affected if trading markets for the Fund's portfolio securities are limited or absent or if bid/ask spreads are wide.

The Fund may also invest in securities issued by other investment companies, equity securities, fixed income securities and money market instruments, including repurchase agreements. For temporary defensive purposes, the Fund may invest without limit in money market instruments, including repurchase agreements or other funds which invest exclusively in money market instruments.

The Fund is an actively managed ETF that does not seek to replicate the performance of a specified index.

Regulatory developments affecting the exchange-traded and OTC derivatives markets may impair the Fund's ability to manage or hedge its investment portfolio through the use of derivatives. The Dodd-Frank Act and the rules promulgated thereunder may limit the ability of the Fund to enter into one or more exchange-traded or OTC derivatives transactions.

Changes in the laws or regulations of the United States or the Cayman Islands, including any changes to applicable tax laws and regulations, could impair the ability of the Fund to achieve its investment objective and could increase the operating expenses of the Fund or the Subsidiary. CFTC regulations require an investment adviser of a registered investment company to register with the CFTC as a "commodity pool operator" ("CPO") if the investment company either markets itself as a vehicle for trading commodity interests or conducts more than a de minimis amount of speculative trading in commodity interests. Based on the Fund's and its Subsidiary's current investment strategies, the Fund and the Subsidiary are each a "commodity pool" and the Adviser, which is currently registered with the CFTC as a CPO and commodity trading adviser under the CEA, is considered a CPO with respect to the Fund and the Subsidiary. Accordingly, the Fund and the Adviser are subject to dual regulation by the CFTC and the SEC. Pursuant to certain CFTC regulations, the Fund and the Adviser have elected to meet the requirements of certain CFTC regulations by complying with specific SEC rules and regulations relating to disclosure and reporting requirements. The CFTC could deem the Fund or the Adviser in violation of an applicable CFTC regulation if the Fund or the Adviser failed to comply with a related SEC regulatory requirement. In addition, the Fund and the Adviser will remain subject to certain CFTC-mandated disclosure, reporting and recordkeeping regulations with respect to the Fund and the Subsidiary. Compliance with the CFTC regulations could increase the Fund's expenses, adversely affecting the Fund's total return. In addition, the CFTC or the SEC could at any time alter the regulatory requirements governing the use of commodity index-linked notes, commodity futures, options on commodity futures or





swap transactions by investment companies, which could result in the inability of the Fund to achieve its investment objective through its current strategies.

The Fund and the Subsidiary may utilize futures contracts. The use of futures is subject to applicable regulations of the SEC, the several exchanges upon which they are traded, the CFTC and various state regulatory authorities.

## **Futures Contracts**

The Fund may purchase and sell futures contracts. The Fund (directly or through the Subsidiary) may invest in commodity futures contracts. Commodity futures contracts are generally based upon commodities within the six principal commodity groups: energy, industrial metals, agriculture, precious metals, foods and fibers, and livestock. The price of a commodity futures contract will reflect the storage costs of purchasing the physical commodity. These storage costs include the time value of money invested in the physical commodity plus the actual costs of storing the commodity less any benefits from ownership of the physical commodity that are not obtained by the holder of a futures contract (this is sometimes referred to as the “convenience yield”). To the extent that these storage costs change for an underlying commodity while the Fund is in a long position on that commodity, the value of the futures contract may change proportionately.

Commodity futures contracts are traded on futures exchanges. These futures exchanges offer a central marketplace in which to transact futures contracts, a clearing corporation to process trades, a standardization of expiration dates and contract sizes, and the availability of a secondary market. Futures markets also specify the terms and conditions of delivery as well as the maximum permissible price movement during a trading session. Additionally, the commodity futures exchanges may have position limit rules that limit the amount of futures contracts that any one party may hold in a particular commodity at any point in time. These position limit rules are designed to prevent any one participant from controlling a significant portion of the market. In the commodity futures markets, the exchange clearing corporation takes the other side in all transactions, either buying or selling directly to the market participants. The clearinghouse acts as the counterparty to all exchange-traded futures contracts, that is, the Fund’s or Subsidiary’s obligation is to the clearinghouse, and the Fund or Subsidiary will look to the clearinghouse to satisfy the Fund’s or Subsidiary’s rights under a commodity futures contract.

Transaction costs are incurred when a futures contract is bought or sold and margin deposits must be maintained. A futures contract may be satisfied by delivery or purchase, as the case may be, of the instrument or by payment of the change in the cash value of the index. More commonly, futures contracts are closed out prior to delivery by entering into an offsetting transaction in a matching futures contract. Although the value of an index might be a function of the value of certain specified securities, no physical delivery of those securities is made. If the offsetting purchase price is less than the original sale price, a gain will be realized; if it is more, a loss will be realized. Conversely, if the offsetting sale price is more than the original purchase price, a gain will be realized; if it is less, a loss will be realized. The transaction costs must also be included in these calculations. There can be no assurance, however, that the Fund or Subsidiary will be able to enter into an offsetting transaction with respect to a particular futures contract at a particular time. If the Fund or Subsidiary is not able to enter into an offsetting transaction, the Fund or Subsidiary will continue to be required to maintain the margin deposits on the futures contract.

Margin is the amount of funds that must be deposited by the Fund or Subsidiary with its custodian or FCM in a segregated account in the name of the futures commission merchant in order to initiate futures trading and to maintain the Fund's or Subsidiary's open positions in futures contracts. A margin deposit is intended to ensure the Fund's or Subsidiary's performance of the futures contract. The margin required for a particular futures contract is set by the exchange on which the futures contract is traded and may be significantly modified from time

to time by the exchange during the term of the futures contract. Futures contracts are customarily purchased and sold on margins that may range upward from less than 5% of the value of the futures contract being traded.

If the price of an open futures contract changes (by increase in the case of a sale or by decrease in the case of a purchase) so that the loss on the futures contract reaches a point at which the margin on deposit does not satisfy margin requirements, the broker will require an increase in the margin. However, if the value of a position increases because of favorable price changes in the futures contract so that the margin deposit exceeds the required margin, the broker will pay the excess to the Fund or Subsidiary. In computing daily net asset value, the Fund or Subsidiary will mark to market the current value of its open futures contracts. The Fund and Subsidiary expect to earn interest income on their margin deposits.

Because of the low margin deposits required, futures trading involves an extremely high degree of leverage. As a result, a relatively small price movement in a futures contract may result in immediate and substantial loss, as well as gain, to the investor. For example, if at the time of purchase, 10% of the value of the futures contract is deposited as margin, a subsequent 10% decrease in the value of the futures contract would result in a total loss of the margin deposit, before any deduction for the transaction costs, if the account were then closed out. A 15% decrease would result in a loss equal to 150% of the original margin deposit, if the futures contract were closed out. Thus, a purchase or sale of a futures contract may result in losses in excess of the amount initially invested in the futures contract. However, the Fund or Subsidiary would presumably have sustained comparable losses if, instead of investing in the futures contract, it had invested in the underlying financial instrument and sold it after the decline.

Most U.S. futures exchanges limit the amount of fluctuation permitted in futures contract prices during a single trading day. The day limit establishes the maximum amount that the price of a futures contract may vary either up or down from the previous day's settlement price at the end of a trading session. Once the daily limit has been reached in a particular type of futures contract, no trades may be made on that day at a price beyond that limit. The daily limit governs only price movement during a particular trading day and therefore does not limit potential losses, because the limit may prevent the liquidation of unfavorable positions. Futures contract prices have occasionally moved to the daily limit for several consecutive trading days with little or no trading, thereby preventing prompt liquidation of futures positions and subjecting some futures traders to substantial losses. Despite the daily price limits on various futures exchanges, the price volatility of commodity futures contracts has been historically greater than that for traditional securities such as stocks and bonds. To the extent that the Fund or Subsidiary invests in commodity futures contracts, the assets of the Fund and the Subsidiary, and therefore the prices of Fund shares, may be subject to greater volatility.

There can be no assurance that a liquid market will exist at a time when the Fund or Subsidiary seeks to close out a futures contract. The Fund or Subsidiary would continue to be required to meet margin requirements until the position is closed, possibly resulting in a decline in the Fund's net asset value. There can be no assurance that an active secondary market will develop or continue to exist.

## **Regulatory Aspects of Investments in Futures**

The Adviser has registered as a CPO with the CFTC. The Adviser's investment decisions may need to be modified, and commodity contract positions held by the Fund and/or the Subsidiary may have to be liquidated at disadvantageous times or prices, to avoid exceeding position limits established by the CFTC, potentially subjecting the Fund to substantial losses. The regulation of commodity transactions in the United States is subject to ongoing modification by

government, self-regulatory and judicial action. The effect of any future regulatory change on the Fund is impossible to predict, but could be substantial and adverse to the Fund.

### **Asset Coverage for Futures and other Derivatives Positions**

The Fund and Subsidiary on a consolidated basis will comply with SEC guidance with respect to coverage of futures positions by registered investment companies. SEC guidance may require the Fund, in certain circumstances, to segregate cash or liquid securities on its books and records, or engage in other appropriate measures to “cover” its obligations under certain futures or derivative contracts. For example, with respect to futures that are not cash settled, the Fund is required to segregate liquid assets equal to the full notional value of the futures contract. For futures and other derivatives contracts that are cash settled, the Fund is required to segregate liquid assets in an amount equal to the Fund’s daily mark-to-market (net) obligation (i.e., the Fund’s daily net liability) under the contract. Securities earmarked or held in a segregated account cannot be sold while the Fund’s futures or other derivatives position is outstanding, unless replaced with other permissible assets (or otherwise covered), and will be marked-to-market daily. As an alternative to segregating assets, for any futures contract held by the Fund, the Fund could purchase a put option on that same futures contract with a strike price as high or higher than the price of the contract held or the Fund could engage in other cover transactions with respect to other types of contracts. The Subsidiary may not enter into futures positions if such positions will require the Fund to set aside or earmark more than 100% of its net assets.

### **Federal Income Tax Treatment of Investments in the Subsidiary**

The Fund must derive at least 90% of its gross income from certain qualifying sources of income in order to qualify as a regulated investment company (“RIC”) under the Code. The Internal Revenue Service (the “IRS”) issued a revenue ruling in December 2005 which concluded that income and gains from certain commodity-linked derivatives is not qualifying income under Subchapter M of the Code. As a result, the Fund’s ability to invest directly in commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps or in certain exchange traded trusts that hold commodities as part of its investment strategy is limited by the requirement that it receive no more than ten percent (10%) of its gross income from such investments. However, in Revenue Ruling 2006-31, the IRS indicated that income from alternative investment instruments that create commodity exposure may be considered qualifying income under the Code. The IRS subsequently issued private letter rulings to other taxpayers in which the IRS specifically concluded that that income derived from a fund’s investment in a controlled foreign corporation (“CFC”) also will constitute qualifying income to the fund, even if the CFC itself owns commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps. A private letter ruling cannot be used or cited as precedent and is binding on the IRS only for the taxpayer that receives it. The Fund has not obtained a ruling from the IRS with respect to its investments or its structure. The IRS has currently suspended the issuance of private letter rulings relating to the tax treatment of income generated by investments in a subsidiary. The IRS has proposed regulations that, if finalized, would generally treat a fund’s income inclusion with respect to an investment in a non-U.S. company generating investment income as qualifying income only if there is a current-year distribution out of the earnings and profits of the non-U.S. company that are attributable to such income inclusion. The proposed regulations, if adopted, would apply to taxable years beginning on or after 90 days after the regulations are published as final. The Fund intends to treat its income from the Subsidiary as qualifying income without any such ruling from the IRS. There can be no assurance that the IRS will not change its position with respect to some or all of these issues or if the IRS did so, that a court would not sustain the IRS’s position. Furthermore, the tax



treatment of the Fund's investments in the Subsidiary may be adversely affected by future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations. If the IRS were to change its position or otherwise determine that income derived from the Fund's investment in the Subsidiary does not constitute qualifying income and if such positions were upheld, or if future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations were to adversely affect the tax treatment of such investments, the Fund might cease to qualify as a RIC and would be required to reduce its exposure to such investments which could result in difficulty in implementing its investment strategy. If the Fund did not qualify as a RIC for any taxable year, the Fund's taxable income would be subject to tax at the Fund level at regular corporate tax rates (without reduction for distributions to shareholders) and to a further tax at the shareholder level when such income is distributed. In such event, in order to re-qualify for taxation as a RIC, the Fund may be required to recognize unrealized gains, pay substantial taxes and interest and make certain distributions.

## **Cyber Security**

The Fund, its service providers, its Exchange and Authorized Participants (defined below) are susceptible to cyber security risks that include, among other things, theft, unauthorized monitoring, release, misuse, loss, destruction or corruption of confidential and highly restricted data; denial of service attacks; unauthorized access to relevant systems, compromises to networks or devices that the Fund and its service providers use to service the Fund's operations; or operational disruption or failures in the physical infrastructure or operating systems that support the Fund and its service providers. Cyber attacks against or security breakdowns of the Fund, its service providers, the Exchange or Authorized Participants may adversely impact the Fund and its shareholders, potentially resulting in, among other things, financial losses; the inability of Fund shareholders to transact business and the Fund to process transactions; inability to calculate the Fund's NAV; violations of applicable privacy and other laws; regulatory fines, penalties, reputational damage, reimbursement or other compensation costs; and/or additional compliance costs. The Fund may incur additional costs for cyber security risk management and remediation purposes. In addition, cyber security risks may also impact issuers of securities in which the Fund invests, which may cause the Fund's investment in such issuers to lose value. There can be no assurance that the Fund, its service providers, the Exchange or Authorized Participants will not suffer losses relating to cyber attacks or other information security breaches in the future.

## **Subsidiary**

Investments in the Subsidiary are expected to provide the Fund with exposure to the commodity markets within the limitations of Subchapter M of the Code and recent IRS revenue rulings and proposed regulations, as discussed above under "Federal Income Tax Treatment of Investments in the Subsidiary" and below under "Taxes." The Subsidiary is a company organized under the laws of the Cayman Islands and is overseen by its own board of directors. The Fund is the sole shareholder of the Subsidiary, and it is not currently expected that shares of the Subsidiary will be sold or offered to other investors. It is expected that the Subsidiary will primarily invest in Commodities Instruments. To the extent that the Fund invests in the Subsidiary, the Fund may be subject to the risks associated with such Commodities Instruments.

While the Subsidiary may be considered similar to investment companies, it is not registered under the 1940 Act and, unless otherwise noted in the Prospectus and this SAI, is not subject to all of the investor protections of the 1940 Act and other U.S. regulations. Changes in the laws of the United States and/or the Cayman Islands could result in the inability of the Fund and/or the Subsidiary to operate as described in the Prospectus and this SAI and could eliminate or severely limit the Fund's ability to invest in the Subsidiary which may adversely affect the Fund and its shareholders.



## EXCHANGE LISTING AND TRADING

A discussion of exchange listing and trading matters associated with an investment in the Fund is contained in the Prospectus under the headings “Summary Information—Principal Risks of Investing in the Fund,” “Additional Information About the Fund’s Investment Strategies and Risks—Risks of Investing in the Fund,” “Shareholder Information—Determination of NAV” and “Shareholder Information—Buying and Selling Exchange-Traded Shares.” The discussion below supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, such sections of the Prospectus.

The Shares of the Fund are expected to be approved for listing on the NYSE Arca, subject to notice of issuance, and will trade in the secondary market at prices that may differ to some degree from their NAV. The Exchange may but is not required to remove the Shares of the Fund from listing if: (1) following the initial twelve-month period beginning upon the commencement of trading of the Fund, there are fewer than 50 beneficial holders of the Shares for 30 or more consecutive trading days, (2) the value of the portfolio of securities on which the Fund is based is no longer calculated or available or (3) such other event shall occur or condition exists that, in the opinion of the Exchange, makes further dealings on the Exchange inadvisable. In addition, the Exchange will remove the Shares from listing and trading upon termination of the Trust. There can be no assurance that the requirements of the Exchange necessary to maintain the listing of Shares of the Fund will continue to be met.

As in the case of other securities traded on the Exchange, brokers’ commissions on secondary market transactions in Shares of the Fund will be based on negotiated commission rates at customary levels.

In order to provide investors with a basis to gauge whether the market price of the Shares on the Exchange is approximately consistent with the current value of the assets of the Fund on a per Share basis, an updated value of the Fund’s Shares is disseminated intraday (“IIV” and also known as the Indicative Optimized Portfolio Value) through the facilities of the Consolidated Tape Association’s Network B. IIVs are disseminated every 15 seconds during regular Exchange trading hours by NYSE Arca or by market data vendors or other information providers based on the most recently reported prices of Fund Securities. The Fund is not involved in or responsible for the calculation or dissemination of the IIVs and makes no warranty as to the accuracy of the IIVs.

The IIV has a securities component and a cash component reflecting cash and other assets that may be held by the Fund. The securities values included in the IIV are the values of the Deposit Securities (as defined below under the heading “Creation and Redemption of Creation Units—Fund Deposit”) for the Fund. While the IIV reflects the approximate current value of the Deposit Securities required to be deposited in connection with the purchase of a Creation Unit, it does not necessarily reflect the precise composition of the current portfolio of securities held by the Fund at a particular point in time because the current portfolio of the Fund may include securities that are not a part of the current Deposit Securities. Therefore, the Fund’s IIV disseminated during the Exchange trading hours should not be viewed as a real-time update of the Fund’s NAV, which is calculated only once a day.

The cash component included in the IIV could consist of estimated accrued interest, dividends and other income, less expenses. If applicable, the IIV also reflects changes in currency exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and the applicable currency.

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## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE TRUST**

### **Trustees and Officers of the Trust**

The Board of the Trust consists of five Trustees, four of whom are not “interested persons” (as defined in the 1940 Act), of the Trust (the “Independent Trustees”). Mr. David H. Chow, an Independent Trustee, serves as Chairman of the Board. The Board is responsible for overseeing the management and operations of the Trust, including general supervision of the duties performed by the Adviser and other service providers to the Trust. The Adviser is responsible for the day-to-day administration and business affairs of the Trust.

The Board believes that each Trustee’s experience, qualifications, attributes or skills on an individual basis and in combination with those of the other Trustees lead to the conclusion that the Board possesses the requisite skills and attributes to carry out its oversight responsibilities with respect to the Trust. The Board believes that the Trustees’ ability to review, critically evaluate, question and discuss information provided to them, to interact effectively with the Adviser, other service providers, counsel and independent auditors, and to exercise effective business judgment in the performance of their duties, support this conclusion. The Board also has considered the following experience, qualifications, attributes and/or skills, among others, of its members in reaching its conclusion: such person’s character and integrity; length of service as a board member of the Trust; such person’s willingness to serve and willingness and ability to commit the time necessary to perform the duties of a Trustee; and as to each Trustee other than Mr. van Eck, his status as not being an “interested person” (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the Trust. In addition, the following specific experience, qualifications, attributes and/or skills apply as to each Trustee: Mr. Chow, significant business and financial experience, particularly in the investment management industry, experience with trading and markets through his involvement with the Pacific Stock Exchange, and service as a chief executive officer, board member, partner or executive officer of various businesses and non-profit organizations; Mr. Short, business and financial experience, particularly in the investment management industry, and service as a president, board member or executive officer of various businesses; Mr. Sidebottom, business and financial experience, particularly in the investment management industry, and service as partner and/or executive officer of various businesses; Mr. Stamberger, business and financial experience and service as the president and chief executive officer of SmartBrief Inc., a media company; and Mr. van Eck, business and financial experience, particularly in the investment management industry, and service as a president, executive officer and/or board member of various businesses, including Van Eck Securities Corporation (“VESC”) and Van Eck Associates Corporation (“VEAC,” the Adviser’s parent company), both affiliates of the Adviser. References to the experience, qualifications, attributes and skills of Trustees are pursuant to requirements of the SEC, do not constitute holding out of the Board or any Trustee as having any special expertise or experience, and shall not impose any greater responsibility or liability on any such person or on the Board by reason thereof.

The Trustees of the Trust, their addresses, positions with the Trust, year of birth, term of office and length of time served, principal occupations during the past five years, the number of portfolios in the Fund Complex overseen by each Trustee and other directorships, if any, held by the Trustees, are set forth below.

**Independent Trustees**

<b>Name, Address and Year of Birth</b>	<b><sup>1</sup>Position(s) Held with the Trust</b>	<b>Term of Office and Length of Time Served</b>	<b><sup>2</sup>Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years</b>	<b>Number of Portfolios in Fund Complex Overseen</b>	<b>Other Directorships Held By Trustee During Past Five Years</b>
David H. Chow, 1957*†	Chairman Trustee	Since 2008 Since 2006	Founder and CEO, DanCourt Management LLC (financial/strategy consulting firm and Registered Investment Adviser), March 1999 to present.	57	Director, Forward Management LLC and Audit Committee Chairman, May 2008 to June 2015; Trustee, Berea College of Kentucky and Vice-Chairman of the Investment Committee, May 2009 to June 2015; Member of the Governing Council of the Independent Directors Council, October 2012 to present; President, July 2013 to June 2015 and Board Member of the CFA Society of Stamford, July 2009 to present; Advisory Board member, MainStay Fund Complex <sup>4</sup> , June 2015 to December 2015; Trustee, MainStay Fund Complex <sup>4</sup> , January 2016 to present.

Name, Address <sup>1</sup> and Year of Birth	Position(s) Held with the Trust	Term of Office <sup>2</sup> and Length of Time Served	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of Portfolios in Fund Complex <sup>3</sup> Overseen	Other Directorships Held By Trustee During Past Five Years Chairman and Independent Director, EULAV Asset Management, January 2011 to present; Independent Director, Tremont offshore funds, June 2009 to present; Director, Kenyon Review. Board Member, Special Olympics, New Jersey, November 2011 to September 2013; Director, The Charlotte Research Institute, December 2000 to 2009; Board Member, Social Capital Institute, University of North Carolina Charlotte, November 2004 to January 2012; Board Member, NJ-CAN, July 2014 to 2016.
R. Alastair Short, 1953*†	Trustee	Since 2006	President, Apex Capital Corporation (personal investment vehicle), January 1988 to present.	68	
Peter J. Sidebottom, 1962*†	Trustee	Since 2012	Lead Partner, North America Banking and Capital Markets Strategy, Accenture, May 2017 to present; Partner, PWC/Strategy & Financial Services Advisory, February 2015 to March 2017; Founder and Board Member, AspenWoods Risk Solutions, September 2013 to February 2016; Independent consultant, June 2013 – February 2015; Partner, Bain & Company (management consulting firm), April 2012 to December 2013; Executive Vice President and Senior Operating Committee Member, TD Ameritrade (on-line brokerage firm), February 2009 to January 2012.	57	

Name, Address <sup>1</sup> and Year of Birth	Position(s) Held with the Trust	Term of Office <sup>2</sup> and Length of Time Served	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of Portfolios in Fund Complex <sup>3</sup> Overseen	Other Directorships Held By Trustee During Past Five Years
Richard D. Stamberger, 1959*†	Trustee	Since 2006	Director, President and CEO, SmartBrief, Inc. (media company).	68	Director, Food and Friends, Inc., 2013 to present.

<sup>1</sup>The address for each Trustee and officer is 666 Third Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10017.

<sup>2</sup>Each Trustee serves until resignation, death, retirement or removal. Officers are elected yearly by the Trustees.

<sup>3</sup>The Fund Complex consists of the VanEck Funds, VanEck VIP Trust and the Trust.

The MainStay Fund Complex consists of MainStay Funds Trust, MainStay Funds, MainStay VP Funds Trust, Private Advisors Alternative Strategies Master Fund, Private Advisors Alternative Strategies Fund and MainStay DefinedTerm Municipal Opportunities Fund.

\*Member of the Audit Committee.

†Member of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee.

#### Interested Trustee

Name, Address <sup>1</sup> and Year of Birth	Position(s) Held with the Trust	Term of Office <sup>2</sup> and Length of Time Served	Principal Occupation(s) During Past Five Years	Number of Portfolios in Fund Complex <sup>3</sup> Overseen	Other Directorships Held By Trustee During Past Five Years
Jan F. van Eck, 1963 <sup>4</sup>	Trustee, President and Chief Executive Officer	Trustee (Since 2006); President and Chief Executive Officer (Since 2009)	Director, President, Chief Executive Officer and Owner of VEAC; Director, President and Chief Executive Officer, VESC; Director, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Adviser, VEARA.	57	Director, National Committee on US-China Relations.

1 The address for each Trustee and officer is 666 Third Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, New York 10017.

2 Each Trustee serves until resignation, death, retirement or removal. Officers are elected yearly by the Trustees.

3 The Fund Complex consists of the VanEck Funds, VanEck VIP Trust and the Trust.

4 “Interested person” of the Trust within the meaning of the 1940 Act. Mr. van Eck is an officer of the Adviser.

## Officer Information

The Officers of the Trust, their addresses, positions with the Trust, year of birth and principal occupations during the past five years are set forth below.

<b>Officer's Name, Address<sup>1</sup> and Year of Birth</b>	<b>Position(s) Held with the Trust</b>	<b>Term of Office<sup>2</sup> and Length of Time Served</b>	<b>Principal Occupation(s) During The Past Five Years</b>
Matthew A. Babinsky, 1983	Assistant Vice President and Assistant Secretary	Since 2016	Assistant Vice President, Assistant General Counsel of the Adviser and Assistant Secretary of the Adviser, VESC and VEAC (since 2016); Associate, Clifford Chance US LLP (October 2011 to April 2016); Officer of other investment companies advised by the Adviser.
Russell G. Brennan, 1964	Assistant Vice President and Assistant Treasurer	Since 2008	Assistant Vice President and Assistant Treasurer of VEAC (since 2008); Manager (Portfolio Administration) of the Adviser, September 2005 to October 2008; Officer of other investment companies advised by VEAC.
Charles T. Cameron, 1960	Vice President	Since 2006	Director of Trading (since 1995) and Portfolio Manager (since 1997) for VEAC; Officer of other investment companies advised by VEAC.
Simon Chen, 1971	Assistant Vice President	Since 2012	Greater China Director of VEAC (since January 2012); General Manager, SinoMarkets Ltd. (June 2007 to December 2011).

<b>Officer's Name, Address <sup>1</sup> and Year of Birth</b>	<b>Position(s) Held with the Trust</b>	<b>Term of Office <sup>2</sup> and Length of Time Served</b>	<b>Principal Occupation(s) During The Past Five Years</b>
John J. Crimmins, 1957	Vice President, Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer and Principal Accounting Officer	Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Principal Accounting Officer (Since 2012); Treasurer (Since 2009)	Vice President of Portfolio Administration of VEAC, June 2009 to present; Vice President of VESC and the Adviser, June 2009 to present; Chief Financial, Operating and Compliance Officer, Kern Capital Management LLC, September 1997 to February 2009; Officer of other investment companies advised by VEAC. Regional Director, Business Development/Sales for Southern Europe and South America of VEAC (since July 2008); Regional Director (Spain, Portugal, South America and Africa) of Dow Jones Indexes and STOXX Ltd. (May 2001 to July 2008).
Eduardo Escario, 1975	Vice President	Since 2012	Regional Director, Business Development/Sales for Southern Europe and South America of VEAC (since July 2008); Regional Director (Spain, Portugal, South America and Africa) of Dow Jones Indexes and STOXX Ltd. (May 2001 to July 2008).
Henry Glynn, 1983	Assistant Vice President	Since February 2018	Head of ETF Capital Markets Europe for VanEck Vectors ETFs (since 2017); member of the Capital Markets team at Vanguard Group (September 2013 to October 2016). Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer of the Adviser and VEAC (since January 2018); Vice President of VESC (since January 2018); Chief Compliance Officer, City National Rochdale, LLC and City National Rochdale Funds (December 2012 to January 2018); Officer of other investment companies advised by VEAC.
F. Michael Gozzillo, 1965	Chief Compliance Officer	Since January 2018	Vice President, Business Development of VanEck Australia Pty Ltd. (since August 2013); Business Development Manager NSW, Leveraged Equities Limited (October 2006 to July 2013).
Nicholas Jackson, 1974	Assistant Vice President	Since February 2018	Vice President, Business Development of VanEck Australia Pty Ltd. (since August 2013); Business Development Manager NSW, Leveraged Equities Limited (October 2006 to July 2013).
Susan C. Lashley, 1955	Vice President	Since 2006	Vice President of VEAC and VESC; Officer of other investment companies advised by VEAC.
Laura I. Martínez, 1980	Vice President and Assistant Secretary	Vice President (Since 2016) and Assistant Secretary (Since 2008)	Vice President (since 2016), Associate General Counsel and Assistant Secretary (since 2008) and Assistant Vice President (2008 to 2016) of the Adviser, VESC and VEAC (since 2008); Associate, Davis Polk & Wardwell (October 2005 to June 2008); Officer of other investment companies advised by VEAC.
Matthew McKinnon, 1970	Assistant Vice President	Since February 2018	Head of Business Development of Asia Pacific of VanEck Australia Pty Ltd. (since February 2018) and Director, Intermediaries and Institutions (July 2013 to February 2018) of VanEck Australia Pty Ltd.; General Manager, Retail Sales, Equities at Perpetual Limited (December 2006 to May 2012).
Arian Neiron, 1979	Assistant Vice President	Since February 2018	Managing Director and Head of Asia Pacific of VanEck Australia Pty Ltd. (since September 2012); Officer of other investment companies advised by the Adviser.



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James Parker, 1969	Assistant Treasurer	Since June 2014	Manager (Portfolio Administration) of VEAC (since June 2010); Vice President of JPMorgan Chase & Co. (April 1999 to January 2010).
Adam Phillips, 1970	Vice President	Since February 2018	Chief Operating Officer for VanEck Vectors ETFs (since 2012).
Philipp Schlegel, 1974	Vice President	Since 2016	Senior Director of Van Eck Switzerland AG (since 2010).
Jonathan R. Simon, 1974	Senior Vice President, Secretary and Chief Legal Officer	Senior Vice President (Since 2016) and Secretary and Chief Legal Officer (Since 2014)	Senior Vice President (since 2016), General Counsel and Secretary (since 2014) and Vice President (2006 to 2016) of the Adviser, VESC and VEAC; Officer of other investment companies advised by VEAC.

<b>Officer's Name, Address<sup>1</sup> and Year of Birth</b>	<b>Position(s) Held with the Trust</b>	<b>Term of Office<sup>2</sup> and Length of Time Served</b>	<b>Principal Occupation(s) During The Past Five Years</b>
Bruce J. Smith, 1955	Senior Vice President	Since 2006	Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer, Treasurer and Controller of the Adviser, VESC and VEAC (since 1997); Director of the Adviser, VESC and VEAC (since October 2010); Officer of other investment companies advised VEAC.

1 The address for each Officer is 666 Third Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10017.

2 Officers are elected yearly by the Trustees.

The Board of the Trust met six times during the fiscal year ended September 30, 2017.

The Board has an Audit Committee consisting of four Trustees who are Independent Trustees. Messrs. Chow, Short, Sidebottom and Stamberger currently serve as members of the Audit Committee and each of Messrs. Chow, Short, Sidebottom and Stamberger has been designated as an “audit committee financial expert” as defined under Item 407 of Regulation S-K of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the “Exchange Act”). Mr. Short is the Chairman of the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee has the responsibility, among other things, to: (i) oversee the accounting and financial reporting processes of the Trust and its internal control over financial reporting; (ii) oversee the quality and integrity of the Trust’s financial statements and the independent audit thereof; (iii) oversee or, as appropriate, assist the Board’s oversight of the Trust’s compliance with legal and regulatory requirements that relate to the Trust’s accounting and financial reporting, internal control over financial reporting and independent audit; (iv) approve prior to appointment the engagement of the Trust’s independent registered public accounting firm and, in connection therewith, to review and evaluate the qualifications, independence and performance of the Trust’s independent registered public accounting firm; and (v) act as a liaison between the Trust’s independent registered public accounting firm and the full Board. The Audit Committee met four times during the fiscal year ended September 30, 2017.

The Board also has a Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee consisting of four Independent Trustees. Messrs. Chow, Short, Sidebottom and Stamberger currently serve as members of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. Mr. Stamberger is the Chairman of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee has the responsibility, among other things, to: (i) evaluate, as necessary, the composition of the Board, its committees and sub-committees and make such recommendations to the Board as deemed appropriate by the Committee; (ii) review and define Independent Trustee qualifications; (iii) review the qualifications of individuals serving as Trustees on the Board and its committees; (iv) evaluate, recommend and nominate qualified individuals for election or appointment as members of the Board and recommend the appointment of members and chairs of each Board committee and subcommittee; and (v) review and assess, from time to time, the performance of the committees and subcommittees of the Board



and report the results to the Board. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee did not meet during the fiscal year ended September 30, 2017.

The Board has determined that its leadership structure is appropriate given the business and nature of the Trust. In connection with its determination, the Board considered that the Chairman of the Board is an Independent Trustee. The Chairman of the Board can play an important role in setting the agenda of the Board and also serves as a key point person for dealings between management and the other Independent Trustees. The Independent Trustees believe that the Chairman's independence facilitates meaningful dialogue between the Adviser and the Independent Trustees. The Board also considered that the Chairman of each Board committee is an Independent Trustee, which yields similar benefits with respect to the functions and activities of the various Board committees. The Independent Trustees also regularly meet outside the presence of management and are advised by independent legal counsel. The Board has determined that its committees help ensure that the Trust has effective and independent governance and oversight. The Board also believes that its leadership structure facilitates the orderly and efficient flow of information to the Independent Trustees from management of the Trust, including the Adviser. The Board reviews its structure on an annual basis.

As an integral part of its responsibility for oversight of the Trust in the interests of shareholders, the Board, as a general matter, oversees risk management of the Trust's investment programs and business affairs. The function of the Board with respect to risk management is one of oversight and not active involvement in, or coordination of, day-to-day risk management activities for the Trust. The Board recognizes that not all risks that may affect the Trust can be identified, that it may not be practical or cost-effective to eliminate or mitigate certain risks, that it may be necessary to bear certain risks (such as investment-related risks) to achieve the Trust's goals, and that the processes, procedures and controls employed to address certain risks may be limited in their effectiveness. Moreover, reports received by the Trustees that may relate to risk management matters are typically summaries of the relevant information.

The Board exercises oversight of the risk management process primarily through the Audit Committee, and through oversight by the Board itself. The Trust faces a number of risks, such as investment-related and compliance risks. The Adviser's personnel seek to identify and address risks, i.e., events or circumstances that could have material adverse effects on the business, operations, shareholder services, investment performance or reputation of the Trust. Under the overall supervision of the Board or the applicable Committee of the Board, the Trust, the Adviser, and the affiliates of the Adviser employ a variety of processes, procedures and controls to identify such possible events or circumstances, to lessen the probability of their occurrence and/or to mitigate the effects of such events or circumstances if they do occur. Different processes, procedures and controls are employed with respect to different types of risks. Various personnel, including the Trust's Chief Compliance Officer, as well as various personnel of the Adviser and other service providers such as the Trust's independent accountants, may report to the Audit Committee and/or to the Board with respect to various aspects of risk management, as well as events and circumstances that have arisen and responses thereto.

The officers and Trustees of the Trust, in the aggregate, own less than 1% of the Shares of the Fund as of the date of this SAI.

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For each Trustee, the dollar range of equity securities beneficially owned (including ownership through the Trust's Deferred Compensation Plan) by the Trustee in the Trust and in all registered investment companies advised by the Adviser ("Family of Investment Companies") that are overseen by the Trustee is shown below.

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<b>Name of Trustee</b>	<b>Dollar Range of Equity Securities in VanEck Vectors Real Asset Allocation ETF (As of December 31, 2017)</b>	<b>Aggregate Dollar Range of Equity Securities in all Registered Investment Companies Overseen By Trustee In Family of Investment Companies (As of December 31, 2017)</b>
David H. Chow	None	Over \$100,000
R. Alastair Short	None	\$50,001 - \$100,000
Peter J. Sidebottom	None	Over \$100,000
Richard D. Stamberger	None	Over \$100,000
Jan F. van Eck	None	Over \$100,000

As to each Independent Trustee and his immediate family members, no person owned beneficially or of record securities in an investment manager or principal underwriter of the Fund, or a person (other than a registered investment company) directly or indirectly controlling, controlled by or under common control with the investment manager or principal underwriter of the Fund.

#### **Remuneration of Trustees**

Effective January 2018, the Trust pays each Independent Trustee an annual retainer of \$110,000 (\$80,000 prior to January 2018), a per meeting fee of \$20,000 for scheduled quarterly meetings of the Board and each special meeting of the Board (\$15,000 prior to January 2018) and a per meeting fee of \$10,000 for telephonic meetings (\$7,500 prior to January 2018). Additionally, the Trust pays the Chairman of the Board an annual retainer of \$62,000 (\$45,000 prior to January 2018), the Chairman of the Audit Committee an annual retainer of \$26,000 (\$19,500 prior to January 2018) and the Chairman of the Governance Committee an annual retainer of \$18,000 (\$13,000 prior to January 2018). Furthermore, the Trust also reimburses each Trustee for travel and other out-of-pocket expenses incurred in attending such meetings. No pension or retirement benefits are accrued as part of Trustee compensation.

The table below shows the compensation paid to the Trustees by the Trust for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2017. Annual Trustee fees may be reviewed periodically and changed by the Trust's Board.

<b>Name of Trustee</b>	<b>Aggregate Compensation From the Trust</b>	<b>Deferred Compensation From the Trust</b>	<b>Pension or Retirement Benefits Accrued as Part of the Trust's Expenses <sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>Estimated Annual Benefits Upon Retirement</b>	<b>Total Compensation From the Trust and the Fund Complex <sup>(1)</sup> Paid to Trustee <sup>(2)</sup></b>
David H. Chow	\$ 201,771	\$ 0	N/A	N/A	\$ 201,771

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R. Alastair Short	\$ 174,500	\$ 0	N/A	N/A	\$ 299,500
Peter J. Sidebottom	\$ 155,000	\$ 0	N/A	N/A	\$ 155,000
Richard D. Stamberger	\$ 151,567	\$ 16,800	N/A	N/A	\$ 308,367
Jan F. van Eck <sup>(3)</sup>	\$ 0	\$ 0	N/A	N/A	\$ 0

(1) The “Fund Complex” consists of VanEck Funds, VanEck VIP Trust and the Trust.

(2) “Interested person” under the 1940 Act.

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## **PORTFOLIO HOLDINGS DISCLOSURE**

The Fund's portfolio holdings are publicly disseminated each day the Fund is open for business through financial reporting and news services, including publicly accessible Internet web sites. In addition, a basket composition file, which includes the security names and share quantities to deliver in exchange for Creation Units, together with estimates and actual cash components is publicly disseminated daily prior to the opening of the Exchange via the National Securities Clearing Corporation (the "NSCC"), a clearing agency that is registered with the SEC. The basket represents one Creation Unit of the Fund. The Trust, Adviser, Custodian (defined below) and Distributor (defined below) will not disseminate non-public information concerning the Trust.

## **QUARTERLY PORTFOLIO SCHEDULE**

The Trust is required to disclose, after its first and third fiscal quarters, the complete schedule of the Fund's portfolio holdings with the SEC on Form N-Q. Form N-Q for the Fund will be available on the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>. The Fund's Form N-Q may also be reviewed and copied at the SEC's Public Reference Room in Washington, D.C. and information on the operation of the Public Reference Room may be obtained by calling 202.551.8090. The Fund's Form N-Q will be available through the Fund's website, at [www.vaneck.com](http://www.vaneck.com) or by writing to 666 Third Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10017.

## **POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Adviser (and its principals, affiliates or employees) may serve as investment adviser to other client accounts and conduct investment activities for their own accounts. Such "Other Clients" may have investment objectives or may implement investment strategies similar to those of the Fund. When the Adviser implements investment strategies for Other Clients that are similar or directly contrary to the positions taken by the Fund, the prices of the Fund's securities may be negatively affected. For example, when purchase or sales orders for the Fund are aggregated with those of other funds and/or Other Clients and allocated among them, the price that the Fund pays or receives may be more in the case of a purchase or less in a sale than if the Adviser served as adviser to only the Fund. When Other Clients are selling a security that the Fund owns, the price of that security may decline as a result of the sales. The compensation that the Adviser receives from Other Clients may be higher than the compensation paid by the Fund to the Adviser. The Adviser has implemented procedures to monitor trading across the funds and its Other Clients.

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

The Fund, the Adviser and the Distributor have each adopted a Code of Ethics pursuant to Rule 17j-1 under the 1940 Act ("Rule 17j-1"). Such Codes of Ethics require, among other things that "access persons" (as defined in Rule 17j-1) conduct personal securities transactions in a manner that avoids any actual or potential conflict of interest or any abuse



of a position of trust and responsibility. The Codes of Ethics allow such access persons to invest in securities that may be purchased and held by the Fund, provided such investments are done consistently with the provisions of the Codes of Ethics.

## **PROXY VOTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Fund's proxy voting record will be available upon request and on the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>. Proxies for the Fund's portfolio securities are voted in accordance with the Adviser's proxy voting policies and procedures, which are set forth in Appendix A to this SAI.

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The Trust is required to disclose annually the Fund's complete proxy voting record on Form N-PX covering the period July 1 through June 30 and file it with the SEC no later than August 31. Form N-PX for the Fund will be available through the Fund's website, at [www.vaneck.com](http://www.vaneck.com), or by writing to 666 Third Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10017. The Fund's Form N-PX will also be available on the SEC's website at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov).

## MANAGEMENT

The following information supplements and should be read in conjunction with the section in the Prospectus entitled "Management of the Fund."

### Investment Adviser

Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation acts as investment adviser to the Fund and Subsidiary and, subject to the general supervision of the Board is responsible for the day-to-day investment management of the Fund and Subsidiary. The Adviser is a private company with headquarters in New York and manages numerous pooled investment vehicles and separate accounts. The Adviser is a wholly owned subsidiary of VEAC and is registered with the SEC as an investment adviser under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, as amended, and with the CFTC as a CPO and commodity trading advisor under the CEA.

The Adviser serves as investment adviser to the Fund pursuant to an investment management agreement between the Trust and the Adviser (the "Investment Management Agreement"). Under the Investment Management Agreement, the Adviser, subject to the supervision of the Board and in conformity with the stated investment policies of the Fund, manages the investment of the Fund's assets. The Adviser is responsible for placing purchase and sale orders and providing continuous supervision of the investment portfolio of the Fund.

Pursuant to the Investment Management Agreement, the Trust has agreed to indemnify the Adviser for certain liabilities, including certain liabilities arising under the federal securities laws, unless such loss or liability results from willful misfeasance, bad faith or gross negligence in the performance of its duties or the reckless disregard of its obligations and duties.

Investments in the securities of other investment companies ("underlying funds") may involve duplication of advisory fees and certain other expenses. By investing in an underlying fund, the Fund becomes a shareholder of that underlying fund. As a result, the Fund's shareholders will indirectly bear the Fund's proportionate share of the fees and expenses paid by shareholders of the underlying fund, in addition to the fees and expenses the Fund's shareholders directly bear in connection with the Fund's own operations. To minimize the duplication of fees, the Adviser has agreed to waive the management fee it charges to the Fund by any amount it collects as a management fee from an underlying fund managed by the Adviser or VEAC, as a result of an investment of the Fund's assets in such underlying

fund.

*Compensation.* As compensation for its services under the Investment Management Agreement, the Adviser will be paid a monthly fee based on a percentage of the Fund's average daily net assets at the annual rate of 0.50%. For purposes of calculating the fees for the Fund, the net assets of the Fund include the value of the Fund's interest in the Subsidiary. From time to time, the Adviser may waive all or a portion of its fees. Until at least February 1, 2020, the Adviser has agreed to waive fees and/or pay Fund expenses in an amount equal to the fees paid to the Adviser by the Subsidiary and to the extent necessary to prevent the operating expenses of the Fund (excluding acquired fund fees and expenses, interest expense, trading expenses, taxes and extraordinary expenses of the Fund and the Subsidiary) from exceeding 0.55% of its average daily net assets per year.

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*Term.* The Investment Management Agreement is subject to annual approval by (1) the Board or (2) a vote of a majority of the outstanding voting securities (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the Fund, *provided* that in either event such continuance also is approved by a majority of the Board who are not interested persons (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the Trust by a vote cast in person at a meeting called for the purpose of voting on such approval. The Investment Management Agreement is terminable without penalty, on 60 days' notice, by the Board or by a vote of the holders of a majority (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the Fund's outstanding voting securities. The Investment Management Agreement is also terminable upon 60 days' notice by the Adviser and will terminate automatically in the event of its assignment (as defined in the 1940 Act).

*Subsidiary Investment Management Agreement.* The Adviser provides an investment program for the Subsidiary and manages the investment of the Subsidiary's assets under the overall supervision of the Board of Directors of the Subsidiary. Pursuant to a management agreement between the Adviser and the Subsidiary (the "Subsidiary Investment Management Agreement"), the Adviser will receive certain fees for managing the Subsidiary's assets and the Adviser will waive or credit such amounts against the fees payable to the Adviser by the Fund.

The Subsidiary Investment Management Agreement terminates automatically upon assignment and is terminable at any time without penalty as to the Subsidiary by the Board of Directors of the Subsidiary, the Trust's Independent Trustees or by vote of the holders of a majority of the Subsidiary's outstanding voting securities on 60 days' written notice to the Adviser, or by the Adviser on 60 days' written notice to the Subsidiary. Pursuant to the Subsidiary Investment Management Agreement, the Adviser will not be liable for any error of judgment or mistake of law or for any loss suffered by the Subsidiary in connection with the performance of the Subsidiary Investment Agreement, except a loss resulting from willful misfeasance, bad faith, fraud or gross negligence on the part of the Adviser in the performance of its duties or from reckless disregard of its duties and obligations thereunder.

## **The Administrator**

Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation also serves as administrator (the "Administrator") for the Trust pursuant to the Investment Management Agreement. Under the Investment Management Agreement, the Adviser is obligated on a continuous basis to provide such administrative services as the Board of the Trust reasonably deems necessary for the proper administration of the Trust and the Fund. The Adviser will generally assist in all aspects of the Trust's and the Fund's operations; supply and maintain office facilities, statistical and research data, data processing services, clerical, bookkeeping and record keeping services (including without limitation the maintenance of such books and records as are required under the 1940 Act and the rules thereunder, except as maintained by other agents), internal auditing, executive and administrative services, and stationery and office supplies; prepare reports to shareholders or investors; prepare and file tax returns; supply financial information and supporting data for reports to and filings with the SEC and various state Blue Sky authorities; supply supporting documentation for meetings of the Board; provide monitoring reports and assistance regarding compliance with the Declaration of Trust, by-laws, investment objectives and policies and with federal and state securities laws; arrange for appropriate insurance coverage; calculate NAVs, net income and realized capital gains or losses; and negotiate arrangements with, and supervise and coordinate the activities of, agents and others to supply services.

**Custodian and Transfer Agent**

The Bank of New York Mellon (“The Bank of New York”), located at 101 Barclay Street, New York, New York 10286, serves as custodian (in such capacity, the “Custodian”) for the Fund pursuant to a custodian agreement. As Custodian, The Bank of New York holds the Fund’s assets. As compensation

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for these custodial services, The Bank of New York receives, among other items, transaction fees, asset-based safe keeping fees and overdraft charges and may be reimbursed by the Fund for its out-of-pocket expenses. The Bank of New York serves as the Fund's transfer agent (in such capacity, the "Transfer Agent") pursuant to a transfer agency agreement. In addition, The Bank of New York provides various accounting services to the Fund pursuant to a fund accounting agreement.

### **The Distributor**

Van Eck Securities Corporation (the "Distributor") is the principal underwriter and distributor of Shares. Its principal address is 666 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10017 and investor information can be obtained by calling 800-826-2333. The Distributor has entered into an agreement with the Trust which will continue from its effective date unless terminated by either party upon 60 days' prior written notice to the other party by the Trust and the Adviser, or by the Distributor, or until termination of the Trust or the Fund offering its Shares, and which is renewable annually thereafter (the "Distribution Agreement"), pursuant to which it distributes Shares. Shares will be continuously offered for sale by the Trust through the Distributor only in Creation Units, as described below under "Creation and Redemption of Creation Units—Procedures for Creation of Creation Units." Shares in less than Creation Units are not distributed by the Distributor. The Distributor will deliver a prospectus to persons purchasing Shares in Creation Units and will maintain records of both orders placed with it and confirmations of acceptance furnished by it. The Distributor is a broker-dealer registered under the Exchange Act and a member of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority ("FINRA"). The Distributor has no role in determining the investment policies of the Trust or which securities are to be purchased or sold by the Trust.

The Distributor may also enter into sales and investor services agreements with broker-dealers or other persons that are Participating Parties and DTC Participants (as defined below) to provide distribution assistance, including broker-dealer and shareholder support and educational and promotional services but must pay such broker-dealers or other persons, out of its own assets.

The Distribution Agreement provides that it may be terminated at any time, without the payment of any penalty: (i) by vote of a majority of the Independent Trustees or (ii) by vote of a majority (as defined in the 1940 Act) of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund, on at least 60 days' written notice to the Distributor. The Distribution Agreement is also terminable upon 60 days' notice by the Distributor and will terminate automatically in the event of its assignment (as defined in the 1940 Act).

### **Other Accounts Managed by the Portfolio Managers**

As of the date indicated below, Messrs. Schassler and Laks managed the following other accounts:

Name of Portfolio Manager	Category of Account	Other Accounts Managed (As of December 31, 2017)		Accounts with respect to which the advisory fee is based on the performance of the account	
		Number of Accounts in Category	Total Assets in Accounts in Category	Number of Accounts in Category	Total Assets in Accounts in Category
David Schassler, Portfolio Manager	Registered investment companies	1	\$35.90 million	0	\$0
	Other pooled investment vehicles	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Other accounts	0	\$0	0	\$0
Barak Laks, Deputy Portfolio Manager	Registered investment companies	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Other pooled investment vehicles	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Other accounts	0	\$0	0	\$0

Although the funds in the Trust that are managed by Messrs. Schassler and Laks may have different investment strategies, the Adviser does not believe that management of the various accounts presents a material conflict of interest for Messrs. Schassler and Laks or the Adviser.

### **Portfolio Manager Compensation**

The portfolio managers are paid a fixed base salary and a bonus. The bonus is based upon the quality of investment analysis and the management of the funds. The quality of management of the funds includes issues of replication, rebalancing, portfolio monitoring and efficient operation, among other factors. Portfolio managers who oversee accounts with significantly different fee structures are generally compensated by discretionary bonus rather than a set formula to help reduce potential conflicts of interest. At times, the Adviser and its affiliates manage accounts with incentive fees. The portfolio managers may serve as portfolio managers to other clients. Such "Other Clients" may have investment objectives or may implement investment strategies similar to those of the Fund. When the portfolio managers implement investment strategies for Other Clients that are similar or directly contrary to the positions taken by the Fund, the prices of the Fund's securities may be negatively affected. The compensation that the Fund's portfolio managers receive for managing other client accounts may be higher than the compensation the portfolio managers receive for managing the Fund. The Adviser has implemented procedures to monitor trading across funds and its Other Clients.

### **Portfolio Manager Share Ownership**

As of the date of this SAI, Messrs. Schassler and Laks did not beneficially own any Shares of the Fund.

### **BROKERAGE TRANSACTIONS**

When selecting brokers and dealers to handle the purchase and sale of portfolio securities, the Adviser looks for prompt execution of the order at a favorable price. Generally, the Adviser works with recognized dealers in these securities, except when a better price and execution of the order can be obtained elsewhere. The Fund will not deal with affiliates in principal transactions unless permitted by exemptive order or applicable rule or regulation. The Adviser owes a duty to its clients to seek best execution on trades effected. The Adviser does not intend to select brokers and dealers for the purpose of receiving research services in addition to a favorable price and prompt execution either from that broker or an unaffiliated third party.

The Adviser assumes general supervision over placing orders on behalf of the Trust for the purchase or sale of portfolio securities. If purchases or sales of portfolio securities of the Trust and one or



more other investment companies or clients supervised by the Adviser are considered at or about the same time, transactions in such securities are allocated among the several investment companies and clients in a manner deemed equitable to all by the Adviser. In some cases, this procedure could have a detrimental effect on the price or volume of the security so far as the Trust is concerned. However, in other cases, it is possible that the ability to participate in volume transactions and to negotiate lower brokerage commissions will be beneficial to the Trust. The primary consideration is best execution.

Portfolio turnover may vary from year to year, as well as within a year. High turnover rates are likely to result in comparatively greater brokerage expenses, additional taxable income at the Fund level and additional taxable distributions. The overall reasonableness of brokerage commissions is evaluated by the Adviser based upon its knowledge of available information as to the general level of commissions paid by other institutional investors for comparable services.

Because the Fund commenced operations on or following the date of this SAI, there have been no payments by the Fund for brokerage commissions.

#### **BOOK ENTRY ONLY SYSTEM**

The following information supplements and should be read in conjunction with the section in the Prospectus entitled “Shareholder Information—Buying and Selling Exchange-Traded Shares.”

The Depository Trust Company (“DTC”) acts as securities depository for the Shares. Shares of the Fund are represented by securities registered in the name of DTC or its nominee and deposited with, or on behalf of, DTC. Certificates will not be issued for Shares.

DTC, a limited-purpose trust company, was created to hold securities of its participants (the “DTC Participants”) and to facilitate the clearance and settlement of securities transactions among the DTC Participants in such securities through electronic book-entry changes in accounts of the DTC Participants, thereby eliminating the need for physical movement of securities certificates. DTC Participants include securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations and certain other organizations, some of whom (and/or their representatives) own DTC. More specifically, DTC is owned by a number of its DTC Participants and by the New York Stock Exchange (“NYSE”) and FINRA. Access to the DTC system is also available to others such as banks, brokers, dealers and trust companies that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a DTC Participant, either directly or indirectly (the “Indirect Participants”).

Beneficial ownership of Shares is limited to DTC Participants, Indirect Participants and persons holding interests through DTC Participants and Indirect Participants. Ownership of beneficial interests in Shares (owners of such

beneficial interests are referred to herein as “Beneficial Owners”) is shown on, and the transfer of ownership is effected only through, records maintained by DTC (with respect to DTC Participants) and on the records of DTC Participants (with respect to Indirect Participants and Beneficial Owners that are not DTC Participants). Beneficial Owners will receive from or through the DTC Participant a written confirmation relating to their purchase of Shares.

Conveyance of all notices, statements and other communications to Beneficial Owners is effected as follows. Pursuant to the depositary agreement between the Trust and DTC, DTC is required to make available to the Trust upon request and for a fee to be charged to the Trust a listing of the Shares holdings of each DTC Participant. The Trust shall inquire of each such DTC Participant as to the number of Beneficial Owners holding Shares, directly or indirectly, through such DTC Participant. The Trust shall provide each such DTC Participant with copies of such notice, statement or other communication, in such form, number and at such place as such DTC Participant may reasonably request, in order that such

notice, statement or communication may be transmitted by such DTC Participant, directly or indirectly, to such Beneficial Owners. In addition, the Trust shall pay to each such DTC Participant a fair and reasonable amount as reimbursement for the expenses attendant to such transmittal, all subject to applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Share distributions shall be made to DTC or its nominee, Cede & Co., as the registered holder of all Shares. DTC or its nominee, upon receipt of any such distributions, shall credit immediately DTC Participants' accounts with payments in amounts proportionate to their respective beneficial interests in Shares as shown on the records of DTC or its nominee. Payments by DTC Participants to Indirect Participants and Beneficial Owners of Shares held through such DTC Participants will be governed by standing instructions and customary practices, as is now the case with securities held for the accounts of customers in bearer form or registered in a "street name," and will be the responsibility of such DTC Participants.

The Trust has no responsibility or liability for any aspects of the records relating to or notices to Beneficial Owners, or payments made on account of beneficial ownership interests in such Shares, or for maintaining, supervising or reviewing any records relating to such beneficial ownership interests or for any other aspect of the relationship between DTC and the DTC Participants or the relationship between such DTC Participants and the Indirect Participants and Beneficial Owners owning through such DTC Participants.

DTC may determine to discontinue providing its service with respect to the Shares at any time by giving reasonable notice to the Trust and discharging its responsibilities with respect thereto under applicable law. Under such circumstances, the Trust shall take action either to find a replacement for DTC to perform its functions at a comparable cost or, if such a replacement is unavailable, to issue and deliver printed certificates representing ownership of Shares, unless the Trust makes other arrangements with respect thereto satisfactory to the Exchange.

## CREATION AND REDEMPTION OF CREATION UNITS

### General

The Fund will issue and sell Shares only in Creation Units on a continuous basis through the Distributor, without an initial sales load, at their NAV next determined after receipt, on any Business Day (as defined herein), of an order in proper form. An Authorized Participant that is not a “qualified institutional buyer,” as such term is defined under Rule 144A of the Securities Act, will not be able to receive, as part of a redemption, restricted securities eligible for resale under Rule 144A.

A “Business Day” with respect to the Fund is any day on which the NYSE is open for business. As of the date of the Prospectus, the NYSE observes the following holidays: New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, President’s Day (Washington’s Birthday), Good Friday, Memorial Day (observed), Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

### Fund Deposit

The consideration for a purchase of Creation Units generally consists of cash and/or the in-kind deposit of a designated portfolio of securities (the “Deposit Securities”) and an amount of cash computed as described below (the “Cash Component”). The Cash Component together with the Deposit Securities, as applicable, are referred to as the “Fund Deposit,” which represents the minimum initial and subsequent investment amount for Shares.

The Cash Component represents the difference between the NAV of a Creation Unit and the market value of Deposit Securities and may include a Dividend Equivalent Payment. The “Dividend Equivalent Payment” enables the Fund to make a complete distribution of dividends on the next dividend payment date, and is an amount equal, on a per Creation Unit basis, to the dividends on all the securities held by the Fund (“Fund Securities”) with ex-dividend dates within the accumulation period for such distribution (the “Accumulation Period”), net of expenses and liabilities for such period, as if all of the Fund Securities had been held by the Trust for the entire Accumulation Period. The Accumulation Period begins on the ex-dividend date for the Fund and ends on the next ex-dividend date.

The Administrator, through the NSCC, makes available on each Business Day, immediately prior to the opening of business on the Exchange (currently 9:30 a.m. Eastern time), the list of the names and the required number of shares and/or principal amounts of each Deposit Security to be included in the current Fund Deposit (based on information at the end of the previous Business Day) as well as the Cash Component for the Fund. Such Fund Deposit is applicable, subject to any adjustments as described below, in order to effect creations of Creation Units of the Fund until such time as the next-announced Fund Deposit composition is made available.

The identity and number of shares of the Deposit Securities required for the Fund Deposit for the Fund changes as adjustments and corporate action events are reflected from time to time by the Adviser with a view to the investment objective of the Fund. In addition, the Trust reserves the right to accept a basket of securities or cash that differs from Deposit Securities or to permit or require the substitution of an amount of cash (i.e., a “cash in lieu” amount) to be added to the Cash Component to replace any Deposit Security which may, among other reasons, not be available in sufficient quantity for delivery, not be permitted to be re-registered in the name of the Trust as a result of an in-kind creation order pursuant to local law or market convention or which may not be eligible for transfer through the Clearing Process (described below), or which may not be eligible for trading by a Participating Party (defined below). In light of the foregoing, in order to seek to replicate the in-kind creation order process, the Trust expects to purchase the Deposit Securities represented by the cash in lieu amount in the secondary market (“Market

Purchases”). In such cases where the Trust makes Market Purchases because a Deposit Security may not be permitted to be re-registered in the name of the Trust as a result of an in-kind creation order pursuant to local law or market convention, or for other reasons, the Authorized Participant will reimburse the Trust for, among other things, any difference between the market value at which the securities were purchased by the Trust and the cash in lieu amount (which amount, at the Adviser’s discretion, may be capped), applicable registration fees and taxes. Brokerage commissions incurred in connection with the Trust’s acquisition of Deposit Securities will be at the expense of the Fund and will affect the value of all Shares of the Fund; but the Adviser may adjust the transaction fee to the extent the composition of the Deposit Securities changes or cash in lieu is added to the Cash Component to protect ongoing shareholders. The adjustments described above will reflect changes, known to the Adviser on the date of announcement to be in effect by the time of delivery of the Fund Deposit, resulting from stock splits and other corporate actions.

In addition to the list of names and numbers of securities constituting the current Deposit Securities of the Fund Deposit, the Administrator, through the NSCC, also makes available (i) on each Business Day, the Dividend Equivalent Payment, if any, and the estimated Cash Component effective through and including the previous Business Day, per outstanding Shares of the Fund, and (ii) on a continuous basis throughout the day, the Indicative Per Share Portfolio Value.

### **Procedures for Creation of Creation Units**

To be eligible to place orders with the Distributor to create Creation Units of the Fund, an entity or person either must be (1) a “Participating Party,” *i.e.*, a broker-dealer or other participant in the Clearing Process through the Continuous Net Settlement System of the NSCC; or (2) a DTC Participant (see “Book Entry Only System”); and, in either case, must have executed an agreement with the Distributor and the Transfer Agent with respect to creations and redemptions of Creation Units (as it may be amended from time to time in accordance with its terms) (“Participant Agreement”) (discussed below). A Participating Party and DTC Participant are collectively referred to as an “Authorized Participant.” All Creation Units of the Fund, however created, will be entered on the records of the Depository in the name of Cede & Co. for the account of a DTC Participant.

All orders to create Creation Units must be placed in multiples of 50,000 Shares of the Fund (*i.e.*, a Creation Unit). All orders to create Creation Units, whether through the Clearing Process or outside the Clearing Process, must be received by the Distributor no later than the closing time of the regular trading session on NYSE Arca (“Closing Time”) (ordinarily 4:00 p.m. Eastern time) on the date such order is placed in order for creation of Creation Units to be effected based on the NAV of the Fund as determined on such date. A “Custom Order” may be placed by an Authorized Participant in the event that the Trust permits or requires the substitution of an amount of cash to be added to the Cash Component to replace any Deposit Security which may not be available in sufficient quantity for delivery or which may not be eligible for trading by such Authorized Participant or the investor for which it is acting, or other relevant reason. The Business Day on which a creation order (or order to redeem as discussed below) is placed is herein referred to as the “Transmittal Date.” Orders must be transmitted by telephone or other transmission method acceptable to the Distributor pursuant to procedures set forth in the Participant Agreement, as described below (see “—Placement of Creation Orders Using Clearing Process”). Severe economic or market disruptions or changes, or telephone or other communication failure, may impede the ability to reach the Distributor, a Participating Party or a DTC Participant.

Creation Units may be created in advance of the receipt by the Trust of all or a portion of the Fund Deposit. In such cases, the Authorized Participant will remain liable for the full deposit of the missing portion(s) of the Fund Deposit and will be required to post collateral with the Trust consisting of cash at least equal to a percentage of the marked-to-market value of such missing portion(s) that is

specified in the Participant Agreement. The Trust may use such collateral to buy the missing portion(s) of the Fund Deposit at any time and will subject such Authorized Participant to liability for any shortfall between the cost to the Trust of purchasing such securities and the value of such collateral. The Trust will have no liability for any such shortfall. The Trust will return any unused portion of the collateral to the Authorized Participant once the entire Fund Deposit has been properly received by the Distributor and deposited into the Trust.

Orders to create Creation Units of the Fund shall be placed with a Participating Party or DTC Participant, as applicable, in the form required by such Participating Party or DTC Participant. Investors should be aware that their particular broker may not have executed a Participant Agreement, and that, therefore, orders to create Creation Units of the Fund may have to be placed by the investor's broker through a Participating Party or a DTC Participant who has executed a Participant Agreement. At any given time there may be only a limited number of broker-dealers that have executed a Participant Agreement. Those placing orders to create Creation Units of the Fund through the Clearing Process should afford sufficient time to permit proper submission of the order to the Distributor prior to the Closing Time on the Transmittal Date.

Orders for creation that are effected outside the Clearing Process are likely to require transmittal by the DTC Participant earlier on the Transmittal Date than orders effected using the Clearing Process. Those persons placing orders outside the Clearing Process should ascertain the deadlines applicable to DTC and the Federal Reserve Bank wire system by contacting the operations department of the broker or depository institution effectuating such transfer of Deposit Securities and Cash Component.

### **Placement of Creation Orders Using Clearing Process**

Fund Deposits created through the Clearing Process, if available, must be delivered through a Participating Party that has executed a Participant Agreement.

The Participant Agreement authorizes the Distributor to transmit to NSCC on behalf of the Participating Party such trade instructions as are necessary to effect the Participating Party's creation order. Pursuant to such trade instructions from the Distributor to NSCC, the Participating Party agrees to transfer the requisite Deposit Securities (or contracts to purchase such Deposit Securities that are expected to be delivered in a "regular way" manner by the second (2nd) Business Day) and the Cash Component to the Trust, together with such additional information as may be required by the Distributor. An order to create Creation Units of the Fund through the Clearing Process is deemed received by the Distributor on the Transmittal Date if (i) such order is received by the Distributor not later than the Closing Time on such Transmittal Date and (ii) all other procedures set forth in the Participant Agreement are properly followed.

### **Placement of Creation Orders Outside Clearing Process**



Fund Deposits created outside the Clearing Process must be delivered through a DTC Participant that has executed a Participant Agreement. A DTC Participant who wishes to place an order creating Creation Units of the Fund to be effected outside the Clearing Process need not be a Participating Party, but such orders must state that the DTC Participant is not using the Clearing Process and that the creation of Creation Units will instead be effected through a transfer of securities and cash. The Fund Deposit transfer must be ordered by the DTC Participant in a timely fashion so as to ensure the delivery of the requisite number of Deposit Securities through DTC to the account of the Trust by no later than 11:00 a.m. Eastern time, of the next Business Day immediately following the Transmittal Date. All questions as to the number of Deposit Securities to be delivered, and the validity, form and eligibility (including time of receipt) for the deposit of any tendered securities, will be determined by the Trust, whose

determination shall be final and binding. The cash equal to the Cash Component must be transferred directly to the Distributor through the Federal Reserve wire system in a timely manner so as to be received by the Distributor no later than 2:00 p.m. Eastern time, on the next Business Day immediately following the Transmittal Date. An order to create Creation Units of the Fund outside the Clearing Process is deemed received by the Distributor on the Transmittal Date if (i) such order is received by the Distributor not later than the Closing Time on such Transmittal Date; and (ii) all other procedures set forth in the Participant Agreement are properly followed. However, if the Distributor does not receive both the requisite Deposit Securities and the Cash Component in a timely fashion on the next Business Day immediately following the Transmittal Date, such order will be cancelled. Upon written notice to the Distributor, such cancelled order may be resubmitted the following Business Day using a Fund Deposit as newly constituted to reflect the current NAV of the Fund. The delivery of Creation Units so created will occur no later than the second (2nd) Business Day following the day on which the creation order is deemed received by the Distributor.

Additional transaction fees may be imposed with respect to transactions effected outside the Clearing Process (through a DTC participant) and in circumstances in which any cash can be used in lieu of Deposit Securities to create Creation Units. (See "Creation Transaction Fee" section below.)

### **Acceptance of Creation Orders**

The Trust reserves the absolute right to reject a creation order transmitted to it by the Distributor if, for any reason, (a) the order is not in proper form; (b) the creator or creators, upon obtaining the Shares, would own 80% or more of the currently outstanding Shares of the Fund; (c) the Deposit Securities delivered are not as specified by the Administrator, as described above; (d) the acceptance of the Deposit Securities would have certain adverse tax consequences to the Fund; (e) the acceptance of the Fund Deposit would, in the opinion of counsel, be unlawful; (f) the acceptance of the Fund Deposit would otherwise, in the discretion of the Trust or the Adviser, have an adverse effect on the Trust or the rights of Beneficial Owners; or (g) in the event that circumstances outside the control of the Trust, the Distributor and the Adviser make it for all practical purposes impossible to process creation orders. Examples of such circumstances include, without limitation, acts of God or public service or utility problems such as earthquakes, fires, floods, extreme weather conditions and power outages resulting in telephone, telecopy and computer failures; wars; civil or military disturbances, including acts of civil or military authority or governmental actions; terrorism; sabotage; epidemics; riots; labor disputes; market conditions or activities causing trading halts; systems failures involving computer or other information systems affecting the Trust, the Adviser, the Distributor, DTC, the NSCC or any other participant in the creation process, and similar extraordinary events. The Transfer Agent will notify a prospective creator of its rejection of the order of such person. The Trust, the Custodian, any sub-custodian, the Distributor and the Transfer Agent are under no duty, however, to give notification of any defects or irregularities in the delivery of Fund Deposits to Authorized Participants nor shall any of them incur any liability to Authorized Participants for the failure to give any such notification.

All questions as to the number of shares of each security in the Deposit Securities and the validity, form, eligibility and acceptance for deposit of any securities to be delivered shall be determined by the Trust, and the Trust's determination shall be final and binding.

**Creation Transaction Fee**

A fixed creation transaction fee of \$500 payable to the Custodian is imposed on each creation transaction regardless of the number of Creation Units purchased in the transaction. The Fund may adjust or waive all or a portion of

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its creation transaction fee (including both the fixed and variable components) from time to time. In addition, a variable charge for cash creations or for creations outside the Clearing Process currently of up to four times the basic creation transaction fee may be imposed. In the case of cash creations or where the Trust permits or requires a creator to substitute cash in lieu of depositing a portion of the Deposit Securities, the creator may be assessed an additional variable charge to compensate the Fund for the costs associated with purchasing the applicable securities. (See “Fund Deposit” section above.) As a result, in order to seek to replicate the in-kind creation order process, the Trust expects to purchase, in the secondary market or otherwise gain exposure to, the portfolio securities that could have been delivered as a result of an in-kind creation order pursuant to local law or market convention, or for other reasons (“Market Purchases”). In such cases where the Trust makes Market Purchases, the Authorized Participant will reimburse the Trust for, among other things, any difference between the market value at which the securities and/or financial instruments were purchased by the Trust and the cash in lieu amount (which amount, at the Adviser’s discretion, may be capped), applicable registration fees, brokerage commissions and certain taxes. The Adviser may adjust the transaction fee to the extent the composition of the creation securities changes or cash in lieu is added to the Cash Component to protect ongoing shareholders. Creators of Creation Units are responsible for the costs of transferring the securities constituting the Deposit Securities to the account of the Trust.

### Redemption of Creation Units

Shares may be redeemed only in Creation Units at their NAV next determined after receipt of a redemption request in proper form by the Distributor, only on a Business Day and only through a Participating Party or DTC Participant who has executed a Participant Agreement. **The Trust will not redeem Shares in amounts less than Creation Units.** Beneficial Owners also may sell Shares in the secondary market, but must accumulate enough Shares to constitute a Creation Unit in order to have such Shares redeemed by the Trust. There can be no assurance, however, that there will be sufficient liquidity in the public trading market at any time to permit assembly of a Creation Unit. Investors should expect to incur brokerage and other costs in connection with assembling a sufficient number of Shares to constitute a redeemable Creation Unit. See the section entitled “Summary Information—Principal Risks of Investing in the Fund” and “Additional Information About the Fund’s Investment Strategies and Risks—Risks of Investing in the Fund” in the Prospectus.

The Administrator, through NSCC, makes available immediately prior to the opening of business on the Exchange (currently 9:30 a.m. Eastern time) on each day that the Exchange is open for business, the Fund Securities that will be applicable (subject to possible amendment or correction) to redemption requests received in proper form (as defined below) on that day. An Authorized Participant submitting a redemption request is deemed to represent to the Trust that it (or its client) (i) owns outright or has full legal authority and legal beneficial right to tender for redemption the requisite number of Fund Shares to be redeemed and can receive the entire proceeds of the redemption, and (ii) the Fund Shares to be redeemed have not been loaned or pledged to another party nor are they the subject of a repurchase agreement, securities lending agreement or such other arrangement that would preclude the delivery of such Fund Shares to the Trust. The Trust reserves the right to verify these representations at its discretion, but will typically require verification with respect to a redemption request from the Fund in connection with higher levels of redemption activity and/or short interest in the Fund. If the Authorized Participant, upon receipt of a verification request, does not provide sufficient verification of its representations as determined by the Trust, the redemption request will not be considered to have been received in proper form and may be rejected by the Trust.

Unless cash redemptions are permitted or required for the Fund, the redemption proceeds for a Creation Unit generally consist of Fund Securities as announced by the Administrator on the Business Day of the request for redemption, plus cash in an amount equal to the difference between the NAV of the Shares being redeemed, as next determined after a receipt of a request in proper form, and the value of the Fund Securities, less the redemption transaction fee and variable fees described below. Should the Fund

Securities have a value greater than the NAV of the Shares being redeemed, a compensating cash payment to the Trust equal to the differential plus the applicable redemption transaction fee will be required to be arranged for by or on behalf of the redeeming shareholder. The Fund reserves the right to honor a redemption request by delivering a basket of securities or cash that differs from the Fund Securities.

### **Redemption Transaction Fee**

The basic redemption transaction fee of \$500 is the same no matter how many Creation Units are being redeemed pursuant to any one redemption request. An additional charge up to four times the redemption transaction fee will be charged with respect to cash redemptions or redemptions outside of the Clearing Process. The Fund may adjust or waive all or a portion of its redemption transaction fee (including both the fixed and variable components) from time to time. An additional variable charge for cash redemptions or partial cash redemptions (when cash redemptions are permitted or required for the Fund) may also be imposed to compensate the Fund for the costs associated with selling the applicable securities. As a result, in order to seek to replicate the in-kind redemption order process, the Trust expects to sell, in the secondary market, the portfolio securities or settle any financial instruments that may not be permitted to be re-registered in the name of the Participating Party as a result of an in-kind redemption order pursuant to local law or market convention, or for other reasons (“Market Sales”). In such cases where the Trust makes Market Sales, the Authorized Participant will reimburse the Trust for, among other things, any difference between the market value at which the securities and/or financial instruments were sold or settled by the Trust and the cash in lieu amount (which amount, at the Adviser’s discretion, may be capped), applicable registration fees, brokerage commissions and certain taxes (“Transaction Costs”). The Adviser may adjust the transaction fee to the extent the composition of the redemption securities changes or cash in lieu is added to the Cash Component to protect ongoing shareholders. In no event will fees charged by the Fund in connection with a redemption exceed 2% of the value of each Creation Unit. Investors who use the services of a broker or other such intermediary may be charged a fee for such services. To the extent the Fund cannot recoup the amount of Transaction Costs incurred in connection with a redemption from the redeeming shareholder because of the 2% cap or otherwise, those Transaction Costs will be borne by the Fund’s remaining shareholders and negatively affect the Fund’s performance.

### **Placement of Redemption Orders Using Clearing Process**

Orders to redeem Creation Units of the Fund through the Clearing Process, if available, must be delivered through a Participating Party that has executed a Participant Agreement. An order to redeem Creation Units of the Fund using the Clearing Process is deemed received on the Transmittal Date if (i) such order is received by the Transfer Agent not later than 4:00 p.m. Eastern time on such Transmittal Date; and (ii) all other procedures set forth in the Participant Agreement are properly followed; such order will be effected based on the NAV of the Fund as next determined. An order to redeem Creation Units of the Fund using the Clearing Process made in proper form but received by the Fund after 4:00 p.m. Eastern time, will be deemed received on the next Business Day immediately following the Transmittal Date. The requisite Fund Securities (or contracts to purchase such Fund Securities which are expected to be delivered in a “regular way” manner) and the applicable cash payment will be transferred by the second (2nd) Business Day following the date on which such request for redemption is deemed received.

**Placement of Redemption Orders Outside Clearing Process**

Orders to redeem Creation Units of the Fund outside the Clearing Process must be delivered through a DTC Participant that has executed a Participant Agreement. A DTC Participant who wishes to place an order for redemption of Creation Units of the Fund to be effected outside the Clearing Process

need not be a Participating Party, but such orders must state that the DTC Participant is not using the Clearing Process and that redemption of Creation Units of the Fund will instead be effected through transfer of Creation Units of the Fund directly through DTC. An order to redeem Creation Units of the Fund outside the Clearing Process is deemed received by the Transfer Agent on the Transmittal Date if (i) such order is received by the Transfer Agent not later than 4:00 p.m. Eastern time on such Transmittal Date; (ii) such order is preceded or accompanied by the requisite number of Shares of Creation Units specified in such order, which delivery must be made through DTC to the Transfer Agent no later than 11:00 a.m. Eastern time, on such Transmittal Date (the “DTC Cut-Off-Time”); and (iii) all other procedures set forth in the Participant Agreement are properly followed.

After the Transfer Agent has deemed an order for redemption outside the Clearing Process received, the Transfer Agent will initiate procedures to transfer the requisite Fund Securities (or contracts to purchase such Fund Securities) which are expected to be delivered within two Business Days and the cash redemption payment to the redeeming Beneficial Owner by the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) Business Day following the Transmittal Date on which such redemption order is deemed received by the Transfer Agent. An additional variable redemption transaction fee of up to four times the basic transaction fee is applicable to redemptions outside the Clearing Process.



## **DETERMINATION OF NET ASSET VALUE**

The following information supplements and should be read in conjunction with the section in the Prospectus entitled “Shareholder Information—Determination of NAV.”

The NAV per Share for the Fund is computed by dividing the value of the net assets of the Fund (i.e., the value of its total assets less total liabilities) by the total number of Shares outstanding. Expenses and fees, including the management fee, are accrued daily and taken into account for purposes of determining NAV. The NAV of the Fund is determined each business day as of the close of trading (ordinarily 4:00 p.m., Eastern time) on the New York Stock Exchange.

The values of the Fund’s portfolio securities are based on the securities’ closing prices on the markets on which the securities trade, when available. Due to the time differences between the United States and certain countries in which the Fund invests, securities on these exchanges may not trade at times when Shares of the Fund will trade. In the absence of a last reported sales price, or if no sales were reported, and for other assets for which market quotes are not readily available, values may be based on quotes obtained from a quotation reporting system, established market makers or by an outside independent pricing service. Debt instruments with remaining maturities of more than 60 days are valued at the evaluated mean price provided by an outside independent pricing service. If an outside independent pricing service is unable to provide a valuation, the instrument is valued at the mean of the highest bid and the lowest asked quotes obtained from one or more brokers or dealers selected by the Adviser. Prices obtained by an outside independent pricing service may use information provided by market makers or estimates of market values obtained from yield data related to investments or securities with similar characteristics and may use a computerized grid matrix of securities and its evaluations in determining what it believes is the fair value of the portfolio securities. Short-term debt instruments having a maturity of 60 days or less are valued at amortized cost. Any assets or liabilities denominated in currencies other than the U.S. dollar are converted into U.S. dollars at the current market rates on the date of valuation as quoted by one or more sources. If a market quotation for a security or other asset is not readily available or the Adviser believes it does not otherwise accurately reflect the market value of the security or asset at the time the Fund calculates its NAV, the security or asset will be fair valued by the Adviser in accordance with the Trust’s valuation policies and procedures approved by the Board of Trustees. The Fund may also use fair value pricing in a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to, situations when the value of a security in the Fund’s portfolio has been materially affected by events occurring after the close of the market on which the security is principally traded (such as a corporate action or other news that may materially affect the price of a security) or trading in a security has been suspended or halted. In addition, the Fund currently expects that it will fair value certain of the foreign equity securities held by the Fund, if any, each day the Fund calculates its NAV, except those securities principally traded on exchanges that close at the same time the Fund calculates its NAV.

Accordingly, the Fund’s NAV may reflect certain portfolio securities’ fair values rather than their market prices at the time the exchanges on which they principally trade close. Fair value pricing involves subjective judgments and it is possible that a fair value determination for a security or other asset is materially different than the value that could be realized upon the sale of such security or asset. With respect to securities that are principally traded on foreign exchanges, the value of the Fund’s portfolio securities may change on days when you will not be able to purchase or sell your Shares.



## **DIVIDENDS AND DISTRIBUTIONS**

The following information supplements and should be read in conjunction with the section in the Prospectus entitled “Shareholder Information—Distributions.”

### **General Policies**

Dividends from net investment income, if any, are declared and paid at least annually by the Fund. Distributions of net realized capital gains, if any, generally are declared and paid once a year, but the Trust may make distributions on a more frequent basis for the Fund to comply with the distribution requirements of the Code, in all events in a manner consistent with the provisions of the 1940 Act. In addition, in situations where the Fund acquires investment securities after the beginning of a dividend period, the Fund, the Fund may elect to distribute at least annually amounts representing the full dividend yield on the underlying portfolio securities of the Fund, net of expenses of the Fund, as if the Fund owned such underlying portfolio securities for the entire dividend period. If the Fund so elects, some portion of each distribution may result in a return of capital, which, for tax purposes, is treated as a return of your investment in Shares.

Dividends and other distributions on Shares are distributed, as described below, on a pro rata basis to Beneficial Owners of such Shares. Dividend payments are made through DTC Participants and Indirect Participants to Beneficial Owners then of record with proceeds received from the Trust. The Trust makes additional distributions to the minimum extent necessary (i) to distribute the entire annual taxable income of the Trust, plus any net capital gains and (ii) to avoid imposition of the excise tax imposed by Section 4982 of the Code. Management of the Trust reserves the right to declare special dividends if, in its reasonable discretion, such action is necessary or advisable to preserve the status of the Fund as a RIC or to avoid imposition of income or excise taxes on undistributed income.

### **DIVIDEND REINVESTMENT SERVICE**

No reinvestment service is provided by the Trust. Broker-dealers may make available the DTC book-entry Dividend Reinvestment Service for use by Beneficial Owners of the Fund through DTC Participants for reinvestment of their dividend distributions. If this service is used, dividend distributions of both income and realized gains will be automatically reinvested in additional whole Shares of the Fund. Beneficial Owners should contact their broker to determine the availability and costs of the service and the details of participation therein. Brokers may require Beneficial Owners to adhere to specific procedures and timetables.

## **CONTROL PERSONS AND PRINCIPAL SHAREHOLDERS**

As of the date of this SAI, no entity beneficially owned securities of the Fund.

## **TAXES**

The following information also supplements and should be read in conjunction with the section in the Prospectus entitled “Shareholder Information—Tax Information” and the section in this Statement of Additional Information entitled “Special Considerations and Risks.” The following summary of certain relevant tax provisions is subject to change, and does not constitute legal or tax advice.

The Fund intends to qualify for and to elect treatment as a RIC under Subchapter M of the Code. As a RIC, the Fund will not be subject to U.S. federal income tax on the portion

of its taxable investment income and capital gains that it distributes to its shareholders. To qualify for treatment as a RIC, a company must annually distribute at least 90% of its investment company taxable income (which includes dividends, interest and net short-term capital gains) and meet several other requirements relating to the nature of its income and the diversification of its assets, among others. If the Fund fails to qualify for any taxable year as a RIC, all of its taxable income will be subject to tax at regular corporate income tax rates without any deduction for distributions to shareholders, and such distributions generally will be taxable to shareholders as ordinary dividends to the extent of the Fund's current and accumulated earnings and profits.

The Fund will be subject to a 4% excise tax on certain undistributed income if it does not distribute to its shareholders in each calendar year an amount at least equal to the sum of 98% of its ordinary income (taking into account certain deferrals and elections) for the calendar year, 98.2% of its capital gain net income for the twelve months ended October 31 of such year, and 100% of any undistributed amounts from the prior years. The Fund intends to declare and distribute dividends and distributions in the amounts and at the times necessary to avoid the application of this 4% excise tax.

As a result of U.S. federal income tax requirements, the Trust on behalf of the Fund, has the right to reject an order for a creation of Shares if the creator (or group of creators) would, upon obtaining the Shares so ordered, own 80% or more of the outstanding Shares of the Fund and if, pursuant to Section 351 of the Code, the Fund would have a basis in the Deposit Securities different from the market value of such securities on the date of deposit. The Trust also has the right to require information necessary to determine beneficial share ownership for purposes of the 80% determination. See "Creation and Redemption of Creation Units—Procedures for Creation of Creation Units."

Dividends, interest and gains received by the Fund from a non-U.S. investment may give rise to withholding and other taxes imposed by foreign countries. Tax conventions between certain countries and the United States may reduce or eliminate such taxes. If more than 50% of the Fund's total assets at the end of its taxable year consist of foreign stock or securities, the Fund may elect to "pass through" to its investors certain foreign income taxes paid by the Fund, with the result that each investor will (i) include in gross income, as an additional dividend, even though not actually received, the investor's pro rata share of the Fund's foreign income taxes, and (ii) either deduct (in calculating U.S. taxable income) or credit (in calculating U.S. federal income), subject to certain holding period and other limitations, the investor's pro rata share of the Fund's foreign income taxes.

Under Section 988 of the Code, special rules are provided for certain transactions in a foreign currency other than the taxpayer's functional currency (i.e., unless certain special rules apply, currencies other than the U.S. dollar). In general, foreign currency gains or losses from forward contracts, from futures contracts that are not "regulated futures contracts," and from unlisted options will be treated as ordinary income or loss under Section 988 of the Code. Also, certain foreign exchange gains or losses derived with respect to foreign fixed income securities are also subject to Section 988 treatment. In general, therefore, Section 988 gains or losses will increase or decrease the amount of the Fund's investment company taxable income available to be distributed to shareholders as ordinary income, rather than increasing or decreasing the amount of the Fund's net capital gain. If a portion of the Fund's investment income may be received in foreign currencies, the Fund will be required to compute its income in U.S. dollars for distribution to shareholders. When the Fund has distributed income, subsequent foreign currency losses may result in the Fund having distributed more income in a particular fiscal period than was available from investment income, which could result in a return of capital to shareholders.

The Fund will report to shareholders annually the amounts of dividends received from ordinary income, the amount of distributions received from capital gains and the portion of dividends, if any,

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which may qualify for the dividends received deduction. Certain ordinary dividends paid to non-corporate shareholders may qualify for taxation at a lower tax rate applicable to long-term capital gains provided holding period and other requirements are met at both the shareholder and Fund levels. In the event that the Fund receives such a dividend and reports the distribution of such dividend as a qualified dividend, the dividend may be taxed at maximum capital gains rates of 15% or 20%, provided holding period and other requirements are met at both the shareholder and the Fund level.

In general, a sale of Shares results in capital gain or loss, and for individual shareholders, is taxable at a federal rate dependent upon the length of time the Shares were held. A redemption of a shareholder's Fund Shares is normally treated as a sale for tax purposes. Fund Shares held for a period of one year or less at the time of such sale or redemption will, for tax purposes, generally result in short-term capital gains or losses, and those held for more than one year will generally result in long-term capital gains or losses. The maximum tax rate on long-term capital gains available to a non-corporate shareholder generally is 15% or 20%, depending on whether the shareholder's income exceeds certain threshold amounts.

Special tax rules may change the normal treatment of gains and losses recognized by the Fund if the Fund makes certain investments such as investments in structured notes, swaps, options, futures transactions, futures transactions and non-U.S. corporations classified as passive foreign investment companies ("PFICs"). Those special tax rules can, among other things, affect the treatment of capital gain or loss as long-term or short-term and may result in ordinary income or loss rather than capital gain or loss and may accelerate when the Fund has to take these items into account for U.S. federal income tax purposes. The application of these special rules would therefore also affect the timing and character of distributions made by a Fund.

There may be uncertainty as to the appropriate treatment of certain of the Fund's investments for U.S. federal income tax purposes. In particular, the Fund may invest a portion of its net assets in below investment grade instruments. Investments in these types of instruments may present special tax issues for the Fund. U.S. federal income tax rules are not entirely clear about issues such as when the Fund may cease to accrue interest, original issue discount or market discount, when and to what extent deductions may be taken for bad debts or worthless instruments, how payments received on obligations in default should be allocated between principal and income and whether exchanges of debt obligations in a bankruptcy or workout context are taxable. These and other issues will be addressed by the Fund, to the extent necessary, in order to seek to ensure that it distributes sufficient income to ensure that it does not become subject to U.S. federal income or excise tax.

The Fund must derive at least 90% of its gross income from certain qualifying sources of income in order to qualify as a RIC under the Code. The IRS issued a revenue ruling in December 2005 which concluded that income and gains from certain commodity-linked derivatives is not qualifying income under Subchapter M of the Code. As a result, the Fund's ability to invest directly in commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps and in certain exchange traded trusts that hold commodities as part of its investment strategy is limited by the requirement that it receive no more than ten percent (10%) of its gross income from such investments.

However, in Revenue Ruling 2006-31, the IRS indicated that income from alternative investment instruments that create commodity exposure may be considered qualifying income under the Code. The IRS subsequently issued private letter rulings to other taxpayers in which the IRS specifically concluded that that income derived from a fund's investment in a CFC also will constitute qualifying income to the fund, even if the CFC itself owns commodity-linked futures contracts or swaps. A private letter ruling cannot be used or cited as precedent and is binding on the IRS



only for the taxpayer that receives it. The Fund has not obtained a ruling from the IRS with respect to its investments or its structure. The IRS has currently suspended the issuance of private letter rulings relating to the tax treatment of income generated by investments in a subsidiary. The IRS has proposed regulations that, if finalized, would generally treat a fund's income inclusion with respect to an investment in a non-U.S. company generating investment income as qualifying income only if there is a current-year distribution out of the earnings and profits of the non-U.S. company that are attributable to such income inclusion. The proposed regulations, if adopted, would apply to taxable years beginning on or after 90 days after the regulations are published as final. The Fund intends to treat its income from the Subsidiary as qualifying income without any such ruling from the IRS. There can be no assurance that the IRS will not change its position with respect to some or all of these issues or if the IRS did so, that a court would not sustain the IRS's position. Furthermore, the tax treatment of the Fund's investments in the Subsidiary may be adversely affected by future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations. If the IRS were to change its position or otherwise determine that income derived from the Fund's investment in the Subsidiary does not constitute qualifying income and if such positions were upheld, or if future legislation, court decisions, future IRS guidance or Treasury regulations were to adversely affect the tax treatment of such investments, the Fund might cease to qualify as a RIC and would be required to reduce its exposure to such investments which could result in difficulty in implementing its investment strategy. If the Fund did not qualify as a RIC for any taxable year, the Fund's taxable income would be subject to tax at the Fund level at regular corporate tax rates (without reduction for distributions to shareholders) and to a further tax at the shareholder level when such income is distributed. In such event, in order to re-qualify for taxation as a RIC, the Fund may be required to recognize unrealized gains, pay substantial taxes and interest and make certain distributions.

A foreign corporation, such as the Subsidiary, generally is not subject to U.S. federal income taxation on its business income unless it is engaged in, or deemed to be engaged in, a U.S. trade or business. It is expected that each Subsidiary will conduct its activities so as to satisfy the requirements of a safe-harbor set forth in the Code, under which each Subsidiary may engage in certain commodity-related investments without being treated as engaged in a U.S. trade or business. However, if a Subsidiary's activities were determined not to be of the type described in the safe harbor, its activities may be subject to U.S. federal income taxation.

A foreign corporation, such as the Subsidiary, that does not conduct a U.S. trade or business is nonetheless subject to a U.S. withholding tax at a flat 30% rate (or lower treaty rate) on certain U.S. source gross income. No tax treaty is in force between the United States and the Cayman Islands that would reduce the 30% rate of withholding tax. However, it is not expected that the Subsidiary will derive income subject to U.S. withholding taxes.

The Subsidiary will be treated as a CFC for U.S. federal income tax purposes. As a result, the Fund must include in gross income for such purposes all of the Subsidiary's "subpart F" income when the Subsidiary recognizes that income, whether or not the Subsidiary distributes such income to the respective Fund. It is expected that all of the Subsidiary's income will be subpart F income. The Fund's tax basis in the Subsidiary will be increased as a result of the Fund's recognition of the Subsidiary's subpart F income. The Fund will not be taxed on distributions received from the Subsidiary to the extent of the Subsidiary's previously-undistributed subpart F income although its tax basis in the Subsidiary will be decreased by such amount. All subpart F income will be taxed as ordinary income, regardless of the

nature of the transactions that generate it. Subpart F income does not qualify for treatment as qualified dividend income. If the Subsidiary recognizes a net loss, the net loss will not be available to offset income recognized by the Fund and such loss cannot be carried forward to offset taxable income of the Fund or the Subsidiary in future periods.

The Fund may also gain commodity exposure through investment in ETFs that are treated as “qualified publicly traded partnerships” or grantor trusts for U.S. federal income tax purposes. The Fund may also invest in certain MLPs that are treated as “qualified publicly traded partnerships”. Investments by the Fund in “qualified publicly traded partnerships” and grantor trusts that engage in commodity trading must be monitored and limited so as to enable the Fund to satisfy certain asset diversification and qualifying income tests for qualification as a RIC. Failure to satisfy either test would jeopardize the Fund’s status as a RIC. Loss of such status could materially adversely affect the Fund.

Under recent tax legislation, individuals (and certain other non-corporate entities) are generally eligible for a 20% deduction with respect to taxable ordinary dividends from REITs and certain taxable income from publicly traded partnerships. Currently, there is not a mechanism for RICs to pass through the 20% deduction to shareholders although it is possible that a legislative or regulatory approach to do so may be provided in the future. As a result, in comparison, investors investing directly in REITs or publicly traded partnerships would generally be eligible for the 20% deduction for such taxable income from these investments while investors investing in REITs or publicly traded partnerships indirectly through the Fund would not be eligible for the 20% deduction for their share of such taxable income.

Certain ETFs in which the Fund may invest seek to qualify as RICs for tax purposes (“Underlying RICs”). To qualify and remain eligible for the special tax treatment accorded to RICs, such funds must meet certain source-of-income, asset diversification and annual distribution requirements. If a fund in which the Fund invests fails to qualify as a RIC, such fund would be liable for federal, and possibly state, corporate taxes on its taxable income and gains. Such failure by a fund could substantially reduce the Fund’s net assets and the amount of income available for distribution to the Fund, which would in turn decrease the total return of the Fund in respect of such investment. The Fund will not be able to offset gains distributed by one Underlying RIC in which it invests against losses in another Underlying RIC in which the Fund invests. Redemptions of shares in an Underlying RIC, including those resulting from changes in the allocation among Underlying RICs, could also cause additional distributable gains to shareholders of the Fund. A portion of any such gains may be short-term capital gains that would be distributable as ordinary income to shareholders of the Fund. Further, a portion of losses on redemptions of shares in the Underlying RICs may be deferred under the wash sale rules. As a result of these factors, the use of the fund of funds structure by the Fund could therefore affect the amount, timing and character of distributions to shareholders.

An additional 3.8% Medicare tax is imposed on certain net investment income (including ordinary dividends and capital gain distributions received from the Fund and net gains from redemptions or other taxable dispositions of Fund Shares) of U.S. individuals, estates and trusts to the extent that such person’s “modified adjusted gross income” (in the case of an individual) or “adjusted gross income” (in the case of an estate or trust) exceeds certain threshold amounts.

Investments in PFICs are subject to special tax rules which may result in adverse tax consequences to a Fund and its shareholders. To the extent a Fund invests in PFICs, it generally intends to elect to “mark to market” these investments

at the end of each taxable year. By making this election, the Fund will recognize as ordinary income any increase in the value of such shares as of the close of the taxable year over their adjusted basis and as ordinary loss any decrease in such investment (but only to the extent of prior income from such investment under the mark to market rules). Gains realized with respect to a disposition of a PFIC that a Fund has elected to mark to market will be ordinary income. By making the mark to market election, a Fund may recognize income in excess of the distributions that it receives from its investments. Accordingly, a Fund may need to borrow money or dispose of some of its investments in order to meet its distribution requirements. If a Fund does not make the mark to market election with respect to an investment in a PFIC, the Fund could become subject to U.S. federal income tax with respect to certain distributions from, and gain on the dispositions of, the PFIC which cannot be avoided by distributing such amounts to the Fund's shareholders.

Gain or loss on the sale or redemption of Fund Shares is measured by the difference between the amount of cash received (or the fair market value of any property received) and the adjusted tax basis of the Shares. Shareholders should keep records of investments made (including Shares acquired through reinvestment of dividends and distributions) so they can compute the tax basis of their Fund Shares. Legislation passed by Congress requires reporting of adjusted cost basis information for covered securities, which generally include shares of a regulated investment company acquired after January 1, 2012, to the Internal Revenue Service and to taxpayers. Shareholders should contact their financial intermediaries with respect to reporting of cost basis and available elections for their accounts.

A loss realized on a sale or exchange of Shares of the Fund may be disallowed if other Fund Shares or substantially identical shares are acquired (whether through the automatic reinvestment of dividends or otherwise) within a sixty-one (61) day period beginning thirty (30) days before and ending thirty (30) days after the date that the Shares are disposed of. In such a case, the basis of the Shares acquired will be adjusted to reflect the disallowed loss. Any loss upon the sale or exchange of Shares held for six (6) months or less will be treated as long-term capital loss to the extent of any capital gain dividends received by the shareholders. Distribution of ordinary income and capital gains may also be subject to foreign, state and local taxes.

The Fund may make investments in which it recognizes income or gain prior to receiving cash with respect to such investment. For example, under certain tax rules, the Fund may be required to accrue a portion of any discount at which certain securities are purchased as income each year even though the Fund receives no payments in cash on the security during the year. To the extent that the Fund makes such investments, it generally would be required to pay out such income or gain as a distribution in each year to avoid taxation at the Fund level.

Distributions reinvested in additional Fund Shares through the means of a dividend reinvestment service (see “Dividend Reinvestment Service”) will nevertheless be taxable dividends to Beneficial Owners acquiring such additional Shares to the same extent as if such dividends had been received in cash.

Some shareholders may be subject to a withholding tax on distributions of ordinary income, capital gains and any cash received on redemption of Creation Units (“backup withholding”). The backup withholding rate for individuals is currently 24%. Generally, shareholders subject to backup withholding will be those for whom no certified taxpayer identification number is on file with the Fund or who, to the Fund’s knowledge, have furnished an incorrect number. When establishing an account, an investor must certify under penalty of perjury that such number is correct and that such investor is not otherwise subject to backup withholding. Backup withholding is not an additional tax. Any amounts withheld will be allowed as a credit against shareholders’ U.S. federal income tax liabilities, and may entitle them to a refund, provided that the required information is timely furnished to the Internal Revenue Service.

Distributions of ordinary income paid to shareholders who are nonresident aliens or foreign entities will generally be subject to a 30% U.S. withholding tax unless a reduced rate of withholding or a withholding exemption is provided under applicable treaty law. Prospective investors are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding such withholding.

Properly reported dividends received by a nonresident alien or foreign entity are generally exempt from U.S. federal withholding tax when they (i) are paid in respect of the Fund's "qualified net interest income" (generally, the Fund's U.S. source interest income, reduced by expenses that are allocable to such income) or (ii) are paid in connection with the Fund's "qualified short-term capital gains" (generally, the excess of the Fund's net short-term capital gain over the Fund's long-term capital loss for such taxable year). However, depending

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on the circumstances, the Fund may report all, some or none of the Fund's potentially eligible dividends as such qualified net interest income or as qualified short-term capital gains, and a portion of the Fund's distributions (e.g. interest from non-U.S. sources, Subpart F income with respect to the Fund's investment in the Subsidiary and any foreign currency gains) would be ineligible for this potential exemption from withholding. A financial intermediary may in fact withhold even if the Fund does so report.

As part of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, ("FATCA"), the Fund may be required to withhold 30% on certain types of U.S. sourced income (e.g., dividends, interest, and other types of passive income), and after January 1, 2019 proceeds from the sale or other disposition of property producing U.S. sourced income and certain capital gain dividends to (i) foreign financial institutions ("FFIs"), including non-U.S. investment funds, unless they agree to collect and disclose to the Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") information regarding their direct and indirect U.S. account holders and (ii) certain nonfinancial foreign entities ("NFFE's"), unless they certify certain information regarding their direct and indirect U.S. owners. To avoid possible withholding, FFIs will need to enter into agreements with the IRS which state that they will provide the IRS information, including the names, account numbers and balances, addresses and taxpayer identification numbers of direct and indirect U.S. account holders and comply with due diligence procedures with respect to the identification of U.S. accounts as well as agree to withhold tax on certain types of withholdable payments made to non-compliant foreign financial institutions or to applicable foreign account holders who fail to provide the required information to the IRS, or similar account information and required documentation to a local revenue authority, should an applicable intergovernmental agreement be implemented. NFFE's will need to provide certain information regarding each substantial U.S. owner or certifications of no substantial U.S. ownership, unless certain exceptions apply, or agree to provide certain information to the IRS.

While some parts of the FATCA rules have not been finalized, the Fund may be subject to the FATCA withholding obligation, and also will be required to perform due diligence reviews to classify foreign entity investors for FATCA purposes. Investors are required to agree to provide information necessary to allow the Fund to comply with the FATCA rules. If the Fund is required to withhold amounts from payments pursuant to FATCA, investors will receive distributions that are reduced by such withholding amounts.

Non-U.S. shareholders are advised to consult their tax advisors with respect to the particular tax consequences to them of an investment in the Fund, including the possible applicability of the U.S. estate tax.

The foregoing discussion is a summary only and is not intended as a substitute for careful tax planning. Purchasers of Shares of the Trust should consult their own tax advisers as to the tax consequences of investing in such Shares, including under state, local and other tax laws. Finally, the foregoing discussion is based on applicable provisions of the Code, regulations, judicial authority and administrative interpretations in effect on the date hereof. Changes in applicable authority could materially affect the conclusions discussed above, and such changes often occur.

## **Reportable Transactions**

Under promulgated Treasury regulations, if a shareholder recognizes a loss on disposition of the Fund's Shares of \$2 million or more in any one taxable year (or \$4 million or more over a period of six taxable years) for an individual shareholder or \$10 million or more in any taxable year (or \$20 million or more over a period of six taxable years) for a corporate shareholder, the shareholder must file with the IRS a disclosure statement on Form 8886. Direct shareholders of portfolio securities are in many cases excepted from this reporting requirement, but under current guidance, shareholders of a RIC that engaged in a reportable transaction are not excepted.

Significant penalties may be imposed for the failure to comply with the reporting requirements. The fact that a loss is reportable under these regulations does not affect the legal determination of whether the taxpayer's treatment of the loss is proper. Shareholders should consult their tax advisors to determine the applicability of these regulations in light of their individual circumstances.

## **CAPITAL STOCK AND SHAREHOLDER REPORTS**

The Trust currently is comprised of 57 investment portfolios. The Trust issues Shares of beneficial interest with no par value. The Board may designate additional funds of the Trust.

Each Share issued by the Trust has a pro rata interest in the assets of the Fund. Shares have no pre-emptive, exchange, subscription or conversion rights and are freely transferable. Each Share is entitled to participate equally in dividends and distributions declared by the Board with respect to the Fund, and in the net distributable assets of the Fund on liquidation. The Fund may liquidate and terminate at any time and for any reason.

Each Share has one vote with respect to matters upon which a shareholder vote is required consistent with the requirements of the 1940 Act and the rules promulgated thereunder and each fractional Share has a proportional fractional vote. Shares of all funds vote together as a single class except that if the matter being voted on affects only a particular fund it will be voted on only by that fund, and if a matter affects a particular fund differently from other funds, that fund will vote separately on such matter. Under Delaware law, the Trust is not required to hold an annual meeting of shareholders unless required to do so under the 1940 Act. The policy of the Trust is not to hold an annual meeting of shareholders unless required to do so under the 1940 Act. All Shares of the Trust have noncumulative voting rights for the election of Trustees. Under Delaware law, Trustees of the Trust may be removed by vote of the shareholders.

Under Delaware law, the shareholders of the Fund are not generally subject to liability for the debts or obligations of the Trust. Similarly, Delaware law provides that the Fund will not be liable for the debts or obligations of any other series of the Trust. However, no similar statutory or other authority limiting statutory trust shareholder liability may exist in other states. As a result, to the extent that a Delaware statutory trust or a shareholder is subject to the jurisdiction of courts of such other states, the courts may not apply Delaware law and may thereby subject the Delaware statutory trust's shareholders to liability for the debts or obligations of the Trust. The Trust's Amended and Restated Declaration of Trust (the "Declaration of Trust") provides for indemnification by the Fund for all loss suffered by a shareholder as a result of an obligation of the Fund. The Declaration of Trust also provides that the Fund shall, upon request, assume the defense of any claim made against any shareholder for any act or obligation of the Fund and satisfy any judgment thereon.

The Trust will issue through DTC Participants to its shareholders semi-annual reports containing unaudited financial statements and annual reports containing financial statements audited by an independent auditor approved by the Trust's Trustees and by the shareholders when meetings are held and such other information as may be required by



applicable laws, rules and regulations. Beneficial Owners also receive annually notification as to the tax status of the Trust's distributions.

Shareholder inquiries may be made by writing to the Trust, c/o Van Eck Absolute Return Advisers Corporation, 666 Third Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, New York 10017.

**COUNSEL AND INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM**

Dechert LLP, 1095 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10036, is counsel to the Trust and has passed upon the validity of the Fund's Shares.

Ernst & Young LLP is the Trust's independent registered public accounting firm and audits the Fund's financial statements and performs other related audit services.

## APPENDIX A

### VANECK PROXY VOTING POLICIES

VanEck (the “Adviser”) has adopted the following policies and procedures which are reasonably designed to ensure that proxies are voted in a manner that is consistent with the best interests of its clients in accordance with its fiduciary duties and Rule 206(4)-6 under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940. When an adviser has been granted proxy voting authority by a client, the adviser owes its clients the duties of care and loyalty in performing this service on their behalf. The duty of care requires the adviser to monitor corporate actions and vote client proxies. The duty of loyalty requires the adviser to cast the proxy votes in a manner that is consistent with the best interests of the client.

Rule 206(4)-6 also requires the Adviser to disclose information about the proxy voting procedures to its clients and to inform clients how to obtain information about how their proxies were voted. Additionally, Rule 204-2 under the Advisers Act requires the Adviser to maintain certain proxy voting records.

An adviser that exercises voting authority without complying with Rule 206(4)-6 will be deemed to have engaged in a “fraudulent, deceptive, or manipulative” act, practice or course of business within the meaning of Section 206(4) of the Advisers Act.

The Adviser intends to vote all proxies in accordance with applicable rules and regulations, and in the best interests of clients without influence by real or apparent conflicts of interest. To assist in its responsibility for voting proxies and the overall voting process, the Adviser has engaged an independent third party proxy voting specialist, Glass Lewis & Co., LLC. The services provided by Glass Lewis include in-depth research, global issuer analysis, and voting recommendations as well as vote execution, reporting and recordkeeping.

#### **Resolving Material Conflicts of Interest**

When a material conflict of interest exists, proxies will be voted in the following manner:

1. Strict adherence to the Glass Lewis guidelines, or
2. The potential conflict will be disclosed to the client:
  - a. with a request that the client vote the proxy,
  - b. with a recommendation that the client engage another party to determine how the proxy should be voted or if the foregoing are not acceptable to the client, disclosure of how VanEck intends to vote and a written consent to
  - c. that vote by the client.

Any deviations from the foregoing voting mechanisms must be approved by the Chief Compliance Officer with a written explanation of the reason for the deviation.

A **material conflict of interest** means the existence of a business relationship between a portfolio company or an affiliate and the Adviser, any affiliate or subsidiary, or an “affiliated person” of a VanEck mutual fund. Examples of when a material conflict of interest exists include a situation where the adviser provides significant investment advisory, brokerage or other services to a company whose management is soliciting proxies; an officer of the Adviser serves on the board of a charitable organization that receives charitable contributions from the portfolio company and the charitable organization is a client of the Adviser; a portfolio company that is a significant selling agent of the Adviser’s products and services

solicits proxies; a broker-dealer or insurance company that controls 5% or more of the Adviser's assets solicits proxies; the Adviser serves as an investment adviser to the pension or other investment account of the portfolio company; the Adviser and the portfolio company have a lending relationship. In each of these situations voting against management may cause the Adviser a loss of revenue or other benefit.

## Client Inquiries

All inquiries by clients as to how the Adviser has voted proxies must immediately be forwarded to Portfolio Administration.

## Disclosure to Clients

### 1. Notification of Availability of Information

Client Brochure - The Client Brochure or Part II of Form ADV will inform clients that they can obtain information from the Adviser on how their proxies were voted. The Client Brochure or Part II of Form ADV will be mailed to each client annually. The Legal Department will be responsible for coordinating the mailing with Sales/Marketing Departments.

### 2. Availability of Proxy Voting Information

At the client's request or if the information is not available on the Adviser's website, a hard copy of the account's proxy votes will be mailed to each client.

## Recordkeeping Requirements

1. VanEck will retain the following documentation and information for each matter relating to a portfolio security with respect to which a client was entitled to vote:
  - a. proxy statements received;
  - b. identifying number for the portfolio security;
  - c. shareholder meeting date;
  - d. brief identification of the matter voted on;
  - e. whether the vote was cast on the matter;
  - f. how the vote was cast (e.g., for or against proposal, or abstain; for or withhold regarding election of directors);
  - g. records of written client requests for information on how the Adviser voted proxies on behalf of the client; a copy of written responses from the Adviser to any written or oral client request for information on how the
  - h. Adviser voted proxies on behalf of the client; and any documents prepared by the Adviser that were material to the decision on how to vote or that memorialized the basis for the decision, if such documents were prepared.

Copies of proxy statements filed on EDGAR, and proxy statements and records of proxy votes maintained with a third party (i.e., proxy voting service) need not be maintained. The third party must agree in writing to provide a copy of the documents promptly upon request.

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3. If applicable, any document memorializing that the costs of voting a proxy exceed the benefit to the client or any other decision to refrain from voting, and that such abstention was in the client's best interest.
4. Proxy voting records will be maintained in an easily accessible place for five years, the first two at the office of the Adviser. Proxy statements on file with EDGAR or maintained by a third

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party and proxy votes maintained by a third party are not subject to these particular retention requirements.

### **Voting Foreign Proxies**

At times the Adviser may determine that, in the best interests of its clients, a particular proxy should not be voted. This may occur, for example, when the cost of voting a foreign proxy (translation, transportation, etc.) would exceed the benefit of voting the proxy or voting the foreign proxy may cause an unacceptable limitation on the sale of the security. Any such instances will be documented by the Portfolio Manager and reviewed by the Chief Compliance Officer.

### **Securities Lending**

Certain portfolios managed by the Adviser participate in securities lending programs to generate additional revenue. Proxy voting rights generally pass to the borrower when a security is on loan. The Adviser will use its best efforts to recall a security on loan and vote such securities if the Portfolio Manager determines that the proxy involves a material event.

### **Proxy Voting Policy**

The Adviser has reviewed the Glass Lewis Proxy Guidelines (“Guidelines”) and has determined that the Guidelines are consistent with the Adviser’s proxy voting responsibilities and its fiduciary duty with respect to its clients. The Adviser will review any material amendments to the Guidelines.

While it is the Adviser’s policy to generally follow the Guidelines, the Adviser retains the right, on any specific proxy, to vote differently from the Guidelines, if the Adviser believes it is in the best interests of its clients. Any such exceptions will be documented by the Adviser and reviewed by the Chief Compliance Officer.

The portfolio manager or analyst covering the security is responsible for making proxy voting decisions. Portfolio Administration, in conjunction with the portfolio manager and the custodian, is responsible for monitoring corporate actions and ensuring that corporate actions are timely voted.

**2018**

PROXY PAPER™

**GUIDELINES**

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GLASS LEWIS APPROACH TO PROXY ADVICE

**UNITED STATES**



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## **Guidelines Introduction**

Glass Lewis evaluates these guidelines on an ongoing basis and formally updates them on an annual basis. This year we've made noteworthy revisions in the following areas, which are summarized below but discussed in greater detail in the relevant section of this document:

### **SUMMARY OF CHANGES FOR THE 2018 UNITED STATES POLICY GUIDELINES**

#### **BOARD GENDER DIVERSITY**

We have added a discussion of how Glass Lewis considers gender diversity on boards of directors. As with previous years, Glass Lewis will continue to closely review the composition of the board and may note as a concern instances where we believe the board lacks representation of diverse director candidates, including those boards which have no female directors.

In 2018, we will not make voting recommendations solely on the basis of the diversity of the board; rather, it will be one of many considerations we make when evaluating companies' oversight structures. Beginning in 2019, however, Glass Lewis will generally recommend voting against the nominating committee chair of a board that has no female members. Depending on other factors, including the size of the company, the industry in which the company operates and the governance profile of the company, we may extend this recommendation to vote against other nominating committee members. Also, when making these voting recommendations, we will carefully review a company's disclosure of its diversity considerations and may refrain from recommending shareholders vote against directors of companies outside the Russell 3000 index, or when boards have provided a sufficient rationale for not having any female board members, or have disclosed a plan to address the lack of diversity on the board.

#### **DUAL-CLASS SHARE STRUCTURES**

We have added a discussion of how Glass Lewis considers dual-class share structures when analyzing a company's governance. Glass Lewis believes dual-class voting structures are typically not in the best interests of common shareholders and that allowing one vote per share generally operates as a safeguard for common shareholders by ensuring that those who hold a significant minority of shares are able to weigh in on issues set forth by the board.

With regards to our evaluation of corporate governance following an IPO or spin-off within the past year, we have not changed our general approach; however, we will now include the presence of dual-class share structures as an additional factor in determining whether shareholder rights are being severely restricted indefinitely.

## **BOARD RESPONSIVENESS**

In light of evolving investor sentiment, we have clarified that we consider that the board generally has an imperative to respond to shareholder dissent from a proposal at an annual meeting of more than 20% of votes cast — particularly in the case of a compensation or director election proposal.

With regards to companies where voting control is held through a dual-class share structure with disproportionate voting and economic rights, we will carefully examine the level of approval or disapproval attributed to unaffiliated shareholders when determining whether board responsiveness is warranted. Where vote results indicate that a majority of unaffiliated shareholders supported a shareholder proposal or opposed a management proposal, we believe the board should demonstrate an appropriate level of responsiveness.

## **VIRTUAL SHAREHOLDER MEETINGS**

Glass Lewis is aware that a relatively small but growing contingent of companies have elected to hold shareholder meetings by virtual means only. We believe that virtual meeting technology can be a useful complement to a traditional, in-person shareholder meeting by expanding participation of shareholders who are unable to attend a shareholder meeting in person (i.e. a “hybrid meeting”). However, we also believe that virtual-only meetings have the potential to curb the ability of a company’s shareholders to meaningfully communicate with the company’s management.

In 2018, we will not make voting recommendations solely on the basis that a company is holding a virtual-only meeting. When analyzing the governance profile of companies that choose to hold virtual-only meetings, we look for robust disclosure in a company’s proxy statement which assures shareholders that they will be afforded the same rights and opportunities to participate as they would at an in-person meeting. Beginning in 2019, however, Glass Lewis will generally recommend voting against members of the governance committee of a board where the board is planning to hold a virtual-only shareholder meeting and the company does not provide such disclosure.

## **DIRECTOR COMMITMENTS**

While there is no change to our director overboarding policy, we have clarified our approach to evaluating outside commitments of directors who serve in executive roles other than CEO (e.g., executive chair). When determining whether to apply our limit of two total board memberships for public executives, we will evaluate the specific duties and responsibilities of their executive role in addition to the company’s disclosure regarding that director’s time commitments.

## **CEO PAY RATIO**

We have added a discussion of the CEO Pay Ratio disclosure required beginning in 2018. Glass Lewis will display the pay ratio as a data point in our Proxy Papers, as available. While we believe the pay ratio has the potential to provide additional insight when assessing a company’s pay practices, at this time it will not be a determinative factor in our voting recommendations.

## **PAY FOR PERFORMANCE**

While there is no change to our pay-for-performance model, we have added clarification regarding the Glass Lewis grading system. Consistent with previous years, our pay-for-performance grades guide our evaluation of compensation

committee effectiveness, and we generally recommend voting against compensation committee members at companies with a pattern of failing our pay-for-performance analysis. Unlike a school letter grade, however, a “C” does not indicate a significant lapse; rather, a “C” in the Glass Lewis grade system identifies companies where the pay and performance percentile rankings relative to peers are generally aligned.

## A Board of Directors that Serves the Interests of Shareholders

### ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

The purpose of Glass Lewis' proxy research and advice is to facilitate shareholder voting in favor of governance structures that will drive performance, create shareholder value and maintain a proper tone at the top. Glass Lewis looks for talented boards with a record of protecting shareholders and delivering value over the medium- and long-term. We believe that a board can best protect and enhance the interests of shareholders if it is sufficiently independent, has a record of positive performance, and consists of individuals with diverse backgrounds and a breadth and depth of relevant experience.

### INDEPENDENCE

The independence of directors, or lack thereof, is ultimately demonstrated through the decisions they make. In assessing the independence of directors, we will take into consideration, when appropriate, whether a director has a track record indicative of making objective decisions. Likewise, when assessing the independence of directors we will also examine when a director's track record on multiple boards indicates a lack of objective decision-making. Ultimately, we believe the determination of whether a director is independent or not must take into consideration both compliance with the applicable independence listing requirements as well as judgments made by the director.

We look at each director nominee to examine the director's relationships with the company, the company's executives, and other directors. We do this to evaluate whether personal, familial, or financial relationships (not including director compensation) may impact the director's decisions. We believe that such relationships make it difficult for a director to put shareholders' interests above the director's or the related party's interests. We also believe that a director who owns more than 20% of a company can exert disproportionate influence on the board, and therefore believe such a director's independence may be hampered, in particular when serving on the audit committee.

Thus, we put directors into three categories based on an examination of the type of relationship they have with the company:

**Independent Director** — An independent director has no material financial, familial or other current relationships with the company, its executives, or other board members, except for board service and standard fees paid for that service. Relationships that existed within three to five years<sup>1</sup> before the inquiry are usually considered "current" for purposes of this test.



**Affiliated Director** — An affiliated director has, (or within the past three years, had) a material financial, familial or other relationship with the company or its executives, but is not an employee of the company.<sup>2</sup> This includes directors whose employers have a material financial relationship with the

<sup>1</sup> NASDAQ originally proposed a five-year look-back period but both it and the NYSE ultimately settled on a three-year look-back prior to finalizing their rules. A five-year standard is more appropriate, in our view, because we believe that the unwinding of conflicting relationships between former management and board members is more likely to be complete and final after five years. However, Glass Lewis does not apply the five-year look-back period to directors who have previously served as executives of the company on an interim basis for less than one year.

<sup>2</sup> If a company does not consider a non-employee director to be independent, Glass Lewis will classify that director as an affiliate.

company.<sup>3</sup> In addition, we view a director who either owns or controls 20% or more of the company's voting stock, or is an employee or affiliate of an entity that controls such amount, as an affiliate.<sup>4</sup>

We view 20% shareholders as affiliates because they typically have access to and involvement with the management of a company that is fundamentally different from that of ordinary shareholders. More importantly, 20% holders may have interests that diverge from those of ordinary holders, for reasons such as the liquidity (or lack thereof) of their holdings, personal tax issues, etc.

Glass Lewis applies a three-year look back period to all directors who have an affiliation with the company other than former employment, for which we apply a five-year look back.

Definition of **“Material”**: A material relationship is one in which the dollar value exceeds:

- \$50,000 (or where no amount is disclosed) for directors who are paid for a service they have agreed to perform for the company, outside of their service as a director, including professional or other services; or

- \$120,000 (or where no amount is disclosed) for those directors employed by a professional services firm such as a law firm, investment bank, or consulting firm and the company pays the firm, not the individual, for services.<sup>5</sup> This dollar limit would also apply to charitable contributions to schools where a board member is a professor; or charities where a director serves on the board or is an executive;<sup>6</sup> and any aircraft and real estate dealings between the company and the director's firm; or

- 1% of either company's consolidated gross revenue for other business relationships (e.g., where the director is an executive officer of a company that provides services or products to or receives services or products from the company).<sup>7</sup>

Definition of **“Familial”** — Familial relationships include a person's spouse, parents, children, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, in-laws, and anyone (other than domestic employees) who shares such person's home. A director is an affiliate if: i) he or she has a family member who is employed by the company and receives more than \$120,000 in annual compensation; or, ii) he or she has a family member who is employed by the company and the company does not disclose this individual's compensation.

Definition of **“Company”** — A company includes any parent or subsidiary in a group with the company or any entity that merged with, was acquired by, or acquired the company.

**Inside Director** — An inside director simultaneously serves as a director and as an employee of the company. This category may include a board chair who acts as an employee of the company or is paid as an employee of the company. In our view, an inside director who derives a greater amount of income as a result of affiliated transactions

with the company rather than through compensation paid by the company (i.e., salary, bonus, etc. as a company employee) faces a conflict between making decisions that are in the best interests of the company versus those in the director's own best interests. Therefore, we will recommend voting against such a director.

3 We allow a five-year grace period for former executives of the company or merged companies who have consulting agreements with the surviving company. (We do not automatically recommend voting against directors in such cases for the first five years.) If the consulting agreement persists after this five-year grace period, we apply the materiality thresholds outlined in the definition of "material."

4 This includes a director who serves on a board as a representative (as part of his or her basic responsibilities) of an investment firm with greater than 20% ownership. However, while we will generally consider him/her to be affiliated, we will not recommend voting against unless (i) the investment firm has disproportionate board representation or (ii) the director serves on the audit committee.

5 We may deem such a transaction to be immaterial where the amount represents less than 1% of the firm's annual revenues and the board provides a compelling rationale as to why the director's independence is not affected by the relationship.

6 We will generally take into consideration the size and nature of such charitable entities in relation to the company's size and industry along with any other relevant factors such as the director's role at the charity. However, unlike for other types of related party transactions, Glass Lewis generally does not apply a look-back period to affiliated relationships involving charitable contributions; if the relationship between the director and the school or charity ceases, or if the company discontinues its donations to the entity, we will consider the director to be independent.

7 This includes cases where a director is employed by, or closely affiliated with, a private equity firm that profits from an acquisition made by the company. Unless disclosure suggests otherwise, we presume the director is affiliated.

Additionally, we believe a director who is currently serving in an interim management position should be considered an insider, while a director who previously served in an interim management position for less than one year and is no longer serving in such capacity is considered independent. Moreover, a director who previously served in an interim management position for over one year and is no longer serving in such capacity is considered an affiliate for five years following the date of his/her resignation or departure from the interim management position.

## **VOTING RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE BASIS OF BOARD INDEPENDENCE**

Glass Lewis believes a board will be most effective in protecting shareholders' interests if it is at least two-thirds independent. We note that each of the Business Roundtable, the Conference Board, and the Council of Institutional Investors advocates that two-thirds of the board be independent. Where more than one-third of the members are affiliated or inside directors, we typically<sup>8</sup> recommend voting against some of the inside and/ or affiliated directors in order to satisfy the two-thirds threshold.

In the case of a less than two-thirds independent board, Glass Lewis strongly supports the existence of a presiding or lead director with authority to set the meeting agendas and to lead sessions outside the insider chair's presence.

In addition, we scrutinize avowedly "independent" chairs and lead directors. We believe that they should be unquestionably independent or the company should not tout them as such.

## **COMMITTEE INDEPENDENCE**

We believe that only independent directors should serve on a company's audit, compensation, nominating, and governance committees.<sup>9</sup> We typically recommend that shareholders vote against any affiliated or inside director seeking appointment to an audit, compensation, nominating, or governance committee, or who has served in that capacity in the past year.

Pursuant to Section 952 of the Dodd-Frank Act, as of January 11, 2013, the SEC approved new listing requirements for both the NYSE and NASDAQ which require that boards apply enhanced standards of independence when making an affirmative determination of the independence of compensation committee members. Specifically, when making this determination, in addition to the factors considered when assessing general director independence, the board's considerations must include: (i) the source of compensation of the director, including any consulting, advisory or other compensatory fee paid by the listed company to the director (the "Fees Factor"); and (ii) whether the director is affiliated with the listing company, its subsidiaries, or affiliates of its subsidiaries (the "Affiliation Factor").

Glass Lewis believes it is important for boards to consider these enhanced independence factors when assessing compensation committee members. However, as discussed above in the section titled Independence, we apply our own standards when assessing the independence of directors, and these standards also take into account consulting and advisory fees paid to the director, as well as the director's affiliations with the company and its subsidiaries and affiliates. We may recommend voting against compensation committee members who are not independent based on our standards.

## **INDEPENDENT CHAIR**

Glass Lewis believes that separating the roles of CEO (or, more rarely, another executive position) and chair creates a better governance structure than a combined CEO/chair position. An executive manages the business

8 With a staggered board, if the affiliates or insiders that we believe should not be on the board are not up for election, we will express our concern regarding those directors, but we will not recommend voting against the other affiliates or insiders who are up for election just to achieve two-thirds independence. However, we will consider recommending voting against the directors subject to our concern at their next election if the issue giving rise to the concern is not resolved.

9 We will recommend voting against an audit committee member who owns 20% or more of the company's stock, and we believe that there should be a maximum of one director (or no directors if the committee is comprised of less than three directors) who owns 20% or more of the company's stock on the compensation, nominating, and governance committees.

according to a course the board charts. Executives should report to the board regarding their performance in achieving goals set by the board. This is needlessly complicated when a CEO chairs the board, since a CEO/chair presumably will have a significant influence over the board.

While many companies have an independent lead or presiding director who performs many of the same functions of an independent chair (e.g., setting the board meeting agenda), we do not believe this alternate form of independent board leadership provides as robust protection for shareholders as an independent chair.

It can become difficult for a board to fulfill its role of overseer and policy setter when a CEO/chair controls the agenda and the boardroom discussion. Such control can allow a CEO to have an entrenched position, leading to longer-than-optimal terms, fewer checks on management, less scrutiny of the business operation, and limitations on independent, shareholder-focused goal-setting by the board.

A CEO should set the strategic course for the company, with the board's approval, and the board should enable the CEO to carry out the CEO's vision for accomplishing the board's objectives. Failure to achieve the board's objectives should lead the board to replace that CEO with someone in whom the board has confidence.

Likewise, an independent chair can better oversee executives and set a pro-shareholder agenda without the management conflicts that a CEO and other executive insiders often face. Such oversight and concern for shareholders allows for a more proactive and effective board of directors that is better able to look out for the interests of shareholders.

Further, it is the board's responsibility to select a chief executive who can best serve a company and its shareholders and to replace this person when his or her duties have not been appropriately fulfilled. Such a replacement becomes more difficult and happens less frequently when the chief executive is also in the position of overseeing the board.

Glass Lewis believes that the installation of an independent chair is almost always a positive step from a corporate governance perspective and promotes the best interests of shareholders. Further, the presence of an independent chair fosters the creation of a thoughtful and dynamic board, not dominated by the views of senior management. Encouragingly, many companies appear to be moving in this direction—one study indicates that only 10 percent of incoming CEOs in 2014 were awarded the chair title, versus 48 percent in 2002.<sup>10</sup> Another study finds that 47 percent of S&P 500 boards now separate the CEO and chair roles, up from 37 percent in 2009, although the same study found that only 28 percent of S&P 500 boards have truly independent chairs.<sup>11</sup>

We do not recommend that shareholders vote against CEOs who chair the board. However, we typically recommend that our clients support separating the roles of chair and CEO whenever that question is posed in a proxy (typically in the form of a shareholder proposal), as we believe that it is in the long-term best interests of the company and its

shareholders.

Further, where the company has neither an independent chair nor independent lead director, we will recommend voting against the chair of the governance committee.

## **PERFORMANCE**

The most crucial test of a board's commitment to the company and its shareholders lies in the actions of the board and its members. We look at the performance of these individuals as directors and executives of the company and of other companies where they have served.

We find that a director's past conduct is often indicative of future conduct and performance. We often find directors with a history of overpaying executives or of serving on boards where avoidable disasters have occurred serving on the boards of companies with similar problems. Glass Lewis has a proprietary database

10 Ken Favaro, Per-Ola Karlsson and Gary L. Nelson. "The \$112 Billion CEO Succession Problem." (*Strategy+Business*, Issue 79, Summer 2015).

11 Spencer Stuart Board Index, 2014, p. 23.

of directors serving at over 8,000 of the most widely held U.S. companies. We use this database to track the performance of directors across companies.

## **VOTING RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE BASIS OF PERFORMANCE**

We typically recommend that shareholders vote against directors who have served on boards or as executives of companies with records of poor performance, inadequate risk oversight, excessive compensation, auditor accounting-related issues, and/or other indicators of mismanagement or actions against the interests of shareholders. We will reevaluate such directors based on, among other factors, the length of time passed since the incident giving rise to the concern, shareholder support for the director, the severity of the issue, the director's role (e.g., committee membership), director tenure at the subject company, whether ethical lapses accompanied the oversight lapse, and evidence of strong oversight at other companies.

Likewise, we examine the backgrounds of those who serve on key board committees to ensure that they have the required skills and diverse backgrounds to make informed judgments about the subject matter for which the committee is responsible.

We believe shareholders should avoid electing directors who have a record of not fulfilling their responsibilities to shareholders at any company where they have held a board or executive position. We typically recommend voting against:

1. A director who fails to attend a minimum of 75% of board and applicable committee meetings, calculated in the aggregate.<sup>12</sup>
2. A director who belatedly filed a significant form(s) 4 or 5, or who has a pattern of late filings if the late filing was the director's fault (we look at these late filing situations on a case-by-case basis).
3. A director who is also the CEO of a company where a serious and material restatement has occurred after the CEO had previously certified the pre-restatement financial statements.
4. A director who has received two against recommendations from Glass Lewis for identical reasons within the prior year at different companies (the same situation must also apply at the company being analyzed).
5. All directors who served on the board if, for the last three years, the company's performance has been in the bottom quartile of the sector and the directors have not taken reasonable steps to address the poor performance.

## **BOARD RESPONSIVENESS**



Glass Lewis believes that any time 20% or more of shareholders vote contrary to the recommendation of management, the board should, depending on the issue, demonstrate some level of responsiveness to address the concerns of shareholders. These include instances when 20% or more of shareholders (excluding abstentions and broker non-votes): WITHHOLD votes from (or vote AGAINST) a director nominee, vote AGAINST a management-sponsored proposal, or vote FOR a shareholder proposal. In our view, a 20% threshold is significant enough to warrant a close examination of the underlying issues and an evaluation of whether or not a board response was warranted and, if so, whether the board responded appropriately following the vote, particularly in the case of a compensation or director election proposal. While the 20% threshold alone will not automatically generate a negative vote recommendation from Glass Lewis on a future proposal (e.g., to recommend against a director nominee, against a say-on-pay proposal, etc.), it may be a contributing factor to our recommendation to vote against management's recommendation in the event we determine that the board did not respond appropriately.

12 However, where a director has served for less than one full year, we will typically not recommend voting against for failure to attend 75% of meetings. Rather, we will note the poor attendance with a recommendation to track this issue going forward. We will also refrain from recommending to vote against directors when the proxy discloses that the director missed the meetings due to serious illness or other extenuating circumstances.

With regards to companies where voting control is held through a dual-class share structure with disproportionate voting and economic rights, we will carefully examine the level of approval or disapproval attributed to unaffiliated shareholders when determining whether board responsiveness is warranted. Where vote results indicate that a majority of unaffiliated shareholders supported a shareholder proposal or opposed a management proposal, we believe the board should demonstrate an appropriate level of responsiveness.

As a general framework, our evaluation of board responsiveness involves a review of publicly available disclosures (e.g., the proxy statement, annual report, 8-Ks, company website, etc.) released following the date of the company's last annual meeting up through the publication date of our most current Proxy Paper. Depending on the specific issue, our focus typically includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- At the board level, any changes in directorships, committee memberships, disclosure of related party transactions, meeting attendance, or other responsibilities;
- Any revisions made to the company's articles of incorporation, bylaws or other governance documents;
- Any press or news releases indicating changes in, or the adoption of, new company policies, business practices or special reports; and
- Any modifications made to the design and structure of the company's compensation program, as well as an assessment of the company's engagement with shareholders on compensation issues as discussed in the CD&A, particularly following a material vote against a company's say-on-pay.

Our Proxy Paper analysis will include a case-by-case assessment of the specific elements of board responsiveness that we examined along with an explanation of how that assessment impacts our current voting recommendations.

## **THE ROLE OF A COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Glass Lewis believes that a designated committee chair maintains primary responsibility for the actions of his or her respective committee. As such, many of our committee-specific voting recommendations are against the applicable committee chair rather than the entire committee (depending on the seriousness of the issue). However, in cases where we would ordinarily recommend voting against a committee chair but the chair is not specified, we apply the following general rules, which apply throughout our guidelines:

- If there is no committee chair, we recommend voting against the longest-serving committee member or, if the longest-serving committee member cannot be determined, the longest-serving board member serving on the committee (i.e., in either case, the "senior director"); and
- If there is no committee chair, but multiple senior directors serving on the committee, we recommend voting against both (or all) such senior directors.

In our view, companies should provide clear disclosure of which director is charged with overseeing each committee. In cases where that simple framework is ignored and a reasonable analysis cannot determine which committee member is the designated leader, we believe shareholder action against the longest serving committee member(s) is warranted. Again, this only applies if we would ordinarily recommend voting against the committee chair but there is either no such position or no designated director in such role.

On the contrary, in cases where there is a designated committee chair and the recommendation is to vote against the committee chair, but the chair is not up for election because the board is staggered, we do not recommend voting against any members of the committee who are up for election; rather, we will note the concern with regard to the committee chair.

## AUDIT COMMITTEES AND PERFORMANCE

Audit committees play an integral role in overseeing the financial reporting process because “[v]ibrant and stable capital markets depend on, among other things, reliable, transparent, and objective financial information to support an efficient and effective capital market process. The vital oversight role audit committees play in the process of producing financial information has never been more important.”<sup>13</sup>

When assessing an audit committee’s performance, we are aware that an audit committee does not prepare financial statements, is not responsible for making the key judgments and assumptions that affect the financial statements, and does not audit the numbers or the disclosures provided to investors. Rather, an audit committee member monitors and oversees the process and procedures that management and auditors perform. The 1999 Report and Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Improving the Effectiveness of Corporate Audit Committees stated it best:

*A proper and well-functioning system exists, therefore, when the three main groups responsible for financial reporting — the full board including the audit committee, financial management including the internal auditors, and the outside auditors — form a ‘three legged stool’ that supports responsible financial disclosure and active participatory oversight. However, in the view of the Committee, the audit committee must be ‘first among equals’ in this process, since the audit committee is an extension of the full board and hence the ultimate monitor of the process.*

## STANDARDS FOR ASSESSING THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

For an audit committee to function effectively on investors’ behalf, it must include members with sufficient knowledge to diligently carry out their responsibilities. In its audit and accounting recommendations, the Conference Board Commission on Public Trust and Private Enterprise said “members of the audit committee must be independent and have both knowledge and experience in auditing financial matters.”<sup>14</sup>

We are skeptical of audit committees where there are members that lack expertise as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or corporate controller, or similar experience. While we will not necessarily recommend voting against members of an audit committee when such expertise is lacking, we are more likely to recommend voting against committee members when a problem such as a restatement occurs and such expertise is lacking.

Glass Lewis generally assesses audit committees against the decisions they make with respect to their oversight and monitoring role. The quality and integrity of the financial statements and earnings reports, the completeness of disclosures necessary for investors to make informed decisions, and the effectiveness of the internal controls should provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are materially free from errors. The independence of the external auditors and the results of their work all provide useful information by which to assess the audit committee.

When assessing the decisions and actions of the audit committee, we typically defer to its judgment and generally recommend voting in favor of its members. However, we will consider recommending that shareholders vote against the following:<sup>15</sup>

All members of the audit committee when options were backdated, there is a lack of adequate controls in place, 1. there was a resulting restatement, and disclosures indicate there was a lack of documentation with respect to the option grants.

13 Audit Committee Effectiveness – What Works Best.” PricewaterhouseCoopers. The Institute of Internal Auditors Research Foundation. 2005.

14 Commission on Public Trust and Private Enterprise. The Conference Board. 2003.

15 As discussed under the section labeled “Committee Chair,” where the recommendation is to vote against the committee chair but the chair is not up for election because the board is staggered, we do not recommend voting against the members of the committee who are up for election; rather, we will note the concern with regard to the committee chair.

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2. The audit committee chair, if the audit committee does not have a financial expert or the committee's financial expert does not have a demonstrable financial background sufficient to understand the financial issues unique to public companies.
3. The audit committee chair, if the audit committee did not meet at least four times during the year.
4. The audit committee chair, if the committee has less than three members.

5. Any audit committee member who sits on more than three public company audit committees, unless the audit committee member is a retired CPA, CFO, controller or has similar experience, in which case the limit shall be four committees, taking time and availability into consideration including a review of the audit committee member's attendance at all board and committee meetings!<sup>6</sup>

6. All members of an audit committee who are up for election and who served on the committee at the time of the audit, if audit and audit-related fees total one-third or less of the total fees billed by the auditor.
7. The audit committee chair when tax and/or other fees are greater than audit and audit-related fees paid to the auditor for more than one year in a row (in which case we also recommend against ratification of the auditor).

8. All members of an audit committee where non-audit fees include fees for tax services (including, but not limited to, such things as tax avoidance or shelter schemes) for senior executives of the company. Such services are prohibited by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board ("PCAOB").

9. All members of an audit committee that reappointed an auditor that we no longer consider to be independent for reasons unrelated to fee proportions.
10. All members of an audit committee when audit fees are excessively low, especially when compared with other companies in the same industry.

11. The audit committee chair<sup>17</sup> if the committee failed to put auditor ratification on the ballot for shareholder approval. However, if the non-audit fees or tax fees exceed audit plus audit-related fees in either the current or the prior year, then Glass Lewis will recommend voting against the entire audit committee.

12. All members of an audit committee where the auditor has resigned and reported that a section 10A<sup>18</sup> letter has been issued.

13. All members of an audit committee at a time when material accounting fraud occurred at the company.<sup>19</sup>

14. All members of an audit committee at a time when annual and/or multiple quarterly financial statements had to be restated, and any of the following factors apply:

16 Glass Lewis may exempt certain audit committee members from the above threshold if, upon further analysis of relevant factors such as the director's experience, the size, industry-mix and location of the companies involved and the director's attendance at all the companies, we can reasonably determine that the audit committee member is likely not hindered by multiple audit committee commitments.

17 As discussed under the section labeled "Committee Chair," in all cases, if the chair of the committee is not specified, we recommend voting against the director who has been on the committee the longest.

18 Auditors are required to report all potential illegal acts to management and the audit committee unless they are clearly inconsequential in nature. If the audit committee or the board fails to take appropriate action on an act that has been determined to be a violation of the law, the independent auditor is required to send a section 10A letter to the SEC. Such letters are rare and therefore we believe should be taken seriously.

19 Research indicates that revenue fraud now accounts for over 60% of SEC fraud cases, and that companies that engage in fraud experience significant negative abnormal stock price declines—facing bankruptcy, delisting, and material asset sales at much higher rates than do non-fraud firms (Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission. “Fraudulent Financial Reporting: 1998-2007.” May 2010).

- The restatement involves fraud or manipulation by insiders;
- The restatement is accompanied by an SEC inquiry or investigation;
- The restatement involves revenue recognition;
- The restatement results in a greater than 5% adjustment to costs of goods sold, operating expense, or operating cash flows; or
- The restatement results in a greater than 5% adjustment to net income, 10% adjustment to assets or shareholders equity, or cash flows from financing or investing activities.

All members of an audit committee if the company repeatedly fails to file its financial reports in a timely fashion. 15. For example, the company has filed two or more quarterly or annual financial statements late within the last five quarters.

16. All members of an audit committee when it has been disclosed that a law enforcement agency has charged the company and/or its employees with a violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA).

17. All members of an audit committee when the company has aggressive accounting policies and/or poor disclosure or lack of sufficient transparency in its financial statements.

18. All members of the audit committee when there is a disagreement with the auditor and the auditor resigns or is dismissed (e.g., the company receives an adverse opinion on its financial statements from the auditor).

19. All members of the audit committee if the contract with the auditor specifically limits the auditor's liability to the company for damages.<sup>20</sup>

All members of the audit committee who served since the date of the company's last annual meeting, and when, 20. since the last annual meeting, the company has reported a material weakness that has not yet been corrected, or, when the company has an ongoing material weakness from a prior year that has not yet been corrected.

We also take a dim view of audit committee reports that are boilerplate, and which provide little or no information or transparency to investors. When a problem such as a material weakness, restatement or late filings occurs, we take into consideration, in forming our judgment with respect to the audit committee, the transparency of the audit committee report.

## COMPENSATION COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE

Compensation committees have a critical role in determining the compensation of executives. This includes deciding the basis on which compensation is determined, as well as the amounts and types of compensation to be paid. This process begins with the hiring and initial establishment of employment agreements, including the terms for such items as pay, pensions and severance arrangements. It is important in establishing compensation arrangements that compensation be consistent with, and based on the long-term economic performance of, the business's long-term shareholders returns.



Compensation committees are also responsible for the oversight of the transparency of compensation. This oversight includes disclosure of compensation arrangements, the matrix used in assessing pay for performance, and the use of compensation consultants. In order to ensure the independence of the board's compensation

20 The Council of Institutional Investors. "Corporate Governance Policies," p. 4, April 5, 2006; and "Letter from Council of Institutional Investors to the AICPA," November 8, 2006.

consultant, we believe the compensation committee should only engage a compensation consultant that is not also providing any services to the company or management apart from their contract with the compensation committee. It is important to investors that they have clear and complete disclosure of all the significant terms of compensation arrangements in order to make informed decisions with respect to the oversight and decisions of the compensation committee.

Finally, compensation committees are responsible for oversight of internal controls over the executive compensation process. This includes controls over gathering information used to determine compensation, establishment of equity award plans, and granting of equity awards. For example, the use of a compensation consultant who maintains a business relationship with company management may cause the committee to make decisions based on information that is compromised by the consultant's conflict of interests. Lax controls can also contribute to improper awards of compensation such as through granting of backdated or spring-loaded options, or granting of bonuses when triggers for bonus payments have not been met.

Central to understanding the actions of a compensation committee is a careful review of the Compensation Discussion and Analysis ("CD&A") report included in each company's proxy. We review the CD&A in our evaluation of the overall compensation practices of a company, as overseen by the compensation committee. The CD&A is also integral to the evaluation of compensation proposals at companies, such as advisory votes on executive compensation, which allow shareholders to vote on the compensation paid to a company's top executives.

When assessing the performance of compensation committees, we will consider recommending that shareholders vote against the following:<sup>21</sup>

All members of a compensation committee during whose tenure the committee failed to address shareholder concerns following majority shareholder rejection of the say-on-pay proposal in the previous year. Where the proposal was approved but there was a significant shareholder vote (i.e., greater than 20% of votes cast) against the

1. say-on-pay proposal in the prior year, if the board did not respond sufficiently to the vote including actively engaging shareholders on this issue, we will also consider recommending voting against the chair of the compensation committee or all members of the compensation committee, depending on the severity and history of the compensation problems and the level of shareholder opposition.

2. pay with performance if shareholders are not provided with an advisory vote on executive compensation at the annual meeting.<sup>22</sup>

3. public companies that have consistently failed to align pay with performance and whose oversight of compensation at the company in question is suspect.

4. All members of the compensation committee (during the relevant time period) if the company entered into excessive employment agreements and/or severance agreements.

21 As discussed under the section labeled “Committee Chair,” where the recommendation is to vote against the committee chair and the chair is not up for election because the board is staggered, we do not recommend voting against any members of the committee who are up for election; rather, we will note the concern with regard to the committee chair.

22 If a company provides shareholders with a say-on-pay proposal, we will initially only recommend voting against the company’s say-on-pay proposal and will not recommend voting against the members of the compensation committee unless there is a pattern of failing to align pay and performance and/or the company exhibits egregious compensation practices. However, if the company repeatedly fails to align pay and performance, we will then recommend against the members of the compensation committee in addition to recommending voting against the say-on-pay proposal. For cases in which the disconnect between pay and performance is marginal and the company has outperformed its peers, we will consider not recommending against compensation committee members. In addition, if a company provides shareholders with a say-on-pay proposal, we will initially only recommend voting against the company’s say-on-pay proposal and will not recommend voting against the members of the compensation committee unless there is a pattern of failing to align pay and performance and/or the company exhibits egregious compensation practices. However, if the company repeatedly fails to align pay and performance, we will then recommend against the members of the compensation committee in addition to recommending voting against the say-on-pay proposal.

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5. All members of the compensation committee when performance goals were changed (i.e., lowered) when employees failed or were unlikely to meet original goals, or performance-based compensation was paid despite goals not being attained.
6. All members of the compensation committee if excessive employee perquisites and benefits were allowed.
7. The compensation committee chair if the compensation committee did not meet during the year.
8. All members of the compensation committee when the company repriced options or completed a “self tender offer” without shareholder approval within the past two years.
9. All members of the compensation committee when vesting of in-the-money options is accelerated.
10. All members of the compensation committee when option exercise prices were backdated. Glass Lewis will recommend voting against an executive director who played a role in and participated in option backdating.
11. All members of the compensation committee when option exercise prices were spring-loaded or otherwise timed around the release of material information.
12. All members of the compensation committee when a new employment contract is given to an executive that does not include a clawback provision and the company had a material restatement, especially if the restatement was due to fraud.
13. The chair of the compensation committee where the CD&A provides insufficient or unclear information about performance metrics and goals, where the CD&A indicates that pay is not tied to performance, or where the compensation committee or management has excessive discretion to alter performance terms or increase amounts of awards in contravention of previously defined targets.
14. All members of the compensation committee during whose tenure the committee failed to implement a shareholder proposal regarding a compensation-related issue, where the proposal received the affirmative vote of a majority of the voting shares at a shareholder meeting, and when a reasonable analysis suggests that the compensation committee (rather than the governance committee) should have taken steps to implement the request.<sup>23</sup>

### **NOMINATING AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE**

The nominating and governance committee, as an agent for the shareholders, is responsible for the governance by the board of the company and its executives. In performing this role, the committee is responsible and accountable for selection of objective and competent board members. It is also responsible for providing leadership on governance policies adopted by the company, such as decisions to implement shareholder proposals that have received a majority vote. (At most companies, a single committee is charged with these oversight functions; at others, the governance and nominating responsibilities are apportioned among two separate committees.)

Consistent with Glass Lewis’ philosophy that boards should have diverse backgrounds and members with a breadth and depth of relevant experience, we believe that nominating and governance committees should consider diversity when making director nominations within the context of each specific company and its industry. In our view, shareholders are best served when boards make an effort to ensure a constituency that is not only reasonably diverse

on the basis of age, race, gender and ethnicity, but also on the basis of geographic knowledge, industry experience, board tenure and culture.

23 In all other instances (i.e., a non-compensation-related shareholder proposal should have been implemented) we recommend that shareholders vote against the members of the governance committee.

Regarding the committee responsible for governance, we will consider recommending that shareholders vote against the following:<sup>24</sup>

1. All members of the governance committee<sup>25</sup> during whose tenure a shareholder proposal relating to important shareholder rights received support from a majority of the votes cast (excluding abstentions and broker non-votes) and the board has not begun to implement or enact the proposal's subject matter<sup>26</sup> Examples of such shareholder proposals include those seeking a declassified board structure, a majority vote standard for director elections, or a right to call a special meeting. In determining whether a board has sufficiently implemented such a proposal, we will examine the quality of the right enacted or proffered by the board for any conditions that may unreasonably interfere with the shareholders' ability to exercise the right (e.g., overly restrictive procedural requirements for calling a special meeting).
2. The governance committee chair,<sup>27</sup> when the chair is not independent and an independent lead or presiding director has not been appointed.<sup>28</sup>
3. In the absence of a nominating committee, the governance committee chair when there are less than five or the whole nominating committee when there are more than 20 members on the board.
4. The governance committee chair, when the committee fails to meet at all during the year.  
  
The governance committee chair, when for two consecutive years the company provides what we consider to be "inadequate" related party transaction disclosure (i.e., the nature of such transactions and/or the monetary amounts involved are unclear or excessively vague, thereby preventing a shareholder from being able to reasonably interpret the independence status of multiple directors above and beyond what the company maintains is compliant with SEC or applicable stock exchange listing requirements).
5. The governance committee chair, when during the past year the board adopted a forum selection clause (i.e., an exclusive forum provision)<sup>29</sup> without shareholder approval, or if the board is currently seeking shareholder approval of a forum selection clause pursuant to a bundled bylaw amendment rather than as a separate proposal.
6. All members of the governance committee during whose tenure the board adopted, without shareholder approval, provisions in its charter or bylaws that, through rules on director compensation, may inhibit the ability of shareholders to nominate directors.
- 7.

In addition, we may recommend that shareholders vote against the chair of the governance committee, or the entire committee, where the board has amended the company's governing documents to reduce or remove important shareholder rights, or to otherwise impede the ability of shareholders to exercise such

24 As discussed in the guidelines section labeled "Committee Chair," where we would recommend to vote against the committee chair but the chair is not up for election because the board is staggered, we do not recommend voting against any members of the committee who are up for election; rather, we will note the concern with regard to the committee chair.

25 If the board does not have a committee responsible for governance oversight and the board did not implement a shareholder proposal that received the requisite support, we will recommend voting against the entire board. If the shareholder proposal at issue requested that the board adopt a declassified structure, we will recommend voting against all director nominees up for election.

26 Where a compensation-related shareholder proposal should have been implemented, and when a reasonable analysis suggests that the members of the compensation committee (rather than the governance committee) bear the responsibility for failing to implement the request, we recommend that shareholders only vote against members of the compensation committee.

27 As discussed in the guidelines section labeled “Committee Chair,” if the committee chair is not specified, we recommend voting against the director who has been on the committee the longest. If the longest-serving committee member cannot be determined, we will recommend voting against the longest-serving board member serving on the committee.

28 We believe that one independent individual should be appointed to serve as the lead or presiding director. When such a position is rotated among directors from meeting to meeting, we will recommend voting against the governance committee chair as we believe the lack of fixed lead or presiding director means that, effectively, the board does not have an independent board leader.

29 A forum selection clause is a bylaw provision stipulating that a certain state, typically where the company is incorporated, which is most often Delaware, shall be the exclusive forum for all intra-corporate disputes (e.g., shareholder derivative actions, assertions of claims of a breach of fiduciary duty, etc.). Such a clause effectively limits a shareholder’s legal remedy regarding appropriate choice of venue and related relief offered under that state’s laws and rulings.

right, and has done so without seeking shareholder approval. Examples of board actions that may cause such a recommendation include: the elimination of the ability of shareholders to call a special meeting or to act by written consent; an increase to the ownership threshold required for shareholders to call a special meeting; an increase to vote requirements for charter or bylaw amendments; the adoption of provisions that limit the ability of shareholders to pursue full legal recourse—such as bylaws that require arbitration of shareholder claims or that require shareholder plaintiffs to pay the company’s legal expenses in the absence of a court victory (i.e., “fee-shifting” or “loser pays” bylaws); the adoption of a classified board structure; and the elimination of the ability of shareholders to remove a director without cause.

Regarding the nominating committee, we will consider recommending that shareholders vote against the following:<sup>30</sup>

- All members of the nominating committee, when the committee nominated or renominated an individual who had a
1. significant conflict of interest or whose past actions demonstrated a lack of integrity or inability to represent shareholder interests.
  2. The nominating committee chair, if the nominating committee did not meet during the year.
  3. In the absence of a governance committee, the nominating committee chair<sup>31</sup> when the chair is not independent, and an independent lead or presiding director has not been appointed.<sup>32</sup>
  4. The nominating committee chair, when there are less than five or the whole nominating committee when there are more than 20 members on the board.<sup>33</sup>
  5. The nominating committee chair, when a director received a greater than 50% against vote the prior year and not only was the director not removed, but the issues that raised shareholder concern were not corrected.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, we may consider recommending shareholders vote against the chair of the nominating committee where the board’s failure to ensure the board has directors with relevant experience, either through periodic director assessment or board refreshment, has contributed to a company’s poor performance.

## **BOARD-LEVEL RISK MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT**

Glass Lewis evaluates the risk management function of a public company board on a strictly case-by-case basis. Sound risk management, while necessary at all companies, is particularly important at financial firms which inherently maintain significant exposure to financial risk. We believe such financial firms should have a chief risk officer reporting directly to the board and a dedicated risk committee or a committee of the board charged with risk oversight. Moreover, many non-financial firms maintain strategies which involve a high level of exposure to financial risk. Similarly, since many non-financial firms have complex hedging or trading strategies, those firms should also have a chief risk officer and a risk committee.



Our views on risk oversight are consistent with those expressed by various regulatory bodies. In its December 2009 Final Rule release on Proxy Disclosure Enhancements, the SEC noted that risk oversight is a key competence

30 As discussed in the guidelines section labeled “Committee Chair,” where we would recommend to vote against the committee chair but the chair is not up for election because the board is staggered, we do not recommend voting against any members of the committee who are up for election; rather, we will note the concern with regard to the committee chair.

31 As discussed under the section labeled “Committee Chair,” if the committee chair is not specified, we will recommend voting against the director who has been on the committee the longest. If the longest-serving committee member cannot be determined, we will recommend voting against the longest-serving board member on the committee.

32 In the absence of both a governance and a nominating committee, we will recommend voting against the board chair on this basis, unless if the chair also serves as the CEO, in which case we will recommend voting against the longest-serving director.

33 In the absence of both a governance and a nominating committee, we will recommend voting against the board chair on this basis, unless if the chair also serves as the CEO, in which case we will recommend voting against the the longest-serving director.

34 Considering that shareholder discontent clearly relates to the director who received a greater than 50% against vote rather than the nominating chair, we review the severity of the issue(s) that initially raised shareholder concern as well as company responsiveness to such matters, and will only recommend voting against the nominating chair if a reasonable analysis suggests that it would be most appropriate. In rare cases, we will consider recommending against the nominating chair when a director receives a substantial (i.e., 20% or more) vote against based on the same analysis.

of the board and that additional disclosures would improve investor and shareholder understanding of the role of the board in the organization's risk management practices. The final rules, which became effective on February 28, 2010, now explicitly require companies and mutual funds to describe (while allowing for some degree of flexibility) the board's role in the oversight of risk.

When analyzing the risk management practices of public companies, we take note of any significant losses or writedowns on financial assets and/or structured transactions. In cases where a company has disclosed a sizable loss or writedown, and where we find that the company's board-level risk committee's poor oversight contributed to the loss, we will recommend that shareholders vote against such committee members on that basis. In addition, in cases where a company maintains a significant level of financial risk exposure but fails to disclose any explicit form of board-level risk oversight (committee or otherwise)<sup>35</sup>, we will consider recommending to vote against the board chair on that basis. However, we generally would not recommend voting against a combined chair/CEO, except in egregious cases.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISK OVERSIGHT**

Companies face significant financial, legal and reputational risks resulting from poor environmental and social practices, or negligent oversight thereof. Therefore, Glass Lewis views the identification, mitigation and management of environmental and social risks as integral components when evaluating a company's overall risk exposure. We believe boards should ensure that management conducts a complete risk analysis of company operations, including those that have environmental and social implications. Directors should monitor management's performance in managing and mitigating these environmental and social risks in order to eliminate or minimize the risks to the company and its shareholders. In cases where the board or management has failed to sufficiently identify and manage a material environmental or social risk that did or could negatively impact shareholder value, we will recommend shareholders vote against directors responsible for risk oversight in consideration of the nature of the risk and the potential effect on shareholder value.

## **DIRECTOR COMMITMENTS**

We believe that directors should have the necessary time to fulfill their duties to shareholders. In our view, an overcommitted director can pose a material risk to a company's shareholders, particularly during periods of crisis. In addition, recent research indicates that the time commitment associated with being a director has been on a significant upward trend in the past decade.<sup>36</sup> As a result, we generally recommend that shareholders vote against a director who serves as an executive officer of any public company while serving on more than two public company boards and any other director who serves on more than five public company boards.

Because we believe that executives will primarily devote their attention to executive duties, we generally will not recommend that shareholders vote against overcommitted directors at the companies where they serve as an executive.

When determining whether a director's service on an excessive number of boards may limit the ability of the director to devote sufficient time to board duties, we may consider relevant factors such as the size and location of the other companies where the director serves on the board, the director's board roles at the companies in question, whether the director serves on the board of any large privately-held companies, the director's tenure on the boards in question, and the director's attendance record at all companies. In the case of directors who serve in executive roles other than CEO (e.g., executive chair), we will evaluate the specific duties and responsibilities of that role in determining whether an exception is warranted.

35 A committee responsible for risk management could be a dedicated risk committee, the audit committee, or the finance committee, depending on a given company's board structure and method of disclosure. At some companies, the entire board is charged with risk management.

36 For example, the 2015-2016 NACD Public Company Governance Survey states that, on average, directors spent a total of 248.2 hours annual on board-related matters during the past year, which it describes as a "historically high level" that is significantly above the average hours recorded in 2006. Additionally, the 2015 Spencer Stuart Board Index indicates that the average number of outside board seats held by CEOs of S&P 500 companies is 0.6, down from 0.7 in 2009 and 0.9 in 2004.

We may also refrain from recommending against certain directors if the company provides sufficient rationale for their continued board service. The rationale should allow shareholders to evaluate the scope of the directors' other commitments, as well as their contributions to the board including specialized knowledge of the company's industry, strategy or key markets, the diversity of skills, perspective and background they provide, and other relevant factors. We will also generally refrain from recommending to vote against a director who serves on an excessive number of boards within a consolidated group of companies or a director that represents a firm whose sole purpose is to manage a portfolio of investments which include the company.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

In addition to the three key characteristics — independence, performance, experience — that we use to evaluate board members, we consider conflict-of-interest issues as well as the size of the board of directors when making voting recommendations.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

We believe board members should be wholly free of identifiable and substantial conflicts of interest, regardless of the overall level of independent directors on the board. Accordingly, we recommend that shareholders vote against the following types of directors:

A CFO who is on the board: In our view, the CFO holds a unique position relative to financial reporting and disclosure to shareholders. Due to the critical importance of financial disclosure and reporting, we believe the CFO should report to the board and not be a member of it.

A director who provides — or a director who has an immediate family member who provides — material consulting or other material professional services to the company. These services may include legal, consulting, or financial services. We question the need for the company to have consulting relationships with its directors. We view such relationships as creating conflicts for directors, since they may be forced to weigh their own interests against shareholder interests when making board decisions. In addition, a company's decisions regarding where to turn for the best professional services may be compromised when doing business with the professional services firm of one of the company's directors.

A director, or a director who has an immediate family member, engaging in airplane, real estate, or similar deals, including perquisite-type grants from the company, amounting to more than \$50,000. Directors who receive these sorts of payments from the company will have to make unnecessarily complicated decisions that may pit their interests against shareholder interests.

Interlocking directorships: CEOs or other top executives who serve on each other's boards create an interlock that poses conflicts that should be avoided to ensure the promotion of shareholder interests above all else.<sup>37</sup>

5.

All board members who served at a time when a poison pill with a term of longer than one year was adopted without shareholder approval within the prior twelve months.<sup>38</sup> In the event a board is classified and shareholders are therefore unable to vote against all directors, we will recommend voting against the remaining directors the next year they are up for a shareholder vote. If a poison pill with a term of one year or less was adopted without shareholder approval, and without adequate justification, we will consider recommending that shareholders vote against all members of the governance committee. If the board has, without seeking shareholder approval, and without adequate justification, extended the term of a poison pill by one year or less in two consecutive years, we will consider recommending that shareholders vote against the entire board.

37 We do not apply a look-back period for this situation. The interlock policy applies to both public and private companies. We will also evaluate multiple board interlocks among non-insiders (i.e., multiple directors serving on the same boards at other companies), for evidence of a pattern of poor oversight.

38 Refer to Section V. Governance Structure and the Shareholder Franchise for further discussion of our policies regarding anti-takeover measures, including poison pills.

## Size of the Board of Directors

While we do not believe there is a universally applicable optimum board size, we do believe boards should have at least five directors to ensure sufficient diversity in decision-making and to enable the formation of key board committees with independent directors. Conversely, we believe that boards with more than 20 members will typically suffer under the weight of “too many cooks in the kitchen” and have difficulty reaching consensus and making timely decisions. Sometimes the presence of too many voices can make it difficult to draw on the wisdom and experience in the room by virtue of the need to limit the discussion so that each voice may be heard.

To that end, we typically recommend voting against the chair of the nominating committee (or the governance committee, in the absence of a nominating committee) at a board with fewer than five directors or more than 20 directors.<sup>39</sup>

## CONTROLLED COMPANIES

We believe controlled companies warrant certain exceptions to our independence standards. The board’s function is to protect shareholder interests; however, when an individual, entity (or group of shareholders party to a formal agreement) owns more than 50% of the voting shares, the interests of the majority of shareholders are the interests of that entity or individual. Consequently, Glass Lewis does not apply our usual two-thirds board independence rule and therefore we will not recommend voting against boards whose composition reflects the makeup of the shareholder population.

## Independence Exceptions

The independence exceptions that we make for controlled companies are as follows:

1. We do not require that controlled companies have boards that are at least two-thirds independent. So long as the insiders and/or affiliates are connected with the controlling entity, we accept the presence of non-independent board members.
2. The compensation committee and nominating and governance committees do not need to consist solely of independent directors.

We believe that standing nominating and corporate governance committees at controlled companies are unnecessary. Although having a committee charged with the duties of searching for, selecting, and nominating independent directors can be beneficial, the unique composition of a controlled company’s shareholder base makes such committees weak and irrelevant.

Likewise, we believe that independent compensation committees at controlled companies are unnecessary. Although independent directors are the best choice for approving and monitoring senior executives' pay, controlled companies serve a unique shareholder population whose voting power ensures the protection of its interests. As such, we believe that having affiliated directors on a controlled company's compensation committee is acceptable. However, given that a controlled company has certain obligations to minority shareholders we feel that an insider should not serve on the compensation committee. Therefore, Glass Lewis will recommend voting against any insider (the CEO or otherwise) serving on the compensation committee.

Controlled companies do not need an independent chair or an independent lead or presiding director. Although an independent director in a position of authority on the board — such as chair or presiding director — can best carry out the board's duties, controlled companies serve a unique shareholder population whose voting power ensures the protection of its interests.

39 The Conference Board, at p. 23 in its May 2003 report "Corporate Governance Best Practices, Id.," quotes one of its roundtable participants as stating, "[w]hen you've got a 20 or 30 person corporate board, it's one way of assuring that nothing is ever going to happen that the CEO doesn't want to happen."

## **Size of the Board of Directors**

We have no board size requirements for controlled companies.

## **Audit Committee Independence**

Despite a controlled company's status, unlike for the other key committees, we nevertheless believe that audit committees should consist solely of independent directors. Regardless of a company's controlled status, the interests of all shareholders must be protected by ensuring the integrity and accuracy of the company's financial statements. Allowing affiliated directors to oversee the preparation of financial reports could create an insurmountable conflict of interest.

## **Board Responsiveness at Dual-Class Companies**

With regards to companies where voting control is held through a dual-class share structure with disproportionate voting and economic rights, we will carefully examine the level of approval or disapproval attributed to unaffiliated shareholders when determining whether board responsiveness is warranted. Where vote results indicate that a majority of unaffiliated shareholders supported a shareholder proposal or opposed a management proposal, we believe the board should demonstrate an appropriate level of responsiveness.

## **SIGNIFICANT SHAREHOLDERS**

Where an individual or entity holds between 20-50% of a company's voting power, we believe it is reasonable to allow proportional representation on the board and committees (excluding the audit committee) based on the individual or entity's percentage of ownership.

## **GOVERNANCE FOLLOWING AN IPO OR SPIN-OFF**

We believe companies that have recently completed an initial public offering ("IPO") or spin-off should be allowed adequate time to fully comply with marketplace listing requirements and meet basic corporate governance standards. Generally speaking, Glass Lewis refrains from making recommendations on the basis of governance standards (e.g., board independence, committee membership and structure, meeting attendance, etc.) during the one-year period following an IPO.



However, some cases warrant shareholder action against the board of a company that have completed an IPO or spin-off within the past year. When evaluating companies that have recently gone public, Glass Lewis will review the terms of the applicable governing documents in order to determine whether shareholder rights are being severely restricted indefinitely. We believe boards that approve highly restrictive governing documents have demonstrated that they may subvert shareholder interests following the IPO. In conducting this evaluation, Glass Lewis will consider:

1. The adoption of anti-takeover provisions such as a poison pill or classified board
2. Supermajority vote requirements to amend governing documents
3. The presence of exclusive forum or fee-shifting provisions
4. Whether shareholders can call special meetings or act by written consent
5. The voting standard provided for the election of directors
6. The ability of shareholders to remove directors without cause
7. The presence of evergreen provisions in the Company's equity compensation arrangements

8. The presence of a dual-class share structure which does not afford common shareholders voting power that is aligned with their economic interest

In cases where a board adopts an anti-takeover provision preceding an IPO, we will consider recommending to vote against the members of the board who served when it was adopted if the board: (i) did not also commit to submit the anti-takeover provision to a shareholder vote at the company's first shareholder meeting following the IPO; or (ii) did not provide a sound rationale or sunset provision for adopting the anti-takeover provision in question.

In our view, adopting an anti-takeover device unfairly penalizes future shareholders who (except for electing to buy or sell the stock) are unable to weigh in on a matter that could potentially negatively impact their ownership interest. This notion is strengthened when a board adopts a classified board with an infinite duration or a poison pill with a five- to ten-year term immediately prior to going public, thereby insulated management for a substantial amount of time.

In addition, shareholders should also be wary of companies that adopt supermajority voting requirements before their IPO. Absent explicit provisions in the articles or bylaws stipulating that certain policies will be phased out over a certain period of time, long-term shareholders could find themselves in the predicament of having to attain a supermajority vote to approve future proposals seeking to eliminate such policies.

## **DUAL-LISTED OR FOREIGN-INCORPORATED COMPANIES**

For companies that trade on multiple exchanges or are incorporated in foreign jurisdictions but trade only in the U.S., we will apply the governance standard most relevant in each situation. We will consider a number of factors in determining which Glass Lewis country-specific policy to apply, including but not limited to: (i) the corporate governance structure and features of the company including whether the board structure is unique to a particular market; (ii) the nature of the proposals; (iii) the location of the company's primary listing, if one can be determined; (iv) the regulatory/governance regime that the board is reporting against; and (v) the availability and completeness of the company's SEC filings.

## **MUTUAL FUND BOARDS**

Mutual funds, or investment companies, are structured differently from regular public companies (i.e., operating companies). Typically, members of a fund's advisor are on the board and management takes on a different role from that of regular public companies. Thus, we focus on a short list of requirements, although many of our guidelines remain the same.

The following mutual fund policies are similar to the policies for regular public companies:

1. **Size of the board of directors** — The board should be made up of between five and twenty directors.
2. **The CFO on the board** — Neither the CFO of the fund nor the CFO of the fund's registered investment advisor should serve on the board.
3. **Independence of the audit committee** — The audit committee should consist solely of independent directors.
4. **Audit committee financial expert** — At least one member of the audit committee should be designated as the audit committee financial expert.

The following differences from regular public companies apply at mutual funds:

1. **Independence of the board** — We believe that three-fourths of an investment company's board should be made up of independent directors. This is consistent with a proposed SEC rule on investment company boards. The Investment Company Act requires 40% of the board to be independent, but

in 2001, the SEC amended the Exemptive Rules to require that a majority of a mutual fund board be independent. In 2005, the SEC proposed increasing the independence threshold to 75%. In 2006, a federal appeals court ordered that this rule amendment be put back out for public comment, putting it back into “proposed rule” status. Since mutual fund boards play a vital role in overseeing the relationship between the fund and its investment manager, there is greater need for independent oversight than there is for an operating company board.

**When the auditor is not up for ratification** — We do not recommend voting against the audit committee if the auditor is not up for ratification. Due to the different legal structure of an investment company compared to an operating company, the auditor for the investment company (i.e., mutual fund) does not conduct the same level of financial review for each investment company as for an operating company.

**Non-independent chair** — The SEC has proposed that the chair of the fund board be independent. We agree that the roles of a mutual fund’s chair and CEO should be separate. Although we believe this would be best at all companies, we recommend voting against the chair of an investment company’s nominating committee as well as the board chair if the chair and CEO of a mutual fund are the same person and the fund does not have an independent lead or presiding director. Seven former SEC commissioners support the appointment of an independent chair and we agree with them that “an independent board chair would be better able to create conditions favoring the long-term interests of fund shareholders than would a chair who is an executive of the advisor.” (See the comment letter sent to the SEC in support of the proposed rule at <http://www.sec.gov/news/studies/indchair.pdf>.)

**Multiple funds overseen by the same director** — Unlike service on a public company board, mutual fund boards require much less of a time commitment. Mutual fund directors typically serve on dozens of other mutual fund boards, often within the same fund complex. The Investment Company Institute’s (“ICI”) Overview of Fund Governance Practices, 1994-2012, indicates that the average number of funds served by an independent director in 2012 was 53. Absent evidence that a specific director is hindered from being an effective board member at a fund due to service on other funds’ boards, we refrain from maintaining a cap on the number of outside mutual fund boards that we believe a director can serve on.

## DECLASSIFIED BOARDS

Glass Lewis favors the repeal of staggered boards and the annual election of directors. We believe staggered boards are less accountable to shareholders than boards that are elected annually. Furthermore, we feel the annual election of directors encourages board members to focus on shareholder interests.

Empirical studies have shown: (i) staggered boards are associated with a reduction in a firm’s valuation; and (ii) in the context of hostile takeovers, staggered boards operate as a takeover defense, which entrenches management, discourages potential acquirers, and delivers a lower return to target shareholders.

In our view, there is no evidence to demonstrate that staggered boards improve shareholder returns in a takeover context. Some research has indicated that shareholders are worse off when a staggered board blocks a transaction; further, when a staggered board negotiates a friendly transaction, no statistically significant difference in premium occurs.<sup>40</sup> Additional research found that charter-based staggered boards “reduce the market value of a firm by 4% to 6% of its market capitalization” and that “staggered boards bring about and not merely reflect this reduction in market

value.<sup>#1</sup> A subsequent study reaffirmed that classified boards reduce shareholder value, finding “that the ongoing process of dismantling staggered boards, encouraged by institutional investors, could well contribute to increasing shareholder wealth.”<sup>#2</sup>

40 Lucian Bebchuk, John Coates IV, Guhan Subramanian, “The Powerful Antitakeover Force of Staggered Boards: Further Findings and a Reply to Symposium Participants,” 55 *Stanford Law Review* 885-917 (2002).

41 Lucian Bebchuk, Alma Cohen, “The Costs of Entrenched Boards” (2004).

42 Lucian Bebchuk, Alma Cohen and Charles C.Y. Wang, “Staggered Boards and the Wealth of Shareholders: Evidence from a Natural Experiment,” SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1706806> (2010), p. 26.

Shareholders have increasingly come to agree with this view. In 2016, 92% of S&P 500 companies had declassified boards, up from approximately 40% a decade ago.<sup>43</sup> Management proposals to declassify boards are approved with near unanimity and shareholder proposals on the topic also receive strong shareholder support; in 2014, shareholder proposals requesting that companies declassify their boards received average support of 84% (excluding abstentions and broker non-votes), whereas in 1987, only 16.4% of votes cast favored board declassification.<sup>44</sup> Further, a growing number of companies, nearly half of all those targeted by shareholder proposals requesting that all directors stand for election annually, either recommended shareholder support the proposal or made no recommendation, a departure from the more traditional management recommendation to vote against shareholder proposals.

Given our belief that declassified boards promote director accountability, the empirical evidence suggesting staggered boards reduce a company's value and the established shareholder opposition to such a structure, Glass Lewis supports the declassification of boards and the annual election of directors.

## **BOARD COMPOSITION AND REFRESHMENT**

Glass Lewis strongly supports routine director evaluation, including independent external reviews, and periodic board refreshment to foster the sharing of diverse perspectives in the boardroom and the generation of new ideas and business strategies. Further, we believe the board should evaluate the need for changes to board composition based on an analysis of skills and experience necessary for the company, as well as the results of the director evaluations, as opposed to relying solely on age or tenure limits. When necessary, shareholders can address concerns regarding proper board composition through director elections.

In our view, a director's experience can be a valuable asset to shareholders because of the complex, critical issues that boards face. This said, we recognize that in rare circumstances, a lack of refreshment can contribute to a lack of board responsiveness to poor company performance.

On occasion, age or term limits can be used as a means to remove a director for boards that are unwilling to police their membership and enforce turnover. Some shareholders support term limits as a way to force change in such circumstances.

While we understand that age limits can aid board succession planning, the long-term impact of age limits restricts experienced and potentially valuable board members from service through an arbitrary means. We believe that shareholders are better off monitoring the board's overall composition, including the diversity of its members, the alignment of the board's areas of expertise with a company's strategy, the board's approach to corporate governance, and its stewardship of company performance, rather than imposing inflexible rules that don't necessarily correlate with returns or benefits for shareholders.

However, if a board adopts term/age limits, it should follow through and not waive such limits. If the board waives its term/age limits, Glass Lewis will consider recommending shareholders vote against the nominating and/or governance committees, unless the rule was waived with sufficient explanation, such as consummation of a corporate transaction like a merger.

## **BOARD GENDER DIVERSITY**

Glass Lewis recognizes the importance of ensuring that the board is comprised of directors who have a diversity of skills, thought and experience, as such diversity benefits companies by providing a broad range of perspectives and insights.<sup>45</sup> As with previous years, Glass Lewis will continue to closely review the composition of the board and may note as a concern instances where we believe the board lacks representation of diverse director candidates, including those boards which have no female directors.

43 Spencer Stuart Board Index, 2016, p. 14.

44 Lucian Bebchuk, John Coates IV and Guhan Subramanian, “The Powerful Antitakeover Force of Staggered Boards: Theory, Evidence, and Policy”.

45 <http://www.glasslewis.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-In-Depth-Report-Gender-Diversity.pdf>.

In 2018, we will not make voting recommendations solely on the basis of the diversity of the board. Rather, it will be one of many considerations we make when evaluating companies' oversight structures. Beginning in 2019, however, Glass Lewis will generally recommend voting against the nominating committee chair of a board that has no female members. Depending on other factors, including the size of the company, the industry in which the company operates and the governance profile of the company, we may extend this recommendation to vote against other nominating committee members. When making these voting recommendations, we will carefully review a company's disclosure of its diversity considerations and may refrain from recommending shareholders vote against directors of companies outside the Russell 3000 index, or when boards have provided a sufficient rationale for not having any female board members or have disclosed a plan to address the lack of diversity on the board.

## **PROXY ACCESS**

In lieu of running their own contested election, proxy access would not only allow certain shareholders to nominate directors to company boards but the shareholder nominees would be included on the company's ballot, significantly enhancing the ability of shareholders to play a meaningful role in selecting their representatives. Glass Lewis generally supports affording shareholders the right to nominate director candidates to management's proxy as a means to ensure that significant, long-term shareholders have an ability to nominate candidates to the board.

Companies generally seek shareholder approval to amend company bylaws to adopt proxy access in response to shareholder engagement or pressure, usually in the form of a shareholder proposal requesting proxy access, although some companies may adopt some elements of proxy access without prompting. Glass Lewis considers several factors when evaluating whether to support proposals for companies to adopt proxy access including the specified minimum ownership and holding requirement for shareholders to nominate one or more directors, as well as company size, performance and responsiveness to shareholders.

For a discussion of recent regulatory events in this area, along with a detailed overview of the Glass Lewis approach to Shareholder Proposals regarding Proxy Access, refer to Glass Lewis' *Proxy Paper Guidelines for Shareholder Initiatives*, available at [www.glasslewis.com](http://www.glasslewis.com).

## **MAJORITY VOTE FOR THE ELECTION OF DIRECTORS**

Majority voting for the election of directors is fast becoming the de facto standard in corporate board elections. In our view, the majority voting proposals are an effort to make the case for shareholder impact on director elections on a company-specific basis.

While this proposal would not give shareholders the opportunity to nominate directors or lead to elections where shareholders have a choice among director candidates, if implemented, the proposal would allow shareholders to have



a voice in determining whether the nominees proposed by the board should actually serve as the overseer-representatives of shareholders in the boardroom. We believe this would be a favorable outcome for shareholders.

The number of shareholder proposals requesting that companies adopt a majority voting standard has declined significantly during the past decade, largely as a result of widespread adoption of majority voting or director resignation policies at U.S. companies. In 2016, 88% of the S&P 500 Index had implemented a resignation policy for directors failing to receive majority shareholder support, compared to 76% in 2011.<sup>46</sup>

## **THE PLURALITY VOTE STANDARD**

Today, most US companies still elect directors by a plurality vote standard. Under that standard, if one shareholder holding only one share votes in favor of a nominee (including that director, if the director is a shareholder), that nominee “wins” the election and assumes a seat on the board. The common concern among companies with a plurality voting standard is the possibility that one or more directors would not receive a majority of votes, resulting in “failed elections.”

46 Spencer Stuart Board Index, 2016, p. 12.

## **ADVANTAGES OF A MAJORITY VOTE STANDARD**

If a majority vote standard were implemented, a nominee would have to receive the support of a majority of the shares voted in order to be elected. Thus, shareholders could collectively vote to reject a director they believe will not pursue their best interests. Given that so few directors (less than 100 a year) do not receive majority support from shareholders, we think that a majority vote standard is reasonable since it will neither result in many failed director elections nor reduce the willingness of qualified, shareholder-focused directors to serve in the future. Further, most directors who fail to receive a majority shareholder vote in favor of their election do not step down, underscoring the need for true majority voting.

We believe that a majority vote standard will likely lead to more attentive directors. Although shareholders only rarely fail to support directors, the occasional majority vote against a director's election will likely deter the election of directors with a record of ignoring shareholder interests. Glass Lewis will therefore generally support proposals calling for the election of directors by a majority vote, excepting contested director elections.

In response to the high level of support majority voting has garnered, many companies have voluntarily taken steps to implement majority voting or modified approaches to majority voting. These steps range from a modified approach requiring directors that receive a majority of withheld votes to resign (i.e., a resignation policy) to actually requiring a majority vote of outstanding shares to elect directors.

We feel that the modified approach does not go far enough because requiring a director to resign is not the same as requiring a majority vote to elect a director and does not allow shareholders a definitive voice in the election process. Further, under the modified approach, the corporate governance committee could reject a resignation and, even if it accepts the resignation, the corporate governance committee decides on the director's replacement. And since the modified approach is usually adopted as a policy by the board or a board committee, it could be altered by the same board or committee at any time.

## **CONFLICTING PROPOSALS**

On January 16, 2015, the SEC announced that for the 2015 proxy season it would not opine on the application of Rule 14a-8(i)(9) that allows companies to exclude shareholder proposals, including those seeking proxy access, that conflict with a management proposal on the same issue. While the announcement did not render the rule ineffective, a number of companies opted not to exclude a shareholder proposal but rather to allow shareholders a vote on both management and shareholder proposals on the same issue, generally proxy access. The management proposals typically imposed more restrictive terms than the shareholder proposal in order to exercise the particular shareholder right at issue, e.g., a higher proxy access ownership threshold. On October 22, 2015, the SEC issued Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14H ("SLB 14H") clarifying its rule concerning the exclusion of certain shareholder proposals when similar items are also on the ballot. SLB 14H increases the burden on companies to prove to SEC staff that a conflict exists; therefore, some companies may still choose to place management proposals alongside similar shareholder proposals in

the coming year.

When Glass Lewis reviews conflicting management and shareholder proposals, we will consider the following:

- The nature of the underlying issue;
- The benefit to shareholders from implementation of the proposal;
- The materiality of the differences between the terms of the shareholder proposal and management proposal;
- The appropriateness of the provisions in the context of a company's shareholder base, corporate structure and other relevant circumstances; and
- A company's overall governance profile and, specifically, its responsiveness to shareholders as evidenced by a company's response to previous shareholder proposals and its adoption of progressive shareholder rights provisions.

## Transparency and Integrity in Financial Reporting

### AUDITOR RATIFICATION

The auditor's role as gatekeeper is crucial in ensuring the integrity and transparency of the financial information necessary for protecting shareholder value. Shareholders rely on the auditor to ask tough questions and to do a thorough analysis of a company's books to ensure that the information provided to shareholders is complete, accurate, fair, and that it is a reasonable representation of a company's financial position. The only way shareholders can make rational investment decisions is if the market is equipped with accurate information about a company's fiscal health. As stated in the October 6, 2008 Final Report of the Advisory Committee on the Auditing Profession to the U.S. Department of the Treasury:

*"The auditor is expected to offer critical and objective judgment on the financial matters under consideration, and actual and perceived absence of conflicts is critical to that expectation. The Committee believes that auditors, investors, public companies, and other market participants must understand the independence requirements and their objectives, and that auditors must adopt a mindset of skepticism when facing situations that may compromise their independence."*

As such, shareholders should demand an objective, competent and diligent auditor who performs at or above professional standards at every company in which the investors hold an interest. Like directors, auditors should be free from conflicts of interest and should avoid situations requiring a choice between the auditor's interests and the public's interests. Almost without exception, shareholders should be able to annually review an auditor's performance and to annually ratify a board's auditor selection. Moreover, in October 2008, the Advisory Committee on the Auditing Profession went even further, and recommended that "to further enhance audit committee oversight and auditor accountability ... disclosure in the company proxy statement regarding shareholder ratification [should] include the name(s) of the senior auditing partner(s) staffed on the engagement."<sup>7</sup>

On August 16, 2011, the PCAOB issued a Concept Release seeking public comment on ways that auditor independence, objectivity and professional skepticism could be enhanced, with a specific emphasis on mandatory audit firm rotation. The PCAOB convened several public roundtable meetings during 2012 to further discuss such matters. Glass Lewis believes auditor rotation can ensure both the independence of the auditor and the integrity of the audit; we will typically recommend supporting proposals to require auditor rotation when the proposal uses a reasonable period of time (usually not less than 5-7 years), particularly at companies with a history of accounting problems.

### VOTING RECOMMENDATIONS ON AUDITOR RATIFICATION

We generally support management's choice of auditor except when we believe the auditor's independence or audit integrity has been compromised. Where a board has not allowed shareholders to review and ratify an auditor, we typically recommend voting against the audit committee chair. When there have been material restatements of annual financial statements or material weaknesses in internal controls, we usually recommend voting against the entire audit committee.

47 "Final Report of the Advisory Committee on the Auditing Profession to the U.S. Department of the Treasury." p. VIII:20, October 6, 2008.

Reasons why we may not recommend ratification of an auditor include:

1. When audit fees plus audit-related fees total less than the tax fees and/or other non-audit fees.

2. Weaknesses in internal controls and including late filings by the company where the auditor bears some responsibility for the restatement or late filing.<sup>48</sup>

3. When the auditor performs prohibited services such as tax-shelter work, tax services for the CEO or CFO, or contingent-fee work, such as a fee based on a percentage of economic benefit to the company.

4. When audit fees are excessively low, especially when compared with other companies in the same industry.

5. When the company has aggressive accounting policies.

6. When the company has poor disclosure or lack of transparency in its financial statements.

7. Where the auditor limited its liability through its contract with the company or the audit contract requires the corporation to use alternative dispute resolution procedures without adequate justification.

8. We also look for other relationships or concerns with the auditor that might suggest a conflict between the auditor's interests and shareholder interests.

## **PENSION ACCOUNTING ISSUES**

A pension accounting question occasionally raised in proxy proposals is what effect, if any, projected returns on employee pension assets should have on a company's net income. This issue often arises in the executive-compensation context in a discussion of the extent to which pension accounting should be reflected in business performance for purposes of calculating payments to executives.

Glass Lewis believes that pension credits should not be included in measuring income that is used to award performance-based compensation. Because many of the assumptions used in accounting for retirement plans are subject to the company's discretion, management would have an obvious conflict of interest if pay were tied to pension income. In our view, projected income from pensions does not truly reflect a company's performance.

<sup>48</sup> An auditor does not audit interim financial statements. Thus, we generally do not believe that an auditor should be opposed due to a restatement of interim financial statements unless the nature of the misstatement is clear from a reading of the incorrect financial statements.



## **The Link Between Compensation and Performance**

Glass Lewis carefully reviews the compensation awarded to senior executives, as we believe that this is an important area in which the board's priorities are revealed. Glass Lewis strongly believes executive compensation should be linked directly with the performance of the business the executive is charged with managing. We believe the most effective compensation arrangements provide for an appropriate mix of performance-based short- and long-term incentives in addition to fixed pay elements while promoting a prudent and sustainable level of risk-taking.

Glass Lewis believes that comprehensive, timely and transparent disclosure of executive pay is critical to allowing shareholders to evaluate the extent to which pay is aligned with company performance. When reviewing proxy materials, Glass Lewis examines whether the company discloses the performance metrics used to determine executive compensation. We recognize performance metrics must necessarily vary depending on the company and industry, among other factors, and may include a wide variety of financial measures as well as industry-specific performance indicators. However, we believe companies should disclose why the specific performance metrics were selected and how the actions they are designed to incentivize will lead to better corporate performance.

Moreover, it is rarely in shareholders' interests to disclose competitive data about individual salaries below the senior executive level. Such disclosure could create internal personnel discord that would be counterproductive for the company and its shareholders. While we favor full disclosure for senior executives and we view pay disclosure at the aggregate level (e.g., the number of employees being paid over a certain amount or in certain categories) as potentially useful, we do not believe share-holders need or will benefit from detailed reports about individual management employees other than the most senior executives.

## **ADVISORY VOTE ON EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION ("SAY-ON-PAY")**

The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the "Dodd-Frank Act") required companies to hold an advisory vote on executive compensation at the first shareholder meeting that occurs six months after enactment of the bill (January 21, 2011).

This practice of allowing shareholders a non-binding vote on a company's compensation report is standard practice in many non-US countries, and has been a requirement for most companies in the United Kingdom since 2003 and in Australia since 2005. Although say-on-pay proposals are non-binding, a high level of "against" or "abstain" votes indicates substantial shareholder concern about a company's compensation policies and procedures.



Given the complexity of most companies' compensation programs, Glass Lewis applies a highly nuanced approach when analyzing advisory votes on executive compensation. We review each company's compensation on a case-by-case basis, recognizing that each company must be examined in the context of industry, size, maturity, performance, financial condition, its historic pay for performance practices, and any other relevant internal or external factors.

We believe that each company should design and apply specific compensation policies and practices that are appropriate to the circumstances of the company and, in particular, will attract and retain competent executives and other staff, while motivating them to grow the company's long-term shareholder value.

Where we find those specific policies and practices serve to reasonably align compensation with performance, and such practices are adequately disclosed, Glass Lewis will recommend supporting the company's approach. If, however, those specific policies and practices fail to demonstrably link compensation with performance, Glass Lewis will generally recommend voting against the say-on-pay proposal.

Glass Lewis reviews say-on-pay proposals on both a qualitative basis and a quantitative basis, with a focus on several main areas:

- The overall design and structure of the company's executive compensation programs including selection and challenging nature of performance metrics;
- The implementation and effectiveness of the company's executive compensation programs including pay mix and use of performance metrics in determining pay levels;
- The quality and content of the company's disclosure;
- The quantum paid to executives; and
- The link between compensation and performance as indicated by the company's current and past pay-for-performance grades.

We also review any significant changes or modifications, and the rationale for such changes, made to the company's compensation structure or award amounts, including base salaries.

## **SAY-ON-PAY VOTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

In cases where we find deficiencies in a company's compensation program's design, implementation or management, we will recommend that shareholders vote against the say-on-pay proposal. Generally such instances include evidence of a pattern of poor pay-for-performance practices (i.e., deficient or failing pay-for-performance grades), unclear or questionable disclosure regarding the overall compensation structure (e.g., limited information regarding benchmarking processes, limited rationale for bonus performance metrics and targets, etc.), questionable adjustments to certain aspects of the overall compensation structure (e.g., limited rationale for significant changes to performance targets or metrics, the payout of guaranteed bonuses or sizable retention grants, etc.), and/or other egregious compensation practices.

Although not an exhaustive list, the following issues when weighed together may cause Glass Lewis to recommend voting against a say-on-pay vote:

- Inappropriate peer group and/or benchmarking issues;
- Inadequate or no rationale for changes to peer groups;
- Egregious or excessive bonuses, equity awards or severance payments, including golden handshakes and golden parachutes;
- Problematic contractual payments, such as guaranteed bonuses;
- Targeting overall levels of compensation at higher than median without adequate justification;
- Performance targets not sufficiently challenging, and/or providing for high potential payouts;
- Performance targets lowered without justification;
- Discretionary bonuses paid when short- or long-term incentive plan targets were not met;

- Executive pay high relative to peers not justified by outstanding company performance; and
- The terms of the long-term incentive plans are inappropriate (please see “Long-Term Incentives” on page 30).

In instances where a company has simply failed to provide sufficient disclosure of its policies, we may recommend shareholders vote against this proposal solely on this basis, regardless of the appropriateness of compensation levels.

Where we identify egregious compensation practices, we may also recommend voting against the compensation committee based on the practices or actions of its members during the year. Such practices may include: approving large one-off payments, the inappropriate, unjustified use of discretion, or sustained poor pay for performance practices.

## **COMPANY RESPONSIVENESS**

At companies that received a significant level of shareholder opposition (20% or greater) to their say-on-pay proposal at the previous annual meeting, we believe the board should demonstrate some level of engagement and responsiveness to the shareholder concerns behind the discontent, particularly in response to shareholder engagement. While we recognize that sweeping changes cannot be made to a compensation program without due consideration and that a majority of shareholders voted in favor of the proposal, given that the average approval rate for say-on-pay proposals is about 90% we believe the compensation committee should provide some level of response to a significant vote against, including engaging with large shareholders to identify their concerns. In the absence of any evidence that the board is actively engaging shareholders on these issues and responding accordingly, we may recommend holding compensation committee members accountable for failing to adequately respond to shareholder opposition, giving careful consideration to the level of shareholder protest and the severity and history of compensation problems.

## **PAY FOR PERFORMANCE**

Glass Lewis believes an integral part of a well-structured compensation package is a successful link between pay and performance. Our proprietary pay-for-performance model was developed to better evaluate the link between pay and performance of the top five executives at US companies. Our model benchmarks these executives' pay and company performance against peers selected using Equilar's market-based peer groups and across five performance metrics. By measuring the magnitude of the gap between two weighted-average percentile rankings (executive compensation and performance), we rank companies based on a grade system. The grades guide our evaluation of compensation committee effectiveness, and we generally recommend voting against compensation committee members at companies with a pattern of failing our pay-for-performance analysis. Unlike a school letter system, however, the letter “C” in the Glass Lewis grade system does not indicate a significant lapse; rather, a “C” in the Glass Lewis grade system identifies companies where the pay and performance percentile rankings relative to peers are generally aligned. This suggests that the company neither overpays nor underpays its executives relative to its comparator group.

The grades “A” and “B” are also designated to companies which align pay with performance. However, these grades indicate lower compensation levels relative to the market and to company performance. A “B” grade stems from slightly higher performance levels in comparison to market peers while executives earn relatively less than peers. Receiving an “A” in our analysis shows that the company is paying significantly less than peers while outperforming the comparator group.

A grade of “D” or “F” in our analysis is due to high pay and low performance relative to the comparator group. In our analysis, we differentiate between a disconnect between pay and performance, “D”, and a significant disconnect, “F”. An “F” grade in our analysis indicates that executives receive significantly higher compensation than peers while underperforming the market.

We also use this analysis to inform our voting decisions on say-on-pay proposals. As such, if a company receives a failing grade from our proprietary model, we are more likely to recommend that shareholders vote against the say-on-pay proposal. However, other qualitative factors such as an effective overall incentive structure, the relevance of selected performance metrics, significant forthcoming enhancements or reasonable long-term payout levels may give us cause to recommend in favor of a proposal even when we have identified a disconnect between pay and performance.

## **SHORT-TERM INCENTIVES**

A short-term bonus or incentive (“STI”) should be demonstrably tied to performance. Whenever possible, we believe a mix of corporate and individual performance measures is appropriate. We would normally expect performance measures for STIs to be based on company-wide or divisional financial measures as well as non-financial factors such as those related to safety, environmental issues, and customer satisfaction. While we recognize that companies operating in different sectors or markets may seek to utilize a wide range of metrics, we expect such measures to be appropriately tied to a company’s business drivers.

Further, the target and potential maximum awards that can be achieved under STI awards should be disclosed. Shareholders should expect stretching performance targets for the maximum award to be achieved. Any increase in the potential target and maximum award should be clearly justified to shareholders.

Glass Lewis recognizes that disclosure of some measures may include commercially confidential information. Therefore, we believe it may be reasonable to exclude such information in some cases as long as the company provides sufficient justification for non-disclosure. However, where a short-term bonus has been paid, companies should disclose the extent to which performance has been achieved against relevant targets, including disclosure of the actual target achieved.

Where management has received significant STIs but short-term performance over the previous year prima facie appears to be poor or negative, we believe the company should provide a clear explanation of why these significant short-term payments were made. In addition, we believe that where companies use non-GAAP or bespoke metrics, clear reconciliations between these figures and GAAP figures in audited financial statement should be provided.

## **LONG-TERM INCENTIVES**

Glass Lewis recognizes the value of equity-based incentive programs, which are often the primary long-term incentive for executives. When used appropriately, they can provide a vehicle for linking an executive’s pay to company performance, thereby aligning their interests with those of shareholders. In addition, equity-based compensation can be an effective way to attract, retain and motivate key employees.

There are certain elements that Glass Lewis believes are common to most well-structured long-term incentive (“LTI”) plans. These include:

- No re-testing or lowering of performance conditions;
- Performance metrics that cannot be easily manipulated by management;
- Two or more performance metrics;
- At least one relative performance metric that compares the company’s performance to a relevant peer group or index;
- Performance periods of at least three years;
- Stretching metrics that incentivize executives to strive for outstanding performance while not encouraging excessive risk-taking; and

Individual limits expressed as a percentage of base salary.

Performance measures should be carefully selected and should relate to the specific business/industry in which the company operates and, especially, the key value drivers of the company's business. As with short-term incentive plans, the basis for any adjustments to metrics or results should be clearly explained.

While cognizant of the inherent complexity of certain performance metrics, Glass Lewis generally believes that measuring a company's performance with multiple metrics serves to provide a more complete picture of the company's performance than a single metric; further, reliance on just one metric may focus too much management attention on a single target and is therefore more susceptible to manipulation. When utilized for relative measurements, external benchmarks such as a sector index or peer group should be disclosed and transparent. The rationale behind the selection of a specific index or peer group should also be disclosed. Internal benchmarks should also be disclosed and transparent, unless a cogent case for confidentiality is made and fully explained. Similarly, actual performance and vesting levels for previous grants earned during the fiscal year should be disclosed.

We also believe shareholders should evaluate the relative success of a company's compensation programs, particularly with regard to existing equity-based incentive plans, in linking pay and performance when evaluating new LTI plans to determine the impact of additional stock awards. We will therefore review the company's pay-for-performance grade (see below for more information) and specifically the proportion of total compensation that is stock-based.

## **TRANSITIONAL AND ONE-OFF AWARDS**

Glass Lewis believes shareholders should generally be wary of awards granted outside of the standard incentive schemes outlined above, as such awards have the potential to undermine the integrity of a company's regular incentive plans, the link between pay and performance or both. We generally believe that if the existing incentive programs fail to provide adequate incentives to executives, companies should redesign their compensation programs rather than make additional grants.

However, we recognize that in certain circumstances, additional incentives may be appropriate. In these cases, companies should provide a thorough description of the awards, including a cogent and convincing explanation of their necessity and why existing awards do not provide sufficient motivation. Further, such awards should be tied to future service and performance whenever possible.

Similarly, we acknowledge that there may be certain costs associated with transitions at the executive level. We believe that sign-on arrangements should be clearly disclosed and accompanied by a meaningful explanation of the payments and the process by which the amounts are reached. Furthermore, the details of and basis for any "make-whole" payments (which are paid as compensation for forfeited awards from a previous employer) should be provided.



While in limited circumstances such deviations may not be inappropriate, we believe shareholders should be provided with a meaningful explanation of any additional benefits agreed upon outside of the regular arrangements. For severance or sign-on arrangements, we may consider the executive's regular target compensation levels or the sums paid to other executives (including the recipient's predecessor, where applicable) in evaluating the appropriateness of such an arrangement.

Additionally, we believe companies making supplemental or one-time awards should also describe if and how the regular compensation arrangements will be affected by these additional grants. In reviewing a company's use of supplemental awards, Glass Lewis will evaluate the terms and size of the grants in the context of the company's overall incentive strategy and granting practices, as well as the current operating environment.

## **RECOUPMENT PROVISIONS (“CLAWBACKS”)**

We believe it is prudent for boards to adopt detailed and stringent bonus recoupment policies to prevent executives from retaining performance-based awards that were not truly earned. We believe such “clawback” policies should be triggered in the event of a restatement of financial results or similar revision of performance indicators upon which bonuses were based. Such policies would allow the board to review all performance-related bonuses and awards made to senior executives during the period covered by a restatement and would, to the extent feasible, allow the company to recoup such bonuses in the event that performance goals were not actually achieved. We further believe clawback policies should be subject to only limited discretion to ensure the integrity of such policies.

Section 954 of the Dodd-Frank Act requires the SEC to create a rule requiring listed companies to adopt policies for recouping certain compensation during a three-year look-back period. The rule applies to incentive-based compensation paid to current or former executives if the company is required to prepare an accounting restatement due to erroneous data resulting from material non-compliance with any financial reporting requirements under the securities laws. However, the SEC has yet to finalize the relevant rules.

These recoupment provisions are more stringent than under Section 304 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in three respects: (i) the provisions extend to current or former executive officers rather than only to the CEO and CFO; (ii) it has a three-year look-back period (rather than a twelve-month look-back period); and (iii) it allows for recovery of compensation based upon a financial restatement due to erroneous data, and therefore does not require misconduct on the part of the executive or other employees.

## **HEDGING OF STOCK**

Glass Lewis believes that the hedging of shares by executives in the shares of the companies where they are employed severs the alignment of interests of the executive with shareholders. We believe companies should adopt strict policies to prohibit executives from hedging the economic risk associated with their shareownership in the company.

## **PLEDGING OF STOCK**

Glass Lewis believes that shareholders should examine the facts and circumstances of each company rather than apply a one-size-fits-all policy regarding employee stock pledging. Glass Lewis believes that shareholders benefit when employees, particularly senior executives have “skin-in-the-game” and therefore recognizes the benefits of measures designed to encourage employees to both buy shares out of their own pocket and to retain shares they have been granted; blanket policies prohibiting stock pledging may discourage executives and employees from doing either.

However, we also recognize that the pledging of shares can present a risk that, depending on a host of factors, an executive with significant pledged shares and limited other assets may have an incentive to take steps to avoid a forced sale of shares in the face of a rapid stock price decline. Therefore, to avoid substantial losses from a forced sale to meet the terms of the loan, the executive may have an incentive to boost the stock price in the short term in a manner that is unsustainable, thus hurting shareholders in the long-term. We also recognize concerns regarding pledging may not apply to less senior employees, given the latter group's significantly more limited influence over a company's stock price. Therefore, we believe that the issue of pledging shares should be reviewed in that context, as should policies that distinguish between the two groups.

Glass Lewis believes that the benefits of stock ownership by executives and employees may outweigh the risks of stock pledging, depending on many factors. As such, Glass Lewis reviews all relevant factors in evaluating proposed policies, limitations and prohibitions on pledging stock, including:

- The number of shares pledged;
- The percentage executives' pledged shares are of outstanding shares;

- The percentage executives' pledged shares are of each executive's shares and total assets;
- Whether the pledged shares were purchased by the employee or granted by the company;
- Whether there are different policies for purchased and granted shares;
- Whether the granted shares were time-based or performance-based;
- The overall governance profile of the company;
- The volatility of the company's stock (in order to determine the likelihood of a sudden stock price drop);
- The nature and cyclicity, if applicable, of the company's industry;
- The participation and eligibility of executives and employees in pledging;
- The company's current policies regarding pledging and any waiver from these policies for employees and executives; and
- Disclosure of the extent of any pledging, particularly among senior executives.

#### **COMPENSATION CONSULTANT INDEPENDENCE**

As mandated by Section 952 of the Dodd-Frank Act, as of January 11, 2013, the SEC approved new listing requirements for both the NYSE and NASDAQ which require compensation committees to consider six factors in assessing compensation advisor independence. These factors include: (1) provision of other services to the company; (2) fees paid by the company as a percentage of the advisor's total annual revenue; (3) policies and procedures of the advisor to mitigate conflicts of interests; (4) any business or personal relationships of the consultant with any member of the compensation committee; (5) any company stock held by the consultant; and (6) any business or personal relationships of the consultant with any executive officer of the company. According to the SEC, "no one factor should be viewed as a determinative factor." Glass Lewis believes this six-factor assessment is an important process for every compensation committee to undertake but believes companies employing a consultant for board compensation, consulting and other corporate services should provide clear disclosure beyond just a reference to examining the six points to allow shareholders to review the specific aspects of the various consultant relationships.

We believe compensation consultants are engaged to provide objective, disinterested, expert advice to the compensation committee. When the consultant or its affiliates receive substantial income from providing other services to the company, we believe the potential for a conflict of interest arises and the independence of the consultant may be jeopardized. Therefore, Glass Lewis will, when relevant, note the potential for a conflict of interest when the fees paid to the advisor or its affiliates for other services exceeds those paid for compensation consulting.

#### **CEO PAY RATIO**

As mandated by Section 953(b) of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Consumer and Protection Act, beginning in 2018, issuers will be required to disclose the median annual total compensation of all employees except the CEO, the total annual compensation of the CEO or equivalent position, and the ratio between the two amounts. Glass Lewis will display the pay ratio as a data point in our Proxy Papers, as available. While we recognize that the pay ratio has the potential to provide additional insight when assessing a company's pay practices, at this time it will not be a determinative factor in our voting recommendations.

## **FREQUENCY OF SAY-ON-PAY**

The Dodd-Frank Act also requires companies to allow shareholders a non-binding vote on the frequency of say-on-pay votes, i.e. every one, two or three years. Additionally, Dodd-Frank requires companies to hold such votes on the frequency of say-on-pay votes at least once every six years.

We believe companies should submit say-on-pay votes to shareholders every year. We believe that the time and financial burdens to a company with regard to an annual vote are relatively small and incremental and are outweighed by the benefits to shareholders through more frequent accountability. Implementing biannual or triennial votes on executive compensation limits shareholders' ability to hold the board accountable for its compensation practices through means other than voting against the compensation committee. Unless a company provides a compelling rationale or unique circumstances for say-on-pay votes less frequent than annually, we will generally recommend that shareholders support annual votes on compensation.

## **VOTE ON GOLDEN PARACHUTE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Dodd-Frank Act also requires companies to provide shareholders with a separate non-binding vote on approval of golden parachute compensation arrangements in connection with certain change-in-control transactions. However, if the golden parachute arrangements have previously been subject to a say-on-pay vote which shareholders approved, then this required vote is waived.

Glass Lewis believes the narrative and tabular disclosure of golden parachute arrangements benefits all shareholders. Glass Lewis analyzes each golden parachute arrangement on a case-by-case basis, taking into account, among other items: the nature of the change-in-control transaction, the ultimate value of the payments particularly compared to the value of the transaction, any excise tax gross-up obligations, the tenure and position of the executives in question before and after the transaction, any new or amended employment agreements entered into in connection with the transaction, and the type of triggers involved (i.e., single vs. double).

## **EQUITY-BASED COMPENSATION PLAN PROPOSALS**

We believe that equity compensation awards, when not abused, are useful for retaining employees and providing an incentive for them to act in a way that will improve company performance. Glass Lewis recognizes that equity-based compensation plans are critical components of a company's overall compensation program and we analyze such plans accordingly based on both quantitative and qualitative factors.

Our quantitative analysis assesses the plan's cost and the company's pace of granting utilizing a number of different analyses, comparing the program with absolute limits we believe are key to equity value creation and with a carefully chosen peer group. In general, our model seeks to determine whether the proposed plan is either absolutely excessive or is more than one standard deviation away from the average plan for the peer group on a range of criteria, including dilution to shareholders and the projected annual cost relative to the company's financial performance. Each of the analyses (and their constituent parts) is weighted and the plan is scored in accordance with that weight.

We compare the program's expected annual expense with the business's operating metrics to help determine whether the plan is excessive in light of company performance. We also compare the plan's expected annual cost to the enterprise value of the firm rather than to market capitalization because the employees, managers and directors of the firm contribute to the creation of enterprise value but not necessarily market capitalization (the biggest difference is seen where cash represents the vast majority of market capitalization). Finally, we do not rely exclusively on relative comparisons with averages because, in addition to creeping averages serving to inflate compensation, we believe that some absolute limits are warranted.

We then consider qualitative aspects of the plan such as plan administration, the method and terms of exercise, repricing history, express or implied rights to reprice, and the presence of evergreen provisions. We also

closely review the choice and use of, and difficulty in meeting, the awards' performance metrics and targets, if any. We believe significant changes to the terms of a plan should be explained for shareholders and clearly indicated. Other factors such as a company's size and operating environment may also be relevant in assessing the severity of concerns or the benefits of certain changes. Finally, we may consider a company's executive compensation practices in certain situations, as applicable.

We evaluate equity plans based on certain overarching principles:

- Companies should seek more shares only when needed;
- Requested share amounts should be small enough that companies seek shareholder approval every three to four years (or more frequently);
- If a plan is relatively expensive, it should not grant options solely to senior executives and board members;
- Dilution of annual net share count or voting power, along with the "overhang" of incentive plans, should be limited;
- Annual cost of the plan (especially if not shown on the income statement) should be reasonable as a percentage of financial results and should be in line with the peer group;
- The expected annual cost of the plan should be proportional to the business's value;
- The intrinsic value that option grantees received in the past should be reasonable compared with the business's financial results;
- Plans should not permit re-pricing of stock options;
- Plans should not contain excessively liberal administrative or payment terms;
- Plans should not count shares in ways that understate the potential dilution, or cost, to common shareholders. This refers to "inverse" full-value award multipliers;
- Selected performance metrics should be challenging and appropriate, and should be subject to relative performance measurements; and
- Stock grants should be subject to minimum vesting and/or holding periods sufficient to ensure sustainable performance and promote retention.

## **OPTION EXCHANGES**

Glass Lewis views option repricing plans and option exchange programs with great skepticism. Shareholders have substantial risk in owning stock and we believe that the employees, officers, and directors who receive stock options should be similarly situated to align their interests with shareholder interests.



We are concerned that option grantees who believe they will be “rescued” from underwater options will be more inclined to take unjustifiable risks. Moreover, a predictable pattern of repricing or exchanges substantially alters a stock option’s value because options that will practically never expire deeply out of the money are worth far more than options that carry a risk of expiration.

In short, repricings and option exchange programs change the bargain between shareholders and employees after the bargain has been struck.

There is one circumstance in which a repricing or option exchange program may be acceptable: if macroeconomic or industry trends, rather than specific company issues, cause a stock's value to decline dramatically and the repricing is necessary to motivate and retain employees. In this circumstance, we think it fair to conclude that option grantees may be suffering from a risk that was not foreseeable when the original "bargain" was struck. In such a circumstance, we will recommend supporting a repricing if the following conditions are true:

- Officers and board members cannot participate in the program;
- The stock decline mirrors the market or industry price decline in terms of timing and approximates the decline in magnitude;
- The exchange is value-neutral or value-creative to shareholders using very conservative assumptions and with a recognition of the adverse selection problems inherent in voluntary programs; and
- Management and the board make a cogent case for needing to motivate and retain existing employees, such as being in a competitive employment market.

#### **OPTION BACKDATING, SPRING-LOADING AND BULLET-DODGING**

Glass Lewis views option backdating, and the related practices of spring-loading and bullet-dodging, as egregious actions that warrant holding the appropriate management and board members responsible. These practices are similar to re-pricing options and eliminate much of the downside risk inherent in an option grant that is designed to induce recipients to maximize shareholder return.

Backdating an option is the act of changing an option's grant date from the actual grant date to an earlier date when the market price of the underlying stock was lower, resulting in a lower exercise price for the option. Since 2006, Glass Lewis has identified over 270 companies that have disclosed internal or government investigations into their past stock-option grants.

Spring-loading is granting stock options while in possession of material, positive information that has not been disclosed publicly. Bullet-dodging is delaying the grants of stock options until after the release of material, negative information. This can allow option grants to be made at a lower price either before the release of positive news or following the release of negative news, assuming the stock's price will move up or down in response to the information. This raises a concern similar to that of insider trading, or the trading on material non-public information.

The exercise price for an option is determined on the day of grant, providing the recipient with the same market risk as an investor who bought shares on that date. However, where options were backdated, the executive or the board (or the compensation committee) changed the grant date retroactively. The new date may be at or near the lowest price for the year or period. This would be like allowing an investor to look back and select the lowest price of the year at which to buy shares.

A 2006 study of option grants made between 1996 and 2005 at 8,000 companies found that option backdating can be an indication of poor internal controls. The study found that option backdating was more likely to occur at companies without a majority independent board and with a long-serving CEO; both factors, the study concluded, were associated with greater CEO influence on the company's compensation and governance practices.<sup>49</sup>

Where a company granted backdated options to an executive who is also a director, Glass Lewis will recommend voting against that executive/director, regardless of who decided to make the award. In addition, Glass Lewis will recommend voting against those directors who either approved or allowed the backdating. Glass Lewis feels that executives and directors who either benefited from backdated options or authorized the practice have breached their fiduciary responsibility to shareholders.

<sup>49</sup> Lucian Bebchuk, Yaniv Grinstein and Urs Peyer. "LUCKY CEOs." November, 2006.

Given the severe tax and legal liabilities to the company from backdating, Glass Lewis will consider recommending voting against members of the audit committee who served when options were backdated, a restatement occurs, material weaknesses in internal controls exist and disclosures indicate there was a lack of documentation. These committee members failed in their responsibility to ensure the integrity of the company's financial reports.

When a company has engaged in spring-loading or bullet-dodging, Glass Lewis will consider recommending voting against the compensation committee members where there has been a pattern of granting options at or near historic lows. Glass Lewis will also recommend voting against executives serving on the board who benefited from the spring-loading or bullet-dodging.

## **DIRECTOR COMPENSATION PLANS**

Glass Lewis believes that non-employee directors should receive reasonable and appropriate compensation for the time and effort they spend serving on the board and its committees. However, a balance is required. Fees should be competitive in order to retain and attract qualified individuals, but excessive fees represent a financial cost to the company and potentially compromise the objectivity and independence of non-employee directors. We will consider recommending supporting compensation plans that include option grants or other equity-based awards that help to align the interests of outside directors with those of shareholders. However, equity grants to directors should not be performance-based to ensure directors are not incentivized in the same manner as executives but rather serve as a check on imprudent risk-taking in executive compensation plan design.

Glass Lewis uses a proprietary model and analyst review to evaluate the costs of equity plans compared to the plans of peer companies with similar market capitalizations. We use the results of this model to guide our voting recommendations on stock-based director compensation plans.

## **EMPLOYEE STOCK PURCHASE PLANS**

Glass Lewis believes that employee stock purchase plans ("ESPPs") can provide employees with a sense of ownership in their company and help strengthen the alignment between the interests of employees and shareholders. We evaluate ESPPs by assessing the expected discount, purchase period, expected purchase activity (if previous activity has been disclosed) and whether the plan has a "lookback" feature. Except for the most extreme cases, Glass Lewis will generally support these plans given the regulatory purchase limit of \$25,000 per employee per year, which we believe is reasonable. We also look at the number of shares requested to see if a ESPP will significantly contribute to overall shareholder dilution or if shareholders will not have a chance to approve the program for an excessive period of time. As such, we will generally recommend against ESPPs that contain "evergreen" provisions that automatically increase the number of shares available under the ESPP each year.

**EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION TAX DEDUCTIBILITY (IRS 162(M) COMPLIANCE)**

Section 162(m) of the Internal Revenue Code allows companies to deduct compensation in excess of \$1 million for the CEO and the next three most highly compensated executive officers, excluding the CFO, if the compensation is performance-based and is paid under shareholder-approved plans. Companies therefore submit incentive plans for shareholder approval to take advantage of the tax deductibility afforded under 162(m) for certain types of compensation.

We believe the best practice for companies is to provide robust disclosure to shareholders so that they can make fully-informed judgments about the reasonableness of the proposed compensation plan. To allow for meaningful shareholder review, we prefer that disclosure should include specific performance metrics, a maximum award pool, and a maximum award amount per employee. We also believe it is important to analyze the estimated grants to see if they are reasonable and in line with the company's peers.

We typically recommend voting against a 162(m) proposal where: (i) a company fails to provide at least a list of performance targets; (ii) a company fails to provide one of either a total maximum or an individual maximum; or (iii) the proposed plan or individual maximum award limit is excessive when compared with the plans of the company's peers.

The company's record of aligning pay with performance (as evaluated using our proprietary pay-for-performance model) also plays a role in our recommendation. Where a company has a record of setting reasonable pay relative to business performance, we generally recommend voting in favor of a plan even if the plan caps seem large relative to peers because we recognize the value in special pay arrangements for continued exceptional performance.

As with all other issues we review, our goal is to provide consistent but contextual advice given the specifics of the company and ongoing performance. Overall, we recognize that it is generally not in shareholders' best interests to vote against such a plan and forgo the potential tax benefit since shareholder rejection of such plans will not curtail the awards; it will only prevent the tax deduction associated with them.

## **Governance Structure and the Shareholder Franchise**

### **ANTI-TAKEOVER MEASURES**

#### **POISON PILLS (SHAREHOLDER RIGHTS PLANS)**

Glass Lewis believes that poison pill plans are not generally in shareholders' best interests. They can reduce management accountability by substantially limiting opportunities for corporate takeovers. Rights plans can thus prevent shareholders from receiving a buy-out premium for their stock. Typically we recommend that shareholders vote against these plans to protect their financial interests and ensure that they have an opportunity to consider any offer for their shares, especially those at a premium.

We believe boards should be given wide latitude in directing company activities and in charting the company's course. However, on an issue such as this, where the link between the shareholders' financial interests and their right to consider and accept buyout offers is substantial, we believe that shareholders should be allowed to vote on whether they support such a plan's implementation. This issue is different from other matters that are typically left to board discretion. Its potential impact on and relation to shareholders is direct and substantial. It is also an issue in which management interests may be different from those of shareholders; thus, ensuring that shareholders have a voice is the only way to safeguard their interests.

In certain circumstances, we will support a poison pill that is limited in scope to accomplish a particular objective, such as the closing of an important merger, or a pill that contains what we believe to be a reasonable qualifying offer clause. We will consider supporting a poison pill plan if the qualifying offer clause includes each of the following attributes:

- The form of offer is not required to be an all-cash transaction;
- The offer is not required to remain open for more than 90 business days;
- The offeror is permitted to amend the offer, reduce the offer, or otherwise change the terms;
- There is no fairness opinion requirement; and
- There is a low to no premium requirement.

Where these requirements are met, we typically feel comfortable that shareholders will have the opportunity to voice their opinion on any legitimate offer.



## **NOL POISON PILLS**

Similarly, Glass Lewis may consider supporting a limited poison pill in the event that a company seeks shareholder approval of a rights plan for the express purpose of preserving Net Operating Losses (NOLs). While companies with NOLs can generally carry these losses forward to offset future taxable income, Section 382 of the Internal Revenue Code limits companies' ability to use NOLs in the event of a "change of ownership."<sup>50</sup> In this case, a company may adopt or amend a poison pill ("NOL pill") in order to prevent an inadvertent change of ownership by multiple investors purchasing small chunks of stock at the same time, and thereby preserve the ability to carry the NOLs forward. Often such NOL pills have trigger thresholds much lower than the common 15% or 20% thresholds, with some NOL pill triggers as low as 5%.

Glass Lewis evaluates NOL pills on a strictly case-by-case basis taking into consideration, among other factors, the value of the NOLs to the company, the likelihood of a change of ownership based on the size of the holding and the nature of the larger shareholders, the trigger threshold and whether the term of the plan is limited in duration (i.e., whether it contains a reasonable "sunset" provision) or is subject to periodic board review and/ or shareholder ratification. However, we will recommend that shareholders vote against a proposal to adopt or amend a pill to include NOL protective provisions if the company has adopted a more narrowly tailored means of preventing a change in control to preserve its NOLs. For example, a company may limit share transfers in its charter to prevent a change of ownership from occurring.

Furthermore, we believe that shareholders should be offered the opportunity to vote on any adoption or renewal of a NOL pill regardless of any potential tax benefit that it offers a company. As such, we will consider recommending voting against those members of the board who served at the time when an NOL pill was adopted without shareholder approval within the prior twelve months and where the NOL pill is not subject to shareholder ratification.

## **FAIR PRICE PROVISIONS**

Fair price provisions, which are rare, require that certain minimum price and procedural requirements be observed by any party that acquires more than a specified percentage of a corporation's common stock. The provision is intended to protect minority shareholder value when an acquirer seeks to accomplish a merger or other transaction which would eliminate or change the interests of the minority shareholders. The provision is generally applied against the acquirer unless the takeover is approved by a majority of "continuing directors" and holders of a majority, in some cases a supermajority as high as 80%, of the combined voting power of all stock entitled to vote to alter, amend, or repeal the above provisions.

The effect of a fair price provision is to require approval of any merger or business combination with an "interested shareholder" by 51% of the voting stock of the company, excluding the shares held by the interested shareholder. An interested shareholder is generally considered to be a holder of 10% or more of the company's outstanding stock, but the trigger can vary.

Generally, provisions are put in place for the ostensible purpose of preventing a back-end merger where the interested shareholder would be able to pay a lower price for the remaining shares of the company than he or she paid to gain control. The effect of a fair price provision on shareholders, however, is to limit their ability to gain a premium for their shares through a partial tender offer or open market acquisition which typically raise the share price, often significantly. A fair price provision discourages such transactions because of the potential costs of seeking shareholder approval and because of the restrictions on purchase price for completing a merger or other transaction at a later time.

50 Section 382 of the Internal Revenue Code refers to a “change of ownership” of more than 50 percentage points by one or more 5% shareholders within a three-year period. The statute is intended to deter the “trafficking” of net operating losses.

Glass Lewis believes that fair price provisions, while sometimes protecting shareholders from abuse in a takeover situation, more often act as an impediment to takeovers, potentially limiting gains to shareholders from a variety of transactions that could significantly increase share price. In some cases, even the independent directors of the board cannot make exceptions when such exceptions may be in the best interests of shareholders. Given the existence of state law protections for minority shareholders such as Section 203 of the Delaware Corporations Code, we believe it is in the best interests of shareholders to remove fair price provisions.

## **REINCORPORATION**

In general, Glass Lewis believes that the board is in the best position to determine the appropriate jurisdiction of incorporation for the company. When examining a management proposal to reincorporate to a different state or country, we review the relevant financial benefits, generally related to improved corporate tax treatment, as well as changes in corporate governance provisions, especially those relating to shareholder rights, resulting from the change in domicile. Where the financial benefits are de minimis and there is a decrease in shareholder rights, we will recommend voting against the transaction.

However, costly, shareholder-initiated reincorporations are typically not the best route to achieve the furtherance of shareholder rights. We believe shareholders are generally better served by proposing specific shareholder resolutions addressing pertinent issues which may be implemented at a lower cost, and perhaps even with board approval. However, when shareholders propose a shift into a jurisdiction with enhanced shareholder rights, Glass Lewis examines the significant ways would the company benefit from shifting jurisdictions including the following:

- Is the board sufficiently independent?
- Does the company have anti-takeover protections such as a poison pill or classified board in place?
- Has the board been previously unresponsive to shareholders (such as failing to implement a shareholder proposal that received majority shareholder support)?
- Do shareholders have the right to call special meetings of shareholders?
- Are there other material governance issues of concern at the company?
- Has the company's performance matched or exceeded its peers in the past one and three years?
- How has the company ranked in Glass Lewis' pay-for-performance analysis during the last three years?
- Does the company have an independent chair?

We note, however, that we will only support shareholder proposals to change a company's place of incorporation in exceptional circumstances.

**EXCLUSIVE FORUM AND FEE-SHIFTING BYLAW PROVISIONS**

Glass Lewis recognizes that companies may be subject to frivolous and opportunistic lawsuits, particularly in conjunction with a merger or acquisition, that are expensive and distracting. In response, companies have sought ways to prevent or limit the risk of such suits by adopting bylaws regarding where the suits must be brought or shifting the burden of the legal expenses to the plaintiff, if unsuccessful at trial.

Glass Lewis believes that charter or bylaw provisions limiting a shareholder's choice of legal venue are not in the best interests of shareholders. Such clauses may effectively discourage the use of shareholder claims by increasing their associated costs and making them more difficult to pursue. As such, shareholders should

be wary about approving any limitation on their legal recourse including limiting themselves to a single jurisdiction (e.g., Delaware) without compelling evidence that it will benefit shareholders.

For this reason, we recommend that shareholders vote against any bylaw or charter amendment seeking to adopt an exclusive forum provision unless the company: (i) provides a compelling argument on why the provision would directly benefit shareholders; (ii) provides evidence of abuse of legal process in other, non-favored jurisdictions; (iii) narrowly tailors such provision to the risks involved; and (iv) maintains a strong record of good corporate governance practices.

Moreover, in the event a board seeks shareholder approval of a forum selection clause pursuant to a bundled bylaw amendment rather than as a separate proposal, we will weigh the importance of the other bundled provisions when determining the vote recommendation on the proposal. We will nonetheless recommend voting against the chair of the governance committee for bundling disparate proposals into a single proposal (refer to our discussion of nominating and governance committee performance in Section I of the guidelines).

Similarly, some companies have adopted bylaws requiring plaintiffs who sue the company and fail to receive a judgment in their favor pay the legal expenses of the company. These bylaws, also known as “fee-shifting” or “loser pays” bylaws, will likely have a chilling effect on even meritorious shareholder lawsuits as shareholders would face an strong financial disincentive not to sue a company. Glass Lewis therefore strongly opposes the adoption of such fee-shifting bylaws and, if adopted without shareholder approval, will recommend voting against the governance committee. While we note that in June of 2015 the State of Delaware banned the adoption of fee-shifting bylaws, such provisions could still be adopted by companies incorporated in other states.

## AUTHORIZED SHARES

Glass Lewis believes that adequate capital stock is important to a company’s operation. When analyzing a request for additional shares, we typically review four common reasons why a company might need additional capital stock:

**Stock Split** — We typically consider three metrics when evaluating whether we think a stock split is likely or necessary: The historical stock pre-split price, if any; the current price relative to the company’s most common trading price over the past 52 weeks; and some absolute limits on stock price that, in our view, either always make a stock split appropriate if desired by management or would almost never be a reasonable price at which to split a stock.

**Shareholder Defenses** — Additional authorized shares could be used to bolster takeover defenses such as a poison pill. Proxy filings often discuss the usefulness of additional shares in defending against or discouraging a hostile takeover as a reason for a requested increase. Glass Lewis is typically against such defenses and will oppose actions intended to bolster such defenses.

**Financing for Acquisitions** — We look at whether the company has a history of using stock for acquisitions and  
3. attempt to determine what levels of stock have typically been required to accomplish such transactions. Likewise, we look to see whether this is discussed as a reason for additional shares in the proxy.

**Financing for Operations** — We review the company's cash position and its ability to secure financing through  
4. borrowing or other means. We look at the company's history of capitalization and whether the company has had to use stock in the recent past as a means of raising capital.

Issuing additional shares can dilute existing holders in limited circumstances. Further, the availability of additional shares, where the board has discretion to implement a poison pill, can often serve as a deterrent to interested suitors. Accordingly, where we find that the company has not detailed a plan for use of the proposed shares, or where the number of shares far exceeds those needed to accomplish a detailed plan,

we typically recommend against the authorization of additional shares. Similar concerns may also lead us to recommend against a proposal to conduct a reverse stock split if the board does not state that it will reduce the number of authorized common shares in a ratio proportionate to the split.

While we think that having adequate shares to allow management to make quick decisions and effectively operate the business is critical, we prefer that, for significant transactions, management come to shareholders to justify their use of additional shares rather than providing a blank check in the form of a large pool of unallocated shares available for any purpose.

## **ADVANCE NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

We typically recommend that shareholders vote against proposals that would require advance notice of shareholder proposals or of director nominees.

These proposals typically attempt to require a certain amount of notice before shareholders are allowed to place proposals on the ballot. Notice requirements typically range between three to six months prior to the annual meeting. Advance notice requirements typically make it impossible for a shareholder who misses the deadline to present a shareholder proposal or a director nominee that might be in the best interests of the company and its shareholders.

We believe shareholders should be able to review and vote on all proposals and director nominees. Shareholders can always vote against proposals that appear with little prior notice. Shareholders, as owners of a business, are capable of identifying issues on which they have sufficient information and ignoring issues on which they have insufficient information. Setting arbitrary notice restrictions limits the opportunity for shareholders to raise issues that may come up after the window closes.

## **VIRTUAL SHAREHOLDER MEETINGS**

A relatively small but growing contingent of companies have elected to hold shareholder meetings by virtual means only. Glass Lewis believes that virtual meeting technology can be a useful complement to a traditional, in-person shareholder meeting by expanding participation of shareholders who are unable to attend a shareholder meeting in person (i.e. a “hybrid meeting”). However, we also believe that virtual-only meetings have the potential to curb the ability of a company’s shareholders to meaningfully communicate with the company’s management.

Prominent shareholder rights advocates, including the Council of Institutional Investors, have expressed concerns that such virtual-only meetings do not approximate an in-person experience and may serve to reduce the board’s

accountability to shareholders. When analyzing the governance profile of companies that choose to hold virtual-only meetings, we look for robust disclosure in a company's proxy statement which assures shareholders that they will be afforded the same rights and opportunities to participate as they would at an in-person meeting.

In 2018, we will not make voting recommendations solely on the basis that a company is holding a virtual-only meeting. Beginning in 2019, however, Glass Lewis will generally recommend voting against members of the governance committee of a board where the board is planning to hold a virtual-only shareholder meeting and the company does not provide such disclosure.



## **VOTING STRUCTURE**

### **DUAL-CLASS SHARE STRUCTURES**

Glass Lewis believes dual-class voting structures are typically not in the best interests of common shareholders. Allowing one vote per share generally operates as a safeguard for common shareholders by ensuring that those who hold a significant minority of shares are able to weigh in on issues set forth by the board.

Furthermore, we believe that the economic stake of each shareholder should match their voting power and that no small group of shareholders, family or otherwise, should have voting rights different from those of other shareholders. On matters of governance and shareholder rights, we believe shareholders should have the power to speak and the opportunity to effect change. That power should not be concentrated in the hands of a few for reasons other than economic stake.

We generally consider a dual-class share structure to reflect negatively on a company's overall corporate governance. Because we believe that companies should have share capital structures that protect the interests of non-controlling shareholders as well as any controlling entity, we typically recommend that shareholders vote in favor of recapitalization proposals to eliminate dual-class share structures. Similarly, we will generally recommend against proposals to adopt a new class of common stock.

With regards to our evaluation of corporate governance following an IPO or spin-off within the past year, we will now include the presence of dual-class share structures as an additional factor in determining whether shareholder rights are being severely restricted indefinitely.

When analyzing voting results from meetings of shareholders at companies controlled through dual-class structures, we will carefully examine the level of approval or disapproval attributed to unaffiliated shareholders when determining whether board responsiveness is warranted. Where vote results indicate that a majority of unaffiliated shareholders supported a shareholder proposal or opposed a management proposal, we believe the board should demonstrate an appropriate level of responsiveness.

### **CUMULATIVE VOTING**

Cumulative voting increases the ability of minority shareholders to elect a director by allowing shareholders to cast as many shares of the stock they own multiplied by the number of directors to be elected. As companies generally have multiple nominees up for election, cumulative voting allows shareholders to cast all of their votes for a single

nominee, or a smaller number of nominees than up for election, thereby raising the likelihood of electing one or more of their preferred nominees to the board. It can be important when a board is controlled by insiders or affiliates and where the company's ownership structure includes one or more shareholders who control a majority-voting block of company stock.

Glass Lewis believes that cumulative voting generally acts as a safeguard for shareholders by ensuring that those who hold a significant minority of shares can elect a candidate of their choosing to the board. This allows the creation of boards that are responsive to the interests of all shareholders rather than just a small group of large holders.

We review cumulative voting proposals on a case-by-case basis, factoring in the independence of the board and the status of the company's governance structure. But we typically find these proposals on ballots at companies where independence is lacking and where the appropriate checks and balances favoring shareholders are not in place. In those instances we typically recommend in favor of cumulative voting.

Where a company has adopted a true majority vote standard (i.e., where a director must receive a majority of votes cast to be elected, as opposed to a modified policy indicated by a resignation policy only), Glass Lewis will recommend voting against cumulative voting proposals due to the incompatibility of the two election methods. For companies that have not adopted a true majority voting standard but have adopted some form

of majority voting, Glass Lewis will also generally recommend voting against cumulative voting proposals if the company has not adopted antitakeover protections and has been responsive to shareholders.

Where a company has not adopted a majority voting standard and is facing both a shareholder proposal to adopt majority voting and a shareholder proposal to adopt cumulative voting, Glass Lewis will support only the majority voting proposal. When a company has both majority voting and cumulative voting in place, there is a higher likelihood of one or more directors not being elected as a result of not receiving a majority vote. This is because shareholders exercising the right to cumulate their votes could unintentionally cause the failed election of one or more directors for whom shareholders do not cumulate votes.

### **SUPERMAJORITY VOTE REQUIREMENTS**

Glass Lewis believes that supermajority vote requirements impede shareholder action on ballot items critical to shareholder interests. An example is in the takeover context, where supermajority vote requirements can strongly limit the voice of shareholders in making decisions on such crucial matters as selling the business. This in turn degrades share value and can limit the possibility of buyout premiums to shareholders. Moreover, we believe that a supermajority vote requirement can enable a small group of shareholders to overrule the will of the majority shareholders. We believe that a simple majority is appropriate to approve all matters presented to shareholders.

### **TRANSACTION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

We typically recommend that shareholders not give their proxy to management to vote on any other business items that may properly come before an annual or special meeting. In our opinion, granting unfettered discretion is unwise.

### **ANTI-GREENMAIL PROPOSALS**

Glass Lewis will support proposals to adopt a provision preventing the payment of greenmail, which would serve to prevent companies from buying back company stock at significant premiums from a certain shareholder. Since a large or majority shareholder could attempt to compel a board into purchasing its shares at a large premium, the anti-greenmail provision would generally require that a majority of shareholders other than the majority shareholder approve the buyback.

### **MUTUAL FUNDS: INVESTMENT POLICIES AND ADVISORY AGREEMENTS**

Glass Lewis believes that decisions about a fund's structure and/or a fund's relationship with its investment advisor or sub-advisors are generally best left to management and the members of the board, absent a showing of egregious or illegal conduct that might threaten shareholder value. As such, we focus our analyses of such proposals on the following main areas:

- The terms of any amended advisory or sub-advisory agreement;
- Any changes in the fee structure paid to the investment advisor; and
- Any material changes to the fund's investment objective or strategy.

We generally support amendments to a fund's investment advisory agreement absent a material change that is not in the best interests of shareholders. A significant increase in the fees paid to an investment advisor would be reason for us to consider recommending voting against a proposed amendment to an investment advisory agreement or fund reorganization. However, in certain cases, we are more inclined to support an increase in advisory fees if such increases result from being performance-based rather than asset-based. Furthermore, we generally support sub-advisory agreements between a fund's advisor and sub-advisor, primarily because the fees received by the sub-advisor are paid by the advisor, and not by the fund.

In matters pertaining to a fund's investment objective or strategy, we believe shareholders are best served when a fund's objective or strategy closely resembles the investment discipline shareholders understood and selected when they initially bought into the fund. As such, we generally recommend voting against amendments to a fund's investment objective or strategy when the proposed changes would leave shareholders with stakes in a fund that is noticeably different than when originally purchased, and which could therefore potentially negatively impact some investors' diversification strategies.

## **REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUSTS**

The complex organizational, operational, tax and compliance requirements of Real Estate Investment Trusts ("REITs") provide for a unique shareholder evaluation. In simple terms, a REIT must have a minimum of 100 shareholders (the "100 Shareholder Test") and no more than 50% of the value of its shares can be held by five or fewer individuals (the "5/50 Test"). At least 75% of a REITs' assets must be in real estate, it must derive 75% of its gross income from rents or mortgage interest, and it must pay out 90% of its taxable earnings as dividends. In addition, as a publicly traded security listed on a stock exchange, a REIT must comply with the same general listing requirements as a publicly traded equity.

In order to comply with such requirements, REITs typically include percentage ownership limitations in their organizational documents, usually in the range of 5% to 10% of the REITs outstanding shares. Given the complexities of REITs as an asset class, Glass Lewis applies a highly nuanced approach in our evaluation of REIT proposals, especially regarding changes in authorized share capital, including preferred stock.

## **PREFERRED STOCK ISSUANCES AT REITS**

Glass Lewis is generally against the authorization of preferred shares that allows the board to determine the preferences, limitations and rights of the preferred shares (known as "blank-check preferred stock"). We believe that granting such broad discretion should be of concern to common shareholders, since blank-check preferred stock could be used as an antitakeover device or in some other fashion that adversely affects the voting power or financial interests of common shareholders. However, given the requirement that a REIT must distribute 90% of its net income annually, it is inhibited from retaining capital to make investments in its business. As such, we recognize that equity financing likely plays a key role in a REIT's growth and creation of shareholder value. Moreover, shareholder concern regarding the use of preferred stock as an anti-takeover mechanism may be allayed by the fact that most REITs maintain ownership limitations in their certificates of incorporation. For these reasons, along with the fact that REITs typically do not engage in private placements of preferred stock (which result in the rights of common shareholders being adversely impacted), we may support requests to authorize shares of blank-check preferred stock at REITs.

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES**

Business Development Companies (“BDCs”) were created by the U.S. Congress in 1980; they are regulated under the Investment Company Act of 1940 and are taxed as regulated investment companies (“RICs”) under the Internal Revenue Code. BDCs typically operate as publicly traded private equity firms that invest in early stage to mature private companies as well as small public companies. BDCs realize operating income when their investments are sold off, and therefore maintain complex organizational, operational, tax and compliance requirements that are similar to those of REITs—the most evident of which is that BDCs must distribute at least 90% of their taxable earnings as dividends.

#### **AUTHORIZATION TO SELL SHARES AT A PRICE BELOW NET ASSET VALUE**

Considering that BDCs are required to distribute nearly all their earnings to shareholders, they sometimes need to offer additional shares of common stock in the public markets to finance operations and acquisitions. However, shareholder approval is required in order for a BDC to sell shares of common stock at a price below Net Asset Value (“NAV”). Glass Lewis evaluates these proposals using a case-by-case approach, but will recommend supporting such requests if the following conditions are met:

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- The authorization to allow share issuances below NAV has an expiration date of one year or less from the date that shareholders approve the underlying proposal (i.e. the meeting date);
- The proposed discount below NAV is minimal (ideally no greater than 20%);
- The board specifies that the issuance will have a minimal or modest dilutive effect (ideally no greater than 25% of the company's then-outstanding common stock prior to the issuance); and
- A majority of the company's independent directors who do not have a financial interest in the issuance approve the sale.

In short, we believe BDCs should demonstrate a responsible approach to issuing shares below NAV, by proactively addressing shareholder concerns regarding the potential dilution of the requested share issuance, and explaining if and how the company's past below-NAV share issuances have benefitted the company.

## **Compensation, Environmental, Social and Governance Shareholder Initiatives**

Glass Lewis generally believes decisions regarding day-to-day management and policy decisions, including those related to social, environmental or political issues, are best left to management and the board as they in almost all cases have more and better information about company strategy and risk. However, when there is a clear link between the subject of a shareholder proposal and value enhancement or risk mitigation, Glass Lewis will recommend in favor of a reasonable, well-crafted shareholder proposal where the company has failed to or inadequately addressed the issue.

We believe that shareholders should not attempt to micromanage a company, its businesses or its executives through the shareholder initiative process. Rather, we believe shareholders should use their influence to push for governance structures that protect shareholders and promote director accountability. Shareholders should then put in place a board they can trust to make informed decisions that are in the best interests of the business and its owners, and hold directors accountable for management and policy decisions through board elections. However, we recognize that support of appropriately crafted shareholder initiatives may at times serve to promote or protect shareholder value.

To this end, Glass Lewis evaluates shareholder proposals on a case-by-case basis. We generally recommend supporting shareholder proposals calling for the elimination of, as well as to require shareholder approval of, antitakeover devices such as poison pills and classified boards. We generally recommend supporting proposals likely to increase and/or protect shareholder value and also those that promote the furtherance of shareholder rights. In addition, we also generally recommend supporting proposals that promote director accountability and those that seek to improve compensation practices, especially those promoting a closer link between compensation and performance, as well as those that promote more and better disclosure of relevant risk factors where such disclosure is lacking or inadequate.

For a detailed review of our policies concerning compensation, environmental, social and governance shareholder initiatives, please refer to our comprehensive *Proxy Paper Guidelines for Shareholder Initiatives*, available at [www.glasslewis.com](http://www.glasslewis.com).



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**2018**

PROXY PAPER™

**SUMMARY GUIDELINES**

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GLASS LEWIS APPROACH TO PROXY ADVICE

**INTERNATIONAL**

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## **Guidelines Introduction**

### **SUMMARY OF CHANGES FOR THE 2018 INTERNATIONAL PROXY PAPER GUIDELINES**

Following is a summary of the significant changes to the 2018 International Proxy Paper Policy Guidelines:

#### **DIRECTOR NOMINEES**

We have clarified that we believe it is incumbent on boards to provide the necessary disclosure for shareholders to evaluate the independence, skills and past performance of a director nominee. Where such information is lacking, we will typically recommend voting against the nominee.

#### **BOARD RESPONSIVENESS**

We have added a discussion of our approach to evaluating board responsiveness to shareholder votes. Glass Lewis believes that any time 20% or more of shareholders vote contrary to the recommendation of management, the board should, depending on the issue, demonstrate some level of responsiveness to address the concerns of shareholders, particularly in the case of a compensation or director election proposal.

#### **DUAL-CLASS SHARE STRUCTURES**

We have added a discussion of our views on dual-class share structures. We believe dual-class share structures are not in the best interests of shareholders; therefore, we typically recommend that shareholders vote in favor of recapitalization proposals to eliminate dual-class share structures, and vote against proposals seeking to adopt a new class of common stock.

#### **EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION**

We have clarified that we favor granting discretion to the board to implement compensation plans that drive sustainable growth.

## **SHAREHOLDER PROPOSALS**

We have added additional information about our current approach to shareholder proposals. Specifically, we have cited that we do not believe shareholders should seek to micromanage a company through shareholder initiatives and we have detailed our research process for assessing risk posed by ESG issues.

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## **Election of Directors**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Boards are put in place to represent shareholders and protect their interests. Glass Lewis seeks boards with a proven record of protecting shareholders and delivering value over the medium- and long-term. In our view, boards working to protect and enhance the best interests of shareholders typically include some independent directors (the percentage will vary by local market practice and regulations), boast a record of positive performance, have directors with diverse backgrounds, and appoint directors with a breadth and depth of experience.

### **BOARD COMPOSITION**

When companies disclose sufficient relevant information, we look at each individual on the board and examine his or her relationships with the company, the company's executives and with other board members. The purpose of this inquiry is to determine whether pre-existing personal, familial or financial relationships are likely to impact the decisions of that board member.

Where the company does not disclose the names or backgrounds of director nominees with sufficient time in advance of the shareholder meeting to evaluate their independence, performance or skills we will consider recommending abstaining on the directors' election.

We vote in favor of governance structures that will drive positive performance and enhance shareholder value. The most crucial test of a board's commitment to the company and to its shareholders is the performance of the board and its members. The performance of directors in their capacity as board members and as executives of the company, when applicable, and in their roles at other companies where they serve is critical to this evaluation.

We believe a director is independent if he or she has no material financial, familial or other current relationships with the company, its executives or other board members except for service on the board and standard fees paid for that service. Relationships that have existed within the three-five years prior to the inquiry are usually considered to be "current" for purposes of this test.

In our view, a director is affiliated if he or she has a material financial, familial or other relationship with the company or its executives, but is not an employee of the company. This includes directors whose employers have a material financial relationship with the Company. This also includes a director who owns or controls 10-20% or more of the



company's voting stock.

We define an inside director as one who simultaneously serves as a director and as an employee of the company. This category may include a chairman of the board who acts as an employee of the company or is paid as an employee of the company.

Although we typically vote for the election of directors, we will recommend voting against directors for the following reasons:

- A director who attends less than 75% of the board and applicable committee meetings.

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A director who is also the CEO of a company where a serious restatement has occurred after the CEO certified the pre-restatement financial statements.

We also feel that the following conflicts of interest may hinder a director's performance and will therefore recommend voting against a:

- Director who presently sits on an excessive number of boards.

Director, or a director whose immediate family member, provides material professional services to the company at any time during the past five years.

Director, or a director whose immediate family member, engages in airplane, real estate or other similar deals, including perquisite type grants from the company.

- Director with an interlocking directorship.

## **SLATE ELECTIONS**

In some countries, companies elect their board members as a slate, whereby shareholders are unable to vote on the election of each individual director, but rather are limited to voting for or against the board as a whole. If significant issues exist concerning one or more of the nominees or in markets where directors are generally elected individually, we will recommend voting against the entire slate of directors.

## **BOARD COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

We believe that independent directors should serve on a company's audit, compensation, nominating and governance committees. We will support boards with such a structure and encourage change where this is not the case.

## **REVIEW OF RISK MANAGEMENT CONTROLS**

We believe companies, particularly financial firms, should have a dedicated risk committee, or a committee of the board charged with risk oversight, as well as a chief risk officer who reports directly to that committee, not to the CEO or another executive. In cases where a company has disclosed a sizable loss or writedown, and where a reasonable analysis indicates that the company's board-level risk committee should be held accountable for poor oversight, we

would recommend that shareholders vote against such committee members on that basis. In addition, in cases where a company maintains a significant level of financial risk exposure but fails to disclose any explicit form of board-level risk oversight (committee or otherwise), we will consider recommending to vote against the chairman of the board on that basis.

## **CLASSIFIED BOARDS**

Glass Lewis favors the repeal of staggered boards in favor of the annual election of directors. We believe that staggered boards are less accountable to shareholders than annually elected boards. Furthermore, we feel that the annual election of directors encourages board members to focus on protecting the interests of shareholders.

## **BOARD RESPONSIVENESS**

Glass Lewis believes that any time 20% or more of shareholders vote contrary to the recommendation of management, the board should, depending on the issue, demonstrate some level of responsiveness to address the concerns of shareholders, particularly in the case of a compensation or director election proposal. While the 20% threshold alone will not automatically generate a negative vote recommendation from Glass Lewis on a future proposal (e.g., to recommend against a director nominee, against a remuneration proposal, etc.),

it will be a contributing factor to recommend a vote against management's recommendation in the event we determine that the board did not respond appropriately.

As a general framework, our evaluation of board responsiveness involves a review of the publicly available disclosures released following the date of the company's last annual meeting up through the publication date of our most current Proxy Paper.

## **Financial Reporting**

### **ACCOUNTS AND REPORTS**

Many countries require companies to submit the annual financial statements, director reports and independent auditors' reports to shareholders at a general meeting. Shareholder approval of such a proposal does not discharge the board or management. We will usually recommend voting in favor of these proposals except when there are concerns about the integrity of the statements/reports. However, should the audited financial statements, auditor's report and/or annual report not be published at the writing of our report, we will recommend that shareholders abstain from voting on this proposal.

### **INCOME ALLOCATION (DISTRIBUTION OF DIVIDENDS)**

In many countries, companies must submit the allocation of income for shareholder approval. We will generally recommend voting for such a proposal. However, we will give particular scrutiny to cases where the company's dividend payout ratio is exceptionally low or excessively high relative to its peers and the company has not provided a satisfactory explanation.

### **APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS AND AUTHORITY TO SET FEES**

We believe that role of the auditor is crucial in protecting shareholder value. Like directors, auditors should be free from conflicts of interest and should assiduously avoid situations that require them to make choices between their own interests and the interests of the shareholders. We generally support management's recommendation regarding the selection of an auditor and support granting the board the authority to fix auditor fees except in cases where we believe the independence of an incumbent auditor or the integrity of the audit has been compromised. However, we recommend voting against ratification of the auditor and/or authorizing the board to set auditor fees for the following reasons:

- When audit fees added to audit-related fees total less than one-half of total fees.

• When there have been any recent restatements or late filings by the company where the auditor bears some responsibility for the restatement or late filing (e.g., a restatement due to a reporting error).

- When the company has aggressive accounting policies.

- When the company has poor disclosure or lack of transparency in financial statements.

When there are other relationships or issues of concern with the auditor that might suggest a conflict between the interest of the auditor and the interests of shareholders.

When the company is changing auditors as a result of a disagreement between the company and the auditor on a matter of accounting principles or practices, financial statement disclosure or auditing scope or procedures.

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## Compensation

### COMPENSATION REPORT/COMPENSATION POLICY

We closely review companies' remuneration practices and disclosure as outlined in company filings to evaluate management-submitted advisory compensation report and policy vote proposals. In evaluating these proposals, which can be binding or non-binding depending on the country, we examine how well the company has disclosed information pertinent to its compensation programs, the extent to which overall compensation is tied to performance, the performance metrics selected by the company and the levels of remuneration in comparison to company performance and that of its peers.

We will usually recommend voting against approval of the compensation report or policy when the following occur:

- Gross disconnect between pay and performance;
- Performance goals and metrics are inappropriate or insufficiently challenging;

• Lack of disclosure regarding performance metrics and goals as well as the extent to which the performance metrics, targets and goals are implemented to enhance company performance and encourage prudent risk-taking;

• Excessive discretion afforded to or exercised by management or the compensation committee to deviate from defined performance metrics and goals in making awards;

• Ex gratia or other non-contractual payments have been made and the reasons for making the payments have not been fully explained or the explanation is unconvincing;

- Guaranteed bonuses are established;
- There is no clawback policy; or
- Egregious or excessive bonuses, equity awards or severance payments.

### LONG-TERM INCENTIVE PLANS

Glass Lewis recognizes the value of equity-based incentive programs. When used appropriately, they can provide a vehicle for linking an employee's pay to a company's performance, thereby aligning their interests with those of shareholders. Tying a portion of an employee's compensation to the performance of the Company provides an incentive to maximize share value. In addition, equity-based compensation is an effective way to attract, retain and motivate key employees. In order to allow for meaningful shareholder review, we believe that incentive programs should generally include: (i) specific and appropriate performance goals; (ii) a maximum award pool; and (iii) a maximum award amount per employee. In addition, the payments made should be reasonable relative to the performance of the business and total compensation to those covered by the plan should be in line with compensation paid by the Company's peers.



## **PERFORMANCE-BASED EQUITY COMPENSATION**

Glass Lewis believes in performance-based equity compensation plans for senior executives. We feel that executives should be compensated with equity when their performance and that of the company warrants such rewards. While we do not believe that equity-based compensation plans for all employees need to be based on overall company performance, we do support such limitations for grants to senior executives (although even some equity-based compensation of senior executives without performance criteria is acceptable, such as in the case of moderate incentive grants made in an initial offer of employment). Boards often argue that such a proposal would hinder them in attracting talent. We believe that boards can develop a consistent, reliable approach, as boards of many companies have, that would still attract executives who believe in their ability to guide the company to achieve its targets.

We generally recommend that shareholders vote in favor of performance-based option requirements. There should be no retesting of performance conditions for all share- and option- based incentive schemes. We will generally recommend that shareholders vote against performance-based equity compensation plans that allow for re-testing.

## **DIRECTOR COMPENSATION**

Glass Lewis believes that non-employee directors should receive appropriate types and levels of compensation for the time and effort they spend serving on the board and its committees. Director fees should be reasonable in order to retain and attract qualified individuals. We support compensation plans that include equity awards, so long as the awards are not subject to any performance hurdle or other type of restriction. Glass Lewis compares the costs of these plans to the plans of peer companies with similar market capitalizations in the same country to help inform its judgment on this issue.

## **RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR DIRECTORS**

We will typically recommend voting against proposals to grant retirement benefits to non-executive directors. Such extended payments can impair the objectivity and independence of these board members. Directors should receive adequate compensation for their board service through initial and annual fees.

## **LIMITS ON EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION**

As a general rule, Glass Lewis believes that shareholders should not seek to micromanage executive compensation programs. Such matters should be left to the board's compensation committee. We view the election of directors, and specifically those who sit on the compensation committee, as an appropriate mechanism for shareholders to express

their disapproval or support of board policy on this issue. Further, we believe that companies whose pay-for-performance is in line with their peers should be granted the flexibility to compensate their executives in a manner that drives sustainable growth. However, Glass Lewis favors performance-based compensation as an effective means of motivating executives to act in the best interests of shareholders. Performance-based compensation may be limited if a chief executive's pay is capped at a low level rather than flexibly tied to the performance of the company.

## **Governance Structure**

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION**

We will evaluate proposed amendments to a company's articles of association on a case-by-case basis. We are opposed to the practice of bundling several amendments under a single proposal because it prevents shareholders from evaluating each amendment on its own merits. In such cases, we will analyze each change individually and will recommend voting for the proposal only when we believe that the amendments on balance are in the best interests of shareholders.

### **ANTI-TAKEOVER MEASURES**

### **DUAL-CLASS SHARE STRUCTURES**

Glass Lewis believes dual-class voting structures are typically not in the best interests of common shareholders. We believe the economic stake of each shareholder should match their voting power and that no small group of shareholders, family or otherwise, should have voting rights different from those of other shareholders.

We generally consider a dual-class share structure to reflect negatively on a company's overall corporate governance. Because we believe that allowing one vote per share best protects the interests of shareholders, we typically recommend that shareholders vote in favor of recapitalization proposals to eliminate dual-class share structures. Similarly, we will generally recommend voting against proposals to adopt a new class of common stock.

### **POISON PILLS (SHAREHOLDER RIGHTS PLANS)**

Glass Lewis believes that poison pill plans generally are not in the best interests of shareholders. Specifically, they can reduce management accountability by substantially limiting opportunities for corporate takeovers. Rights plans can thus prevent shareholders from receiving a buy-out premium for their stock. We believe that boards should be given wide latitude in directing the activities of the company and charting the company's course. However, on an issue such as this where the link between the financial interests of shareholders and their right to consider and accept buyout offers is so substantial, we believe that shareholders should be allowed to vote on whether or not they support such a plan's implementation. In certain limited circumstances, we will support a limited poison pill to accomplish a particular objective, such as the closing of an important merger, or a pill that contains what we believe to be a reasonable 'qualifying offer' clause.

## **SUPERMAJORITY VOTE REQUIREMENTS**

Glass Lewis favors a simple majority voting structure. Supermajority vote requirements act as impediments to shareholder action on ballot items that are critical to our interests. One key example is in the takeover context where supermajority vote requirements can strongly limit shareholders' input in making decisions on such crucial matters as selling the business.

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## **INCREASE IN AUTHORIZED SHARES**

Glass Lewis believes that having adequate capital stock available for issuance is important to the operation of a company. We will generally support proposals when a company could reasonably use the requested shares for financing, stock splits and stock dividends. While we believe that having adequate shares to allow management to make quick decisions and effectively operate the business is critical, we prefer that, for significant transactions, management come to shareholders to justify their use of additional shares rather than providing a blank check in the form of large pools of unallocated shares available for any purpose.

In general, we will support proposals to increase authorized shares up to 100% of the number of shares currently authorized unless, after the increase the company would be left with less than 30% of its authorized shares outstanding.

## **ISSUANCE OF SHARES**

Issuing additional shares can dilute existing holders in some circumstances. Further, the availability of additional shares, where the board has discretion to implement a poison pill, can often serve as a deterrent to interested suitors. Accordingly, where we find that the company has not disclosed a detailed plan for use of the proposed shares, or where the number of shares requested are excessive, we typically recommend against the issuance. In the case of a private placement, we will also consider whether the company is offering a discount to its share price.

In general, we will support proposals to issue shares (with pre-emption rights) when the requested increase is the lesser of (i) the unissued ordinary share capital; or (ii) a sum equal to one-third of the issued ordinary share capital. This authority should not exceed five years. In some countries, if the proposal contains a figure greater than one-third, the company should explain the nature of the additional amounts.

We will also generally support proposals to suspend pre-emption rights for a maximum of 5-20% of the issued ordinary share capital of the company, depending on best practice in the country in which the company is located. This authority should not exceed five years, or less for some countries.

## **REPURCHASE OF SHARES**

We will recommend voting in favor of a proposal to repurchase shares when the plan includes the following provisions: (i) a maximum number of shares which may be purchased (typically not more than 15% of the issued share capital); and (ii) a maximum price which may be paid for each share (as a percentage of the market price), that

those who hold a significant minority of shares are able to elect a candidate of their choosing to the board.

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## **Environmental and Social Risk**

Glass Lewis generally believes decisions regarding day-to-day management and policy decisions, including those related to social, environmental or political issues, are best left to management and the board as they in almost all cases have more and better information about company strategy and risk. However, when there is a clear link between the subject of a shareholder proposal and value enhancement or risk mitigation, Glass Lewis will recommend in favor of such proposal where the company has failed to or inadequately addressed the issue.

We strongly feel that shareholders should not attempt to micromanage the company, its business or its executives through the shareholder initiative process. Rather, we believe shareholders should use their influence to push for governance structures that protect shareholders and promote director accountability. Shareholders should put in place a board they can trust to make informed decisions that are in the best interests of the business and its owners, and hold directors accountable through the election of directors.

To this end, we examine the circumstances at each company on a case-by-case basis. We thoroughly research each firm, using publicly available information, such as annual reports, sustainability reports, companies' websites, NGO websites, and news sources. When we identify situations where shareholder value may be at risk, we will note our concerns in the relevant section of the Proxy Paper analysis as well as in any applicable shareholder proposals. Though relatively rare, should a shareholder proposal seek action on a specific ESG issue, Glass Lewis will recommend voting in favor of such a proposal when we believe its implementation will enhance or protect shareholder value. We will also recommend voting in favor of a proposal if we believe supporting such proposal will promote disclosure of significant risk exposure.

In limited cases where a company has failed to adequately mitigate risks stemming from environmental or social practices, we will recommend shareholders vote against: (i) ratification of board and/or management acts; (ii) approving a company's accounts and reports and/or; (iii) directors (in egregious cases).

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