



DIVISION OF  
CORPORATION FINANCE

UNITED STATES  
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549

April 2, 2019

John B. Beckman  
Hogan Lovells  
john.beckman@hoganlovells.com

Re: Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co.  
Incoming letter dated January 15, 2019

Dear Mr. Beckman:

This letter is in response to your correspondence dated January 15, 2019 concerning the shareholder proposal (the "Proposal") submitted to Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (the "Company") by John Chevedden (the "Proponent") for inclusion in the Company's proxy materials for its upcoming annual meeting of security holders. We also have received correspondence from the Proponent dated January 20, 2019, February 3, 2019 and March 3, 2019. Copies of all of the correspondence on which this response is based will be made available on our website at <http://www.sec.gov/divisions/corpfin/cf-noaction/14a-8.shtml>. For your reference, a brief discussion of the Division's informal procedures regarding shareholder proposals is also available at the same website address.

Sincerely,

M. Hughes Bates  
Special Counsel

Enclosure

cc: John Chevedden

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April 2, 2019

**Response of the Office of Chief Counsel**  
**Division of Corporation Finance**

Re: Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co.  
Incoming letter dated January 15, 2019

The Proposal requests that the Company provide a report on political contributions and expenditures that contains information specified in the Proposal.

Based on our review of your submission, in particular the description of how your board of directors has analyzed this matter, there appears to be some basis for your view that the Company may exclude the Proposal under rule 14a-8(i)(5). In reaching this position, we note your representations that: the Proposal relates to operations that account for less than 5 percent of the Company's total assets, net earnings and gross sales for its most recent fiscal year; the Company does not make direct contributions or other expenditures to any candidate for public office or to influence the general public with respect to any election or referendum nor does the Company make indirect contributions for the purpose of supporting a candidate or referendum or influencing legislation or public affairs; and the only expenditure that could be considered an indirect political contribution or expenditure is the Company's paid dues to a single trade association that is not permitted to make contributions to political candidates or political action committees.

Accordingly, we will not recommend enforcement action to the Commission if the Company omits the Proposal from its proxy materials in reliance on rule 14a-8(i)(5). In reaching this position, we have not found it necessary to address the alternative basis for omission upon which the Company relies.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Kaufman  
Attorney-Adviser

**DIVISION OF CORPORATION FINANCE**  
**INFORMAL PROCEDURES REGARDING SHAREHOLDER PROPOSALS**

The Division of Corporation Finance believes that its responsibility with respect to matters arising under Rule 14a-8 [17 CFR 240.14a-8], as with other matters under the proxy rules, is to aid those who must comply with the rule by offering informal advice and suggestions and to determine, initially, whether or not it may be appropriate in a particular matter to recommend enforcement action to the Commission. In connection with a shareholder proposal under Rule 14a-8, the Division's staff considers the information furnished to it by the company in support of its intention to exclude the proposal from the company's proxy materials, as well as any information furnished by the proponent or the proponent's representative.

Although Rule 14a-8(k) does not require any communications from shareholders to the Commission's staff, the staff will always consider information concerning alleged violations of the statutes and rules administered by the Commission, including arguments as to whether or not activities proposed to be taken would violate the statute or rule involved. The receipt by the staff of such information, however, should not be construed as changing the staff's informal procedures and proxy review into a formal or adversarial procedure.

It is important to note that the staff's no-action responses to Rule 14a-8(j) submissions reflect only informal views. The determinations reached in these no-action letters do not and cannot adjudicate the merits of a company's position with respect to the proposal. Only a court such as a U.S. District Court can decide whether a company is obligated to include shareholder proposals in its proxy materials. Accordingly, a discretionary determination not to recommend or take Commission enforcement action does not preclude a proponent, or any shareholder of a company, from pursuing any rights he or she may have against the company in court, should the company's management omit the proposal from the company's proxy materials.

JOHN CHEVEDDEN

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March 3, 2019

Office of Chief Counsel  
Division of Corporation Finance  
Securities and Exchange Commission  
100 F Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20549

**# 3 Rule 14a-8 Proposal**  
**Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (RS)**  
**Political Disclosure**  
**John Chevedden**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is in regard to the January 15, 2019 no-action request.

The company did not distinguish its request from *NextEra Energy, Inc.* (March 30, 2018).

This is to request that the Securities and Exchange Commission allow this resolution to stand and be voted upon in the 2019 proxy.

Sincerely,

  
John Chevedden

cc: William A. Smith <will.smith@rsac.com>

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February 3, 2019

Office of Chief Counsel  
Division of Corporation Finance  
Securities and Exchange Commission  
100 F Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20549

**# 2 Rule 14a-8 Proposal**  
**Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (RS)**  
**Political Disclosure**  
**John Chevedden**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is in regard to the January 15, 2019 no-action request.

The company does not discuss whether this proposal addresses a governance issue.

On November 1, 2017, the SEC issued Staff Legal Bulletin 14I which invited boards of directors to provide their opinions as to whether a proposal is "significant to the company" for purposes of Rule 14a-8(i)(7).

However, the Bulletin expressly limits the case-by-case analysis, stating "On the other hand, we would generally view substantive governance matters to be significantly related to almost all companies."

According to the company Form 8-K from February 2018 the company is subject to risks from regulations, political risks and regulatory proceedings.

This is to request that the Securities and Exchange Commission allow this resolution to stand and be voted upon in the 2019 proxy.

Sincerely,

  
John Chevedden

cc: William A. Smith <will.smith@rsac.com>

**UNITED STATES  
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION**

Washington, D.C. 20549

**FORM 10-K**

(Mark One)

- ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**

For the fiscal year ended **December 31, 2017**

OR

- TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**

For the transition period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
Commission file number: 001-13122

**RELIANCE STEEL & ALUMINUM CO.**

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

**Delaware**  
(State or other jurisdiction of  
incorporation or organization)

**95-1142616**  
(I.R.S. Employer  
Identification No.)

**350 South Grand Avenue, Suite 5100  
Los Angeles, California 90071  
(213) 687-7700**

(Address and telephone number, including area code, of principal executive offices)

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of each class

Name of each exchange on which registered

Common Stock, \$0.001 par value

New York Stock Exchange

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: **None**

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes  No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act. Yes  No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes  No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files). Yes  No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (§229.405 of this chapter) is not contained herein and will not be contained, to the best of the registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, a smaller reporting company, or emerging growth company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer," "smaller reporting company," and "emerging growth company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.

Large accelerated filer  Accelerated filer  Non-accelerated filer  Smaller reporting company  Emerging

***As a decentralized business, we depend on both senior management and our key operating employees. If we are unable to attract and retain these individuals, our ability to operate and grow our business may be adversely affected.***

Because of our decentralized operating style, we depend on the efforts of our senior management, including our President and Chief Executive Officer, Gregg J. Mollins, our Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Karla Lewis, our Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, James Hoffman and other senior management, as well as our key operating employees. We may not be able to retain these individuals or attract and retain additional qualified personnel when needed. We do not have employment agreements with any of our corporate officers or most of our key employees, so they may have less of an incentive to stay with us when presented with alternative employment opportunities. The compensation of our officers and key employees is heavily dependent on our financial performance and in times of reduced financial performance this may cause our employees to seek employment opportunities that provide a more stable compensation structure. The loss of any key officer or employee will require remaining officers and employees to direct immediate and substantial attention to seeking and training a replacement. Our inability to retain members of our senior management or key operating employees or to find adequate replacements for any departing key officer or employee on a timely basis could adversely affect our ability to operate and grow our business.

***We could fail to maintain effective internal control over financial reporting.***

The accuracy of our financial reporting depends on the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting. Internal control over financial reporting can provide only reasonable assurance with respect to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements and may not prevent or detect misstatements because of its inherent limitations. These limitations include, among others, the possibility of human error, inadequacy or circumvention of controls and fraud. If we do not maintain effective internal control over financial reporting or design and implement controls sufficient to provide reasonable assurance with respect to the preparation and fair presentation of our financial statements, we might fail to timely detect any misappropriation of corporate assets or inappropriate allocation or use of funds and could be unable to file accurate financial reports on a timely basis. As a result, our reputation, results of operations and stock price could be materially adversely affected.

***We are subject to various environmental, employee safety and health and customs and export laws and regulations, which could subject us to significant liabilities and compliance expenditures.***

We are subject to various foreign, federal, state and local environmental laws and regulations concerning air emissions, wastewater discharges, underground storage tanks and solid and hazardous waste disposal at or from our facilities. Our operations are also subject to various employee safety and health laws and regulations, including those concerning occupational injury and illness, employee exposure to hazardous materials and employee complaints. We are also subject to customs and export laws and regulations for international shipment of our products. Environmental, employee safety and health and customs and export laws and regulations are comprehensive, complex and frequently changing. Some of these laws and regulations are subject to varying and conflicting interpretations. We may be subject from time to time to administrative and/or judicial proceedings or investigations brought by private parties or governmental agencies with respect to environmental matters, employee safety and health issues or customs and export issues. Proceedings and investigations with respect to environmental matters, any employee safety and health issues or customs and export issues could result in substantial costs to us, divert our management's attention and result in significant liabilities, fines or the suspension or interruption of our service center activities. Some of our current properties are located in industrial areas with histories of heavy industrial use. The location of these properties may require us to incur environmental expenditures and to establish accruals for environmental liabilities that arise from causes other than our operations. In addition, we are currently remediating contamination in connection with a certain property related to activities at former manufacturing operations of a subsidiary we acquired.

Future events, such as changes in existing laws and regulations or their enforcement, new laws and regulations or the discovery of conditions not currently known to us, could result in material environmental or export compliance or remedial liabilities and costs, constrain our operations or make such operations more costly.

*We operate internationally and are subject to exchange rate fluctuations, exchange controls, political risks and other risks relating to international operations.*

Eleven percent of our 2017 sales were to international customers, subjecting us to the risks of doing business on a global level. These risks include fluctuations in currency exchange rates, economic instability and disruptions, restrictions on the transfer of funds and the imposition of duties and tariffs. Additional risks from our multinational business include transportation delays and interruptions, war, terrorist activities, epidemics, pandemics, political instability, import and export controls, local regulation, changes in governmental policies, labor unrest and current and changing regulatory environments. In addition, government policies on international trade and investment such as import quotas, tariffs, and capital controls, whether adopted by individual governments or addressed by regional trade blocs, can affect the demand for our customers' products and services. The implementation of more restrictive trade policies, such as higher tariffs or new barriers to entry, in countries in which our customers sell large quantities of products and services could negatively impact our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Our operating results could be negatively affected by the global laws, rules and regulations, as well as political environments in the jurisdictions in which we operate. There could be reduced demand for our products, decreases in the prices at which we can sell our products and disruptions of production or other operations. Additionally, there may be substantial capital and other costs to comply with regulations and/or increased security costs or insurance premiums, any of which could negatively impact our operating results.

*Our international operations continue to expand, exposing us to additional risks.*

Our international presence has grown, so the risk of incurring liabilities or fines resulting from non-compliance with various U.S. or international laws and regulations has increased. For example, we are subject to the FCPA, and similar worldwide anti-bribery laws in non-U.S. jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom's Bribery Act 2010, which generally prohibit companies and their intermediaries from corruptly paying, offering to pay, or authorizing the payment of money, a gift, or anything of value, to a foreign official or foreign political party, for purposes of obtaining or retaining business. A company can be held liable under these anti-bribery laws not just for its own direct actions, but also for the actions of its foreign subsidiaries or other third parties, such as agents or distributors. In addition, we could be held liable for actions taken by employees or third parties on behalf of a company that we acquire. If we fail to comply with the requirements under these laws and other laws we are subject to due to our international operations, we may face possible civil and/or criminal penalties, which could have a material adverse effect on our business or financial results.

*We may be subject to risks relating to changes in our tax rates or exposure to additional income tax liabilities.*

We are subject to income taxes in the United States and various non-U.S. jurisdictions. Domestic and international tax liabilities are subject to the allocation of income among various tax jurisdictions. Our effective income tax rate could be affected by changes in the mix of earnings among countries with differing statutory tax rates, changes in the valuation allowance of deferred tax assets or changes in tax rates or tax laws or regulations. In particular, although the passage of the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 reduced the U.S. tax rate to 21%, our future earnings could be negatively impacted by changes in tax legislation including changing tax rates and tax base such as limiting, phasing-out or eliminating deductions or tax credits, changing rules for earnings repatriations and changing other tax laws in the U.S. or other countries. In addition, it is uncertain if, and to what extent, various states will conform to the new tax law and foreign countries will react by adopting tax legislation or taking other actions that could adversely affect our business.

In addition, the amount of income taxes we pay is subject to audits by U.S. federal, state and local tax authorities and by non-U.S. tax authorities. If these audits result in assessments different from amounts reserved, future financial results may include unfavorable adjustments to our income tax liabilities, which could have an adverse effect on our results of operations and liquidity.

***We rely on information management systems and any damage, interruption or compromise of our information management systems or data could disrupt and harm our business.***

We rely upon information technology systems and networks, some of which are managed by third parties, to process, transmit, and store electronic information in connection with the operation of our business. Additionally, we collect and store data that is sensitive to our company. Operating these information technology systems and networks and processing and maintaining this data, in a secure manner, are critical to our business operations and strategy. Our information management systems and the data contained therein may be vulnerable to damage, including interruption due to power loss, system and network failures, operator negligence and similar causes.

In addition, our systems and data may be subject to security breaches, viruses, malware, and other cybersecurity attacks. Cybersecurity attacks are increasing in frequency and sophistication. Cybersecurity attacks may range from random attempts to coordinated and targeted attacks, including sophisticated computer crime and advanced threats. These threats pose a risk to the security of our information technology systems and networks and the confidentiality, availability and integrity of our data. We have experienced cybersecurity events on the Company's and certain of our affiliates' networks and/or systems. To date, none of these events has had a material impact on our or our affiliates' operations or financial results. We may experience similar or more sophisticated events in the future. We believe that we have adopted appropriate measures to mitigate potential risks to our technology and our operations from these information technology-related and other potential disruptions. However, given the unpredictability of the timing, nature and scope of such disruptions, we could potentially be subject to production downtimes, operational delays, other detrimental impacts on our operations or ability to provide products and services to our customers, the compromising of confidential or otherwise protected information, misappropriation, destruction or corruption of data, security breaches, other manipulation or improper use of our systems or networks, financial losses from remedial actions, loss of business or potential liability, and/or damage to our reputation, any of which could have a material adverse effect on our competitive position, results of operations, cash flows or financial condition. Any significant compromise of our information management systems or data could impede or interrupt our business operations and may result in negative consequences including loss of revenue, fines, penalties, litigation, reputational damage, inability to accurately and/or timely complete required filings with government entities including the SEC and the Internal Revenue Service, unavailability or disclosure of confidential information (including personal information) and negative impact on our stock price.

***An inability to successfully develop and manage the implementation of our new enterprise resource planning ("ERP") system could adversely affect our operations and operating results.***

We are in the process of customizing a third party ERP system to be deployed at certain of our operating locations over the next few years, on a subsidiary by subsidiary basis. The Company has committed significant resources to this new ERP system, which, when implemented, will replace certain of our legacy systems. The Company plans to implement this system, when available, on a subsidiary by subsidiary, or location by location, basis to minimize risks of disruption to the business. A project of this size may result in cost overruns, project delays, or business interruptions. Any business disruption could adversely affect our ability to process orders, ship products, provide services and customer support, send invoices and track payments, fulfill contractual obligations or otherwise operate our business at those locations where deployed.

***Our financial results may be affected by various legal and regulatory proceedings, including those involving antitrust, tax, environmental, or other matters.***

We are subject to a variety of litigation and legal compliance risks. These risks include, among other things, possible liability relating to product liability, personal injuries, intellectual property rights, contract-related claims, government contracts, taxes, environmental matters and compliance with U.S. and

foreign laws, including competition laws and laws governing improper business practices. We or one of our subsidiaries could be charged with wrongdoing as a result of such matters. If convicted or found liable, we could be subject to significant fines, penalties, repayments, or other damages (in certain cases, treble damages). As a global business, we are subject to complex laws and regulations in the U.S. and other countries in which we operate. Those laws and regulations may be interpreted in different ways. They may also change from time to time and so may their related interpretations. Changes in laws or regulations could result in higher

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January 20, 2019

Office of Chief Counsel  
Division of Corporation Finance  
Securities and Exchange Commission  
100 F Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20549

**# 1 Rule 14a-8 Proposal**  
**Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (RS)**  
**Political Disclosure**  
**John Chevedden**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is in regard to the January 15, 2019 no-action request.

The company leaves the impression that it does not want shareholders to know about certain elementary items that are addressed by this political disclosure proposal. There is no exhibit of any company "anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy" which leads to the question of whether such a policy even exists. The purported policy is not even given a date.

There is no name given to the "Trade Association" which suggests that the mere mention of the name would give an instantaneous negative reaction.

This is to request that the Securities and Exchange Commission allow this resolution to stand and be voted upon in the 2019 proxy.

Sincerely,

  
John Chevedden

cc: William A. Smith <will.smith@rsac.com>

[RS: Rule 14a-8 Proposal, August 29, 2018]  
[This line and any line above it – *Not* for publication.]  
**Proposal [4] – Political Disclosure Shareholder Resolution**

**Resolved**, that shareholders request that the Company provide a report, updated semiannually, disclosing the Company's:

1. Policies and procedures for making, with corporate funds or assets, contributions and expenditures (direct or indirect) to (a) participate or intervene in any campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office, or (b) influence the general public, or any segment thereof, with respect to an election or referendum.
2. Monetary and non-monetary contributions and expenditures (direct and indirect) used in the manner described in section 1 above, including:
  - a. The identity of the recipient as well as the amount paid to each; and
  - b. The title(s) of the person(s) in the Company responsible for decision-making.

The report shall be presented to the board of directors or relevant board committee and posted on the Company's website within 12 months from the date of the annual meeting. This proposal does not encompass lobbying spending.

**Supporting Statement**

As a long-term shareholder of the Company, I support transparency and accountability in corporate electoral spending. This includes any activity considered intervention in a political campaign under the Internal Revenue Code, such as direct and indirect contributions to political candidates, parties, or organizations, and independent expenditures or electioneering communications on behalf of federal, state, or local candidates.

Disclosure is in the best interest of the company and its shareholders. The Supreme Court recognized this in its 2010 Citizens United decision, which said, "[D]isclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way. This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages."

Relying on publicly available data does not provide a complete picture of the Company's electoral spending. For example, the Company's payments to trade associations that may be used for election-related activities are undisclosed and unknown. This proposal asks the Company to disclose all of its electoral spending, including payments to trade associations and other tax-exempt organizations, which may be used for electoral purposes. This would bring our Company in line with a growing number of leading companies, including International Paper Company, Freeport-McMoRan Inc., and Illinois Tool Works, Inc., which present this information on their websites.

The Company's Board and shareholders need comprehensive disclosure to fully evaluate the use of corporate assets in elections. We ask your support for this critical governance reform.

**Political Disclosure Shareholder Resolution – Proposal [4]**

[The line above – *Is* for publication.]

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL** ([shareholderproposals@sec.gov](mailto:shareholderproposals@sec.gov))

January 15, 2019

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission  
Division of Corporation Finance  
Office of Chief Counsel  
100 F Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20549

Re: Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co.  
Shareholder Proposal of John Chevedden

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are submitting this letter on behalf of Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (the "**Company**"), pursuant to Rule 14a-8(j) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the "**Exchange Act**") to notify the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "**Commission**") of the Company's intention to exclude from its proxy materials for its 2019 annual meeting of stockholders a shareholder proposal (the "**Proposal**") submitted by John Chevedden (the "**Proponent**").

We also request confirmation that the staff of the Division of Corporation Finance will not recommend to the Commission that enforcement action be taken if the Company excludes the Proposal from its 2019 proxy materials for the reasons discussed below.

A copy of the Proposal and related correspondence is attached as Exhibit 1.

In accordance with Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14D (November 7, 2008) ("**SLB 14D**"), this letter and its exhibits are being e-mailed to [shareholderproposals@sec.gov](mailto:shareholderproposals@sec.gov). In accordance with Rule 14a-8(j), a copy of this letter and its exhibits also is being sent to the Proponent. Rule 14a-8(k) and SLB 14D provide that a shareholder proponent is required to send the company a copy of any correspondence that the proponent elects to submit to the Commission or the staff. Accordingly, the undersigned hereby informs the Proponent that, if the Proponent elects to submit additional correspondence to the Commission or the staff relating to the Proposal, a copy of that correspondence should be furnished concurrently to the Company and the undersigned.

The Company currently intends to file its 2019 proxy materials with the Commission on or about April 5, 2019.

## THE PROPOSAL

On August 29, 2018, the Company received an e-mail submitting the Proposal for inclusion in the Company's 2019 proxy materials. The resolution included in the Proposal provides as follows:

**“Resolved**, that shareholders request that the Company provide a report, updated semiannually, disclosing the Company's:

1. Policies and procedures for making, with corporate funds or assets, contributions and expenditures (direct or indirect) to (a) participate or intervene in any campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office, or (b) influence the general public, or any segment thereof, with respect to an election or referendum.
2. Monetary and non-monetary contributions and expenditures (direct and indirect) used in the manner described in section 1 above, including
  - a. The identity of the recipient as well as the amount paid to each; and
  - b. The title(s) of the person(s) in the Company responsible for decision-making.

The report shall be presented to the board of directors or relevant board committee and posted on the Company's website within 12 months from the date of the annual meeting. This proposal does not encompass lobbying spending.”

## BASES FOR EXCLUSION OF THE PROPOSAL

We request that the staff concur that the Company may exclude the Proposal pursuant to:

- Rule 14a-8(i)(7) because the Proposal deals with matters relating to the Company's ordinary business operations; and
- Rule 14a-8(i)(5) because the Proposal relates to operations which account for less than five percent of the Company's total assets at the end of its most recent fiscal year, for less than five percent of its net earnings and gross sales for its most recent fiscal year and is not otherwise significantly related to the Company's business.

### **I. Rule 14a-8(i)(7) – The Proposal Relates to Matters of the Company's Ordinary Business**

Rule 14a-8(i)(7) permits a company to omit from its proxy materials a shareholder proposal that relates to the company's “ordinary business operations.” According to the Commission, the purpose of the ordinary business exclusion is “to confine the resolution of ordinary business problems to management and the board of directors, since it is impracticable for shareholders to decide how to solve such problems at an annual shareholders meeting.” *See*

Securities Exchange Act Release No. 34-40018 (May 21, 1998) (the “1998 Release”). In the 1998 Release, the Commission explained that the ordinary business exclusion rests on two central considerations: first, that “[c]ertain tasks are so fundamental to management’s ability to run a company on a day-to-day basis that they could not, as a practical matter, be subject to direct shareholder oversight”; and second, the degree to which the proposal attempts to “micro-manage” the company by “probing too deeply into matters of a complex nature upon which shareholders, as a group, would not be in a position to make an informed judgment.”

As explained in the 1998 Release, under the first consideration, a proposal that raises matters that are “so fundamental to management’s ability to run a company on a day-to-day basis that they could not, as a practical matter, be subject to direct shareholder oversight” may be excluded, unless the proposal raises policy issues that are so significant as to transcend day-to-day matters. Where, as here, a proposal requests that the Company prepare a report, “the staff will consider whether the subject matter of the special report or the committee involves a matter of ordinary business; where it does, the proposal will be excludable under Rule 14a-8(i)(7).” Securities Exchange Act Release No. 34-20091 (August 16, 1983).

The staff has historically taken the position that a shareholder proposal that raises a significant social policy issue may not be excluded under Rule 14a-8(i)(7) if the policy issue has a sufficient nexus to the Company’s business. *See* Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14E (October 27, 2009). The staff has traditionally considered shareholder proposals relating to political activity or spending to present a significant social policy issue. *See, e.g., The Procter & Gamble Company* (August 6, 2014) (denying exclusion of a proposal requesting an analysis of the company’s political and electioneering contributions because the proposal focused on “general political activities” and did not seek to micromanage the company).

However, the staff has also acknowledged that a proposal that raises a significant social policy issue may be excludable by one company but not by another company. For example, a proposal addressing the significant social policy of the health effects of cigarette smoking may transcend ordinary business at a cigarette manufacturer but not at a multi-product retailer. *See Phillip Morris Companies Inc.* (February 13, 1990) (denying exclusion of a proposal requesting that the company cease conducting business in tobacco because of the “growing significance of the social and public policy issues attendant to operations involving the manufacture of tobacco related products”); *Kimberly-Clark Corp.* (February 22, 1990) (denying exclusion of a proposal requesting that the company stop its manufacture of tobacco related products because the proposal “goes beyond the realm of the Company’s ordinary business”); *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.* (March 20, 2001) (permitting exclusion of a proposal requesting that the company discontinue the sale of tobacco and tobacco-related products because the proposal related “to Wal-Mart’s ordinary business operations (i.e., the sale of a particular product)”); *Rite Aid Corp.* (March 5, 1997) (permitting exclusion of a proposal related to the sale of cigarettes at Rite Aid stores because the proposal related to the “conduct of the Company’s ordinary business operations (i.e. the sale of a particular product)”). Similarly, a proposal addressing the significant social policy of gun violence may transcend ordinary business at a firearms manufacturer but not at a multi-product retailer. *See Sturm, Ruger & Company, Inc.* (March 5, 2001) (denying exclusion of a proposal requesting a report on gun manufacturer’s policies and procedures aimed at stemming the incidence of gun violence); *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.* (March 9, 2001) (permitting exclusion of a proposal requesting

that the company refuse to sell handguns and ammunition because the proposal related to Wal-Mart's ordinary business operations (i.e. the sale of a particular product)).

In Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14I (November 1, 2017) ("**SLB 14I**"), the staff stated that the applicability of the significant policy exception "depends, in part, on the connection between the significant policy issue and the company's business operations." The staff noted further that whether a policy issue is of sufficient significance to a particular company to warrant inclusion of a proposal that touches upon that issue may involve a "difficult judgment call" which the company's board of directors "is generally in a better position to determine." A well-informed board, the staff said, exercising its fiduciary duty to oversee management and the strategic direction of the company, "is well situated to analyze, determine and explain whether a particular issue is sufficiently significant because the matter transcends ordinary business and would be appropriate for a shareholder vote."

Where the board concludes that the proposal does not raise a policy issue that transcends the company's ordinary business operations, the staff said, the company's letter notifying the staff of the company's intention to exclude the proposal should set forth the board's analysis of "the particular policy issue raised and its significance" and describe the "processes employed by the board to ensure that its conclusions are well-informed and well-reasoned." *See also* Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14J (October 23, 2018) ("**SLB 14J**") (reiterating staff's believe that a "well-developed discussion of the board's analysis . . . can assist the staff in evaluating a company's no action request").

### **Board Process**

The Company's board of directors (the "**Board**") is regularly updated on all aspects of the Company's business operations and also receives regular updates on matters pertaining to the Company's corporate governance. At a regular meeting of the Board following receipt of the Proposal, the Board considered and analyzed the Proposal with input from management of the Company. The Proposal was considered by the Board within the context of the directors' significant knowledge of the Company's business and operations. After hearing the presentation and considering the information presented, the Board determined that the Proposal does not present an issue that transcends the Company's ordinary business operations, does not have a sufficient nexus to the Company, and therefore is not appropriate for inclusion in the Company's 2019 proxy materials.

### **Board Analysis**

In reaching its conclusion that the Proposal does not present an issue that transcends the Company's ordinary business operations and lacks a sufficient nexus to the Company, the Board considered the following factors:

- **The Company Does Not Make Contributions or Other Expenditures to Any Candidate for Public Office or to Influence the General Public with respect to an Election or Referendum.** The Company's anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy sets forth the Company's policies regarding political contributions. The policy prohibits the

use of Company funds to contribute to political candidates or parties unless the person wishing to make such contribution on behalf of the Company has submitted a request for pre-approval of the contribution to, and has received such pre-approval in writing from, the Company's General Counsel. For at least the last five years, no approval has been granted to make any such contribution.

- **The Company Does Not Make Indirect Contributions for the Purpose of Supporting a Candidate or Referendum or Influencing Legislation or Public Affairs.** Not only does the Company not make any direct political contributions whatsoever, but it also does not make any indirect contributions for the purpose of supporting a candidate for political office or influencing the general public with respect to an election or referendum, or influencing legislation or public affairs in any way. The Company does not have a political action committee and does not use corporate funds or assets to contribute to any political action committee. In addition, the Company does not employ, consult with or otherwise make payments to any persons for the purpose of influencing an election or referendum.
- **The Only Trade Association that the Company Is a Member of Makes No Contributions to Political Campaigns, Political Action Committees or Other Direct Political Contributions.** The Company's only expenditure that could possibly be considered "indirect" political contributions or expenditures are the Company's dues paid to one trade association (the "*Trade Association*"). The Trade Association is not permitted to make contributions to political campaigns or political action committees.
- **The Company's Membership in the Trade Association Is Related to Ordinary Business Operations.** The Company is an operator of metal service centers. Similar to other industrial distribution businesses that are impacted by macroeconomic trends, the Company's business is not significantly influenced by political campaigns or activities, and therefore the Company's membership in the Trade Association had neither the purpose nor the effect of influencing political campaigns or activities. The Company is a member of the Trade Association for purely ordinary business purposes. For example, the Company benefits from the networking and educational opportunities provided by the Trade Association, and the Company's executives regularly present at Trade Association conferences and have served as guest speakers at classes sponsored by the Trade Association. The Company has sourced multiple acquisitions and other business opportunities as a result of its membership in the Trade Association. The Company does not, however, direct the Trade Association on how it will spend its budget for political purposes in any way or participate in determinations by the Trade Association on how or whether to use dues for political purposes.
- **Lack of Investor Interest in the Issue.** Prior to receiving the Proposal, the Company had never received a shareholder proposal regarding direct or indirect political contributions, trade association memberships or similar topics. The Company's Investor Relations department has reported minimal interest from investors on such topics over the past five years.

- **The Company's Membership in the Trade Association Has Not Raised Any Social or Ethical Issues for the Company.** The Company has never experienced a boycott, labor stoppage, customer defection or any other adverse impact from its membership in the Trade Association. Moreover, any political activities by the Trade Association are not significant to the Company because the Trade Association's actions and political activities are not directly attributable to the Company, but rather to the Trade Association. For example, even if the Trade Association were to engage in political spending on an issue that was controversial or that raised social or ethical concerns, those concerns would likely impact the metal servicing industry as a whole because of the Trade Association's status as a representative of the Company's industry, including any companies in the industry who are not members of the Trade Association. Accordingly, the political spending of the Trade Association, and by extension the consequences of such spending, which the Company has no control or influence over and is overall insignificant, should not be attributable to the Company.
- **The Gap that the Proposal Is Seeking to Address Is Not Significant to the Company's Business and Is Not Expected to Exist Going Forward.** The Company makes no direct political contributions with corporate funds or assets. Moreover, the Company's Trade Association membership dues are not significant. The Proposal cites Freeport-McMoRan as a model example of disclosure of indirect political contributions. Freeport-McMoRan only discloses trade association payments "that would reasonably be expected to be used for political purposes". The Trade Association is not permitted to make contributions to political campaigns or political action committees. The Company expects to disclose on its website, prior to the 2019 annual meeting, its policy of not making direct political contributions with corporate funds or assets.

Based on its review of the information described above, the Board determined that it had sufficient information to determine whether the Proposal presents an issue that transcends the Company's ordinary business operations. The analysis by the Board led it to determine that the contributions and expenditures addressed by the Proposal fit squarely within the Company's ordinary business operations. The Board also came to the conclusion that providing shareholders an opportunity to vote on the Proposal was not warranted since the Board concluded that the Proposal did not present an issue that transcended the Company's ordinary business and lacked a sufficient nexus to the Company.

**I. Rule 14a-8(i)(5) – The Proposal Relates to Operations Which Account for Less Than Five Percent of the Company's Total Assets, Net Earnings, and Gross Sales and Is Not Otherwise Significantly Related to the Company's Business**

Rule 14a-8(i)(5) allows a company to exclude for lack of relevance a proposal that relates to operations which (i) account for less than five percent of the company's total assets at the end of its most recent fiscal year, (ii) account for less than five percent of its net earnings and gross sales for its most recent fiscal year, and (iii) is not otherwise significantly related to the company's business.

As described in SLB 14I, prior to the issuance of SLB 14I, the staff was “unduly limited” in its interpretation of the “economic relevance” exception because it “ha[d] not fully considered” whether the proposal “deals with a matter that is not significantly related to the issuer’s business.” Instead, if the proposal raised issues of “broad social or ethical concern,” the staff required the company to include the proposal if the company conducted “any amount” of business related to the issue. Going forward, the staff will focus on “a proposal’s significance to the company’s business” when the proposal otherwise relates to operations that account for less than 5% of total assets, net earnings and gross sales.

*A. The Proposal Relates to Operations that Account for Less than 5 Percent of the Company’s Total Assets, Net Earnings and Gross Sales*

The Company’s gross sales, total assets and net earnings as of and for the year ended December 31, 2017 (the last day of its most recently ended fiscal year publicly available) were \$9.7 billion (net sales), \$7.7 billion (total assets) and \$613 million (net income), respectively. The Company did not make any direct political contributions during the five years ended December 31, 2018. The Company’s only expenditures that arguably fit the definition of indirect political contributions, its membership dues paid to the Trade Association. The membership dues paid to the Trade Association in 2017 equates to approximately 0.003% of the Company’s total assets as of December 31, 2017 and approximately 0.033% of the Company’s net income and 0.002% of the Company’s net sales for the year ended December 31, 2017, significantly less than the minimum 5% threshold required for the Proponent to demonstrate economic relevance. While the Company’s financial statements as of and for the year ended December 31, 2018 are not yet available, the Company expects the percentages will be similar for 2018.

*B. The Proposal Is Not Otherwise Significantly Related to the Company’s Business*

In SLB 14I, the staff stated that when a proposal’s significance to the company is not apparent on its face, the proposal “may be excludable unless the proponent demonstrates that it is ‘otherwise significantly related to the company’s business.’” The staff noted further that, similar to the “ordinary business” exception described above, determining whether a proposal is “otherwise significantly related to the company’s business” may involve “difficult judgment calls” which the company’s board of directors “is generally in a better position to determine.” The staff therefore explained that it would expect a company’s no-action request arguing exclusion based on “economic relevance” to include a discussion that reflects the board’s analysis of the proposal’s significance to the company. As with the “ordinary business” exclusion, the staff in SLB 14J reiterated that a “well-developed discussion of the board’s analysis . . . can assist the staff in evaluating a company’s no action request” with respect to the exclusion of a proposal under the “economic relevance” exception.

**Board Process**

The Company’s Board is regularly updated on all aspects of the Company’s business operations and also receives regular updates on matters pertaining to the Company’s corporate governance. At a regular meeting of the Board following receipt of the Proposal, the Board considered and analyzed the Proposal with input from management of the Company. The Proposal

was considered by the Board within the context of the directors' significant knowledge of the Company's business and operations. After hearing the presentation and considering the information presented, the Board concluded that neither the Proposal nor the public policy considerations raised by the Proposal are significantly related to the Company's business.

### **Board Analysis**

In reaching its conclusion that neither the Proposal nor the public policy considerations raised by the Proposal are significantly related to the Company's business, the Board considered all of the factors discussed above in reaching its conclusion that the Proposal does not present an issue that transcended the Company's ordinary business operations and is therefore excludable as relating to the Company's ordinary business operations. In addition, the Board considered that, as noted above, the Company makes no direct political contributions with corporate funds or assets and the only expenditure that could possibly be considered "indirect" political contributions or expenditures are the Company's dues payments to the Trade Association. The Company's Trade Association dues over the past five years have been insignificant and have not come anywhere near 5% of the Company's earnings, assets or net sales.

Based on the foregoing, the Company believes that the Proposal's significance to the Company is not apparent on its face, and the Board concluded that the Proposal is not "otherwise significant to the Company's business." Accordingly, for the reasons set forth above, the Company believes that the Proposal is excludable under Rule 14a-8(i)(5) for lack of economic relevance to the company and is not otherwise significant to the Company's business.

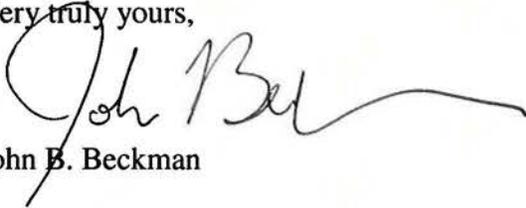
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## CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, the Company believes that the Proposal may be excluded under Rules 14a-8(i)(7) and 14a-8(i)(5). The Company respectfully requests the staff's concurrence in the Company's view or, alternatively, confirmation that the staff will not recommend any enforcement action to the Commission if the Company so excludes the Proposal from the proxy statement for its 2019 annual meeting of stockholders.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at +1 202-637-5464. In accordance with Staff Legal Bulletin 14F, Part F (October 18, 2011), please send your response to this letter to me by e-mail at [john.beckman@hoganlovells.com](mailto:john.beckman@hoganlovells.com).

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Beckman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John B. Beckman

Enclosures

cc: William A. Smith II (Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co.)  
John Chevedden

**Exhibit 1**

Copy of the Proposal and Related Correspondence

JOHN CHEVEDDEN

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Mr. William A. Smith  
Corporate Secretary  
Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (RS)  
350 S. Grand Ave. Ste 5100  
Los Angeles CA 90071  
PH: 213-687-7700  
FX: 213-687-8792

Dear Mr. Smith,

This Rule 14a-8 proposal is respectfully submitted in support of the long-term performance of our company.

This Rule 14a-8 proposal is intended as a low-cost method to improve company performance – especially compared to the substantial capitalization of our company.

This proposal is for the annual shareholder meeting. Rule 14a-8 requirements will be met including the continuous ownership of the required stock value until after the date of the respective shareholder meeting and presentation of the proposal at the annual meeting. This submitted format, with the shareholder-supplied emphasis, is intended to be used for definitive proxy publication.

Your consideration and the consideration of the Board of Directors is appreciated in support of the long-term performance of our company. Please acknowledge receipt of this proposal by email to <sup>\*\*\*</sup>

Sincerely,

  
John Chevedden

  
Date

[RS: Rule 14a-8 Proposal, August 29, 2018]  
[This line and any line above it – *Not* for publication.]  
**Proposal [4] – Political Disclosure Shareholder Resolution**

**Resolved**, that shareholders request that the Company provide a report, updated semiannually, disclosing the Company's:

1. Policies and procedures for making, with corporate funds or assets, contributions and expenditures (direct or indirect) to (a) participate or intervene in any campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office, or (b) influence the general public, or any segment thereof, with respect to an election or referendum.
2. Monetary and non-monetary contributions and expenditures (direct and indirect) used in the manner described in section 1 above, including:
  - a. The identity of the recipient as well as the amount paid to each; and
  - b. The title(s) of the person(s) in the Company responsible for decision-making.

The report shall be presented to the board of directors or relevant board committee and posted on the Company's website within 12 months from the date of the annual meeting. This proposal does not encompass lobbying spending.

### **Supporting Statement**

As a long-term shareholder of the Company, I support transparency and accountability in corporate electoral spending. This includes any activity considered intervention in a political campaign under the Internal Revenue Code, such as direct and indirect contributions to political candidates, parties, or organizations, and independent expenditures or electioneering communications on behalf of federal, state, or local candidates.

Disclosure is in the best interest of the company and its shareholders. The Supreme Court recognized this in its 2010 Citizens United decision, which said, “[D]isclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way. This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages.”

Relying on publicly available data does not provide a complete picture of the Company's electoral spending. For example, the Company's payments to trade associations that may be used for election-related activities are undisclosed and unknown. This proposal asks the Company to disclose all of its electoral spending, including payments to trade associations and other tax-exempt organizations, which may be used for electoral purposes. This would bring our Company in line with a growing number of leading companies, including International Paper Company, Freeport-McMoRan Inc., and Illinois Tool Works, Inc., which present this information on their websites.

The Company's Board and shareholders need comprehensive disclosure to fully evaluate the use of corporate assets in elections. We ask your support for this critical governance reform.

**Political Disclosure Shareholder Resolution – Proposal [4]**

[The line above – *Is* for publication.]

John Chevedden,  
proposal.

sponsors this

Notes:

This proposal is believed to conform with Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14B (CF), September 15, 2004 including (emphasis added):

Accordingly, going forward, we believe that it would not be appropriate for companies to exclude supporting statement language and/or an entire proposal in reliance on rule 14a-8(l)(3) in the following circumstances:

- the company objects to factual assertions because they are not supported;
- the company objects to factual assertions that, while not materially false or misleading, may be disputed or countered;
- the company objects to factual assertions because those assertions may be interpreted by shareholders in a manner that is unfavorable to the company, its directors, or its officers; and/or
- the company objects to statements because they represent the opinion of the shareholder proponent or a referenced source, but the statements are not identified specifically as such.

**We believe that it is appropriate under rule 14a-8 for companies to address these objections in their statements of opposition.**

See also: Sun Microsystems, Inc. (July 21, 2005).

The stock supporting this proposal will be held until after the annual meeting and the proposal will be presented at the annual meeting. Please acknowledge this proposal promptly by email

[ \*\*\* ].



September 4, 2018

*Via Email:* \*\*\*

Mr. John Chevedden  
\*\*\*

Re: Notice of Defects under Rule 14a-8  
Stockholder Proposal for Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. 2019 Annual Meeting

Dear Mr. Chevedden:

On behalf of Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (the “*Company*”), I am writing to inform you that we are in receipt of your submission dated August 29, 2018, which transmitted a stockholder proposal (the “*Proposal*”) relating to disclosure of the Company’s political contributions.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that your submission does not comply with Rule 14a-8 under the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 and, therefore, is not eligible for inclusion in our proxy statement for our 2019 annual meeting of stockholders. SEC regulations require us to bring this deficiency to your attention.

Rule 14a-8(b) provides that in order to be eligible to submit a stockholder proposal, a proponent must have continuously held a minimum of \$2,000 in market value, or 1%, of the Company’s securities entitled to be voted on the proposal for at least one year prior to the date the proposal is submitted. You have not provided any proof that you have continuously held, for the one-year period preceding and including the date the Proposal was submitted to us (August 29, 2018), shares of our common stock having at least \$2,000 in market value or representing at least 1% of the outstanding shares of our common stock. Furthermore, our records do not list you as a record holder of our common stock. Because you are not a record holder of our common stock, you may substantiate your ownership in either of two ways:

1. you may provide a written statement from the record holder of the shares of our common stock that you beneficially own, verifying that, on August 29, 2018, when you submitted the Proposal, you continuously held, for at least one year, the requisite number or value of shares of our common stock; *or*
2. you may provide a copy of a filed Schedule 13D, Schedule 13G, Form 3, Form 4 or Form 5, or any amendment to any of those documents or updated forms, reflecting ownership of the requisite number or value of shares of our common stock as of or before the date on which the one-year eligibility period began, together with a written

Mr. John Chevedden  
September 4, 2018  
Page 2

statement that you have continuously held the shares for the one-year period as of the date of the statement.

As you know, the staff of the SEC's Division of Corporation Finance has provided guidance to assist companies and stockholders with complying with Rule 14a-8(b)'s eligibility criteria. This guidance, contained in Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14F (October 18, 2011) and Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14G (October 16, 2012), clarifies that proof of ownership for Rule 14a-8(b) purposes must be provided by the "record holder" of the securities, which is either the person or entity listed on the Company's stock records as the owner of the securities or a DTC participant (or an affiliate of a DTC participant). A proponent who is not a record owner must therefore obtain the required written statement from the DTC participant through which the proponent's securities are held. If a proponent is not certain whether its broker or bank is a DTC participant, the proponent may check the DTC's participant list, which is currently available on the Internet at <http://www.dtcc.com/~media/Files/Downloads/client-center/DTC/alpha.pdf>. If the broker or bank that holds the proponent's securities is not on DTC's participant list, the proponent will need to obtain proof of ownership from the DTC participant through which its securities are held. If the DTC participant knows the holdings of the proponent's broker or bank, but does not know the proponent's holdings, the proponent may satisfy the proof of ownership requirement by obtaining and submitting two proof of ownership statements verifying that, at the time the proposal was submitted, the required number or value of securities had been continuously held by the proponent for at least one year preceding and including the date of submission of the proposal - with one statement from the proponent's broker or bank confirming the required ownership, and the other statement from the DTC participant confirming the broker or bank's ownership.

For the Proposal to be eligible for inclusion in the Company's proxy materials for its 2019 annual meeting of stockholders, the information requested above must be furnished to us electronically or be postmarked or transmitted electronically no later than 14 calendar days from the date you receive this letter. If the information is not provided, the Company may exclude the Proposal from its proxy materials pursuant to Rule 14a-8(f). Please address any response to my attention by email ([will.smith@rsac.com](mailto:will.smith@rsac.com)) or at Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co., 350 South Grand Avenue, Suite 5100, Los Angeles, California, 90071.

Mr. John Chevedden  
September 4, 2018  
Page 3

In accordance with SEC Staff Legal Bulletin Nos. 14 and 14B, a copy of Rule 14a-8, including Rule 14a-8(b), is enclosed for your reference. Also enclosed for your reference is a copy of Staff Legal Bulletin Nos. 14F and 14G.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W.A. Smith II', followed by a horizontal line.

William A. Smith II

Enclosures

## ELECTRONIC CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

**e-CFR data is current as of August 28, 2018**

Title 17 → Chapter II → Part 240 → §240.14a-8

Title 17: Commodity and Securities Exchanges

PART 240—GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS, SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

**§240.14a-8 Shareholder proposals.**

This section addresses when a company must include a shareholder's proposal in its proxy statement and identify the proposal in its form of proxy when the company holds an annual or special meeting of shareholders. In summary, in order to have your shareholder proposal included on a company's proxy card, and included along with any supporting statement in its proxy statement, you must be eligible and follow certain procedures. Under a few specific circumstances, the company is permitted to exclude your proposal, but only after submitting its reasons to the Commission. We structured this section in a question-and-answer format so that it is easier to understand. The references to "you" are to a shareholder seeking to submit the proposal.

(a) *Question 1: What is a proposal?* A shareholder proposal is your recommendation or requirement that the company and/or its board of directors take action, which you intend to present at a meeting of the company's shareholders. Your proposal should state as clearly as possible the course of action that you believe the company should follow. If your proposal is placed on the company's proxy card, the company must also provide in the form of proxy means for shareholders to specify by boxes a choice between approval or disapproval, or abstention. Unless otherwise indicated, the word "proposal" as used in this section refers both to your proposal, and to your corresponding statement in support of your proposal (if any).

(b) *Question 2: Who is eligible to submit a proposal, and how do I demonstrate to the company that I am eligible?* (1) In order to be eligible to submit a proposal, you must have continuously held at least \$2,000 in market value, or 1%, of the company's securities entitled to be voted on the proposal at the meeting for at least one year by the date you submit the proposal. You must continue to hold those securities through the date of the meeting.

(2) If you are the registered holder of your securities, which means that your name appears in the company's records as a shareholder, the company can verify your eligibility on its own, although you will still have to provide the company with a written statement that you intend to continue to hold the securities through the date of the meeting of shareholders. However, if like many shareholders you are not a registered holder, the company likely does not know that you are a shareholder, or how many shares you own. In this case, at the time you submit your proposal, you must prove your eligibility to the company in one of two ways:

(i) The first way is to submit to the company a written statement from the "record" holder of your securities (usually a broker or bank) verifying that, at the time you submitted your proposal, you continuously held the securities for at least one year. You must also include your own written statement that you intend to continue to hold the securities through the date of the meeting of shareholders; or

(ii) The second way to prove ownership applies only if you have filed a Schedule 13D (§240.13d-101), Schedule 13G (§240.13d-102), Form 3 (§249.103 of this chapter), Form 4 (§249.104 of this chapter) and/or Form 5 (§249.105 of this chapter), or amendments to those documents or updated forms, reflecting your ownership of the shares as of or before the date on which the one-year eligibility period begins. If you have filed one of these documents with the SEC, you may demonstrate your eligibility by submitting to the company:

(A) A copy of the schedule and/or form, and any subsequent amendments reporting a change in your ownership level;

(B) Your written statement that you continuously held the required number of shares for the one-year period as of the date of the statement; and

(C) Your written statement that you intend to continue ownership of the shares through the date of the company's annual or special meeting.

(c) *Question 3: How many proposals may I submit?* Each shareholder may submit no more than one proposal to a company for a particular shareholders' meeting.

(d) *Question 4:* How long can my proposal be? The proposal, including any accompanying supporting statement, may not exceed 500 words.

(e) *Question 5:* What is the deadline for submitting a proposal? (1) If you are submitting your proposal for the company's annual meeting, you can in most cases find the deadline in last year's proxy statement. However, if the company did not hold an annual meeting last year, or has changed the date of its meeting for this year more than 30 days from last year's meeting, you can usually find the deadline in one of the company's quarterly reports on Form 10-Q (§249.308a of this chapter), or in shareholder reports of investment companies under §270.30d-1 of this chapter of the Investment Company Act of 1940. In order to avoid controversy, shareholders should submit their proposals by means, including electronic means, that permit them to prove the date of delivery.

(2) The deadline is calculated in the following manner if the proposal is submitted for a regularly scheduled annual meeting. The proposal must be received at the company's principal executive offices not less than 120 calendar days before the date of the company's proxy statement released to shareholders in connection with the previous year's annual meeting. However, if the company did not hold an annual meeting the previous year, or if the date of this year's annual meeting has been changed by more than 30 days from the date of the previous year's meeting, then the deadline is a reasonable time before the company begins to print and send its proxy materials.

(3) If you are submitting your proposal for a meeting of shareholders other than a regularly scheduled annual meeting, the deadline is a reasonable time before the company begins to print and send its proxy materials.

(f) *Question 6:* What if I fail to follow one of the eligibility or procedural requirements explained in answers to Questions 1 through 4 of this section? (1) The company may exclude your proposal, but only after it has notified you of the problem, and you have failed adequately to correct it. Within 14 calendar days of receiving your proposal, the company must notify you in writing of any procedural or eligibility deficiencies, as well as of the time frame for your response. Your response must be postmarked, or transmitted electronically, no later than 14 days from the date you received the company's notification. A company need not provide you such notice of a deficiency if the deficiency cannot be remedied, such as if you fail to submit a proposal by the company's properly determined deadline. If the company intends to exclude the proposal, it will later have to make a submission under §240.14a-8 and provide you with a copy under Question 10 below, §240.14a-8(j).

(2) If you fail in your promise to hold the required number of securities through the date of the meeting of shareholders, then the company will be permitted to exclude all of your proposals from its proxy materials for any meeting held in the following two calendar years.

(g) *Question 7:* Who has the burden of persuading the Commission or its staff that my proposal can be excluded? Except as otherwise noted, the burden is on the company to demonstrate that it is entitled to exclude a proposal.

(h) *Question 8:* Must I appear personally at the shareholders' meeting to present the proposal? (1) Either you, or your representative who is qualified under state law to present the proposal on your behalf, must attend the meeting to present the proposal. Whether you attend the meeting yourself or send a qualified representative to the meeting in your place, you should make sure that you, or your representative, follow the proper state law procedures for attending the meeting and/or presenting your proposal.

(2) If the company holds its shareholder meeting in whole or in part via electronic media, and the company permits you or your representative to present your proposal via such media, then you may appear through electronic media rather than traveling to the meeting to appear in person.

(3) If you or your qualified representative fail to appear and present the proposal, without good cause, the company will be permitted to exclude all of your proposals from its proxy materials for any meetings held in the following two calendar years.

(i) *Question 9:* If I have complied with the procedural requirements, on what other bases may a company rely to exclude my proposal? (1) Improper under state law: If the proposal is not a proper subject for action by shareholders under the laws of the jurisdiction of the company's organization;

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (i)(1): Depending on the subject matter, some proposals are not considered proper under state law if they would be binding on the company if approved by shareholders. In our experience, most proposals that are cast as recommendations or requests that the board of directors take specified action are proper under state law. Accordingly, we will assume that a proposal drafted as a recommendation or suggestion is proper unless the company demonstrates otherwise.

(2) *Violation of law:* If the proposal would, if implemented, cause the company to violate any state, federal, or foreign law to which it is subject;

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (i)(2): We will not apply this basis for exclusion to permit exclusion of a proposal on grounds that it would violate foreign law if compliance with the foreign law would result in a violation of any state or federal law.

(3) *Violation of proxy rules:* If the proposal or supporting statement is contrary to any of the Commission's proxy rules, including §240.14a-9, which prohibits materially false or misleading statements in proxy soliciting materials;

(4) *Personal grievance; special interest:* If the proposal relates to the redress of a personal claim or grievance against the company or any other person, or if it is designed to result in a benefit to you, or to further a personal interest, which is not shared by the other shareholders at large;

(5) *Relevance:* If the proposal relates to operations which account for less than 5 percent of the company's total assets at the end of its most recent fiscal year, and for less than 5 percent of its net earnings and gross sales for its most recent fiscal year, and is not otherwise significantly related to the company's business;

(6) *Absence of power/authority:* If the company would lack the power or authority to implement the proposal;

(7) *Management functions:* If the proposal deals with a matter relating to the company's ordinary business operations;

(8) *Director elections:* If the proposal:

(i) Would disqualify a nominee who is standing for election;

(ii) Would remove a director from office before his or her term expired;

(iii) Questions the competence, business judgment, or character of one or more nominees or directors;

(iv) Seeks to include a specific individual in the company's proxy materials for election to the board of directors; or

(v) Otherwise could affect the outcome of the upcoming election of directors.

(9) *Conflicts with company's proposal:* If the proposal directly conflicts with one of the company's own proposals to be submitted to shareholders at the same meeting;

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (i)(9): A company's submission to the Commission under this section should specify the points of conflict with the company's proposal.

(10) *Substantially implemented:* If the company has already substantially implemented the proposal;

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (i)(10): A company may exclude a shareholder proposal that would provide an advisory vote or seek future advisory votes to approve the compensation of executives as disclosed pursuant to Item 402 of Regulation S-K (§229.402 of this chapter) or any successor to Item 402 (a "say-on-pay vote") or that relates to the frequency of say-on-pay votes, provided that in the most recent shareholder vote required by §240.14a-21(b) of this chapter a single year (*i.e.*, one, two, or three years) received approval of a majority of votes cast on the matter and the company has adopted a policy on the frequency of say-on-pay votes that is consistent with the choice of the majority of votes cast in the most recent shareholder vote required by §240.14a-21(b) of this chapter.

(11) *Duplication:* If the proposal substantially duplicates another proposal previously submitted to the company by another proponent that will be included in the company's proxy materials for the same meeting;

(12) *Resubmissions:* If the proposal deals with substantially the same subject matter as another proposal or proposals that has or have been previously included in the company's proxy materials within the preceding 5 calendar years, a company may exclude it from its proxy materials for any meeting held within 3 calendar years of the last time it was included if the proposal received:

(i) Less than 3% of the vote if proposed once within the preceding 5 calendar years;

(ii) Less than 6% of the vote on its last submission to shareholders if proposed twice previously within the preceding 5 calendar years; or

(iii) Less than 10% of the vote on its last submission to shareholders if proposed three times or more previously within the preceding 5 calendar years; and

(13) *Specific amount of dividends:* If the proposal relates to specific amounts of cash or stock dividends.

(j) *Question 10:* What procedures must the company follow if it intends to exclude my proposal? (1) If the company intends to exclude a proposal from its proxy materials, it must file its reasons with the Commission no later than 80 calendar days before it files its definitive proxy statement and form of proxy with the Commission. The company must simultaneously provide you with a copy of its submission. The Commission staff may permit the company to make its submission later than 80 days before the company files its definitive proxy statement and form of proxy, if the company demonstrates good cause for missing the deadline.

(2) The company must file six paper copies of the following:

(i) The proposal;

(ii) An explanation of why the company believes that it may exclude the proposal, which should, if possible, refer to the most recent applicable authority, such as prior Division letters issued under the rule; and

(iii) A supporting opinion of counsel when such reasons are based on matters of state or foreign law.

(k) *Question 11:* May I submit my own statement to the Commission responding to the company's arguments?

Yes, you may submit a response, but it is not required. You should try to submit any response to us, with a copy to the company, as soon as possible after the company makes its submission. This way, the Commission staff will have time to consider fully your submission before it issues its response. You should submit six paper copies of your response.

(l) *Question 12:* If the company includes my shareholder proposal in its proxy materials, what information about me must it include along with the proposal itself?

(1) The company's proxy statement must include your name and address, as well as the number of the company's voting securities that you hold. However, instead of providing that information, the company may instead include a statement that it will provide the information to shareholders promptly upon receiving an oral or written request.

(2) The company is not responsible for the contents of your proposal or supporting statement.

(m) *Question 13:* What can I do if the company includes in its proxy statement reasons why it believes shareholders should not vote in favor of my proposal, and I disagree with some of its statements?

(1) The company may elect to include in its proxy statement reasons why it believes shareholders should vote against your proposal. The company is allowed to make arguments reflecting its own point of view, just as you may express your own point of view in your proposal's supporting statement.

(2) However, if you believe that the company's opposition to your proposal contains materially false or misleading statements that may violate our anti-fraud rule, §240.14a-9, you should promptly send to the Commission staff and the company a letter explaining the reasons for your view, along with a copy of the company's statements opposing your proposal. To the extent possible, your letter should include specific factual information demonstrating the inaccuracy of the company's claims. Time permitting, you may wish to try to work out your differences with the company by yourself before contacting the Commission staff.

(3) We require the company to send you a copy of its statements opposing your proposal before it sends its proxy materials, so that you may bring to our attention any materially false or misleading statements, under the following timeframes:

(i) If our no-action response requires that you make revisions to your proposal or supporting statement as a condition to requiring the company to include it in its proxy materials, then the company must provide you with a copy of its opposition statements no later than 5 calendar days after the company receives a copy of your revised proposal; or

(ii) In all other cases, the company must provide you with a copy of its opposition statements no later than 30 calendar days before its files definitive copies of its proxy statement and form of proxy under §240.14a-6.

[63 FR 29119, May 28, 1998; 63 FR 50622, 50623, Sept. 22, 1998, as amended at 72 FR 4168, Jan. 29, 2007; 72 FR 70456, Dec. 11, 2007; 73 FR 977, Jan. 4, 2008; 76 FR 6045, Feb. 2, 2011; 75 FR 56782, Sept. 16, 2010]

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## U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission

### Division of Corporation Finance Securities and Exchange Commission

## Shareholder Proposals

### Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14F (CF)

**Action:** Publication of CF Staff Legal Bulletin

**Date:** October 18, 2011

**Summary:** This staff legal bulletin provides information for companies and shareholders regarding Rule 14a-8 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934.

**Supplementary Information:** The statements in this bulletin represent the views of the Division of Corporation Finance (the "Division"). This bulletin is not a rule, regulation or statement of the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "Commission"). Further, the Commission has neither approved nor disapproved its content.

**Contacts:** For further information, please contact the Division's Office of Chief Counsel by calling (202) 551-3500 or by submitting a web-based request form at [https://tts.sec.gov/cgi-bin/corp\\_fin\\_interpretive](https://tts.sec.gov/cgi-bin/corp_fin_interpretive).

#### A. The purpose of this bulletin

This bulletin is part of a continuing effort by the Division to provide guidance on important issues arising under Exchange Act Rule 14a-8. Specifically, this bulletin contains information regarding:

- Brokers and banks that constitute "record" holders under Rule 14a-8 (b)(2)(i) for purposes of verifying whether a beneficial owner is eligible to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8;
- Common errors shareholders can avoid when submitting proof of ownership to companies;
- The submission of revised proposals;
- Procedures for withdrawing no-action requests regarding proposals submitted by multiple proponents; and
- The Division's new process for transmitting Rule 14a-8 no-action responses by email.

You can find additional guidance regarding Rule 14a-8 in the following bulletins that are available on the Commission's website: [SLB No. 14](#), [SLB](#)

[No. 14A](#), [SLB No. 14B](#), [SLB No. 14C](#), [SLB No. 14D](#) and [SLB No. 14E](#).

## **B. The types of brokers and banks that constitute “record” holders under Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) for purposes of verifying whether a beneficial owner is eligible to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8**

### **1. Eligibility to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8**

To be eligible to submit a shareholder proposal, a shareholder must have continuously held at least \$2,000 in market value, or 1%, of the company’s securities entitled to be voted on the proposal at the shareholder meeting for at least one year as of the date the shareholder submits the proposal. The shareholder must also continue to hold the required amount of securities through the date of the meeting and must provide the company with a written statement of intent to do so.<sup>1</sup>

The steps that a shareholder must take to verify his or her eligibility to submit a proposal depend on how the shareholder owns the securities. There are two types of security holders in the U.S.: registered owners and beneficial owners.<sup>2</sup> Registered owners have a direct relationship with the issuer because their ownership of shares is listed on the records maintained by the issuer or its transfer agent. If a shareholder is a registered owner, the company can independently confirm that the shareholder’s holdings satisfy Rule 14a-8(b)’s eligibility requirement.

The vast majority of investors in shares issued by U.S. companies, however, are beneficial owners, which means that they hold their securities in book-entry form through a securities intermediary, such as a broker or a bank. Beneficial owners are sometimes referred to as “street name” holders. Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) provides that a beneficial owner can provide proof of ownership to support his or her eligibility to submit a proposal by submitting a written statement “from the ‘record’ holder of [the] securities (usually a broker or bank),” verifying that, at the time the proposal was submitted, the shareholder held the required amount of securities continuously for at least one year.<sup>3</sup>

### **2. The role of the Depository Trust Company**

Most large U.S. brokers and banks deposit their customers’ securities with, and hold those securities through, the Depository Trust Company (“DTC”), a registered clearing agency acting as a securities depository. Such brokers and banks are often referred to as “participants” in DTC.<sup>4</sup> The names of these DTC participants, however, do not appear as the registered owners of the securities deposited with DTC on the list of shareholders maintained by the company or, more typically, by its transfer agent. Rather, DTC’s nominee, Cede & Co., appears on the shareholder list as the sole registered owner of securities deposited with DTC by the DTC participants. A company can request from DTC a “securities position listing” as of a specified date, which identifies the DTC participants having a position in the company’s securities and the number of securities held by each DTC participant on that date.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. Brokers and banks that constitute “record” holders under Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) for purposes of verifying whether a beneficial owner is eligible to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8**

In *The Hain Celestial Group, Inc.* (Oct. 1, 2008), we took the position that an introducing broker could be considered a “record” holder for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i). An introducing broker is a broker that engages in sales and other activities involving customer contact, such as opening customer accounts and accepting customer orders, but is not permitted to maintain custody of customer funds and securities.<sup>6</sup> Instead, an introducing broker engages another broker, known as a “clearing broker,” to hold custody of client funds and securities, to clear and execute customer trades, and to handle other functions such as issuing confirmations of customer trades and customer account statements. Clearing brokers generally are DTC participants; introducing brokers generally are not. As introducing brokers generally are not DTC participants, and therefore typically do not appear on DTC’s securities position listing, *Hain Celestial* has required companies to accept proof of ownership letters from brokers in cases where, unlike the positions of registered owners and brokers and banks that are DTC participants, the company is unable to verify the positions against its own or its transfer agent’s records or against DTC’s securities position listing.

In light of questions we have received following two recent court cases relating to proof of ownership under Rule 14a-8<sup>7</sup> and in light of the Commission’s discussion of registered and beneficial owners in the Proxy Mechanics Concept Release, we have reconsidered our views as to what types of brokers and banks should be considered “record” holders under Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i). Because of the transparency of DTC participants’ positions in a company’s securities, we will take the view going forward that, for Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) purposes, only DTC participants should be viewed as “record” holders of securities that are deposited at DTC. As a result, we will no longer follow *Hain Celestial*.

We believe that taking this approach as to who constitutes a “record” holder for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) will provide greater certainty to beneficial owners and companies. We also note that this approach is consistent with Exchange Act Rule 12g5-1 and a 1988 staff no-action letter addressing that rule,<sup>8</sup> under which brokers and banks that are DTC participants are considered to be the record holders of securities on deposit with DTC when calculating the number of record holders for purposes of Sections 12(g) and 15(d) of the Exchange Act.

Companies have occasionally expressed the view that, because DTC’s nominee, Cede & Co., appears on the shareholder list as the sole registered owner of securities deposited with DTC by the DTC participants, only DTC or Cede & Co. should be viewed as the “record” holder of the securities held on deposit at DTC for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i). We have never interpreted the rule to require a shareholder to obtain a proof of ownership letter from DTC or Cede & Co., and nothing in this guidance should be construed as changing that view.

*How can a shareholder determine whether his or her broker or bank is a DTC participant?*

Shareholders and companies can confirm whether a particular broker or bank is a DTC participant by checking DTC’s participant list, which is currently available on the Internet at <http://www.dtcc.com/~media/Files/Downloads/client->

[center/DTC/alpha.ashx](#).

*What if a shareholder's broker or bank is not on DTC's participant list?*

The shareholder will need to obtain proof of ownership from the DTC participant through which the securities are held. The shareholder should be able to find out who this DTC participant is by asking the shareholder's broker or bank.<sup>9</sup>

If the DTC participant knows the shareholder's broker or bank's holdings, but does not know the shareholder's holdings, a shareholder could satisfy Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) by obtaining and submitting two proof of ownership statements verifying that, at the time the proposal was submitted, the required amount of securities were continuously held for at least one year – one from the shareholder's broker or bank confirming the shareholder's ownership, and the other from the DTC participant confirming the broker or bank's ownership.

*How will the staff process no-action requests that argue for exclusion on the basis that the shareholder's proof of ownership is not from a DTC participant?*

The staff will grant no-action relief to a company on the basis that the shareholder's proof of ownership is not from a DTC participant only if the company's notice of defect describes the required proof of ownership in a manner that is consistent with the guidance contained in this bulletin. Under Rule 14a-8(f)(1), the shareholder will have an opportunity to obtain the requisite proof of ownership after receiving the notice of defect.

### **C. Common errors shareholders can avoid when submitting proof of ownership to companies**

In this section, we describe two common errors shareholders make when submitting proof of ownership for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2), and we provide guidance on how to avoid these errors.

First, Rule 14a-8(b) requires a shareholder to provide proof of ownership that he or she has "continuously held at least \$2,000 in market value, or 1%, of the company's securities entitled to be voted on the proposal at the meeting for at least one year by the date you submit the proposal" (emphasis added).<sup>10</sup> We note that many proof of ownership letters do not satisfy this requirement because they do not verify the shareholder's beneficial ownership for the entire one-year period preceding and including the date the proposal is submitted. In some cases, the letter speaks as of a date *before* the date the proposal is submitted, thereby leaving a gap between the date of the verification and the date the proposal is submitted. In other cases, the letter speaks as of a date *after* the date the proposal was submitted but covers a period of only one year, thus failing to verify the shareholder's beneficial ownership over the required full one-year period preceding the date of the proposal's submission.

Second, many letters fail to confirm continuous ownership of the securities.

This can occur when a broker or bank submits a letter that confirms the shareholder's beneficial ownership only as of a specified date but omits any reference to continuous ownership for a one-year period.

We recognize that the requirements of Rule 14a-8(b) are highly prescriptive and can cause inconvenience for shareholders when submitting proposals. Although our administration of Rule 14a-8(b) is constrained by the terms of the rule, we believe that shareholders can avoid the two errors highlighted above by arranging to have their broker or bank provide the required verification of ownership as of the date they plan to submit the proposal using the following format:

"As of [date the proposal is submitted], [name of shareholder] held, and has held continuously for at least one year, [number of securities] shares of [company name] [class of securities]."<sup>11</sup>

As discussed above, a shareholder may also need to provide a separate written statement from the DTC participant through which the shareholder's securities are held if the shareholder's broker or bank is not a DTC participant.

#### **D. The submission of revised proposals**

On occasion, a shareholder will revise a proposal after submitting it to a company. This section addresses questions we have received regarding revisions to a proposal or supporting statement.

##### **1. A shareholder submits a timely proposal. The shareholder then submits a revised proposal before the company's deadline for receiving proposals. Must the company accept the revisions?**

Yes. In this situation, we believe the revised proposal serves as a replacement of the initial proposal. By submitting a revised proposal, the shareholder has effectively withdrawn the initial proposal. Therefore, the shareholder is not in violation of the one-proposal limitation in Rule 14a-8 (c).<sup>12</sup> If the company intends to submit a no-action request, it must do so with respect to the revised proposal.

We recognize that in Question and Answer E.2 of SLB No. 14, we indicated that if a shareholder makes revisions to a proposal before the company submits its no-action request, the company can choose whether to accept the revisions. However, this guidance has led some companies to believe that, in cases where shareholders attempt to make changes to an initial proposal, the company is free to ignore such revisions even if the revised proposal is submitted before the company's deadline for receiving shareholder proposals. We are revising our guidance on this issue to make clear that a company may not ignore a revised proposal in this situation.<sup>13</sup>

##### **2. A shareholder submits a timely proposal. After the deadline for receiving proposals, the shareholder submits a revised proposal. Must the company accept the revisions?**

No. If a shareholder submits revisions to a proposal after the deadline for receiving proposals under Rule 14a-8(e), the company is not required to

accept the revisions. However, if the company does not accept the revisions, it must treat the revised proposal as a second proposal and submit a notice stating its intention to exclude the revised proposal, as required by Rule 14a-8(j). The company's notice may cite Rule 14a-8(e) as the reason for excluding the revised proposal. If the company does not accept the revisions and intends to exclude the initial proposal, it would also need to submit its reasons for excluding the initial proposal.

### **3. If a shareholder submits a revised proposal, as of which date must the shareholder prove his or her share ownership?**

A shareholder must prove ownership as of the date the original proposal is submitted. When the Commission has discussed revisions to proposals,<sup>14</sup> it has not suggested that a revision triggers a requirement to provide proof of ownership a second time. As outlined in Rule 14a-8(b), proving ownership includes providing a written statement that the shareholder intends to continue to hold the securities through the date of the shareholder meeting. Rule 14a-8(f)(2) provides that if the shareholder "fails in [his or her] promise to hold the required number of securities through the date of the meeting of shareholders, then the company will be permitted to exclude all of [the same shareholder's] proposals from its proxy materials for any meeting held in the following two calendar years." With these provisions in mind, we do not interpret Rule 14a-8 as requiring additional proof of ownership when a shareholder submits a revised proposal.<sup>15</sup>

### **E. Procedures for withdrawing no-action requests for proposals submitted by multiple proponents**

We have previously addressed the requirements for withdrawing a Rule 14a-8 no-action request in SLB Nos. 14 and 14C. SLB No. 14 notes that a company should include with a withdrawal letter documentation demonstrating that a shareholder has withdrawn the proposal. In cases where a proposal submitted by multiple shareholders is withdrawn, SLB No. 14C states that, if each shareholder has designated a lead individual to act on its behalf and the company is able to demonstrate that the individual is authorized to act on behalf of all of the proponents, the company need only provide a letter from that lead individual indicating that the lead individual is withdrawing the proposal on behalf of all of the proponents.

Because there is no relief granted by the staff in cases where a no-action request is withdrawn following the withdrawal of the related proposal, we recognize that the threshold for withdrawing a no-action request need not be overly burdensome. Going forward, we will process a withdrawal request if the company provides a letter from the lead filer that includes a representation that the lead filer is authorized to withdraw the proposal on behalf of each proponent identified in the company's no-action request.<sup>16</sup>

### **F. Use of email to transmit our Rule 14a-8 no-action responses to companies and proponents**

To date, the Division has transmitted copies of our Rule 14a-8 no-action responses, including copies of the correspondence we have received in connection with such requests, by U.S. mail to companies and proponents. We also post our response and the related correspondence to the Commission's website shortly after issuance of our response.

In order to accelerate delivery of staff responses to companies and proponents, and to reduce our copying and postage costs, going forward, we intend to transmit our Rule 14a-8 no-action responses by email to companies and proponents. We therefore encourage both companies and proponents to include email contact information in any correspondence to each other and to us. We will use U.S. mail to transmit our no-action response to any company or proponent for which we do not have email contact information.

Given the availability of our responses and the related correspondence on the Commission's website and the requirement under Rule 14a-8 for companies and proponents to copy each other on correspondence submitted to the Commission, we believe it is unnecessary to transmit copies of the related correspondence along with our no-action response. Therefore, we intend to transmit only our staff response and not the correspondence we receive from the parties. We will continue to post to the Commission's website copies of this correspondence at the same time that we post our staff no-action response.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rule 14a-8(b).

<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of the types of share ownership in the U.S., see Concept Release on U.S. Proxy System, Release No. 34-62495 (July 14, 2010) [75 FR 42982] ("Proxy Mechanics Concept Release"), at Section II.A. The term "beneficial owner" does not have a uniform meaning under the federal securities laws. It has a different meaning in this bulletin as compared to "beneficial owner" and "beneficial ownership" in Sections 13 and 16 of the Exchange Act. Our use of the term in this bulletin is not intended to suggest that registered owners are not beneficial owners for purposes of those Exchange Act provisions. See Proposed Amendments to Rule 14a-8 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 Relating to Proposals by Security Holders, Release No. 34-12598 (July 7, 1976) [41 FR 29982], at n.2 ("The term 'beneficial owner' when used in the context of the proxy rules, and in light of the purposes of those rules, may be interpreted to have a broader meaning than it would for certain other purpose[s] under the federal securities laws, such as reporting pursuant to the Williams Act.").

<sup>3</sup> If a shareholder has filed a Schedule 13D, Schedule 13G, Form 3, Form 4 or Form 5 reflecting ownership of the required amount of shares, the shareholder may instead prove ownership by submitting a copy of such filings and providing the additional information that is described in Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(ii).

<sup>4</sup> DTC holds the deposited securities in "fungible bulk," meaning that there are no specifically identifiable shares directly owned by the DTC participants. Rather, each DTC participant holds a pro rata interest or position in the aggregate number of shares of a particular issuer held at DTC. Correspondingly, each customer of a DTC participant – such as an individual investor – owns a pro rata interest in the shares in which the DTC participant has a pro rata interest. See Proxy Mechanics Concept Release, at Section II.B.2.a.

<sup>5</sup> See Exchange Act Rule 17Ad-8.

<sup>6</sup> See Net Capital Rule, Release No. 34-31511 (Nov. 24, 1992) [57 FR 56973] ("Net Capital Rule Release"), at Section II.C.

<sup>7</sup> See *KBR Inc. v. Chevedden*, Civil Action No. H-11-0196, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 36431, 2011 WL 1463611 (S.D. Tex. Apr. 4, 2011); *Apache Corp. v. Chevedden*, 696 F. Supp. 2d 723 (S.D. Tex. 2010). In both cases, the court concluded that a securities intermediary was not a record holder for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b) because it did not appear on a list of the company's non-objecting beneficial owners or on any DTC securities position listing, nor was the intermediary a DTC participant.

<sup>8</sup> *Techne Corp.* (Sept. 20, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> In addition, if the shareholder's broker is an introducing broker, the shareholder's account statements should include the clearing broker's identity and telephone number. See Net Capital Rule Release, at Section II.C.(iii). The clearing broker will generally be a DTC participant.

<sup>10</sup> For purposes of Rule 14a-8(b), the submission date of a proposal will generally precede the company's receipt date of the proposal, absent the use of electronic or other means of same-day delivery.

<sup>11</sup> This format is acceptable for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b), but it is not mandatory or exclusive.

<sup>12</sup> As such, it is not appropriate for a company to send a notice of defect for multiple proposals under Rule 14a-8(c) upon receiving a revised proposal.

<sup>13</sup> This position will apply to all proposals submitted after an initial proposal but before the company's deadline for receiving proposals, regardless of whether they are explicitly labeled as "revisions" to an initial proposal, unless the shareholder affirmatively indicates an intent to submit a second, *additional* proposal for inclusion in the company's proxy materials. In that case, the company must send the shareholder a notice of defect pursuant to Rule 14a-8(f)(1) if it intends to exclude either proposal from its proxy materials in reliance on Rule 14a-8(c). In light of this guidance, with respect to proposals or revisions received before a company's deadline for submission, we will no longer follow *Layne Christensen Co.* (Mar. 21, 2011) and other prior staff no-action letters in which we took the view that a proposal would violate the Rule 14a-8(c) one-proposal limitation if such proposal is submitted to a company after the company has either submitted a Rule 14a-8 no-action request to exclude an earlier proposal submitted by the same proponent or notified the proponent that the earlier proposal was excludable under the rule.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Adoption of Amendments Relating to Proposals by Security Holders, Release No. 34-12999 (Nov. 22, 1976) [41 FR 52994].

<sup>15</sup> Because the relevant date for proving ownership under Rule 14a-8(b) is the date the proposal is submitted, a proponent who does not adequately prove ownership in connection with a proposal is not permitted to submit another proposal for the same meeting on a later date.

16 Nothing in this staff position has any effect on the status of any shareholder proposal that is not withdrawn by the proponent or its authorized representative.

<http://www.sec.gov/interps/legal/cfslb14f.htm>

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## U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission

### Division of Corporation Finance Securities and Exchange Commission

## Shareholder Proposals

### Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14G (CF)

**Action:** Publication of CF Staff Legal Bulletin

**Date:** October 16, 2012

**Summary:** This staff legal bulletin provides information for companies and shareholders regarding Rule 14a-8 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934.

**Supplementary Information:** The statements in this bulletin represent the views of the Division of Corporation Finance (the "Division"). This bulletin is not a rule, regulation or statement of the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "Commission"). Further, the Commission has neither approved nor disapproved its content.

**Contacts:** For further information, please contact the Division's Office of Chief Counsel by calling (202) 551-3500 or by submitting a web-based request form at [https://tts.sec.gov/cgi-bin/corp\\_fin\\_interpretive](https://tts.sec.gov/cgi-bin/corp_fin_interpretive).

#### A. The purpose of this bulletin

This bulletin is part of a continuing effort by the Division to provide guidance on important issues arising under Exchange Act Rule 14a-8. Specifically, this bulletin contains information regarding:

- the parties that can provide proof of ownership under Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) for purposes of verifying whether a beneficial owner is eligible to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8;
- the manner in which companies should notify proponents of a failure to provide proof of ownership for the one-year period required under Rule 14a-8(b)(1); and
- the use of website references in proposals and supporting statements.

You can find additional guidance regarding Rule 14a-8 in the following bulletins that are available on the Commission's website: [SLB No. 14](#), [SLB No. 14A](#), [SLB No. 14B](#), [SLB No. 14C](#), [SLB No. 14D](#), [SLB No. 14E](#) and [SLB No. 14F](#).

#### B. Parties that can provide proof of ownership under Rule 14a-8(b)

**(2)(i) for purposes of verifying whether a beneficial owner is eligible to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8****1. Sufficiency of proof of ownership letters provided by affiliates of DTC participants for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i)**

To be eligible to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8, a shareholder must, among other things, provide documentation evidencing that the shareholder has continuously held at least \$2,000 in market value, or 1%, of the company's securities entitled to be voted on the proposal at the shareholder meeting for at least one year as of the date the shareholder submits the proposal. If the shareholder is a beneficial owner of the securities, which means that the securities are held in book-entry form through a securities intermediary, Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) provides that this documentation can be in the form of a "written statement from the 'record' holder of your securities (usually a broker or bank)...."

In SLB No. 14F, the Division described its view that only securities intermediaries that are participants in the Depository Trust Company ("DTC") should be viewed as "record" holders of securities that are deposited at DTC for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i). Therefore, a beneficial owner must obtain a proof of ownership letter from the DTC participant through which its securities are held at DTC in order to satisfy the proof of ownership requirements in Rule 14a-8.

During the most recent proxy season, some companies questioned the sufficiency of proof of ownership letters from entities that were not themselves DTC participants, but were affiliates of DTC participants.<sup>1</sup> By virtue of the affiliate relationship, we believe that a securities intermediary holding shares through its affiliated DTC participant should be in a position to verify its customers' ownership of securities. Accordingly, we are of the view that, for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i), a proof of ownership letter from an affiliate of a DTC participant satisfies the requirement to provide a proof of ownership letter from a DTC participant.

**2. Adequacy of proof of ownership letters from securities intermediaries that are not brokers or banks**

We understand that there are circumstances in which securities intermediaries that are not brokers or banks maintain securities accounts in the ordinary course of their business. A shareholder who holds securities through a securities intermediary that is not a broker or bank can satisfy Rule 14a-8's documentation requirement by submitting a proof of ownership letter from that securities intermediary.<sup>2</sup> If the securities intermediary is not a DTC participant or an affiliate of a DTC participant, then the shareholder will also need to obtain a proof of ownership letter from the DTC participant or an affiliate of a DTC participant that can verify the holdings of the securities intermediary.

**C. Manner in which companies should notify proponents of a failure to provide proof of ownership for the one-year period required under Rule 14a-8(b)(1)**

As discussed in Section C of SLB No. 14F, a common error in proof of

ownership letters is that they do not verify a proponent's beneficial ownership for the entire one-year period preceding and including the date the proposal was submitted, as required by Rule 14a-8(b)(1). In some cases, the letter speaks as of a date *before* the date the proposal was submitted, thereby leaving a gap between the date of verification and the date the proposal was submitted. In other cases, the letter speaks as of a date *after* the date the proposal was submitted but covers a period of only one year, thus failing to verify the proponent's beneficial ownership over the required full one-year period preceding the date of the proposal's submission.

Under Rule 14a-8(f), if a proponent fails to follow one of the eligibility or procedural requirements of the rule, a company may exclude the proposal only if it notifies the proponent of the defect and the proponent fails to correct it. In SLB No. 14 and SLB No. 14B, we explained that companies should provide adequate detail about what a proponent must do to remedy all eligibility or procedural defects.

We are concerned that companies' notices of defect are not adequately describing the defects or explaining what a proponent must do to remedy defects in proof of ownership letters. For example, some companies' notices of defect make no mention of the gap in the period of ownership covered by the proponent's proof of ownership letter or other specific deficiencies that the company has identified. We do not believe that such notices of defect serve the purpose of Rule 14a-8(f).

Accordingly, going forward, we will not concur in the exclusion of a proposal under Rules 14a-8(b) and 14a-8(f) on the basis that a proponent's proof of ownership does not cover the one-year period preceding and including the date the proposal is submitted unless the company provides a notice of defect that identifies the specific date on which the proposal was submitted and explains that the proponent must obtain a new proof of ownership letter verifying continuous ownership of the requisite amount of securities for the one-year period preceding and including such date to cure the defect. We view the proposal's date of submission as the date the proposal is postmarked or transmitted electronically. Identifying in the notice of defect the specific date on which the proposal was submitted will help a proponent better understand how to remedy the defects described above and will be particularly helpful in those instances in which it may be difficult for a proponent to determine the date of submission, such as when the proposal is not postmarked on the same day it is placed in the mail. In addition, companies should include copies of the postmark or evidence of electronic transmission with their no-action requests.

#### **D. Use of website addresses in proposals and supporting statements**

Recently, a number of proponents have included in their proposals or in their supporting statements the addresses to websites that provide more information about their proposals. In some cases, companies have sought to exclude either the website address or the entire proposal due to the reference to the website address.

In SLB No. 14, we explained that a reference to a website address in a proposal does not raise the concerns addressed by the 500-word limitation

in Rule 14a-8(d). We continue to be of this view and, accordingly, we will continue to count a website address as one word for purposes of Rule 14a-8(d). To the extent that the company seeks the exclusion of a website reference in a proposal, but not the proposal itself, we will continue to follow the guidance stated in SLB No. 14, which provides that references to website addresses in proposals or supporting statements could be subject to exclusion under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) if the information contained on the website is materially false or misleading, irrelevant to the subject matter of the proposal or otherwise in contravention of the proxy rules, including Rule 14a-9.<sup>3</sup>

In light of the growing interest in including references to website addresses in proposals and supporting statements, we are providing additional guidance on the appropriate use of website addresses in proposals and supporting statements.<sup>4</sup>

### **1. References to website addresses in a proposal or supporting statement and Rule 14a-8(i)(3)**

References to websites in a proposal or supporting statement may raise concerns under Rule 14a-8(i)(3). In SLB No. 14B, we stated that the exclusion of a proposal under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) as vague and indefinite may be appropriate if neither the shareholders voting on the proposal, nor the company in implementing the proposal (if adopted), would be able to determine with any reasonable certainty exactly what actions or measures the proposal requires. In evaluating whether a proposal may be excluded on this basis, we consider only the information contained in the proposal and supporting statement and determine whether, based on that information, shareholders and the company can determine what actions the proposal seeks.

If a proposal or supporting statement refers to a website that provides information necessary for shareholders and the company to understand with reasonable certainty exactly what actions or measures the proposal requires, and such information is not also contained in the proposal or in the supporting statement, then we believe the proposal would raise concerns under Rule 14a-9 and would be subject to exclusion under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) as vague and indefinite. By contrast, if shareholders and the company can understand with reasonable certainty exactly what actions or measures the proposal requires without reviewing the information provided on the website, then we believe that the proposal would not be subject to exclusion under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) on the basis of the reference to the website address. In this case, the information on the website only supplements the information contained in the proposal and in the supporting statement.

### **2. Providing the company with the materials that will be published on the referenced website**

We recognize that if a proposal references a website that is not operational at the time the proposal is submitted, it will be impossible for a company or the staff to evaluate whether the website reference may be excluded. In our view, a reference to a non-operational website in a proposal or supporting statement could be excluded under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) as irrelevant to the subject matter of a proposal. We understand, however,

that a proponent may wish to include a reference to a website containing information related to the proposal but wait to activate the website until it becomes clear that the proposal will be included in the company's proxy materials. Therefore, we will not concur that a reference to a website may be excluded as irrelevant under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) on the basis that it is not yet operational if the proponent, at the time the proposal is submitted, provides the company with the materials that are intended for publication on the website and a representation that the website will become operational at, or prior to, the time the company files its definitive proxy materials.

### **3. Potential issues that may arise if the content of a referenced website changes after the proposal is submitted**

To the extent the information on a website changes after submission of a proposal and the company believes the revised information renders the website reference excludable under Rule 14a-8, a company seeking our concurrence that the website reference may be excluded must submit a letter presenting its reasons for doing so. While Rule 14a-8(j) requires a company to submit its reasons for exclusion with the Commission no later than 80 calendar days before it files its definitive proxy materials, we may concur that the changes to the referenced website constitute "good cause" for the company to file its reasons for excluding the website reference after the 80-day deadline and grant the company's request that the 80-day requirement be waived.

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<sup>1</sup> An entity is an "affiliate" of a DTC participant if such entity directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls or is controlled by, or is under common control with, the DTC participant.

<sup>2</sup> Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) itself acknowledges that the record holder is "usually," but not always, a broker or bank.

<sup>3</sup> Rule 14a-9 prohibits statements in proxy materials which, at the time and in the light of the circumstances under which they are made, are false or misleading with respect to any material fact, or which omit to state any material fact necessary in order to make the statements not false or misleading.

<sup>4</sup> A website that provides more information about a shareholder proposal may constitute a proxy solicitation under the proxy rules. Accordingly, we remind shareholders who elect to include website addresses in their proposals to comply with all applicable rules regarding proxy solicitations.

<http://www.sec.gov/interps/legal/cfs1b14g.htm>



09/06/2018

John Chevedden  
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Re: Your TD Ameritrade Account Ending in \*\*\*

Dear John Chevedden,

Thank you for allowing me to assist you today. As you requested, this letter confirms that, as of the date of this letter, you have continuously held no less than the below number of shares in the above referenced account since July 1, 2017.

1. Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. (RS) - 50 Shares
2. Equinix, Inc. (EQIX) - 20 shares
3. Kohl's Corporation (KSS) - 100 shares

If we can be of any further assistance, please let us know. Just log in to your account and go to the Message Center to write us. You can also call Client Services at 800-669-3900. We're available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Sincerely,

Matt Beckman  
Resource Specialist  
TD Ameritrade

This information is furnished as part of a general information service and TD Ameritrade shall not be liable for any damages arising out of any inaccuracy in the information. Because this information may differ from your TD Ameritrade monthly statement, you should rely only on the TD Ameritrade monthly statement as the official record of your TD Ameritrade account.

Market volatility, volume, and system availability may delay account access and trade executions.

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