THE UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SMALL AND EMERGING COMPANIES

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Securities and Exchange Commission
100 F Street, N.E.

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1	PARTICIPANTS (CONT.):	1	PROCEEDINGS
2		2	CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Welcome, everyone.
3	SEC STAFF:	3	Sebastian, I assume we have a quorum.
4	Julie Davis	4	MR. GOMEZ: We do.
5	Karen Garnett	5	CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Are we good? Are we good
6	Sebastian Gomez Abero	6	with that? Okay. Good. Okay. Well, welcome to today's
7	Keith F. Higgins	7	session of the Advisory Committee for Small and Emerging
8	David Shillman	8	Companies. It is a pretty full agenda. I think it
9		9	should be a productive day that we should all hopefully
10		10	find rewarding.
11		11	We will start today with a discussion that a
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		12	number of us feel is critical. That is what can be done
13		13	to make public company disclosure less burdensome for
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relied upon by issuers for interested offerings and whether there might be adjustments to that rule that better accommodate intrastate crowdfunding offerings.

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Before lunch, we also plan to finalize our

consideration to formalize section 4(a)(1-1/2).

Following our discussion and resolution on that matter at

the last meeting, we put together a written

recommendation, which I believe captures the position of

the Committee. We will take that up and hopefully get

that completed.

We will also continue our consideration of venture exchanges. The presentations from David Weild and Vince Molinari at our last meeting set out some thought-provoking options. We agreed at that time that it would be helpful to get a presentation on recurring market structure rules so we can all more fully understand what is currently possible and when impediments might stand in the way of ideas to facilitate greater secondary market liquidity. David Shillman from the SEC's Division of Trading and Markets will be here to help us with that.

As a final item of business today by popular demand on the part of a number of you, we are going to take up the so-called finders issue. Several of you have been engaged in this issue for a long time. And we have

protections. I look forward to seeing companies put the rules to good use to raise capital.

On other fronts, we continue to advance the completion of our other rulemaking mandates under both the JOBS Act and the Dodd-Frank Act and, as we discussed before, it is one of my priorities to complete the crowdfunding rulemaking this year, which is, really, the last significant JOBS Act rulemaking. Crowdfunding in its various forms obviously remains a focus of many others, including this Committee, the states, and various countries around the world. Indeed, more than 20 states have enacted some form of intrastate crowdfunding legislation or rules. And a number of others are considering similar initiatives.

As states are seeking to expand the avenues in which issuers may conduct intrastate offerings, we have focused on the fact that some of our laws and rules were put into place years ago, prior to widespread use of the internet, and may present challenges to the states' efforts. For example, Securities Act rule 147, which you will be discussing today, created a safe harbor that issuers often rely on for intrastate offerings. Rule 147 was adopted in 1974, the year I graduated from law school. So it is a while ago. And how an issuer might conduct an intrastate offering using the internet was

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asked Greg Yadley to tee up that discussion and whether it might make sense to have an exemption or other

solution that would enable those who want to help companies locate investors for private placements to do so without going through all of the full process of

broker-dealer registration.

So it should be a productive meeting. We are honored to have our chair, Mary Jo White, with us this morning. Is Commissioner

ning. Is Commissioner

COMMISSIONER STEIN: She is on her way.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Stuck in traffic. Okay.

Mike is here. Commissioner Piwowar is here.

Would you guys like to make some opening remarks? Okay.

CHAIR WHITE: Yes. Thank you very much, Stephen. Good morning to everybody. Thanks to everybody for being here, Steve, Chris, and all of you. I appreciate the full agenda that you have today. So I will be very brief in my customary update and comments so that you can get down to the business of your meeting.

So let me start. I am pleased to note that since your last meeting, the Commission in March adopted regulation A+. I know this Committee was eager for that rule to be finalized, as we were we. I believe the rule we adopted will provide an additional and effective path to raising capital that also provides strong investor

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obviously not contemplated at that time. The staff in the Division of Corporation Finance is currently considering ways to improve the rule by looking at, among other things, the conditions included in the rule for an offering to be considered intrastate.

Securities Act rule 504, an exemption that could be used to facilitate regional crowdfunding offerings for up to \$1 million that are registered in 1 or more states is another rule. That may benefit from modernization. And the staff is considering ways to do that

We look forward to having your input on these topics and to hearing your thoughts on whether there are aspects of these or, frankly, other rules that could be usefully updated or changed.

It is also quite timely -- and I see it is your first item on the agenda -- for this Committee to be taking up public company disclosure effectiveness. As Steve alluded to, the staff in the Division of Corporation Finance is hard at work on our initiative to improve the effectiveness of the public company disclosure regime for investors and companies. The staff has sought input from a broad range of market participants and is in the process of developing recommendations for the Commission's consideration. And

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so we clearly welcome your thoughts in this area. I know that is of particular interest to many of you.

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I look forward to your input on the other topics on your agenda, including the section 4(a)(1-1/2)exemption and the issues surrounding broker-dealer registration for those who identify or otherwise find potential investors in private placements. I am also very glad to see a continuation of your consideration of venture exchanges as an avenue, possible avenue, for secondary market liquidity.

So I will stop here. As always, we very much appreciate the time and the expertise that you devote to this Committee. And I also wish you a very productive meeting. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Commissioner Piwowar?

COMMISSIONER PIWOWAR: Yes. Thanks. I don't have any prepared remarks. Thank you all again, as Chair White said, for taking the time to come here. We appreciate, you know, you have a lot of other things to do. And we appreciate all of your feedback.

Piggybacking off a couple of things Chair White mentioned, I look forward to the discussion of rule 147, as she mentioned. Sebastian and his group have been working very hard about trying to update that rule. I look forward to your feedback on that.

1 Today you are going to address a bunch of 2 topics that the chair has already gone over that we are 3 really looking forward to. So let me do my job of 4 introducing those on the staff that are here. Sebastian 5 Gomez Abero, who is head of our Office of Small Business 6 Policy, obviously needs no introduction to you, and Julie 7 Davis, who is senior counsel in that office. Also with 8 us today is Karen Garnett, who is an associate director 9 in our Disclosure Operations Division in the division. 10 And she is the one who is heading up our disclosure 11 effectiveness project. 12

So, with that, I would like to turn it back to Stephen and Christine, who will introduce Karen. And then we will begin the discussion on company disclosure.

When Commissioner Stein shows up, we will take a brief respite and have her give the remarks that she is going to do. Thanks.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Thank you, Keith.

Well, as was just said, our first item of business today is public company disclosure effectiveness. I note that this Committee submitted a set of scale disclosure recommendations, really, I guess, over two years ago now. I think, you know, hopefully you have gone back and taken a look at that. So this has been something that has been at the top of the mind for

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And I understand Mike Pieciak is going to be doing a presentation on intrastate crowdfunding. As you know, we are trying to move forward on the federal crowdfunding rule and seeing if we can find some common ground here for potentially some regional crowdfunding for the states to get together. And is there anything we need to do at the SEC to allow that to happen or is this just something that can happen organically?

So I look forward to that discussion and all of the other ones. Thanks.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: So we also have with us Keith Higgins, who is, as you know, the director of the SEC's Division of Corporation Finance. Keith will introduce the rest of the SEC staff joining us today.

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Keith? MR. HIGGINS: Thanks, Stephen. Good morning. Before we get started, let me give the standard disclaimer that anything that I or anyone on the staff says today represents our own views and not the views of the Commission or any other member of the staff.

With that dispensed, I would like to welcome everybody here. Thanks again for coming. It is great that you would take the time to bring your experience, insights, and expertise to us to help us as we sort through issues on small and emerging companies.

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this Committee for some time.

We will start off with a briefing from the SEC's staff working in the initiative to give us an overview of these efforts. Karen Garnett is an associate director of disclosure operations in the Division of Corporation Finance. She is leading the team conducting the review, and we are pleased to have her join us today.

So I will turn it over to you.

MS. GARNETT: Great. Thank you very much. This is my first meeting at this Committee. So I am very pleased to be here today and happy to talk to you a little bit about our efforts on disclosure

As you all are well-aware, I am sure we have been working on this project for some time now. And it is a long process of gathering information and working towards some recommendations for the Commission. So I wanted to just give you a little bit of an overview of that process, what we have been doing up to now, and sort of what the updates we have for you are.

I think in your materials, you all got a copy of a speech that Keith Higgins gave back in October that I think is a really good summary of our efforts to date. One thing that I think is particularly helpful about that speech is it talks both about our perspective in

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looking at ways our disclosure could be improved to the

- benefit of investors as well as balancing the compliance
- 3 and cost burden on registrants who are providing those
- 4 disclosures. As we work through this process, I think,
- 5 believe it or not, we are hopeful that there are many
- 6 opportunities where we can do both, where we can both
 - improve the disclosure that is being provided to
- 8 investors while still reducing the cost to the companies

9 that are providing that disclosure. So we are still

10 working on our recommendations, and we will see how all 11 of that turns out.

> As we continue to work on this project, there are some general areas of focus that we have identified and kind of three major what I will call work streams going on right now. The first of those is the work that we are doing on regulation S-K. We are also taking a look at the disclosure requirements in regulation S-X, which addresses financial statement or financial information that is provided in SEC filings. And then the third area, the third broad area, deals with kind of how companies provide information in their SEC filings. Those efforts coincide with a broader Commission effort to update and modernize our EDGAR system but we hope are

not limited to just improvements in the EDGAR system. So

I will talk a little bit more about each of those three

COMMISSIONER STEIN: I am just pleased to be here. I want to again thank all of you for the pro bono time that you are putting in to help us think through some cutting-edge issues.

There is a really interesting agenda today. So we will look forward to seeing your feedback, you know, on it. But, again, thank you for coming and spending the day with us and helping inform our policy-making.

MS. GARNETT: So we are looking at principlesbased requirements. We are looking at the proscriptive requirements. We are also thinking broadly about how companies present information to investors in their SEC filings and are there ways, should we think about encouraging companies to tailor their disclosure in a manner that makes it readily accessible, both to retail investors and to institutional investors; and if so, how might we go about doing that.

And we are, in fact, looking at the scale disclosure requirements as well. I know that is an area of great interest to this group. We are thinking about how our current scale disclosure requirements are working. Whether they have been effective in reducing the compliance burden on public companies, and whether they are still providing the appropriate information to investors. We are also looking at the types of issuers

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investment decisions.

In the regulation S-K efforts, we are considering some very broad questions about how and where we could improve our existing disclosure requirements. Some examples of issues that we are looking at are whether there are principles-based requirements currently in regulation S-K, are there ways that we could improve those disclosures, and asking first, really, are those principles-based requirements really resulting in the disclosure that investors need to make informed

We are also looking at some of the proscriptive requirements in regulation S-K. These are the requirements for some of the more detailed requirements; for example, the item 101 description of the business. Many of those are very proscriptive. Some of our disclosure rules also include dollar thresholds for disclosure, sort of aside from a more principles-based materiality consideration. So we are looking at all of those prospective disclosure requirements and thinking about whether there are opportunities to update and modernize those requirements.

I am happy to pause for Commissioner Stein at this point. We can pick up again with the remainder of our S-K.

that are permitted to provide scale disclosure.

I know this group has focused on the definition of smaller reporting company. The thresholds there were updated in 2007. Is it time to look back at those thresholds and maybe consider a different definition or perhaps different ways of scoping companies into scale disclosure that might be different from the definition of smaller reporting companies? So all of those are questions that we are thinking about and working towards some recommendations to the Commission.

In regulation S-X, we are taking a little more focused approach there and kind of starting with looking at the disclosure requirements for financial information of entities other than the registrant. So this might include acquired companies. It might include investees or guarantors. Currently regulation S-X requires public companies to provide financial information of those entities under certain circumstances. And we are looking at, we are interested in getting input on the value of that information to investors, how they use it, and whether there are ways that we could streamline or update our disclosure requirements in those areas.

In both S-K and S-X, we are also looking at a more granular level at the existing disclosure requirements and whether there are things that are in our

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- rules that are just simply outdated because the
 information is readily available somewhere else, because
- 3 the information is required. In many cases, our
- 4 disclosure rules overlap with GAAP disclosure
- 5 requirements. So we are thinking about those areas. SEC
- 6 staff has been actively engaged with staff at the FASB to
- 7 talk about ways that we can coordinate to streamline the
- 8 disclosure requirements so that investors continue to get
- 9 the same information but we don't have duplicative
- 10 disclosures within a single filing.

for the moment.

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Also in both of these areas, it is just worth pointing out that we are initially focused on the disclosures that are required in periodic and current reports under the '34 Act. I know that this group has had some additional recommendations on proxy disclosures and governance items. Those are things that we hope to take up in a later phase of the disclosure effectiveness project, but we really are not trying to address those right now. Those are also things that I think have been updated more recently than some of the basic 10-K disclosure requirements. So we are putting those aside

And then a third work stream is how companies file information through the EDGAR system. EDGAR modernization is a big technical project that certainly so we are interested in looking at all of that.

Public input is a really critical part of our whole process. We have gotten a good amount of public comment so far. We are up to almost 40 comment letters in the project right now from a variety of different commenters. We have received a lot of different suggestions for how we might update our disclosure requirements. And these are incredibly useful to us. So I would encourage everyone, you know. If you have input on this project, we are still accepting/welcoming comment letters. And we hope to get more.

We are in the process sort of in the what is next front. We are in the process of developing recommendations of the Commission. That is a long and involved process, but we are working diligently on it. We are mindful not only of the comment letters that we have received but also recommendations from this group, from similar groups that have spoken on this issue, and we are taking all of that into account as we develop recommendations for the Commission.

We are considering both. In developing our recommendations, we are considering both, as I started these remarks, the impact on investors and how we can improve the information that investors receive in the SEC filings, but we are also sensitive to the cost and

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- $1\,$ $\,$ goes beyond the skills of the lawyers and accountants in
- 2 the Division of Corporation Finance, but I think the good
- 3 news is that our timing is really perfect on this because
- 4 it allows us to provide some very substantive input in
- 5 the EDGAR modernization project as the technical folks
 - sort of get started and ramp up there. It is,
- 7 unfortunately, a year's-long project. So thinking about
 - how companies present information in their EDGAR filings
- 9 as a technical matter may take some time to realize any
- 10 changes or benefits in that area.

In the meantime, we are thinking about whether there are things that we can do to make the existing EDGAR system more useful to investors and easier for users of the information to access it through our existing system. So that may take the form of some updates to the sec.gov website, just simply making information easier to search. The presentation of the information that is searchable could be perhaps different on sec.gov in a way that makes it just easier to use and more accessible. So those are all things that I think we can focus on in the short term and perhaps get some benefits.

We have gotten some really great input also on that area and any area on how we can just update our current systems to make information easier to find. And burdens of compliance. And we would particularly welcome
comments from this group on those concerns. To the
extent there are particular areas of compliance that are
burdensome that we could address, we would welcome your
comments on that.

I think that is pretty much our update at this point.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Thank you, Karen.

9 I would like to open it up for comment now, but
10 before I open it up more broadly, I would first like to
11 hear from Christine and form Shannon, two of our
12 Committee members who have firsthand experience with, you
13 know, wrestling with these issues as CEOs of smaller
14 public companies.

And then I would like to hear from you,
Charles, from kind of the investor point of view. We
talk about, again, requirements that may be burdensome
for small companies but also we are looking at improving
things, you know, for the investors as well.

So, with that, who wants to begin? You, Shannon?

22 CO-CHAIR JACOBS: Oh, I will begin.

23 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay.

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: First, good morning. And thank you for allotting time and consideration of

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The SEC's mission has three components: Protecting investors; maintaining fair, orderly, and efficient markets; and facilitating capital formation. All three of these missions are important to today's discussion, but we are going to focus on number 3: Disclosure effectiveness and its effect on capital formation.

The issue of disclosure effectiveness is important, as is scaling that disclosure. Both are critical to small and emerging companies. The burden of increased regulations post-Enron and subsequent collapse of the RPO market is well-documented. Indeed, many of these issues led to the creation of the JOBS Act.

What we would like to do this morning is connect the dots and drill down into some real-world actual examples, providing information for those of us who live the regulations and the compliance issues every day. Shannon and I are going to attempt to do just that.

Please assume at the outset that Shannon and I understand the need to protect investors, both our own and those in general. Shannon Greene has 15 years' experience as a NASDAQ CFO, and I have 20 years' experience as a New York Stock Exchange CEO. What we suggest or talk about today in no way compromises the

costs are material and scale matters. One size does not fit all when we continue to absorb one new regulation after another.

Painting all small companies with the same broad brush harms the small companies in ways that I believe our policy-makers surely never contemplated because the playing field is not at all level for the small companies. Treating all public companies in the same manner, with no adjustment for size, past behavior, or historic good performance, is not only harmful, but it exacerbates an already challenging environment for us, especially with weak economic growth.

Lastly, small companies post-Enron were inextricably caught up in and punished with the same regulatory fervor as the large companies, including those that suffered, the large companies that suffered, catastrophic losses and imposed an enormous burden on the U.S. taxpayer and investors, like an AIG. Net-net, the small public companies were caught up in the resulting economic and regulatory tsunami.

Between the years 1998 and 2012, 7,769 -- that is almost 8,000 -- companies delisted from the ranks of our public companies. The JOBS Act has given us hope and has begun to move the needle. It has reopened a key fundraising avenue for our growth in emerging companies.

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charge of protecting investors. Instead, we intend to strike a balance and give some examples of rules that, some of which are SOX and some of which are Dodd-Frank, harm small companies and capital formation. Increased regulations burden small companies with escalating costs.

These costs to comply eat up precious cash of our small, emerging companies. That cash usage comes at the expense of things like R&D, M&A, investing in new product extensions, purchasing capital equipment, building new plants, new job creation. And all of these things stimulate the state, local, and national economies.

Existing small companies with a market cap of greater than 75 million have to comply to the same rules and regulations as our companies, largest public companies, like GE, J&J, Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan, and even Disney. The compliance costs as they exist today are a disproportionate burden on a small company.

The costs to comply for the large companies that I just mentioned are more easily absorbed by those large companies, often handled with in-house staff. It is not the case with a small public company; whereas, most of us have to go out and incur a higher expense because these are done without the compliances done by outside vendors. So for the small public company, the

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1 One cited reason is the JOBS Act relaxed certain rules 2 for companies wishing to go public. It specifically 3 postponed or eliminated the implementation of certain 4 rules and regulations.

> Companies with revenue of less than \$1 billion are entitled to these enhancements. But wait a minute. What about the existing small companies that have revenue of less than \$1 billion? Unless a company has a market cap of less than \$75 million, the answer is nothing. There is a vast array of public companies now caught in the middle who have had no relief. Instead, the regulations continue to pile on.

Existing public companies could surely use some relief. After all, we need to remember they are already public. They already have internal controls in place. They are already compliant. They already have audited financials. They are known to their regulators. They have a history, both with their investors and with their regulators. They, too, are engines of growth. They are not the IPO du jour. And their goals are the same as those of the emerging growth companies, and that is to grow and to create jobs.

At this point, I am going to share some realworld exact examples of compliance costs on one of these small companies. This example is a New York Stock

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- Exchange company with \$80 million in revenue, 22 years of 1
- 2 being public, no restatements ever, no wrongdoing, the
- 3 cost per year of external auditors \$637,000 a year. It
- doubled in the three years post-SOX. Internal audit cost 4
- 5 this company \$237,000 per year. Do you know insurance
- 6 went up after Sarbanes-Oxley? That is now \$566,000 a
 - year. Again, it is an \$80 million in revenue company.
- 7 Internal salaries related strictly to compliance, \$1.2
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- 9 million a year with an average annual growth rate of 15
- 10 percent per year. External legal costs, no M&A, no
- 11 contracts, strictly compliance issues, \$208,000 a year.
- 12 Employee health insurance, \$1.1 million a year. This is
- 13 a total annual cost of \$4 million. If eliminated to this
- 14 public company, the pre-tax income minus goodwill, et
- 15 cetera, would have increased 55 percent to the immediate
- 16 benefit of its investors. This equates to \$8,000 per
- 17 employee for compliance costs. That is 100 new jobs per
- 18 year at an average pay rate of \$40,000 a year.
- 19 These actual expenses that I am sharing with
- you today were compiled in 2008. Dodd-Frank was enacted 20
- 21 in 2010. Now that it is 2015, I will let you all do the
- 22 math going forward.

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- 23 Now I am going to change course and provide a
- 24 list of regulations which coincide with the JOBS Act
- 25 relaxed rules and are not available to existing

investors. The JOBS Act and its authors were right on track with capital formation and understanding that regulatory compliance is a hurdle for companies in job creation. So what about the existing companies and providing them a level playing field and providing them with the runway for growth?

Small existing companies are known to the regulators. And they deserve some of the same concessions provided by the JOBS Act. They shouldn't be penalized because they went public before the act.

So think about this. This particular class of public company represents less risk to the investing public than an IPO. JOBS Act was the right move, but we somehow forgot the little companies in the middle.

As of 2011, 70 percent of the public companies have a market cap of less than \$250 million. This population only represents 5 percent of the total market cap of all public companies. They also represent less than 5 percent of the total average trading volume and less than 1 percent of the public float of all exchanges. These companies do not represent a systemic risk to the U.S. economy. They are, however, an engine of growth in their one class of business that deserves a level playing field. And it would be nice if this population of companies were somehow viewed as worthy of correlation to

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- companies. And I don't believe they lead to investor
- 2 fraud either. This list also includes suggestion for
- 3 rules that currently create costly disclosure burdens or
- 4 rules that simply represent disclosures that put small
- 5 companies at a competitive disadvantage: say on pay, say
 - on pay frequency. The new pay disclosure, pay for
- 7 performance, which is out on the comment period,
- 8 mandatory auditor rotation, XBRL, proxy access if
- 9 enacted, conflict minerals disclosure, another pending
- 10 regulation, the median employee pay ratio to the CEOs
- 11 comp, auditor attestation, compensation policies versus
- 12 risk disclosures, PCAOB rule adoption timing, and exhibit
- 13 filing requirement. Currently small companies, all
- companies, have to provide any material contracts as part 14
- 15 of their disclosures. That includes schedules and
- 16 attachments.

I doubt anybody has contemplated that that particular rule when you have to disclose those contracts and the exhibits and attachments were used by foreign customers and foreign competitors to demand pricing concessions from the small U.S. companies. This is a real-world example of where disclosure actually harmed

24 Notice the list that I have provided involves no financial/accounting shortcuts or avenues to defraud 25

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- 1 the JOBS Act. Perhaps size, behavior, and historic
- 2 performance could matter and we could employ a common 3 sense approach to disclosure effectiveness because our
- 4 existing companies struggle just as much as the IPOs
- 5 struggle with increased disclosure requirements.
 - Thank you. And, with that, I am going to ask Shannon
 - MS. GREENE: Thanks, Chris.
 - I wrote my comments out today as well because I tend to ramble and rant. And I didn't want to do that. I wanted to use the time effectively. So I apologize in advance for reading.

I do appreciate the Commission's interest in this topic. It is very relevant and timely. And also thank you to Chris and Stephen and my fellow Committee members for emphasizing the importance of this topic such that it made it on today's agenda.

To give some perspective to my comments today, I thought it was important to share a little bit about my company. Tandy Leather Factory is public. Our shares trade on the NASDAQ. And we have been public since 1993. Our revenue is approximately \$85 million, and our market cap is the same. But our public float is less than \$75 million due to 1 large shareholder that sits on our board. We are approximately 60 percent institutionally

the small company.

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owned. And our trading volume is averaging approximately 8,000 shares a day so far this year.

I think we can all agree that the JOBS Act was a good thing. It helped smaller companies who want to go public. But as the CFO of a small company that has been public for over 20 years, what help are we actually getting?

I recognize that there has been some disclosure relief for us as a smaller reporting company presenting two years of audited statements, rather than three, but, frankly, after presenting three years of statements for so long, eliminating one column on our financial statements is hardly what I would call relief. We still present three years of statements in our filings.

We did drop the stock performance graph from our filings, not because it was particularly burdensome to include but why spend the money to buy the graph if you don't have to? I would think, however, that investors might find the graph useful, although I have yet to be asked about it since we dropped it.

XBRL. I am still not convinced that anybody is using our XBRL files, but I admit that I don't have any way to prove that. We use an outside vendor, spending more than \$10,000 a year, and have yet to be asked about it by our investors or anyone else, for that matter.

excerpt from testimony that I gave to the U.S. House Small Business Committee in 2007, the point being made

3 that as small public companies, our investors know us.

They have been on site, met face to face with management.

They are investors in our company, not because of

They are investors in our company, not because of extensive disclosures but because they believe in the people running our company.

The issue then was SOX, but I think you can exchange any reference to SOX or internal controls with some current disclosure topic: XBRL, say on pay, et cetera.

Here it goes. We are considered a micro-cap in the world of public companies. Our market cap and trading volume is quite small, relatively speaking.

Approximately 35 percent of our outstanding stock is owned by institutions, some of which are so large they could buy our entire company and not even realize it. I meet with a number of these institutions as well as individual stockholders either via telephone or in person numerous times a year. Many of our stockholders own our stock because they believe in the potential of our company and are comfortable that the management team knows how to grow the company and, therefore, increase its value.

In all of my discussions with our stockholders

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Conflict minerals. I am still trying to figure out how this disclosure helps investors. Is this one of the criteria used when making investment decisions? I don't know the answer to that question. I have never been asked about that either.

Executive comp. While a former CD&A isn't required for us, we still had to expand our disclosures. We hired an outside comp firm to review our comp programs in order to sufficient deal with say on pay.

PCAOB and the auditors. This may be outside of the scope of this topic, but I could spend the entire morning talking about the negative changes to the relationship between auditors and issuers, which seems to be blamed on the PCAOB more often than not. Our auditors have been such for more than 10 years. It is painful to live through the degradation of our relationship. They are a good firm, but I have watched them become more of a regulator than a business partner. I understand there is a line there, but, frankly, in order to audit efficiently and effectively, there needs to be a spirit of cooperation between auditors and their clients. Instead, my experience is that auditors are now considered to be the guy with the big hammer while we as the client wait to be hit with it.

I will conclude my comments with a short

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and potential stockholders, I have yet to be asked about
our internal control system and whether we are or expect
to be in compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley section 404.
However, I am frequently asked how much we have and will
spend trying to comply and how much of a negative impact
it will have on our earnings.

While most investors want to invest in ethical companies, I am not getting the impression that the internal control system is what helps those investors make that determination. Again, it is the people of the company.

With all of that said, I am not minimizing the importance of effective disclosure. While I do not always agree in principle with the rules and regulations that public companies are forced to follow, I can assure you that my company takes this very seriously. As I have said numerous times, our company chose to play in the public company game. And we will play by the rules, whatever those are, until we find it impossible to do so, at which time we would have to withdraw from the public market.

 $\label{eq:Thanks} Thanks \ again \ for \ your \ time. \ \ I \ turn \ it \ back \ to \\ Chris.$

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: Thank you.
 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Thank you, Shannon,

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and thank you, Chris. 1

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Charles, could we maybe have the benefit of your perspective?

MR. BALTIC: Thank you, Steve. Good morning to Chair White, commissioners, SEC staff, fellow Committee members, and others present today.

The topic of mandated disclosure and disclosure effectiveness is far-reaching and of fundamental importance to the regulatory regime for public companies. It is a big deal. It is a big topic. And it relates to both sides of the equation: companies and investors.

My practice is in investment banking, emerging growth companies, particularly the biotechnology space. And those are companies that fit classically into the definition of emerging growth companies. They have been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the JOBS Act innovation in terms of numbers of companies going public and benefitting from an improved environment for IPOs. They also have an investor base that is very smart and very efficient in evaluating companies. It is largely an institutional investor base.

So I think we need to keep our mind on who the investors are for different classes of companies, but I think both companies and investors can benefit from the disclosure effectiveness efforts in really thinking hard

other burdens that are particularly onerous for emerging growth companies, which are often capital-intensive and at development stage than require new equity capital on a repeat basis to become successful and profitable businesses and create sustained job growth, some of the things we heard from Christine and Shannon in their remarks about the burdens that companies face in trying to get to the next level of commercial success.

And so the principle of scale disclosure for smaller cap public companies is and should be intrinsic to this reform effort.

Now, the Commission staff has been clear that the disclosure effectiveness effort is also important to all public companies at all stages of development. Thank you, Karen, for your presentation. I think the efforts underway are very, very encouraging. Many of the most logical, prudent, and potentially effective reforms are generalizable. This makes sense. There are many potentially fruitful areas of reform in disclosure.

As the staff report on review of disclosure requirements and Reg S-K have enumerated, there are many specific opportunities to modernize and update Reg S-K and also Reg S-X and industry guides as well to delete outdated requirements, rationalize duplicative disclosure, harmonize overlapping disclosure between SEC

about how to revise and update and improve the regime.

As I said, it is not just a big deal to issuers and

reporting companies but also to investors. Things like

- historical stock price graphs or the dilution tables and
- 5 IPO S-1's really have very little, if any, import to
- 6 investors in evaluating companies and investment
- 7 opportunities. So there are clearly a lot of areas in
 - the line item and structuring of S-K and the regulations
 - to make things more efficient and more beneficial.

10 As Chair White has emphasized, when disclosure 11 strays from its core purpose, disclosure can lead to

12 information overload to the detriment of both investors

in their investment decisions and voting decisions as

14 well as unnecessary costs to companies. Therefore,

15 mandated disclosure needs to remain relevant and material

16 to guiding the investment and voting decisions of

17 investors. And so materiality as the bedrock principle

18 of disclosure can and should guide this effort around

19 disclosure effectiveness and reform.

> I think it is also important to note and keep in mind that the current disclosure effectiveness effort was spurred in great part by the JOBS Act mandate to

23 update, modernize, and simplify the disclosure regime,

24 particularly with regard to S-K, but that was also with

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the goal specifically of reducing costs and time and

and standard setters like the FASB and eliminate

unnecessary disclosure. Many of these relate to specific

3 line item reform but can also prove to be very, very

4 beneficial and very impactful and not harm the disclosure

5 that investors are getting. Many of the comment letters

6 received that we heard referred to earlier by the

7 Commission also lend a great deal to potential areas of

8 line item reform or even broader principles of reform,

9 including increasing the scope of principles-based

10 disclosure to provide companies more flexibility in

11 meeting the disclosure burden or using emerging

12 technology to modernize and enhance delivery, things like

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expanded cross-referencing or use of hyperlinks, things

that relate to reforming and improving the EDGAR system.

In this regard, significant contributions have

16 been made through the comment letter process,

17 particularly entities that have weighed in, including

18 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Center for Capital Markets 19 Effectiveness, Business Roundtable, Society of Corporate

20 Secretaries and Governance Professionals, the ABA

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Business Law Section Working Group, and others.

I want to return to the imperative for reducing the regulatory disclosure burden specifically on smaller cap public emerging growth companies, which are the lifeblood of the new economy and economic growth. This

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and burdens.

- Committee, as, Steve, you mentioned earlier, has already
- 2 previously made recommendations to the Commission with
- 3 sensible reform to scale certain requirements for small

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- 4 and mid-sized public companies as recently as February of
- 5 2013. These included a number of very potentially
- 6 important measures revising smaller company reporting
- 7 rules to incorporate the exemptions applicable to
- 8 emerging growth companies, exempting smaller companies
- 9 from requirements to provide the interactive data, the
- 10 XBRL formatting -- those are very expensive undertakings
- 11 -- revising the exhibit requirements of item 601 to
- 12 permit omission of the material schedules and attachments
- 13 and filings and also things relating to definitional
- 14 aspects of smaller reporting companies, realizing the
- 15 definition of smaller reporting company to include
- 16 companies with a public float of up to \$250 million or
- 17 with less than \$100 million in annual revenues and, as
- 18 Christine also said very effectively, correlating the 19
- JOBS Act scale disclosure to existing small cap public
- 20 companies. These would all provide very significant
- 21 relief to emerging growth companies without harming, I
- 22 believe, relevant and material disclosure.

To these, I would add potentially others, potentially revising '33 Act filing requirements,

24 25 allowing emerging growth companies to use forward capital in follow-ons. It is not clear to me that the benefits of making them wait for a year would outweigh

3 the benefits that they would get from having ready access 4 to the market on a regular basis.

5 So these are some thoughts I have trying to be

balanced about the goals of improving disclosure for investors: making it relevant, making it focused exquisitely on materiality, but also providing benefits to companies that face these tremendous regulatory costs

The key to all of these reforms is that they would enhance capital formation and capital efficiency for emerging growth companies without compromising but I believe enhancing the principle of providing relevant and material disclosure for investment and voting decisions.

And so I would urge the Commission to continue to undertake this disclosure effectiveness reform effort with the principles and recommendations just discussed at the forefront in helping to guide the effort. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Great. Thank you, Charles.

Okay. I would like to open it up to the balance of the Committee for comment. There must be some ideas about what is obsolete or redundant or -- Dan?

MR. CHACE: I will give it a go. As a consumer of these filings on a regular basis, I spent a lot of

- incorporation by reference on form S-1, which would reduce the burden of filing updates for both IPOs and
- 3
- first-year follow-on offerings on S-1, potentially
- 4 shortening the waiting period for companies to use form
- 5 S-3 from 1 years to 6 months, thereby reducing the timing
 - risk and uncertainty of undertaking first follow-on
- 7 offerings and facilitating their capital formation and
- 8 potentially creating useful guidance and industry guides, 9
 - specifically for key emerging growth industry sectors, like biotechnology and social media.

would note again the space that I am involved with, biotechnology, since the beginning of 2013 doesn't correlate exactly with the JOBS Act, but it roughly correlates. Since the beginning of 2013, 56 biopharma companies have gone public and conducted a first follow-

On that point about follow-on transactions, I

- 17 on offering. The average time to the first follow-on 18 from the IPO for those 56 has been 9 and a half months,
- inside of the 1 year, that makes them shelf-eligible. 19
- 20 The median time was eight months. And 42 of the 56 that
- 21 conducted first follow-ons did so within the first year.
- 2.2 So these are capital-intensive companies that have to go
- 23 back to the market on a repeat basis. I would hazard a
- 24 guess that very, very, very few of those companies
- 25 actually received comments to their S-1 filings to raise

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- 1 time yesterday just thinking about what I really want to
- 2 find in the filing, when I read SEC documents or when I 3
- look at a company, what I am trying to achieve. The 4 reality right now is that the SEC documents are really
- 5 just a piece of it. You have the SEC documents. You
- 6 have the company reports, the press releases, which,
- 7 increasingly, include a lot of non-GAAP data that is not
- 8 in the 10-K/10-Q's and disclosure, additional
- 9 disclosures, that investors seem to find relevant. And
- 10 there is actually a growing divergence, it seems, between
- 11 the GAAP numbers and the non-GAAP numbers, which is
- 12 another topic worth addressing, I think.

13 But, starting back, I think it feels, reading 14 your document, Keith -- you know, I am always amazed at

how much detail there is in terms of the legal aspect of 15

16 these filings and how I just don't notice it as a

17 consumer. But my goal really to start with is like who

18 does the company define as their stakeholders. Who are

19 they looking to add value to? The standard answer for

20 that is employees, shareholders, customers, right? But

21 there is a lot of nuance in that I think is probably

22 naive to expect, but the goal there is like am I looking

23 at a company whose goal is to enrich management at the

24 expense of shareholders or is it balanced.

From that point, I would love to know, like,

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understand the goals of how that company intends to pursue that. How do they intend to create value for shareholders? Is it through growth? Is it through expanding margins? Is it through maximizing cash flow? Is it through investing that cash flow and growth?

There is a variety of ways that companies can do that. You don't necessarily get that from the disclosures. You have got a generic business description, but you don't get that kind of value-enhancing description, which I think would be useful. We as institutional investors get it in other ways through conversations with management. Some companies put their investor presentations on their websites. Some don't. But there are additional ways to get that. But in terms of SEC filings, it is not there.

Beyond that is understanding those goals of how do they plan to add that value to the stakeholders and then understanding the metrics that management uses to judge themselves to perform to those goals. And, again, I think the SEC filings come up short in that regard, I think mostly because it is a checkmark-type procedure for them versus a kind of explanatory procedure and a little bit of a CYA procedure as well.

MR. HIGGINS: If I can just respond to that?

It is the problem that we have identified that many

like to know if I am looking at a company? And, again,
 there is a variety of ways that companies communicate
 that via press releases, via management meetings, via
 communications with their sell-side analysts, you know,
 presenting at conferences, via public comments to the
 media.

So, you know, there is always a mosaic. And it is not going to be one document that is comprehensive. My take was just more to try to explain to you how I look at it from a public investment standpoint.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Yes. Understood. And that is useful. I think Keith's point is well-taken. I think that oftentimes it is more that companies can do in this regard than — there is more that they can do, but they don't do it. But do you have any thoughts on what is it that is currently disclosed that you could care less

MR. CHACE: Well, I can certainly pull my own stock chart, you know. It is interesting as a reader of a 10-K, you know, you tend to gravitate towards specific sections because you know that you are going to -- it depends on where you are in your level of understanding of that company. If you are trying to -- well, to begin with, to look at a new company, you tend to read the business descriptions, which can vary widely in terms of

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companies treat, particularly 10-K's and 10-Q's, as compliance documents. Of course, they are compliance documents. Look, we have a lot to change in our rules. And we will own up to that. But there is nothing in our rules that prevent companies from doing exactly, Dan, what you are looking for and what you are laying out MR. CHACE: Yes.

MR. HIGGINS: — other than — and maybe
Christine and Shannon have views on that. Why don't
companies view SEC documents as more communication
documents than compliance? And how can our rules help to
achieve that objective?

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Dan, are you saying that, just generally speaking, then, it would be useful to have additional disclosure but the existing disclosure is fine like it is?

MR. CHACE: My take was just if I start with a clean slate, as a consumer of financial information, how would I like to see it? What would I like to know? What are you trying to achieve when you look at a company and try to decide whether or not to invest in it? I am not saying necessarily that the SEC documents have to include that information, but it seems logical to me in a way that they would as a mandated filing for a company. But I am more just starting from the point of, what would I

its usefulness. You know, some companies are much more precise than others. And others, okay, you know, they make pipes. You know, that is the kind of conclusion you get out of it, and there is not much color.

The risk factors are interesting simply because companies I think feel an obligation from a box-checking point of view to be precise on that because they know they will probably get sued if they miss one of them. It is interesting to see the changes in those risk factors over time as well because my sense is the companies are in tune with that and they need to be complete.

The MD&A, my take is typically too vague to be of great usefulness, you know. Just generalities, gross margin is decreased because of product mix, you know. So the management comp is lengthy. And, really, the key to that, what you want to know, is how they are paid. Is their base salary reasonable? And their incentive comp, what is that based on? And, really, are your incentives of shareholders aligned with the way they are paid?

The disclosure there, my take is -- I haven't studied this systematically, but it feels inconsistent there as well that not all of that disclosure is precise, you know. It is nothing like precise to the dollar, but, you know, the take-aways that are useful to you is when a management is compensated on, say, growth in adjusted

EBITDA. You know as a shareholder that that means a lot to them to just grow for the sake of growth, you know, profitably, of course, but not necessarily on a first share basis, not necessarily organically. So there is disclosure there that is, you know, helpful, but inconsistent is my take as well.

Conflict minerals. You know, most companies just say, "Not applicable," you know, if it is not in a manufacturing company. But there is a growing trend towards environmental, social governance issues that companies do find relevant. But I do find that that regulation just seems incredibly complex to implement given the lack of visibility in the supply chain. It just doesn't show up in a lot of companies that we look at.

What else is in there? The contracts at the end that you mentioned typically, you know, are way more precise and necessary than — unless it is a super large contract, but, you know, we will kind of glance over them, but it doesn't seem material in a lot of cases. You do find as well that there is a lot of overlap, you know, there is repetition from a business description to the industry description later. I don't know if those are big cost savings items, but

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: Dan, do you use XBRL to mine

And the comment came back, "When you are Warren Buffett, we will let you do that. But until then"

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(Laughter.)

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: Until then, you have to follow the rules and the regs. And it was like I had to be modeled into place by attorneys and auditors on every single communication that was going out there that had to do with compliance. Dan, I was never given the freedom. And I am not sure I would have taken it because it is one thing to talk about your regulators on a global scale, but you have local regulators. And not all things are equal in Atlanta, as they might be in Dallas. The last thing you need is comment letters coming back because then, depending on the comment letters, you have to disclose that. It is a never-ending world of what you must do.

Keep in mind if you are at a board meeting and you have any kind of discussion and there is a lawyer there or they hear about it later, they come back and say, "Wait a minute. That is a material disclosure" and you find yourself filing S-K's and 8-K's and all the rest of this stuff when, geez, you are wanting to disclose things before they are even concrete or they have even happened in some cases.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Thanks.

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MR. CHACE: We use FactSet and Bloomberg as services that I presume link to XBRL. I don't understand the business process behind it, but I assume they do. But we are very heavy users of financial data downloaded through external data providers, which I assume is XBRL-based.

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: I don't know. Shannon? Our investor base, I mean, we had about 60 percent institutional and not one question ever ever about XBRL because most small companies are in index funds or we have mom and pops. Like to Shannon's point, they have known us forever. Their issue is "We want to talk to management."

And, you know, I have got one comment in response to your wanting — let's say we have shareholder presentations, we go to the investor conferences, et cetera. I don't know about Shannon or any of the rest of you that are associated in the public world. My lawyers would have shot me to put that presentation into my filings with the SEC because my understanding is those are absolutes. They didn't want comment letters.

I once said I would like to write an end-ofyear letter like Warren Buffett does, where you tell them what you did right and you tell them what you did wrong. Page 49

Other thoughts?

MS. LUNA: I had a quick comment. This is Sonia Luna. Thank you, Karen, for your work on the disclosure effectiveness project. I was recently at a conference, LD Micro in Los Angeles. And I got to meet and greet a lot of CEOs of smaller publicly traded companies. I did ask the question about disclosure effectiveness just to get some feedback. The general consensus is that there is over disclosure with little value.

One example would be something that may not be obviously in the authority of the SEC: footnote disclosures. So a lot of these smaller reporting companies back -- I went to some of my client base -- back in 2007 had maybe 10 pages worth of what is called F pages; right, your financials and your footnotes related. We fast forward to present day, and there is somewhere between 24 pages or 26 pages. You know, so there are 10 additional footnote disclosure pages that the auditors have to get their minds around, which ties into a potential solution that I am hoping the Securities and Exchange Commission will look into: In other areas in the filings, if it is already sufficiently present in the footnotes, maybe the company doesn't need necessarily to describe something else in the MD&A section if

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comparative financial data is there already in the footnotes. So things like that would be I think hopeful to a smaller public company.

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And then also, Charles, to your point about scalability, about disclosures, we probably want to revisit the thresholds that are currently being applied.

My last comment, dealing with PCAOB, which I call it the smaller public company additional tax. I had a client, a biotech. They had less than \$100,000 in revenue. Their stock shot up, and they became an accelerated filer. So I had to explain to the audit committee what that meant in terms of internal control evaluation by the external auditors. I gave them only one work paper that I had to go through. And I said, "Here is the before and after." So I have a testing lead sheet. And I had eight fields of data I had to put in for a summary testing lead sheet for what I had to audit for controls. Now that they were an accelerated filer, I said, "I have 17 fields to enter in data. So this is just one summary document. So I have to get an auditor to evaluate this new lead sheet to be sufficient enough for the external auditors to be happy because the PCAOB regulators have, you know, swung the pendulum on internal controls in a very stricter scale."

again in 2007. When the company went public, we had a prospectus. The non-F pages I think were 118. Out of interest, I pulled out of the drawer a copy of the prospectus from 1988. It was less than 30 pages, the non-F pages, which was interesting.

To Dan's point here a few minutes ago, working on an IPO right now in the med tech space, the first draft of the S-1 was from the lawyer. So it had a lot of work to do to be sent to issuers. Well, as everybody else involved was an S-1, another company this year that had gone public in the med tech space with a number of things redacted, you know, the name, the history of the incorporation, the shareholder table and all of these other things. But 80 percent of the risk factors, all of the forms, the columns, the description of the business, the industry, the regulatory environment, and all of these things were the same, to be changed but to the point of checking boxes. There was very, very little originality going into the comprehensive thought process behind the disclosure. To me, if all we are doing is making this a compliance document and a compliance regimen, whether it be the '33 or the '34 Act filings, I think we are creating so much overload of information, 118 pages versus 30, that it is difficult, even for sophisticated investors, to figure out where to go or

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larger firms, CPA firms, that are telling me that, you

And then I had very great colleagues at the

know, there is a newer terminology in auditing called

level of precision. You know, you have got to audit

management's judgment. You know, the degree of work ties

5 into that lead sheet that I was just telling you about,

you know, eight fields of data. And now you are an

accelerated filer. Congratulations. Now I have got to

really evaluate a lot of points of focus for that smaller

9 company.

> And I question, you know, what is the real value add when this client had the exact same number of financial reporting people on their staff. Nothing has changed in their business model. I am auditing expenses. And now I have got to ramp up my audit efforts.

> > CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Thank you.

16 John?

17 MR. BORER: Thank you very much. John Borer.

I appreciate all of the comments this morning. I have a

19 couple of anecdotes I want to just speak to really

20 quickly, which touch on some of the comments that have

21 just been made here by Sonia as well as a couple of the

22

others. 23

I was with a company for a number of years that had gone public in 1988. And through a number of changes, it had become private again and went public

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they just go to where they have interest in what is going

2 on, but a retail investor, a brokerage customer of 3

E*TRADE or Charles Schwab, I think it is probably not an 4

effective disclosure.

To the work that is being done right now -and, Karen, I appreciate your comments earlier -- I just had a couple of questions, whether these were even in the analysis that Corp Fin is doing. And I have spoken to this in prior Committee meetings in the prior session or prior term we had here, a couple of very specific things if there are any comments. One is, has this analysis looked at the benefit of not allowing smaller companies to use S-3? Is there any analysis of whether the baby shelf rules are really enhancing disclosure and investor protection in the real world? And has the issue of issuer registration versus security registration been visited at all in this context, as it has obviously proven to be successful in many other securities regulatory regimes in many other countries? So, instead of having to have an S-1 filed and ready to go effective or an S-3, you sell the securities. The issuer is already registered. And the exchange could admit those securities for trading. And you are done. Is any of that in the context of what is being evaluated?

MS. GARNETT: So I think on the S-3 point, as I

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- 1 said earlier, we are at this phase of our project focused 2
 - on the disclosure requirements for periodic reporting.
- 3 So we really are not focusing any attention on the
- 4 registration requirements, the '33 Act requirements. You
- 5 know, certainly there are a lot of areas that are right
- 6 for consideration there, but just in the interest of
- 7 trying to -- you know, as it is, it is a pretty big
- 8 project. In trying to bite off what we can chew at this
- 9 point, we have decided to focus on the periodic

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10 disclosures. So no, we are not looking at the S-3 11

eligibility standards right now. The second question was company registration. Again, we are not in the '33 Act space so much on this project other than the extent to which S-K requirements apply to both '33 and '34 Act filings. I will say in the EDGAR space, though, one thing that we are thinking about -- and I think that Keith had some remarks in the speech that was in your materials -- this idea of not company registration but having some sort of company file or company disclosure that is more of a static document, updated periodically as there are developments in the

business, but that could be one way to reduce the filing burden on companies to the extent that you have the same information year after year in terms of your description

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of the business. Perhaps that is a different way to

Catherine?

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MS. MOTT: This is just a question. As I think about what I am listening to here, someone commented that there were almost 8,000 companies delisted. People behave in the way that they are rewarded. So companies behave in the way that they are rewarded. So there is obviously something driving that process. And me as a public investor, I would have concerns about that because now I don't have public information that I would normally have. So I just want to say that.

The other thing is I am all for this capital formation because it means something to the companies I invest in. So facilitating it and making it easier for our companies to become public companies is valuable to me and my industry. On the other hand, I am always thinking about balance. One of the things that has been very valuable to me as someone who invests in public stocks as well is that the say on pay has been pretty important to me. As an investor because, you know, I am concerned about the abuses of say on pay, even with the little companies that were on the boards.

So, you know, that is a big issue. And I would take it to the next level. I would like to see say on where money is going in lobbyists and things like that. When I am evaluating investing in a company, how much

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provide that information to investors without having to repeat it in filings every year. So that is more of the long-term project because it would be part of the EDGAR modernization effort, but it is an idea that we are thinking about.

MR. HIGGINS: If I can add, in hopefully not making an unpopular statement, in large part, we have company registration for companies of \$700 million or market cap and over. The WKSZ system is in effect, company registration, because companies that qualify as well-known season issuers can file it and go. And there is an essentially skinny aspect of the '33 Act registration offering. Everything is based on your public filings. That is true to some extent but not entirely the same to companies above the smaller reporting company level, from \$75 million to \$700 million. The S-3 system, the shelf system, they are allowed to use for primary offerings in effect gives them that with the exception that they can't offer novel securities without coming back in to do new filings. It is really at the \$75 million and below. That is not something that is in the wheelhouse of our disclosure

the Commission are interested in looking at. CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Other thoughts?

project, but generally it is something that the staff and

money is being spent and to what degree is it going to certain things that that company wants to advocate?

I think, to Dan's point, what I am trying to determine is, is management enriching it for themselves and their own personal agenda? So those are the kinds of things that are important to me as a private investor.

So, in listening to all of this, I am not as --I tried to read as much as I could to get up to speed on this. I am not, but I just tried to put myself in the shoes of me as the investor and how I am evaluating this and me as a private investor that wants companies to more easily be encouraged to become public companies because I think it is good for our economy. It is very simple but

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. YADLEY: Thanks to the SEC staff for all 18 you are doing here and for the three members of the 19 Commission being here.

> This is really hard. I am a lawyer. And so this is what I do all of the time. And it is really different working with small public companies compared to the large companies that we represent. A lot of it really has to do with the fact that, as Chris and Shannon have said, you are running your businesses. And this

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compliance aspect is something you have to deal with. And, as Dan said, it is not necessarily what the investors are interested in.

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3 4 From the Commission's standpoint and I think 5 from outside counsels' standpoint, where you know you 6 don't have the opportunity to be consulted all the time, 7 with a big client, you get to see press releases. You 8 attend board meetings. You have lots of contact with 9 management. So in a way, I think the disclosure system 10 has become -- and this is right to a great extent. It 11 has to be the baseline of information that is out there. 12 And certainly when I review a 10-K for a client that 13 doesn't use me to review their 10-Q's and rarely for 8-14 K's, I know that I am trying to make sure that I give 15 them enough disclosure so that when they have conferences 16 with investors and make presentations at conferences, 17 there is enough out there that there is a safety net. 18 And my experience is that very few people are out there 19 just trying to enrich themselves and screw the public. 20 Unfortunately, there are enough of those that we have a 21 lot of rules simply to prevent against people that abuse 22 the system. It is very hard. 23

One of the things that on conference calls that I audit for clients that the investors want to know is what is going to happen next. Most of the disclosure and you are asked to explain or expand on your narrative disclosure, if it is going to affect your footnote disclosure, the accountants are not really that helpful. And they don't really want you to change something, even though there may be a different standard for the financial reports.

So I applaud your effort. There are lots of things in the items mentioned today that can be improved upon, certainly can, but I think it is going to be an unwieldy system because in a way, this really is your contract with the public, who may be investors today or may be investors tomorrow. And you sort of have to have a lot of that there. And I think it has to be balanced.

Dan, when you mentioned risk factors, that is always something really important. Of course, over time, risk factors went from something that was part of the document to a separate section to a section that is now incorporated by reference. There has been an ebb and flow about, do you put everything in? Do you only put the important things? Certainly there is a conservatism among lawyers and people who have been through litigation not to leave anything out. But you do have to hunt quite a bit and see, you know, beyond all the standard stuff. Well, this company, what do they perceive as their real risks?

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really is historic. So in the compensation area for sure, the link between what the company says they are going to do to expand revenues and increase profitability, you want to know how that is tied to compensation.

On the other hand, when I read what I consider really great public companies' proxy statements to get ideas for my smaller clients, they end up not being that useful because there is such a degree of detail. And executives get paid under eight different plans with performance metrics that are very hard to understand. And in a smaller company, it is a lot more simple. You know, are you doing your job? Are you working across departments because departments don't really matter? What are you doing to help our company grow and be more profitable? And you lose the flavor of that in SEC filings I think.

So maybe one idea would be more support that forward-looking statements really are okay. I think it is certainly a lot different than it was 10 years ago and before FD, but that is an area. The redundancy is also a problem because, as Shannon was saying with the accountants, if there is disclosure in the narrative that is also included in the footnote or something that the accountants have reviewed, if you get a comment letter

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1 So it is a challenge, and I look forward to 2 this Committee and through other organizations helping 3 you all as much as we can.

> CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Thanks, Greg. You know, you touched on a number of points, I think, that relate to I think the simple fact that a lot of information that we are talking about is useful.

I am kind of reminded of that quote that "I would have written you a shorter letter, but I didn't have time." I think there is a fair amount of that going on, a fair amount of redundancy, a fair amount of things that are just obsolete. And so it strikes me that there is probably some low-hanging fruit before we actually get into, you know, thinking about kind of, you know, absolute information that is seen as valuable by a number of investors.

Milton, were you

MR. CHANG: Yes. I thought the three presentations were extremely thoughtful. Thank you very much. I would like to make more of a trivial viewpoint that I am not really hopeful that much change can occur but just nibble around the edges to make things a little bit simpler because it is a philosophical and expectation issue of the SEC basically from where I sit in a common sense viewpoint. To use an analogy, it is like .01

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percent of the population will catch cancer. And you can make everybody every morning take cancer-preventing drugs versus when you have cancer, you do through an intensive treatment, which means like severe punishment if somebody violates the law.

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The other point is that it is against the big government versus common sense versus free economy because we want to regulate versus the free economy would take care of itself. If a company does not provide useful information to shareholders and commit fraud, they eventually get punished. But then if the expectation is for SEC to prevent everything, bad things, from occurring, then how can it change?

So I think it is really a bigger question than what this room can address. Anyway, just simple, minor comment.

17 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. I appreciate that. 18 And in some ways, I share that perspective. I think it is important that -- because this is a big job. There 2.0 are no two ways about that. It is complex. There are a 21 lot of issues. There is a lot of tension. But there are 2.2 some things that really can be done, like this afternoon, 23 and no one in their right mind would say that that is a 2.4 bad idea. So yes. I think I wouldn't consider your points trivial.

1 information in reverse chronological order based on what 2 was filed. You know, it probably does need EDGAR

3 modernization to break apart a filing and have the

4 company description in one place and have the MD&A in

5 another place and the financial statements in another 6 place, but within the context of, you know, can you find

7 annual reports, can you find prospectuses, can you find 8 proxy statements, it is like you do on a company website.

9 We could do that. And we can probably do that without 10 any rule changes.

> And so we have it on our plate. Stay tuned. It may come sooner than you think and clearly before you retire, Sara.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Charles?

MR. BALTIC: Yes. Steve, I just wanted to circle back to a thread in this conversation going back to something that Keith said very early on about companies can, you know, proactively disclose and tell their story. You know, I work with companies in the biotech sector who are headed by scientists, Ph.D.'s and M.D.'s who developed some kind of new innovation at a research institute, gotten it through the venture capital process, and now need to raise money for clinical trials. And it is tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars. So they have to do that in the public market. They want

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Anyone else? Sara?

MS. HANKS: Yes. It is more of a question for the staff, actually. I am a huge fan of the idea of company files. I think it would really help investors because they would be able to find stuff on EDGAR, which is really difficult right now. And it would help the companies themselves. But, of course, company files is going to be dependent on revising EDGAR, which is older than my legal career, which is pretty long at this point.

How many years out are we? I know that there have been RFPs go out for like the initial concept phase. So before I retire, are we going to have EDGAR changed?

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: When are you going to retire? MR. HIGGINS: You look very youthful. (Laughter.)

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Yes. How much time do we have?

MR. HIGGINS: You know, I think the full EDGAR modernization project is probably a 10-year undertaking, but to your point, I think there are some things that we can do and that we are actually looking at right now. And we have spoken with groups, even before EDGAR is totally modernized, to make it easier to find company information on sec.gov.

We don't necessarily have to display all of the

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1 to tell their story, and they are very enthusiastic about

it, but they very quickly come to learn -- and part of

3 what I do is help these companies form their stories up

for the filings as well as the investor audience. They

5 quickly come to fear disclosure. And I think they look

6 at it as a burden very quickly. And that relates to a

few things: The technical compliance burden, which is 8 great. And so I think anything that can be done to

9 reduce the burden of technical compliance, where those

10 things are not relevant or helpful to the investor

11 audience would be helpful.

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The litigation risk associated with disclosure.

13 And that is another topic for another day perhaps.

> I think also on the investor side, they are concerned about creating expectations for future disclosure. And that is an investor issue. Investors will come to expect some level of disclosure going forward. And so that is perhaps why companies aren't maybe as proactive as they could be and then simply just, you know, driving staff comments or triggering a comment

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21 letter where there might not otherwise be a comment

22 letter, which is a real fear because it can slow down

23 either a process in an S-1 or a process of filing a

24 follow-on S-1. And so I think all of those things go

25 into it.

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So I think companies are incentivized to try and do things that will tell the story to investors in an effective way. In fact, oftentimes when we are forming up the road show, something that will be important to the investor thesis we will realize doesn't have a link in the S-1 and needs to have that link in the S-1. So you will go back and put something in the S-1 that is clearly going to be important to the investor audience. So I think it is just a mindset that disclosure is a technical obligation, as opposed to an opportunity to really give investors useful information.

There is no easy answer. It is complex, probably taking opportunities where their realistic opportunities for reform are important. But I think just reducing the overall burden of disclosure is a really important goal.

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Sure.

MS. MOTT: Charles, define what you mean by technical disclosures.

MR. BALTIC: Well, perhaps adding something about the company's business that may not be necessarily required but would trigger, then, some kind of risk factor disclosure and a whole host of analysis that would go along with that.

You follow? "We are going to reference to our prior filing because the SEC has done a principles-based analysis on this disclosure effectiveness issue." And you looked at materiality being one of the criteria because if something hasn't materially changed and all we are doing is copying and pasting and then just changing the year, you know, maybe that might be a better analysis.

MS. GARNETT: Let me just unpack that a little bit because there is a lot of good stuff in there. So when we think about or when we are looking at principles-based — when I say "principles-based," some of our particular disclosure requirements are written in a principles-based manner. In other words, it is up to the companies to identify the specific information that would be responsive to the requirement like risk factors or MD&A. So that is one aspect of principles-based.

Certainly materiality is something that we are very interested in looking at. And I think that, you know, the Commission has over time in various contexts addressed materiality, thought about materiality as a basis for our disclosure requirements, but that is not to say it is the only basis for our disclosure requirements. So that is, I will say, a concept that we are thinking about just broadly in terms of how to evaluate the basis

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for our disclosure rules.

I mentioned earlier, for instance, the dilution tables or filing of exhibits that oftentimes are far afield from anything that is really relevant to investors' investment decisions. So I think all of those things go into making it a process that is very burdensome, very time-consuming, very expensive.

MS. MOTT: Okay. I was trying to I guess

MS. MOTT: Okay. I was trying to I guess discern that from scientific technical things. And so you are saying more financial technical things.

MR. BALTIC: Yes, just the disclosure regime itself.

MS. MOTT: Okay. All right. That helps me understand. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Sonia?

MS. LUNA: Just one quick question. Karen, in your analysis, I wrote down a note about looking at Reg S-K using a principles-based approach. Part of that process, when I think about certain principles, I think about materiality. Have you guys in your study thought about comparing and contrasting, let's say, annual filings and looking at a particular disclosure section and say, "If there is no material change," you know, maybe there could be a principles-based approach in that disclosure where the company can say, "It is pretty much the same as last year. We are going to incorporate it."

To the specific point about what about the question of disclosure, that really doesn't change much from period to period or from year to year. I think that one way of thinking about that question is, how do investors access information? Given that technology has changed the way investors can find company information, you know, is it important, is it still important, to investors to have a single document that is self-contained that has all of the disclosure or can hyperlinks back to historical filing do the job? So those are really great questions I think that we want to explore further as we are working on this project.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: John?

MR. HEMPILL: Yes. I just wanted to, you know, be one of the lawyers in the room. I just wanted to echo what Greg said and just to pick up on one thing that Christine said. I think one of the problems you have, certainly with the periodic filings, is that smaller companies that have to outsource the review to outside law firms put cost pressures on the law firms. You have to do it on a flat-fee basis. And law firms, in turn, just push the work down to lower-cost providers, you know, junior associates. They have a checklist. So there is absolutely no incentive to try and improve the

disclosure. At that point in time, it is just really a check the box.

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I am not sure how to make that problem go away, somehow incentivize better disclosure. I know that some larger companies, like I saw something on TV about GE, I think it was GE, that, even though they had a huge disclosure in their 10-K, they had put some charts up front to really disclose things a lot better. I think it was also in the Wall Street Journal. How do you incentivize companies to do that when they are looking at this as just a cost center and that the periodic reports with the SEC are disclosure documents but they are not sales documents? It is not even sales documents. It is that they are not a document that tells the story about the company and people don't rely on them for that.

And so it is just basically if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And if new regulations come in, you just lard on the stuff. And so, consequently, your 10-K goes from 75 pages to 150 pages in the process of 10 years, even though it is the same basic company.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: I can't disagree. Any other comments, questions? Tim?

MR. WALSH: I have, actually, one question for Shannon. Were your numbers at your firm similar to Christine's, the cost, the \$4 million in Christine's

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I mean, we are a retailer. You know, we run retail stores, not manufacturing. We don't have to

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: Right. We are strictly
 manufacturing plants, equipment, all of that.

MR. WALSH: So the other follow-up question I guess is to the SEC. So is there a project to try to get these smaller companies exempt or is that stuck in Congress? And where is that? In other words, why were they never given the same opportunities as emerging companies?

MS. GARNETT: So part of our current effort is the various scale disclosure provisions that are available is something that we are looking at. So looking at the existing provisions for scale disclosure, looking at the differences between the accommodations available to smaller reporting companies as compared to emerging growth companies, you know, where are those differences? And why, you know, do they continue to make sense?

So I think those are all questions that we want to think about as part of this project. And they are certainly included in what we are doing now.

MR. HIGGINS: And, just to follow up, a number of the JOBS Act provisions are actually applicable to smaller reporting companies, no CD&A. In fact, the JOBS

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example?

MS. GREENE: No. Our revenue, the company that she referenced and our revenues, are about the same, but I guess we are doing a fairly decent job of managing those costs relative to the dollars that she said. I mean, our employee health insurance matches hers at a million, million and a half, for our 500 employees. Our audit fees are 100 grand. Our attorney fees are 100 grand.

We don't have internal audit. I am it. So my effective hourly rate has got to be \$2 an hour or something or less, you know, well below minimum wage.

(Laughter.)

MR. WALSH: This is being taped.

MS. GREENE: So no. Maybe we are harder on our auditors and our attorneys than on compliance. Maybe we are doing a good job at that. I am pretty hard on them. So yes. No. Four million, no, no. I mean, that was earnings last year.

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: See, we had four factors in four states. We had a larger infrastructure. And we were right in Atlanta, which I think was maybe from a market point of view going to be a little tougher on these outside vendor costs. So yes.

MS. GREENE: Maybe difference in business, too.

Act says the comp disclosure is the same comp disclosure, at least on the CD&A and the tables, as for smaller reporting companies. Some things, obviously, aren't the same, but two years financial statements, same thing for smaller reporting companies. So there is a fair amount.

On things like exemption from say on pay, that is not in our current project. And, you know, obviously, that is something that the Commission would have to decide it wanted to do.

What are the other JOBS Act features that from a disclosure realm would be helpful or

MR. WALSH: My comments are really just for Christine's individual company, which I don't think I can tell you the name of it, but it is studying the cost, you know, \$4 million on an \$80 million revenue company. That just seems exceptional. D&O for over half a million dollars is just -- I can't even comprehend why the costs are that high.

MR. HIGGINS: We probably won't have a rulemaking project on D&O insurance. I mean, I don't think it is anything we

MR. WALSH: That was just one part of it. That was 15 percent of the cost. But still \$4 million for a company just seems incredibly onerous.

CO-CHAIR JACOBS: I have got a question for

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Keith because on a more global thing, rather than it was just this company's cost, you are correct about the small reporting companies, but that is market capital less than \$75 million. That is a really small population. And, yet, the JOBS Act, which we all love, is a billion dollars in revenue.

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So pick a market cap. Seven hundred million might be a fair one, but the gap of relief is just enormous. And, yet, the JOBS Act is on the right track. They have got it correct in identifying that one of the impediments to capital formation is disclosure. I mean, forget the recommendations. Forget the list that I provided. Forget any of the rest of it. Just from a global point of view, it is like, wow, we are getting this right. We have identified a very real opportunity in the area of capital formation. But there is a group stuck in the middle that might be able to benefit us overall. I mean, that is my point.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. I think everyone has pretty much weighed in. Richard, have you? D. J., anything? David?

MR. BOCHNOWSKI: Just to address the forwardlooking statements, we are a small company in the community banking space. Our market cap is at \$78 million. So we are caught. And, yet, the public float

1 In our case, our costs are about \$300,000 a 2 year to comply. In the community banking space, that may 3 not seem like much, but we tend to leverage. So in 10 4 times leverage, that is \$3 million worth of loans we 5 can't make. Community banks make roughly 50 percent of 6 all small business loans in the United States of America. 7 Over 10 years, that is \$3 million times 10, \$30 million 8 worth of loans in jobs that we cannot help create. So 9 that just keeps going.

> So I almost applauded when you were done, the same thing with Karen and her comments, and certainly support Charles in his. So we would be all for continuing the process of trying to make the disclosures scalable, which is critical to the whole process.

Thank you.

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16 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Well, thanks, 17 everyone, for their comments.

> I want to put together a recommendation, but there is a lot here. I think it will be difficult to try to get too specific this morning, but what I would like to do is following this meeting, I would like to put together a recommendation related to this topic that would then be circulated to the Committee. And then I think we will try to deal with it with a telephone conference, as opposed to waiting until our next meeting.

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is a lot less than that because 25 percent of the company

is on the inside-owned, have 18 percent investor that

- 3 comes to us. And they are very stable in their action on
- 4 the buy side and not on the sell side. So the kinds of
- 5 questions we get -- and, to add a little levity, you
- 6 know, at our annual meeting this last time, we dropped
- 7 the non-insiders. We dropped by a third because, instead
- 8 of having three people show up, we had two. The kinds of
 - questions we get, we are in the mom and pop category.
- 10 Our shareholders can all find us. They all can call us

11 and do.

> I am walking into a grocery store two or three weeks ago. And a fellow introduces himself, says he is not only a customer of the bank but an investor. And the kinds of questions he asked had nothing to do with what was in our public disclosures. He wanted to know what we were going to do, how we were reacting to certain conditions in the local economy, and what was our longterm plan.

Now, if I tried to put that into our annual report or even to my letter in the annual report, we are back to the lawyer saying, "You don't want to do that because of the litigation risk and because they are checking boxes on the security side and don't want to do it."

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What I would like would be your thoughts on what that recommendation might look like. I mean, it seems to me that we certainly are supportive of the SEC's efforts. It seems to me that there are a number of things that might be considered controversial. There is also a number of things that are not. I think there are things, a number of things, that could be done immediately. I think, instead of waiting until we can kind of solve every problem, it seems to me that it would make sense to prioritize and start taking care of the things that can be taken care of immediately immediately; you know, for example, requiring disclosure with so many things that people don't even look at because of today's technology. I think it is also important to go back and reconsider the recommendations that we made regarding the scale disclosure two years ago, see what might be considered still relevant and perhaps, you know, reiterate some of those points.

Those are my initial thoughts. Would anyone like to add to them or subtract from them? Does that seem like a reasonable path forward? It was kind of a broad outline.

23 MR. YADLEY: Yes. I think it will be easier 24 for us to add things to some of those generalities 25 because there were a lot of different views expressed.

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Even, for example, within the comp period, there were I think three different comments that may be hard to mold, but I think we ought to do it. And I think we ought to do it over the summer if we can.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Yes. Okay? Thank you.

Let's move on to our next topic, which is intrastate crowdfunding and rule 147. We all know that the Commission is working toward finalizing rules to implement securities-based crowdfunding. At the same time, a number of states are enacting legislation or regulation to provide for intrastate crowdfunding.

Mike has raised this issue to us. And we understand it is a timely one for the Commission as well. So we are pleased to turn it over to Mike to tee up the issue for the Committee.

MR. PIECIAK: Well, thank you, Stephen. And thank you to the commissioners and to the Committee and to the Corporate Finance staff for allowing the opportunity for me and on behalf of the states to talk about something that we think is really exciting in the field of crowdfunding, a recent development, in the last three or four or five years, which is state-based crowdfunding. And, again, I just want to emphasize that state-based crowdfunding is really part of a larger

overhaul that the states and NASAA as an organization are

their offering was originally on the underneath part of their cap of their ice cream and that the ice cream had to be brought into the Department of Financial Regulation. I am not sure what happened to it then. (Laughter.)

MR. PIECIAK: So, anyway, there is a number of other companies: Earth's Best Baby Food, which was purchased by Heinz corporation in 2005; a company called the Catamount Brewery, which, unfortunately, went out of business around 2000 but really sparked the craft brewery movement in Vermont, which is a very strong economic basis for our state, has created a number of small businesses that do craft breweries. And they are very good.

So it is really about local investing, about putting money back into the local economy, supporting your neighbors, your colleagues, your friends, and helping those small businesses grow and expand.

So I will turn to the slide here just to give you an example of how many states currently have state-based crowdfunding or some form of state-based crowdfunding. You will see that the green represents states that have state-based crowdfunding fully enacted.

And I believe there are 16 plus the District of Columbia. There are another nine states, which are

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contemplating by focusing on our dual charge of protecting investors but then also promoting efficient capital formation. This I would say is probably the crown jewel of our capital formation initiatives. It is something that we are very excited about, have started to see some success, and have some ideas as to how it can be improved.

So first a little historical context. And, as is often the case in blue sky laws, it starts with Kansas, which in 2011 created something called the Invest Kansas Exemption, the acronym meaning IKE, which was for Dwight Eisenhower, their native son. So Vermont, of course, was thinking about calling the exemption BERNIE or something similar to that.

(Laughter.)

MR. PIECIAK: But we decided to go with a different acronym.

In 2011, it was really the start of state-based crowdfunding. But to go back a little bit to the history of Vermont because I think it is informative, in the early '80s, there was an intrastate movement with a number of well-known companies, the most well-known being Ben and Jerry's. They did an intrastate offering, took advantage of rule 147, offered their initial shares to only Vermont residents. There is a funny story about how

represented in blue, which have legislation passed and are engaged in rulemaking to finalize state-based crowdfunding. There are I think 12 additional states that have legislation pending, which is in that yellow color. And then there are three states that are currently investigating state-based crowdfunding as an option going forward.

So in the very near future, we will have a majority of states that will have some form of statebased crowdfunding up and running. Traditionally, the limits of the state-based crowdfunding that we have seen, there is a variety of limits and particular rules, but, on average, it is a million dollars per offering, \$2 million if you have audited financial statements. The cap on individual investment is at a maximum of \$10,000. Some states are less than that, but the highest is \$10,000. And then for non-preferred credited investors, there is usually no cap. There is no limitation on the number of investors. For example, in Vermont, we used to have an exemption that limited investors to only 50 investors per offering. And recently, last June, as part of our crowdfunding initiative, we eliminated that cap and raised the aggregate cap to \$1 million. So, as I like to say, you could raise \$1 from a million Vermonters if you wanted to, but we don't have a million Vermonters.

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So you are going to have to raise \$2 from half a million to get to that number.

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So the states are very active. There is a New York Times article that will come out tomorrow that highlights the states' initiatives in the state-based crowdfunding arena. Out of the 16 states plus the District of Columbia that have active state-based crowdfunding, there have been 91 offerings. And, mind you, a number of these states, Vermont included, have only had this new regulation on their books for less than a year. So 91 offerings we think is pretty good for a start or a first step toward, you know, a really robust offering process.

So we give you a little flavor of some of the companies that have taken advantage or the types of companies that have taken advantage of the state-based crowdfunding to date. You will see there is a great variety: breweries, grocery store. There is even a dog groomer -- I thought that one was particularly funny, but I am sure they are a good business -- and hair salon and really a lot of diversity. There are really two types of businesses I see. There are businesses that have the potential for high growth. Their investors are probably looking to maximize their profits. But then there are also businesses that have a social or community component

pretty much the same. And those were in 1991. So I think we have been dealing with some of these for quite a bit of time.

What I hear repeatedly is, first of all, under rule 147, which is a safe harbor right to 3(a)(11), that the focus on residency at both the time of the offer and the sale is an impediment in our internet age and our social media age for an offering to be put publicly on a website for it to be promoted actively on social media. Obviously both of those mechanisms go across state lines. And whether something constitutes an offer could put an issuer in a very difficult position and potentially blow the exemption that they are using, which creates a number of issues for them.

Another constant impediment is the 80 percent rule, which requires under rule 147 that 80 percent of revenues derived from your business, 80 percent of your business assets, and 80 percent of the net proceeds of the offering all be within or derived from the state of operation. It is a difficult rule to comply with, and it is a difficult rule to even calculate for some businesses. For example, an internet business that sells online, where are those revenues derived from? Sometimes they don't even know where their customers are located. For a use of proceeds, for states like New England, where

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to them that it is a local grocery store that they want to keep in the community and, therefore, the grocery store conducts a crowdfunding offering to raise money to buy a new building or to buy the building that they are in or there is a local food store that is looking to expand or craft brewery or anything of that nature. So there are really those two categories, I think, of companies out there and two types of investors as well.

So, again, just to highlight, NASAA has a crowdfunding resource page on its website that lists all of the various states that have state-based crowdfunding, all of the exemptions, all the language for the exemptions, and provides very fulsome details there.

So when we passed our state-based crowdfunding in Vermont, we thought, you know, all was sort of well and good and people were going to be really excited about it, which they were, but almost immediately I heard from practitioners in Vermont that there were certain impediments to using our rules and to using particularly rule 147. So I continued to ask, you know, "Articulate those for me. Let me know what those are." It really came down to three issues. When I looked outside of Vermont to other counsel, they repeated these same three issues. And then when Mr. Keller submitted a paper to us sometime last week, I saw that his three issues were

there is often intrastate companies, what does that mean
to spend your proceeds within the state and so on and so
forth?

One last issue that we continually hear, which is not so much an impediment as it probably is just an inconvenience, is the inability for a company to incorporate in another state but still conduct an intrastate offering in the state where the primary place of business is. The clearest example of this would be a business in Vermont that wants to incorporate in Delaware to take advantage of the Delaware corporate laws but can't do that and also do an intrastate offering.

So those are really the three issues that continually get brought up. And we have been engaging with the SEC very proactively and very cooperatively to look at ways in which those can be changed, those can be modernized, and that issuers and their legal counsel can have much more clarity and assurance that when they are doing an offering, they are not running afoul of state or federal regulations.

Just to touch also, which is not up here, sorry, but on rule 504 as well. There are two states that have done state-based crowdfunding with both rule 147 and rule 504, one of them being Mississippi, the other one being Vermont, which we are working through our

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legislative rule process at the moment. So, basically, we allow an issuer to decide, do you want to do a rule 147 offering or do you want to do a rule 504 offering, which would require a lighter registration process but pretty similar to the type of disclosure that we already require under our rule 147 mechanism.

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So we are sort of excited about offering both of those. However, under rule 504, there are a couple of constant similar complaints, impediments that we hear from counsel, those being that the limit is too low, the \$1 million. I think that was implemented in 1992 and hasn't been increased since then. Particularly when you are using 504 on a regional basis, the million dollars is pretty low. And then the other complaint is that the securities have to be registered at a state in order to utilize general solicitation.

So, just for an example, under most of these intrastate offerings, there are exemptions and they allow you to do general solicitation, but if you are going to do the same thing under 504, you would have to be registered in a state in order to do general solicitation. So those are the complaints that we hear about.

And then one last point that I will make about an initiative that we are doing in New England, all the

New England states are attempting to meet up -- we have

attempting to meet up to discuss a regional approach to

interesting discussion.

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CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. You know, I have a couple of questions. I mean, we are talking about, I mean, obviously, you know, the focus of this Committee is the capital formation of smaller companies. And certainly crowdfunding has been seen as, if not a panacea, seen as certainly something that could represent a tremendous opportunity for companies, for smaller companies, especially those that are not located in or near money centers.

So this, what you say, resonates, with me at least, but it seems to me that there are three different levels that you talked about. You know, one is dealing with rule 147 and 3(a)(11). Two is kind of going beyond that and tinkering with 504, which I think raises the stakes a little bit and kind of complicates the situation.

And then, to further complicate, there is this whole notion of somehow doing regional deals that would somehow be treated, you know, as intrastate offerings. You know, maybe that is not what you meant, but

MR. PIECIAK: On the regional approach, it really would be utilizing a modernized 504 to allow states to get together.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay.

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MR. PIECIAK: So it wouldn't be an additional

had some issues over the winter due to weather --

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crowdfunding and a reasonable approach to capital

formation within our area, which just makes sense based on the geographic size of our region and also considering

the modern economy and how many people live in New

Hampshire but work in Boston or live in New Hampshire and

9 work in Vermont and vice versa. So that is also an 10 exciting new initiative that the states in New England

are working on and a number of other regions are also contemplating as well.

So that is sort of the brief overview. And I will sort of leave it at that. And we are more than open and willing to answer any questions that you have.

The one thing I think from our perspective that we would be really interested in hearing from the Committee about is, in lieu of an 80 percent test, what would be something that is appropriate which would connect a business, the nexus that would connect a business, to a particular state to allow that state to be the primary regulator of the business while they are

conducting their offering? We are open, very much so, to hearing people's thoughts. And we ourselves are trying

to brainstorm, but that would be a really I think

exemption, no.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: No, I didn't think it would be an additional exemption. So you are not trying to roll into 147? You are trying to roll it into 504?

MR. PIECIAK: Correct.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Okay.

MR. PIECIAK: But I think that the heart of what we see as impediments are to rule 147.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Right. Right. You know, my reaction, my initial reaction, would be that that is where the focus should be.

MR. PIECIAK: Yes.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Okay. Greg?

MR. YADLEY: Thank you, Michael. That was a good summary. Florida was one of those states that just passed legislation, even though we have a very dysfunctional legislature, that sort of walked out one of the chambers. But that bill got through.

Could you comment on maybe a similar breakdown in terms of whether there is a portal concept and that aspect of it?

MR. PIECIAK: Yes. Yes, sure. So there are a number of states that require the use of online portals to conduct an offering, but then there are a number of

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states that have that as an optional thing for issuers to decide whether they want to use an online portal or not.

So, for example, in Vermont, we have an elderly population. And we thought it would not make sense to mandate the use of this type of offering to online since maybe some folks aren't as familiar with portals and getting online to do or maybe not even as comfortable with getting online and doing investing. So we made it an option for an issuer to decide to use a portal or not. Some states, as I said, mandate it, but I think it is probably a pretty healthy split.

MR. YADLEY: If you know, the ones that use portals, do they have some of the similar restrictions and limitations on what the portal can do in terms of compensation and maybe education, expectations, and duration, things like that?

MR. PIECIAK: As to the federal proposed rules, yes. So I can speak in Vermont. If you go the avenue of a portal, then we require either registration as a broker-dealer or registration with our office. And if you only register with our office, then you are limited to more of a subscription fee activity than a success-based compensation. And I think that is probably pretty uniform among the states that either mandate portals or have that as an option.

are part of the North American Securities Administrators
Association. So the acronym isn't lost. But the 13
provinces in Canada, those that have crowdfunding, go
provincially. Their provinces are bigger than our state.
So I think it is less of an issue for them, but that is
a good research exercise I think.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: It seems to me like that is one of those questions where it is like so many aspects of securities regulation. Somehow somewhere, we come up with a number, whether it is in defining an accredited investor or demanding a certain disclosure. You know, I don't think there is a right number. At least that is my reaction. And I think we can spend the next few years kind of debating what the right percentage might be. It strikes me as narrowing it where the rule of reason should be applied and understand that this is an impediment to the state efforts and, you know, coming up with something that makes sense.

I am not sure. I am not sure that it is 50 percent or 40 percent. You know, with revenues, maybe it is not even a requirement any more. You know, certainly when determining whether or not someone has a significant presence in a particular state, you know, why should it be 80 percent of something or 70 percent? I think we can look at businesses. And we kind of understand,

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CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Richard?

MR. LEZA: Yes. I understand on intrastate for

being a resident that that makes sense as an investor.

What difference does it make where the revenue comes

5 from?6

MR. PIECIAK: Yes. You know, that is one of the impediments that we see or we hear about, at least, from issuers in Vermont and elsewhere, that they ask that same question. So that is why I bring it up as an issue that should probably be addressed and looked at to decide a better mechanism for connecting a state with an issuer than this 80 percent rule.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Sonia?

MS. LUNA: I wanted to also hone in on -- you had asked about us offering more of a solution. If to 80 percent, then what else? Has NASAA looked into what -- I am not familiar with the space -- other countries and what countries, let's say, based on their rules and regulations -- do they have different, let's say, best of breed percentages? Have you looked at, you know, parts of the U.K.? Are they doing crowdfunding? And have they come up with some local crowdfunding set of rules that would be better than the 80 percent?

MR. PIECIAK: I mean, we haven't looked beyond

North America. I mean, obviously the Canadian provinces

regardless of what else they have going on elsewhere,
whether or not they have a significant presence in a
particular location.

So let's hear everybody else's thoughts. D. ${\bf J}.?$

MR. PAUL: Yes. I mean, I think to some extent, these problems have been solved. They just haven't been enacted yet. And it is title III, which is to say if we had national crowdfunding, we would not be discussing how to make it easier for the states to do financial calisthenics around them, around these various things, whether it is 147 or we are trying to co-opt 504.

I realize that, I am very cognizant of, the chair reiterating her desire to have title III lit up sometime before the end of the year. I am awfully happy to continue to hear that. There is something about the zero if of October, but what have you.

And I understand that our topic today is to try to make some of the federal rules more applicable and less onerous for the intrastate crowdfunding efforts that exist in order to support more than, say, 91 offerings. But I wouldn't mind at some point if this Committee would take up the discussion of title III because I think that that would fiat all of this discussion with respect to, you know, what we can do at the state level.

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I also believe that should we actually have title III and national crowdfunding or federal crowdfunding before the end of the year, that I don't know that there is going to be a great deal of appetite at the state level to continue with the intrastate efforts. I am not sure that they are going to -- I think the federal will supersede it. I think that the internet doesn't know state boundaries, let alone regional boundaries. And I think that its simply -- that it will become where crowdfunding for equity and debt goes to. I don't think that the portals are going to be limited to individual states or individual regions.

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CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: You know, I think that those are good points. And I am unsure if I could discern the answer at this point because I think, you know, a lot is going to depend on the regulations and compliance features that are going to come into play under title III versus what the states are requiring.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Well, it is just a matter of because, clearly, the efficiency of having a patchwork of 50 jurisdictions or even if the regions are broken up into 7 is not going to be as efficient as having, you know, one. So that would be the suggestion there.

MR. PAUL: This is all about crowds.

MR. PIECIAK: If I may just respond to that? I

we are much more comfortable having higher thresholds for businesses to raise money.

MR. PAUL: What you are saying is you are more comfortable in Vermont with the limits being even higher than the federal because at the state level, you weren't preempted; whereas, the federal did, in fact, preempt the states? Because of the states' involvement, you are more comfortable allowing a higher limit in the instance that you said of up to \$2 million; whereas, the federal is limited to a million; correct?

MR. PIECIAK: Yes. I don't think it is because we are preempted.

MR. PAUL: Okay.

MR. PIECIAK: But it is because the offer is of a local nature. And it is a different rule that we would be operating from than the federal crowdfunding exemption that was put in place. So it has continued to exist as a separate exemption after the final rules are implemented. And it really has nothing to do with preemption. It has to do with whether we are comfortable regulating our local region.

MR. PAUL: I don't actually know. Maybe you know the answer to this because you referenced Kansas, which is oftentimes brought up as a model. Since it has been around since 2011, how many offerings has Kansas

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have put a great deal of thought into that as well because, you know, if the federal crowdfunding comes online, what do the states have to offer? And it is really something that, as I mentioned, we have thought considerably about. I think if you look first at IKE, I mean, that predated the JOBS Act in 2011 and was utilized prior to the JOBS Act final rules or, you know, proposed rules being published. However, the thing that is going to differentiate, I think, local/state-based crowdfunding and federal crowdfunding, exactly as Stephen mentioned, is going to be the regulatory compliance.

So, for example, in Vermont and many other states, we allow up to \$1 million without any audited financial statements. We allow \$2 million if you have audited financial statements. We allow a higher individual investment amount. And the reason that the states are comfortable having those higher numbers is because we are often involved in a much more hands-on way with the offerings that come through our door.

So I know in Vermont, we have had maybe 25 meetings with businesses that were substantive meetings, hour-plus long, where we walked through their offering, talked about their business, talked about what they wanted to use the money for. And out of that, we have had a handful of issuers. And because of that process,

actually had since 2011, the last 4-plus years and in what aggregate amount? I am not trying to put you on the spot.

MR. PIECIAK: Yes.

MR. PAUL: I don't know the answer. I probably should know the answer. I was wondering if anyone did. MR. PIECIAK: Well, I can tell you as more of a

general statement, it looks like they have had nine offerings and nine offerings that were successful, a variety of businesses. But that type of information for all states that have state-based crowdfunding is something that we are doing a better job of tracking, not just how many offerings there have been but how many were successful, how many are still in business as an ongoing basis because I think that data is going to be what is going to help drive the conversation in the future.

17 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Commissioner Piwowar?
 18 COMMISSIONER PIWOWAR: Yes. Thanks.

I just wanted to say, so, just like Mike
Pieciak, I view sort of the federal crowdfunding
regulations that hopefully we will get done very soon and
the state efforts as being complementary of that. The
federal statute is very prescriptive in terms of the
regulations on the portals, in terms of the information
that has to be provided by the issuers. Some have

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suggested that it is going to be very successful. Some have suggested that there are some impediments there and maybe the federal statute isn't going to be as great as some people think. And that is where the states come in.

There is a lot of diversity, which I think is great because that allows us to experiment.

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And this idea of regional crowdfunding I think is even better because then you can get the New England states together, maybe D.C., Maryland, Virginia, you know, those sorts of things. Kansas City, right, you get Kansas and Missouri. You get people, you know, close to that sort of thing.

My question to Mike and I guess also Sebastian as well, too, in addition to working on modernization of rule 147, which you guys have been working on and I think it is great that there is a potential win-win here for investors and issuer in this. And the collaboration you guys have is fantastic.

In addition to rule 147 and rule 504, is there anything else the Commission needs to do to help facilitate this regional crowdfunding or is it simply those two things and then we are done?

MR. PIECIAK: I certainly think that if we are to focus our efforts, rule 147 would be the main focus.

25 And it is not to say that we shouldn't continue to his paper, the alternative solution is to look at the states' level of disclosure. And if a substantive

3 disclosure document is required, what is required in that

4 document? If it is similar to something that would be

5 required in a registration context, maybe that is 6 sufficient for the usage of general solicitation in the

7 504 context. So I think both of those are things that 8 are useful to explore.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Charles?

MR. BALTIC: Michael, thank you for the presentation. I just had a question on the three impediments that you mentioned, so 147.

13 MR. PIECIAK: Yes.

> MR. BALTIC: They are very different in character.

16 MR. PIECIAK: Yes.

> MR. BALTIC: The last one, incorporation in another state, is a choice for the company to make.

> > MR. PIECIAK: Yes.

MR. BALTIC: And they can weigh the benefits versus risks and make that choice. The 80 percent rule, as we have talked about, is something that could be solved by different numbers and metrics. The first one, focused on residency, seems to have a different level of risk involved, which is just a legal risk. And I am just

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examine what are the impediments going forward, but I can't think of any greater impediment than the three items that I listed that re contained within rule 147.

MR. GOMEZ: And then, Mike, I think one point that you had raised that I thought would be helpful to better understand, when you were talking about 504 as a vehicle for a more regional type of crowdfunding, you mentioned the \$1 million cap as a potential impediment.

You also discussed the fact that those had to be registered with the state. So is the idea that if the cap went up, the cost of registration would be offset by the fact that you can go up. And, therefore, is what you were thinking something in which by just raising the threshold, all of a sudden, the fact that you have to register becomes less of a factor because you are able to spread that cost over a higher offering amount or were you even thinking that there was a concern with the registration concept itself?

MR. PIECIAK: Yes. That is a good question, a good thing to flesh out. I do think, to your first point, if only the dollar amount was addressed, that would certainly make it more reasonable for an issuer to register in one of the states to take advantage of general solicitation.

However, you know, as Mr. Keller points out in

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1 wondering, of the first two, are they equally

2 impediments? Is one more predominant? You know, if one 3

problem were solved of those, would a lot of the problem

go away?

MR. PIECIAK: Yes.

MR. BALTIC: Can you give some sense of the

7 relative importance of those three?

corporate laws dictate them.

MR. PIECIAK: Sure. I would say, again, that the third one that I mentioned is more of an annoyance than it is an impediment. As you mentioned, it is a choice. And if eventually down the road a company becomes of a sufficient stature, they could always reincorporate in the state that they wish to have the

However, out of the first two that I mentioned, I would say they are pretty evenly split. One affects the way in which you conduct your offering. And then the second really affects who can do the offering in the first place. And both of them are difficult to comply with. And I think issuers are getting probably wise counsel from their attorneys to really look hard at those two pieces of rule 147 before deciding to go down that

23 route to conduct an offering.

24 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: John?

MR. HEMPILL: Again, thank you very much,

Page 102 Page 104 1 Michael. Just to kind of go back to the state of 1 MR. PAUL: Yes. 2 incorporation, not to be parochial here, but I never 2 MR. HIGGINS: Michael was sort of seeking input 3 3 advise my clients to incorporate in the State of New from this group on what does make the offering a local 4 York. I had a former partner who actually said it was 4 offering or, quite frankly, is that even -- if the 5 tantamount to malpractice to have someone incorporate in 5 Commission is using its exemptive authority, is that even 6 the State of New York. It is largely because of a quick 6 a relevant factor? 7 in the New York law that makes the ten largest 7 MR. PIECIAK: Yes. That is exactly right, 8 shareholders personally liable for wage claims. 8 Keith. That is the type of issue that we are trying to 9 MR. PIECIAK: Yes. Yes. 9 address. Which state is in the best position to regulate 10 MR. HEMPILL: And so, you know, one of the 10 the offering? Which local state is in the best position 11 things -- and it was mentioned there as kind of a minor 11 and trying to find that right nexus? 12 12 One thing, for example, would be to even get 13 If it is a minor thing, as far as I know, in my 13 rid of an 80 percent test altogether and focus more on 14 14 experience, incorporating in the state means absolutely where the principal place of business is for the issuer 15 15 nothing to the state. And it doesn't seem to have any and have that state be the primary regulator. And that I 16 sort of like tie to the state or anything along those 16 think would be a much more simple test for issuers to 17 17 lines because you always have to qualify to do business comply with and to understand. 18 18 MR. LEZA: That is the point that I was making in a case. 19 19 MR. PIECIAK: Exactly, yes. at the beginning. You would end up with two rules. The 2.0 MR. HEMPILL: So that one can clearly be 20 first one would be investors are in your state. And the 21 eliminated. I don't think that has any sort of bearing 21 second one is the headquarters are in your state. And on -- so if you are looking to modernize rule 147, I 22 22 that should be all. 23 would say that was one thing you should just 23 MR. PIECIAK: Yes. 2.4 automatically just go. 24 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Sara? 25 25 MR. PAUL: I was just going to point out the MS. HANKS: I just wanted to make a point on Page 103 Page 105 1 pesky issue of the interstate commerce clause, which is, 1 technology that I have seen raised not today but in 2 you know, probably where that derives from. So unless we 2 previous discussions on this, such as how do you 3 3 are going to get rid of that, then it is going to be an establish that somebody is resident in a state when you 4 issue. You know, it would then be under -- all of the 4 are looking to buy. And I have seen some "Oh, yeah. You 5 5 state offerings would then, at least theoretically, be can always tell where a computer is." Let's not try 6 6 subject to federal jurisdiction or federal supervision, going down that path because it is so easy to use a VPN 7 which is, of course, the point. We are trying to avoid 7 or a proxy so that you can't tell. So one of the things 8 8 that I think the regulations are going to have to address 9 MR. HIGGINS: D. J., if I can on the point, it 9 is letting people say where they are, just self-certify 10 10 actually comes from the statute itself, the statute as to their status, and not require any portals or 11 3(a)(11). As a condition of that exemption, the statute 11 intermediaries to jump through any hoops in establishing 12 requires that you be incorporated in that state. 12 where somebody is located. 13 Congress was presumably trying to get at the question of 13 CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Yes. I think that is fair. what offerings are sufficiently local that they don't 14 You know, certainly it seems to me that we should move in 14 15 have the jurisdictional connection of interstate commerce 15 the direction of being guided by the principles that 16 to trigger federal regulation and registration. So we 16 guide recent changes over the last several years with how 17 17 would be outside of the safe harbor, but that is okay we look at other private placements when we stop focusing because the Commission has exemptive authority. 18 on who we made the offers to and focus on who actually 18 19 MR. PAUL: Right. 19 bought the securities. It seems to me that there does 20 MR. HIGGINS: On the other point, I think the 20 have to be that verification, but it can be some other points are all trying to get at that same point. 21 burdensome. It just makes compliance impossible. 21 2.2 You know, what makes something sufficiently local that 22 Sonia? 23 the federal interest shouldn't be involved? And, you 23 MS. LUNA: Yes. I just want to echo Sara's

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know, the 80 percents do seem to be a little over the

top. And I think that is why.

comment. I agree that I think a self-certification

process, the individual makes that statement, instead of

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putting it on the business. And then I don't think there is a good percentage in terms of 80 percent assets or I think it should just go away. I think we are living in an economic situation now that we are interdependent. And I think just the principal business office of that organization should be it. And that way we can say that that is more local.

Also, just a general comment, I think that the dollar thresholds that you were pointing out, a million and \$2 million, seem pretty insignificant. I mean, I just think that at the federal level, if anything, I think that these numbers should be higher to allow, you know, reduced regulation.

MR. PIECIAK: They are lower. At the federal level, the cap is a million dollars for title III; right? So at least for the time being.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Any additional thoughts? Questions?

MR. SAADE: Just a quick comment just to remind everybody I have an observer seat on behalf of the SBA, but I can tell you that the 28 million businesses across America, many of which don't have the ability to raise capital in many of the ways that we have been talking about here, tell us that they are so excited about this.

So this is what I am going to put to everyone here on

same thing happening in a very micro level.

So I know that the chair of the SEC has started talking about when and not if, which is a great change, but I just don't want us to lose sight that this, even though it seems small, is actually going to be quite important to the small business community in America.

And I didn't mean that to sound like a political speech, but it is important. So I am very happy about this discussion.

CO-CHAIR GRAHAM: Well, thank you for that. I think it is important to have kind of that real-life insight.

Charles?

MR. BALTIC: Steve, just one thought on the 80 percent question. And we have talked about different alternatives, principal place of business, but it could be that there could be thresholds of different measures and you meet one in the alternative and that is enough of a nexus to the state to qualify. I am just thinking perhaps something that is relatively easily determinable and maybe much more stable than revenues would be wages, where the company pays people to work for the company. And then it is tied directly to job creation, which presumably is one of the purposes of fostering local/state development. So there may be measures in the

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the Commission, is that something is better than nothing. There is a need at the very bottom end of the market for capital formation. Banks got bigger. Private equity funds got bigger.

So my sense in trying to compare what Ken says has done in 15 years with 9 offering or 91 and the 20 you showed may not be the best corollary. And the only reason I am saying that is because if you look at the other forms of crowdfunding, take out the crowdfunding parent site, crowd rewards, crowd donations, it is in billions of dollars. In fact, the best source of capital, no offense to anyone here, is not equity and it is not debt. It is actually selling things. That is not dilutive.

So I think a good way to kind of think about the size of this potential thing -- and I don't know what it is going to be -- and it is never going to be the \$4 trillion of market cap in the United States and so on and so forth -- is that this, according to the 28 million small businesses in America, many of them are very excited about in some way. So I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that there is a very big tug-of-war that you guys deal with all of the time, which is protection of the ambassador in capital formation, which was evident in the public disclosure issue. It is the

alternative, one of which could include wages at some level that could be deemed to be of sufficient nexus with the state to meet the test, revised test.

And that's much easier to calculate based on records that are with the labor department of various states. So yeah.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. And if there are no other comments, questions, then I call for a recommendation. I can respond to that call. It seems to me that it makes perfect sense to modernize Rule 147 to support these state efforts. As Bob here just said so well, this is -- even if we might not think it's a big deal, this is very, very important to a lot of people that maybe are not necessarily on our radar screen. And in that regard, the focus is on those three things.

I think that to the extent that we can take state of incorporation out of the picture, I think that that's useful. The notion — these 80 percent numbers with respect to where the money is spent and where the business is located, I think those are things that we can deal with. I think the wage idea is a good one. I think we can leave it to the SEC to kind of come up with specifics and something that is doable, but the — you know, modernizing Rule 147 strikes me as something that would be, again, very important to facilitate capital

1	Page 110		Page 112
	formation at these levels. And it strikes me as	1	talked about this at the last meeting. At the last
2	something that really should be noncontroversial and	2	meeting we put it to a vote and we all decided to move
3	that's essentially the way I see it and is that view	3	them forward with recommending that the Commission work
4	shared or	4	to formalize this legal construct with something that we
5	MR. PAUL: I share the view. I just would like	5	all supported. I think that the written recommendation
6	more would your recommendation then in terms of	6	reflects that position, and again, I think you've all had
7	modernizing it or whatever to make it so that it is not a	7	an opportunity to read it before today. And here's
8	violation to offer but rather only a violation to sell?	8	another copy. If I could get a motion.
9	·	9	MS. JACOBS: So moved.
10	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Correct.	10	
11	MR. PAUL: So the contemplation		CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Second? Okay. So any discussion?
12	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.	11	
	MR. PAUL: of the sin is not the sin, only	12	Yes, David.
13	committing the sin is the sin?	13	MR. BOCHNOWSKI: Steve, the only probably
14	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Right.	14	afterthought that I had is that at the 250 million, which
15	MR. PAUL: Okay.	15	I think we all agree with. We have to pick a number and
16	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: It seems to work with the Reg	16	that's a good number. But as we heard Chair White speak
17	D, and so I think it should work in this context as well.	17	earlier today about things that were in place the year
18	MR. YADLEY: I think if you wanted as part	18	that you she graduated from law school, when we as a
19	of the recommendation for elimination of a strict	19	committee dealt with the number of registrations
20	percentage in some of these alternatives, I think wages,	20	registrants of shareholders, it was 300 and that was in
21	employees, main office, headquarters offices are all	21	1964 when I was a sophomore at Georgetown University.
22	good. Maybe use those as examples so	22	I'm just wondering whether or not there should be an
23	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Right.	23	index number here so that 20 or 30 years from now
24	MR. YADLEY: we're not being prescriptive to	24	someone's not sitting here still wondering why we picked
25	the	25	250 million.
	Page 111		Page 113
1	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Exactly.	1	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: That's just the 250 is
2	MR. YADLEY: as they review this, but tell	2	really just preamble, and I think that probably goes back
3	them what we think.	3	to our charter. The only thing that we serve up to
4	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yeah. That's exactly the way	4	posterity is are the last two lines on the last page.
5	I see it. So that's the recommendation. We'll put	5	MR. BOCHNOWSKI: Thank you.
6	something we'll put pen to paper, but before we do	6	
	that does comeone want to move that we adopt it?		CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. John.
7	that, does someone want to move that we adopt it?	7	CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. John. MR. HEMPILL: One question when I was reading
7 8	MR. BALTIC: I would so move that we adopt that	7 8	•
	•		MR. HEMPILL: One question when I was reading
8	MR. BALTIC: I would so move that we adopt that	8	MR. HEMPILL: One question when I was reading this. The recommendation mentions existing opinion
8 9	MR. BALTIC: I would so move that we adopt that kind of a formulation as a recommendation.	8 9	MR. HEMPILL: One question when I was reading this. The recommendation mentions existing opinion practice, and you know you and I know what existing —
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1 started? So if I could get everyone to take their seats. 2 For our first session we're going to have a briefing on 3 rules and market structure matters relevant to the topic 4 of venture exchanges. And as we discussed at our March 5 meeting, venture exchanges and ATSs are alternatives for 6 facilitating secondary trading for private and smaller 7 companies. And this is certainly a topic of interest for 8 us that has come up at least two meetings, probably more. 9 And it's certainly a topic of interest currently for the

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Commission.

At our last meeting we heard from two distinguished speakers who have been looking at these issues for a long time -- David Weild and Vince Molinari. David focused on the decline of small IPOs and the collapse of the investment banking ecosystem that provided incentives for exchanges that trade smaller company stocks. He advocated for moving away from a onesize-fits-all market model that favors for-profit exchanges toward a solution that involves venture exchanges or small cap exchanges. He proposed exempting these changes from a number of rules. And promoting a somewhat different approach,

Vince Molinari encouraged many existing regulation ATS to facilitate the secondary trading of unregistered securities. He suggested streamlining the process for a

MR. SHILLMAN: Okay. Thanks very much. I think what I -- and you're absolutely right. It's a very complex area from both a regulatory structure standpoint and from a market standpoint. And what I think I'd like to do is relatively briefly tee up for you what we have observed as the dialogue about venture exchanges has become increasingly prominent over the last few years, where maybe some common misperceptions and try to identify what at least we as the staff all think the real issues are and what we're looking at. And in the context of that, I'll mention some of the relevant regulations. And it may be -- once I do that, I'd be happy to answer any specific questions about those regulations and how they may impact the analysis that you're doing.

So just to start off with a couple of common misconceptions that we hear quite regularly and in the dialogue around venture exchanges is, one, the Commission should permit venture exchanges. Why are you prohibiting venture exchanges? And the first question there is: What do you mean by a venture exchange? And to some people it's a relatively broad definition that would include any venue for secondary trading of small cap stocks, including ATSs. To others I think they mean trading on a national securities exchange, but one that has substantially lower quantitative listing standards

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broker-dealer to become an ATS, and he argued that a structured ATS mechanism for unregistered securities could facilitate Regulation A-plus offerings.

This is a very complex set of issues, and a number of us asked questions last time to try to clarify the current state of regulations and market conditions at play. We heard questions such as: What is the current process with the SEC and FINRA for a broker-dealer to become an ATS? What exemptions from Reg NMS might be needed to be profitable with smaller volumes? At the end of that session, the committee decided that as a next step in our discussion and education it makes sense for us to get a presentation from SEC staff regarding all the three-letter acronyms and terminology used in this debate so we can better understand the current market structure rules, what is already possible, and what might stand in the way of some ideas presented as they -- as ways to facilitate more secondary market liquidity.

To help us with this we'll hear from David Shillman, associate director for the Office of Market Supervision within the SEC's Division of Trading and Markets. David was here for our last meeting, and David, I'm sure you can decipher for us all the complexity that resides in this area. And you've got 30 minutes to do so. So -- (laughter) --

than the traditional markets.

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With respect to the broader definition of venture exchange that includes ATSs, those exist today. There is a relatively active over-the-counter market for small cap securities and some alternative trading systems' ATSs like OTC markets are quite active in that area. When it comes to venture exchanges, national securities exchanges with lower listing standards, I think we've mentioned it at some of the prior meetings. The Commission has approved exchanges with lower listing standards, the most prominent example of that being the BX venture market.

They are -- the quantitative standards around market cap, a public float, share price were substantially lower in the traditional markets. We approved those rules and from our standpoint, we can approve exchange rules as long as they meet basic -- the statutory standards around -- designed to prevent fraud and manipulation, protect investors and the public interest, don't unfairly discriminate, not unduly competitive and the like. And we can do that with lower listing standards.

I think the -- given the heightened potential risks of investing in small cap securities and given their lower share price, lower public float and the like

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that the greater potential manipulation, we asked for some protections in exchange for that such as greater vetting of issuers, enhanced surveillance, better disclosure to potential investors. But we have approved venture exchanges.

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The real issue is that the BX venture mark and other venture exchanges have had difficulty becoming viable and the BX venture mark has not actually become active to our understanding in part because it's so difficult to attract liquidity providers. So we think the real issue -- the real issue is not should we permit venture exchanges but are there things that we can do to make venture exchanges more viable as a business matter.

The second area where I think there's been a lot of misconception is the impact that regulation has had on either the viability of venture exchanges or on secondary trading in small cap stocks more broadly. And often you'll hear that your Reg NMS has impaired -- is impairing the ability of venture exchange to function so we should exempt venture exchanges from Reg NMS. And Reg NMS as you may know is a -- well, it was coined Reg NMS in the late 2000s but incorporated earlier rules.

You may know that today the markets for equity securities are widely disbursed among a great variety of trading venues, a dozen exchanges, 50 alternative trading listed on the NASDAQ venture market -- the BX venture market would not have been subject to those requirements.

But I think the real issue with the impact of changes of regulation, market structure regulation over the last 15 or 20 years to both venture exchanges in trading and small cap securities more broadly. You know there are some legitimate issues there.

As I mentioned, many of these regulations were designed to promote competition both among trading venues and among dealers in securities, and the focus really was on the larger cap securities and I think there was a concerted effort originating in legislation to break up the monopolies of trading in -- primarily in the New York Stock Exchange, AMX, NASDAQ and create competition among venues and price competition among dealers and allowing customers to participate in the price discovery process.

So the thrust of the market structure regulatory initiative have been to increase competition over the last 15 or 20 years, and that has been done through Reg ATS, which created a new type of trading venue that is subject to a lighter regulatory regime, has a slightly different mix of benefits and burdens.

But as I said, there are about 50 ATSs a day, so that certainly increased competition among trading venues. It was done through decimalization which

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systems, a couple of hundred broker-dealers. And that's -- and that has been done in part through regulatory

initiatives to facilitate competition.

Many of the Reg NMS provisions are designed to bring together the information generated in these disbursed market centers, facilitate access among them, create duties that will support best execution so that you can get both the advantages of competition among all these disbursed trading venues but bring the information together so that the best price can be really determined and accessed efficiently and therefore achieve best execution for customers.

And there are a number of rules that do that, but the rules around requiring market data, both quotes and trades, to be centrally consolidated, there's a trade-through rule that prevents trading from occurring at a better — at a worse readily accessible price.

There are rules against locked and crossed markets and the like. Admittedly a complex set of rules.

But the fact of the matter is venture exchanges don't have to comply with Reg NMS. Reg NMS applies to NMS securities. Those are defined as exchange-listed securities that report pursuant to the established transaction reporting plans, the CTA and NMS and QTP plans and securities like those that would have been

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fostered price competition among dealers by essentially
 decreasing the minimum spread. It was done through the
 order handling rules that made sure best prices were
 available publicly and that obligated brokers to display

their customers' orders if they were better than their
 own orders or substantially increased the size. It was

own orders or substantially increased the size. It was
done through Reg NMS that essentially required a better
price to be sought out in other markets. So the thrust

of the regulatory initiative has been to increase competition.

There are arguments either way, but I think the thrust of the evidence is that those initiatives have worked well to demonstrably reduce transaction cost in the larger cap stocks, both for retail investors and institutional investors. However, legitimate questions have been raised as to have they done the same thing for small cap stocks. As this pushed toward greater competition, the squeeze essentially that they put on dealer profits is that on balance had a negative impact in this market segment by reducing liquidity rather than putting us in a position to achieve the benefits of competition.

So I think -- so as we step back and look at what we think are the real issues around trading in small cap securities and how to create a better small cap

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market structure, it really has been initiative designed to reduce competition both among trading venues and reduce price competition. And one example of that was proved by the Commission last month. It was the tick—is to basically move back from decimalization tentatively to nickel increments for smaller cap stocks to see if essentially allowing greater profitability from market makers could promote liquidity. And that will—tests will begin next year and we'll be analyzing the data.

Another area would be — and this is an area that I think is of most acute Commission staff focus at the moment is to see if there is a way to reduce venue competition, essentially to move away from the efforts to disburse trading, to encourage competition among trading venues to take the position that, well, for relatively illiquid stocks are we better off deemphasizing trading venue competition allowing liquidity to concentrate and seeing if that concentration will put us in a position to extract alternative models that might promote liquidity and market quality in small cap stocks.

be restricted to the listing market. And if that were the case, then the listing market for illiquid securities could, one, be able to offer a better value proposition to market makers, perhaps an exclusive market maker in

So ideas there would be to see if trading can

listed on one exchange. The Commission has limited authority to define the post-IPO interview where -- post-IPO interval where unlisted trading privileges can't be exercised, but that legislative intent indicates that a relatively short time period.

The other thing that we have to think about is restricting over-the-counter trading because you could restrict trading on other exchanges, but the over-the-counter market exists for small cap stocks, and there is the authority for the Commission to do it, but it's a fairly high hurdle in that we have to effectively show that fair and orderly markets have been impaired. And the only way to reestablish a fair and orderly market is to restrict off exchange trading of small cap securities.

So in a nutshell that's where we -- those are a couple of common misconceptions, and I've tried to give you an idea of where we think the real issues are and what we're looking at. But hopefully that sets the stage, and I'd be happy to go into more detail on any issue you'd like to discuss.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Comments?
(No response.)
So David, this -- and thank you for that. I

mean clearly you understand it more fully than I could ever understand it.

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that exchange. You will — like the old New York Stock Exchange specialists, you will be the exclusive market maker with better information, but in exchange for that you have to maintain a continuous quote within reasonable parameters and have other obligations to maintain market quality.

Another idea would be if trading was exclusively at the listing market they could experiment with other models on the continuous trading market. There's some who say continuous trading for illiquid securities really isn't the most efficient way to do it. There should be periodic batch auctions a few times a day and the like. And if trading — and that type of idea would of course be more effective if the only place you could trade were — if batch auctions were competing with the continuous market.

So this -- there certainly is room for potentially greater experimentation if trading venue competition were restricted, and that's something we're actually looking at. We do have -- because I say the legislative mandate was to foster competition 15 or 20 years ago, we have limited room to effectively grand monopoly trading rights, both -- there are rules that grant unlisted -- the right to trade through unlisted trading privileges -- any exchange if the security is

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MR. SHILLMAN: That could be a good or bad thing.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: But what do you see as the -- as the -- I know that you touched on this, but what do you see as kind of the real impediments to moving in this direction?

MR. SHILLMAN: To moving in the direction of --CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Of establishing venture exchanges.

MR. SHILLMAN: Of establishing - CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Viable. Viable.
 MR. SHILLMAN: -- viable venture exchanges.
 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Yes.
 14 MR. SHILLMAN: Well, I think that the real

challenge is attracting liquidity providers, because small cap securities tend to be illiquid, and there aren't many trades from a -- there's limited opportunity for profits by market makers. They also would have to devote the resources to following the security and making sure their quotes are -- remain reasonable. So there's a lot of effort required and -- for limited potential profit. So I think the trick is really designing an attractive value proposition for them where they would be willing to make a continuous market with quotes of reasonable width in securities that don't trade much.

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1 And so I think that gets to the ideas that I 2 was just mentioning. Is there a way to effectively either give them minimum profits through larger minimum 4 quoting increments or to give them monopoly trading 5 rights effectively by a unique position at the unique 6 trading market. Now all of this has trade-offs of course, and by increasing -- and it's a trade-off between the interests of capital formation and small companies 9 and execution quality for investors or risks to 10 investors.

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So as we look at these issues, we have to keep in mind that -- we have to be in a position to conclude that on balance this is better for investors in the markets, because you increase minimum trading profits, then that means potentially lower execution quality for investors. Similarly, if you grant monopoly trading rights you get the potential abuses that could occur with a monopoly trading venue that we would have to be attuned

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: To what extent do you think -- well, to what extent is the proliferation of trading venues a factor? And is there something that you could do as a regulator to correct that?

MR. SHILLMAN: Well, I think the proliferation of venues is a factor particularly for small cap stocks

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sonia.

MS. LUNA: Thank you for that overview, David, on misconceptions and I want to make sure I'm not misconceiving anything about the definition. So is liquidity providers -- what's the definition of liquidity providers. And then more importantly I heard two potential solutions that I just want to be clear. Are they in play or they're about to be in play? One solution I thought I heard was this batch kind of processing of trades, and the other one was moving the tick size to minimum of a nickel. Did I hear that right?

MR. SHILLMAN: Yes, so first of all, the definition of liquidity provider, I think that's commonly market makers. So someone who makes continuous two-sided quotes and is willing to either buy or sell essentially on demand, liquidity provider.

As far as the solutions that are in place, the tick -- it increased the minimum tick size to a nickel. That was approved by -- that's a pilot program that was approved by the Commission last month. It will be implemented next May. So it's been approved, there's going to be an implementation period. It will be implemented next May, last for two years, and we'll study The other ideas which really are -- there's

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because it limits the ability of a venture exchange, an exchange who it decides to list small cap companies to experiment with the most -- potentially most viable ways to attract liquidity providers.

If other exchanges can trade the securities that are on the venture exchange that can be traded in the over-the-counter market, that limits the ability of the venture exchange to experiment, for example, with periodic batch auctions because it will not be the -there will be a continuous market going on alongside and it would have a much more difficult time attracting trading interest if the other options was to trade as occurs normally today continuously.

So if the only place to trade was in a marketplace where liquidity was aggregated at certain points during the day, that potentially is a much more effective way to aggregate liquidity than doing that and trying to compete with a continuous market. Similarly trying to impose meaningful obligations on market makers and creating an attractive value proposition for them is going to be much easier if you're the only play, if you can offer essentially exclusive market making or designated market making rights as opposed to them competing with the full range of other exchanges and over-the-counter venues.

batch auctions and creating monopoly trading rights for designated -- a designated market maker. That would require Commission rulemaking and/or legislation to essentially override the current right of other exchanges to trade unlisted trading privilege or the current right of dealers to trade in the over-the-counter market. And that, many would say, would be the most effective way to implement those measures. But there is nothing that prevents exchange today from experimenting with periodic batch auctions.

Actually you may have read last week the New York Stock Exchange -- for less liquid securities is planning to implement a midday auction, but they would be doing so in an environment where there's also simultaneous, continuous market running. So I think there are questions to how viable that can be in competition with a continuous market.

MS. LUNA: So these solutions that -- the two that were just mentioned, have they been implemented already in other countries where there is an exchange and therefore that's where we got these potential solutions to work with?

MR. SHILLMAN: Well, I can't speak broadly to what's been done in the other markets. I have to say it is really quite similar to the way the U.S. markets used

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to look where the New York Stock Exchange dominated trading in its listed securities, 90 percent or so of trading volume, and they were able to offer their specialists -- the value of proposition of having this monopoly position and they were able to effectively impose affirmative negative trading obligations on their -- on the specialists.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: John.

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and do trade on ATSs.

MR. BORER: Thanks, again. A couple points, so maybe I'll do them one at a time if you can indulge me. But one of the points here in listening and having been watching this stuff for a couple decades on Wall Street it seems like the way things used to be worked reasonably well, and then through -- instead of un-regulating, reregulating we tried to create competition which now has made the markets far less efficient I think especially for these small companies.

To my questions: In your discussion of venture exchanges where you gave us the background, does that include in your mind the venues where non-34 Act companies would trade as well, or are you staying strictly with the 34 Act companies that are just illiquid and deemed in many cases penny stocks today.

24 MR. SHILLMAN: Well, by 34 Act, in order to 25 trade on an exchange you need to be registered, so for

MR. SHILLMAN: It was good for -- maybe not for the investors.

MR. BORER: Right. Right. So where in your mind is the demand for the improvements in the trading of these thinly-priced stocks coming from? Is it coming from investors? Is it coming from the street, or is it coming from the issuers themselves?

MR. SHILLMAN: Well, I think -- I can't tell you definitively where it's coming from. I mean some if it is probably originating from the markets. I think some of it is probably originating from issuers, and I would think some of it is originating maybe primarily from the street because those -- it essentially would provide greater opportunities for market makers to profitably make markets in less liquid securities.

Overall the -- interest stocks, because we want -- our mission is to make sure that we establish a system where markets are fair and orderly and execution quality is high for all investors, and we, too, want to make sure we've designed the right system to benefit the widest swathe investors in all securities.

MR. BORER: And just my last point is I think there's a pretty strong bias on the street these days against companies to find as penny stocks, so not exchange listed companies below \$5, and many of these are

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there to be exchange -- if you take the I guess narrower definition of interexchange, which is really a national securities exchange, they'd have to be registered -- 34 Act registered securities. ATSs, however, don't have that restriction. So non-34 Act registered company can

With respect to your first question, I think what we're coming to realize is I don't think there is serious questioning that the move towards greater competition was of overall net benefit to investors and market quality for the larger cap stocks just looking at the data on execution quality both for institutions and individuals. I think what we've come -- what we're coming to realize is that that model might not work for small cap stocks.

So maybe we need to develop a different model for small cap stocks and move away from the drive towards competition, which created complexity, but overall when you look at the bottom line has seemed to serve investors well in large cap stocks. So it's really a recognition that perhaps there should be differentiation between the two types of securities rather than saying this idea of increased competition was bad.

MR. BORER: Okay. It used to be a pretty good life being a specialist on the American Stock Exchange. Page 133

below \$1. And even to the point where you have all the skull-and-crossbones disclosures that have to go out to the customers before they might be solicited or they might buy a stock that fits into those categories, you have this tremendous bias against non-DTC eligible stocks with respect to even being able to put them in an account, try to put one into a Charles Schwab account, and it takes a really strong effort in order to be able to do that.

And the clearing firms for a lot of the brokerdealers that aren't the top ones have a real tough time even taking those, accepting those securities for trading. Given that bias, which I don't think has happened recently -- I think it's happened over the course of the last 10 or maybe 15 years, and I think influenced substantially by the lack of liquidity, the issues around clearing those stocks in some cases, in some cases due to quality of those companies and issues of those types of things.

Getting the dealers back into that business would seem to be me to a pretty tough hurdle if it's going to be mainstream as opposed to just some specialist companies that develop like the ECNs did at one time and some of the securities to be able to just more efficiently trade companies that you don't know what they

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do, you don't care what they do, but here's an exchange
 where people who own those stocks or want to buy them
 could come to. Any comment to that about how to turn the
 E*Trades, the Schwabs, the Morgan Stanleys, the JP
 Morgans, and those people around in that — in their
 headset as to those small companies?

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MR. SHILLMAN: Yeah, I don't know that I'm in a position to speak in detail about the issues of clearance and settlement and the like, although I think I would say that certainly we want to make sure that the market structure is designed in a way that is appropriate for small cap stocks. That said, we also — it's very important for the Commission to make sure investors are protected.

And the reality is with small cap stocks with lower market cap — lower public float, they are riskier, they're more prone to fraud and manipulation. So I think we — as we look at ways to make the market structure more efficient, we don't want to lose sight of necessary investor protections and making sure that they are — investors are aware of the risks and the securities are suitable for them.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: D.J.

MR. PAUL: Yeah, just -- I have one comment about batch trading. I think in the UK it's pretty actually do here that's often discussed in certain circles, particularly oftentimes on the West Coast where you have people who have taken on shares as a result of their compensation that are Reg D securities private placements, they may not — the sellers in this instance may not yet be accredited investors.

Of course, upon selling these shares that they've accumulated they might actually become accredited investors, and they'd like an opportunity to sell their shares into a secondary market, albeit to either institutions or to expand it to accredited investors.

And then going further, the ability of accredited investors and QIBs to freely trade amongst themselves in Reg D securities.

MR. HIGGINS: Right, I mean the first point is that protection is not for the seller; it's for the buyers. So you don't need to be an accredited investor to sell into the market. The other thing, by the way, is if they're — if they would be an accredited investor after the sale, they're probably an accredited investor before the sale as well.

MR. PAUL: It's hard to know what the value of the --

MR. HIGGINS: Unless they're selling their house, their principal residence, but anyway, setting

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commonplace, and I know that New Zealand is looking at

- 2 it. I don't know if they've implemented it yet just in
- response to that. I wanted to just ask about the 144(a)
- 4 ATSs and Reg D securities, which now -- and just if you
- 5 could kind of give me a little bit of color on this.
- 6 Institutions can trade using 144(a) Reg D securities on
- ATSs that have that designation. Is that correct? With some limitations, like half a million dollars and --

MR. SHILLMAN: Yeah, this is a little out of my area, but if you're talking about the NASDAQ private market securities --

12 MR. PAUL: Right.

MR. SHILLMAN: Second market shares, but yes, those do exist with limitations on them.

MR. PAUL: Right, and that's -- okay. And what would it take for -- to open that up since right now it's limited to QIBs to let's say credit investors, to allow them -- they who can buy Reg D securities and the primary market to enable them to then resell in a secondary context?

MR. SHILLMAN: I think that would probably depend on my colleagues in Corp Fin.

MR. PAUL: Yeah. So what would we need to do in order to facilitate that? What I'm trying to achieve here is a concrete example of something that we could

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- 1 that aside. I mean it goes to sort of the 4-1 -- once
- 2 the -- once they've held the securities for a year and
- 3 our affiliates, I mean, they can freely sell them.
 - Anybody can freely buy them from the company. Now that's
- often -- as we've heard, it's not good enough, these are
- 6 oftentimes people who are exercising options, need to
- 7 raise the money to pay the exercise price, so they need

8 to sell immediately.

I guess apropos of the 4-1 and a half exemption, that would make -- if you put accredited investors on a par with QIBs, that would solve that problem. The question is whether that's the right result. I mean QIBs are QIBs because they manage \$100 million of securities. We've heard a lot about the accredited investor test

The other thing is information. What information is available to the buyer of those securities. That's something that we worry about a lot and creating an exchange to facilitate the trading of securities where there isn't adequate public information, don't we have to solve that?

MR. PAUL: I guess so. Although I would say that you're still -- yes, of course. But I would also say that these are the -- if they're in fact accredited investors, they have access to the same information,

legislation.

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perhaps even more information since they're allowed to purchase in the primary market. Then why make it more restrictive in the secondary when at least at that point you have a seasoned piece of paper.

MR. HIGGINS: Right, and I guess the short answer is: In the primary market, they're presumably dealing directly with the issuer and if they're accredited investors they either have the ability or the knowledge to fend for themselves and decide what they need to get from the issuer to satisfy themselves on the purchase or they walk away from it. When you're dealing with --

MR. PAUL: The secondary.

MR. HIGGINS: In a secondary market, it's not quite the same access directly -- I mean they could try to get access. Although when you do it on exchange, it's hard. Try to get access to your seller, but on a --

MR. PAUL: The seller might not have access to the kind of information that was available to the seller when the seller was the buyer --

21 MR. HIGGINS: Correct.

MR. PAUL: — in the primary. Could you address that maybe by hearkening back not to 144(a), but 144 itself so that the — you have to get the permission of the issuer in order to trade there and therefore upon

unlisted trading privileges cannot be exercised.

Legislative history is -- indicates that with short -the initial time period was two days. So I think our
ability to, on a long-term basis, restrict unlisted
trading privileges, it would be very difficult without

MR. CHACE: And on the increasing the profitability through the tick size angle, have you — is it possible to kind of quantify the current market size in terms of commissions or revenue opportunity for broker-dealers that participate — would or could participate in a venture market?

MR. SHILLMAN: Well, I mean some of the data that we're collecting in the tick size market -- profitability data, so it will be collected as part of the tick -- and that will be one of the factors that we will assess as we're -- we determine whether on balance wider tick sizes is good for the markets.

MR. CHACE: Because I'm just curious, like, if you assume the penny and the total volume trade in these securities and the average profitability per share or whatever, I mean is that a market at its current size that's interesting to anybody?

MR. SHILLMAN: Well, I think that's the problem. Is -- with minimum penny spreads -- and the

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getting permission you could therefore get information from the issuer? What's the state of the business now?

MR. HIGGINS: Right. I mean -- and one of the things about 144(a) is that in order to be eligible for the 144(a) exemption, the issuer has to have agreed to provide 144(a) for (a) information to anybody who -- to any purchaser who requests that information. So a similar --

MR. PAUL: Wouldn't that achieve -- so that would achieve the end.

MR. HIGGINS: A similar system could achieve that same end, yeah.

MR. PAUL: So --

MR. HIGGINS: So when are we going to do it? MR. PAUL: Yeah -- (laughter) -- when are we

going, Keith. Yes, sir. Okay. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Dan.

MR. CHACE: Just back to the basic venture exchange concept, I mean if I heard you right, you're saying that the reducing competition way to promote venture exchanges is just tougher given it probably requires legislative change as well.

MR. SHILLMAN: It may. We're looking at the extent to which we have flexibility under -- we have the ability to define the interval after the IPO during which

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reality is many of these small caps — the securities trade at much wider spreads, but the concern is others — stepping in front of you at the right time, being picked off if you're not paying attention, but if the minimum trading profit when you do trade is greater, the thought is that may be — it would seem logical it would attract more liquidity providers.

MR. CHACE: It makes sense. I'm just trying to get a sense of like is that like a \$100 million market in terms of – or is it a billion? I have no idea –

MR. SHILLMAN: Yeah, I don't know off the top of my head, but it's certainly something we'll be collecting as part of the pilot.

MR. SHILLMAN: Tim.

MR. WALSH: David, earlier this morning, Keith made a little comment that any of the views -- or any comments are just the individuals' comments, not the views of the SEC.

MR. SHILLMAN: Me, too. (Laughter.)
 MR. WALSH: Yeah, I wasn't sure you heard that.

So I'm personally pretty skeptical that this venture exchange is really going to pan out. So on a scale of one to ten, ten being the NYSE and ICE for volume and one being defunct, where would your personal opinion be where this is going to be two to three years from now?

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MR. SHILLMAN: Well, I don't know that I have any -- even if I gave a -- it wouldn't have any value given that I'm not really in the business. MR. WALSH: My guess, it's more value to the Commission than you might think. MR. SHILLMAN: Yeah. Well, but certainly I think we can reasonably expect something similar to ICE New York Stock Exchange type volumes. I think we'd be looking for some -- but essentially -- we would hope to see tighter price -- tighter spreads, more liquidity provided on a regular basis in some of these securities. I don't know whether one can reasonably expect volumes to increase substantially. I think it would be more optimistic to see better market quality in the form of better liquidity provision and perhaps some greater trading in this segment. PARTICIPANT: Was that a two? (Laughter.) MR. SHILLMAN: But I could pick a number, it would have no value. MR. SHILLMAN: Anything else? (No response.) Here's your chance. There will be a test. (Laughter.) Okay. Thank you, David. Let's go to the finder's issue. We've probably

September of 2013 to this past September there were 15,000 new Reg D offerings. So that's quite a bit.

In data looking at Reg D offerings for the period '29 to 2012 right before that, only 13 percent of those offering had a financial intermediary, a brokerdealer or a finder. So why is that the case? And there's — a lot of us believe that certainly for smaller issuers the lack is there isn't any interest from registered broker-dealers and there are enough risks using unregistered broker-dealers that it just isn't available, there's not anybody there to help put together sources of capital for the companies.

The issue, of course, is that federal law and the law of all the states prohibits someone from engaging in the business of affecting transactions and securities without a license. So you have to be licensed, and we now have one regulator — one self-regulator, FINRA. So you have to be a member of FINRA. And there is an exception for a finder, somebody who takes a fee for providing an introduction and steps away. Although we're not even really sure if that's the case.

The most famous no action letter was Paul Anka since it's hockey season and the Tampa Bay Lightning are going to beat the Hawks by the way in case you're interested. Paul Anka was trying to help raise money for

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situation where they're spending day and night just

all worked with the stereotypical founder in a startup

trying to get the business moving in need of lots of

3 capital and no idea where to get it, how to get it. They

4 want to hire a friend or another contact to try to help

5 them secure investors, but that contact is not a

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registered broker-dealer, and does -- can engage -- or at

a minimum is unsure of whether or not they're allowed to engage to help the company find investors. Greg has been

9 looking at this finder's issue for a number of years now,

and we have asked him to lead off our discussion of this

issue So Cross I mut it to you

issue. So Greg, I put it to you.

MR. YADLEY: Thank you. Well, I think Stephen teed it up right, and people in this room have had experience as either entrepreneurs or small business owners or certainly advisors where getting money is a constant challenge and all of the regular suspects are really not available at the beginning of the life cycle of a company.

So the money that's being raised is private, and as we know from our own experience as well as speakers from the SEC at several of our meetings, including in December, most of these are happening under Regulation D. And we were told in December from folks at DERA that the size of the Reg D market is very comparable to that of the public offering market and that from

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the Ottawa Senators Hockey Club, and he was going to open
 his list of contacts and rolodex for them back in those
 days and be paid a fee. Actually it was proposed that he
 be paid a fee only for those people who invested. So

5 that probably went further than maybe the Commission

staff intended.

In any event, they backed away from that. So the point is that accepting transaction-based compensation is a very short, firm way of saying it looks like you're earning a commission and you're being a broker. And certainly the view of the staff and the Commission and the states is that if you're doing this more than once, you've had your free bite, and you're probably in the business.

Certainly John and I have talked about this.

There are a lot of people who have only done it once, but
-- and then they do it again, and -- but they're not
going to do it after that, but then they do it again. So
there are people out there. So the issue is that you
have a lot of small companies, startups that don't really
know how to find capital, and they're looking for capital
in very small amounts.

We talked about crowd funding this morning, and as I think everyone here has experienced, people are looking for \$50,000, \$100,000, \$200,000, maybe a million

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or \$2 million, but probably in that range. Certainly not often as high as 3 or \$5 million. So we have Angels and again we have people in the room and on this committee who are much more expert than I about Angels, but one of the things that I think we've been made aware of if we weren't already is that Angels tend to congregate or historically have in groups and in areas of the country where there have been successful companies and successful entrepreneurs and now people with means and interest in helping other companies.

So when we talked about the accredited investor definition and changes that might be made as a result of cost-of-living increases since 1982 when Reg D was adopted, there would be a third or more fewer available Angels and then the percentage was even higher when you moved away from the coasts and the other money centers. So there's really a lack of capital, and why can't companies enlist the aid of broker-dealers?

Well, again, we talked to -- we heard this morning about compliance costs for smaller public companies and the numbers that Chris, for example, gave and Shannon, those were pretty big numbers. And the numbers if they were spread over 200 or \$500 million of revenues and market caps much larger than 80 million, maybe those percentages wouldn't be so great. But for

trading, they're not making markets, they're not even holding customer funds or securities. They're doing much, much less, and they're really acting as a finder or at least an intermediary assisting the small company.

A lot of the companies, some of the intermediaries and some of the lawyers who help them are not really aware that they're violating the securities laws. They just don't know about it, they're under the radar, and that's a problem.

The other part of the problem is there are people who are involved in this space who absolutely know exactly what they're doing, and that's sort of the seamy side of the securities business and a lot of con-artists who promise the world, and oh yeah, you've got a great company, and I can help you get the money, and they'll take a fee and maybe the funds aren't there, maybe they are, and maybe these are also the same kind of people who have offshore investors and get companies listed, and we know all about the problems that happen. And somebody already said penny stocks, so in that space.

This is not new, as Steve said. In 1999 the ABA created a taskforce in this area to look at private placement broker-dealers and there's an article that is in the materials that was published in the May 2005 business lawyer.

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the broker-dealers, same problem.

There's costs involved in helping a company find money, and if the deals are small, then the risks are there, but the upside is not. The legal costs of a transaction like that are pretty much the same, and in fact they can be worse because this little, honest entrepreneur hasn't kept records, doesn't really know how to keep records, filed incorporation documents and that's the last thing she did legally on behalf of the corporate side of the house. Financial information is rarely in great shape. It's almost never audited, so it's very difficult for real broker-dealers to be able to assist there.

Thinking about creating a class of broker-dealers — we were just talking about how do you make money in trading. Well, how do you make money dealing with these small companies and just the ability to be registered is a process that takes six months or more. The costs can exceed \$150,000 to get going. The compliance costs for being a broker-dealer or member of FINRA are estimated to be between 75 and \$100,000.

So there's an awful lot of costs, compliance costs that is probably disproportionate for someone who is a broker-dealer but is not doing the things that we think of as broker-dealers. They're not alternative

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I was part of the committee and later co-chair of the taskforce where we said, look, there's got to be a way to fix the disconnect between what the regulations say and what's happening in the real world, because it's a problem for the companies trying to raise money, it's a problem for these intermediaries who may have a contract with the company to be compensated, that is void or at least voidable, and you have people flaunting the regulatory system, which is not good for the Commission and the states and the problem is almost too big or too pervasive.

The taskforce report called it a vast and pervasive gray market. So what the thrust of the taskforce report was and the recommendations was to establish a simplified system for registering private placement brokers who engage in these very limited activities and try and facilitate capital formation without sacrificing investor protection. So as part of this proposal there were certain parameters that the taskforce considered would be workable.

First of all, sales could only be made to accredited investors and only in limited amounts. They could only be made by private companies. So if you have a class of equity securities registered under the Exchange Act, you wouldn't qualify here. If people were

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bad boys, had done bad things and had been sanctioned then they wouldn't be able to qualify as a finder.

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There would have to be written disclosure of certain basic things including the background of the person and the compensation arrangements with the issuer. But they would be exempt from the definition of broker-dealer and permitted to share fees with broker-dealers, because that's another thing that a FINRA member is not allowed to share fees with unregistered persons. So by coordinating federal and state regulation along this line we would have a system that might work.

It was a pretty good idea, and although we're the best advisory committee in the small business area that the SEC has ever had, we're not the first, and there was a very august committee back in 2006 that issued an excellent report, and that report included as one of its recommendation a very succinct sentence that recommended that the SEC spearhead a multiagency effort to create a streamlined registration process for finders, M&A advisors and institutional private placement practitioners. So that was really good news for those of us who had worked on the taskforce.

Many of you know that every year -- and it's been happening recently in November -- the SEC hosts a forum, the SEC Government-Business Forum on Small do this in limited fashion. This past year the forum was on November 20, 2014 and the forum final recommendation which was published last week had the same recommendation as it did in 2013, that the SEC should join with NASAA and FINRA in the effort to implement the basic principles of the American Bar Association taskforce on private placement brokers.

To achieve this goal, the Commission should join NASAA and FINRA in developing a timeframe for quarterly or other regular meetings with specified benchmarks until a mutually agreeable regime of finder registration and regulation is achieved. So pretty clear directive. FINRA actually has developed a concept of a limited corporate finance broker, and public comment has been solicited twice on this. It would allow firms to engage in a limited range of activities, including advising companies and private equity funds on capital raising, corporate restructuring.

As has been a thread through all this, this is not a full-service broker. They wouldn't be able to maintain accounts of securities or hold funds. Couldn't engage in proprietary trading or market making, and I think many of us who read this were really, really excited until the very last page when it said it applies to institutional investors, those are the ones that are

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Business Capital Formation. This is a really neat gathering of people, usually about 100 in person and others over the internet who can share ideas about issues that maybe the Commission and the SBA and from time to time the Treasury has participated to help small business capital formation.

The SEC is mandated to do this, and they've done a really great job. Sebastian has been in charge of this under Keith's supervision, and lots and lots of good ideas have come out. Both before the taskforce report and the last SEC small issuers advisory committee and since, the forum has had as one of its recommendations that this area be addressed.

So in 2009 for example the forum recommendation was that the SEC should allow private placement brokers to raise capital through private placements of issuer securities offered solely to accredited investors in amounts per issuer of up to 10 percent of the investor's net worth, excluding his or her primary residence with full written disclosure of the broker's compensation in any relationship that would require disclosure under Item 404 of Regulation SK, which are related party transactions in aggregate amounts up to \$20 million per issuer.

So one really long sentence that said we should

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going to be helped here. So that's \$50 million in assets
in professional institutions. So it certainly doesn't go
far enough, and in fact the proposing release for FINRA
said that they didn't feel that opening this up to
accredited investors would prepare the public.
So less it sound like I am being unsympathetic

to my former agency, let me commend the SEC on I think a very meaningful step that it took a little over a year ago in this area, which is the staff issued a new action letter. It's called the M&A broker, no action letter. I prepared a little piece that I think Julie sent to everybody. I found eight typos so far, and I apologize for those, because I did it on Saturday.

But this no action letter really was a very well done compilation of thought that had been expressed by the Commission in some other no action letters on very specific sets of facts, and this made a very general, very salutary statement of what somebody could do in helping private business be bought and sold.

Now this is an issue that has been around for a while because the Supreme Court in a case called Landreth Timber said that if a sale of a business is being sold and it involves the transfer of stock -- well, a stock's a security, it's right there in the definition. So that causes a problem because there are lots of business

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brokers out in the country, many of whom are regulated by states as real estate brokers or business brokers, so there is some regulation and most of these little, small businesses get conveyed by sales of assets, in which case the securities laws are not implicated.

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But if it's going to be a sale of stock, which is often what you need to do if the business has customer contracts which you want to preserve or licenses or things like that, starts as a stock sale, even worse if it converts to a stock sale from an initial asset transaction.

Now the intermediary is a broker. So the SEC issued the no action letter that said it would not recommend enforcement action or -- for violations of the broker-dealer registration provision for sale -transfers of privately held companies to a buyer who will actively operate the company. And so this has really been very good.

Congress is considering creating a limited exemption along these same lines from federal brokerdealer registration that would probably have more effect. A number of states have sort of gone in the tailwinds of the SEC, no action letter, and agreed that at least for now they're not going to object either. But all the states are not onboard, and this may be another area that getting pretty close to what broker-dealers do. So we'd have to be careful at that end of the scale. But still it's something that in a limited way I think we could provide assistance to smaller companies and not really hurt investors.

There are some things -- and I've mentioned these throughout the presentation that just makes no sense to allow these people to do. They shouldn't hold customer funds or securities. We are talking about private placements, not public deals. Since I think 506(c) is -- I guess you can argue whether that's public or private, but most all of the conclusions of people that seriously would like to get something done are willing to restrict the purchasers to accredited investors, although I think that's something we could look at as well.

There would need to be as there have been in just about all the new efforts at capital raising, bad actor qualifications, so I think that would be fine. But one of the things that would be important here is there really can't be a question on the form that these finders are going to have to file that asks when did you first start conducting activities in securities, because nobody will register if they have to say they've been doing it for the last year or two. So there has to be some

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NASAA can provide us some help, Michael, and there is a group looking at that and just last month or April now, so two months ago. And NASAA requested additional

comments on its proposed uniform state law in the area.

All of that's good. But back to capital formation, which is what we're here now. There's more than one solution possible, everything from exemption to limited regulation, but I think we really need to do it. It's an area where although we'll never eliminate bad guys, there are plenty of advisors out there who are simply trying to help companies and willing to do it and get paid if it's successful, and if it's not successful then they're not getting anything. And that's pretty basic to capitalism in my view.

So at the end of the little piece I provided for our meeting, I just laid out some markers that I think can be considered by the staff and FINRA and NASAA as they look at this. So the first thing would be to sort of segment the area and see who is actually doing this, because you actually out there from time to time do have finders, somebody that just says here's my list, and if they invest, pay me X. And that's the end of it.

Other people are more involved in structuring an offering, helping the issuer, perhaps being involved in some negotiation and so on and admittedly that's

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In terms of regulation, I think no action letters are a really good starting place, and the M&A letter is a pretty good model I think for some of these things. There's, under the Investment Advisors Act, a solicitor's rule, Rule 206.43 that allows payment of fees by registered investment advisors to people who provide leads to them essentially.

Membership in FINRA or some other selfregulatory organization I think would have to be the case. The SEC back in my day actually had an office for SECO brokers, SEC-only broker-dealers that were not members of the NASD, but that -- it doesn't anymore, and this may not be an area where it makes any sense for the SEC to have to gear up and create a new budget item for its own direct regulation.

Written disclosure is really important, and of course who is this person that is helping in the offering and make it clear that he or she or the firm is representing the issuer, have to describe any relationships between them, what the compensation deal is and any other thing like that. And of course this is not an opportunity for people to commit fraud, so the antifraud rules and the other applicable federal and state regulation ought to continue to apply.

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was --

So there's lots of issues about what the regulation could be. Even a small step forward would be of benefit, and I really hope that we will be able to, in my lifetime to coin a phrase, be able to have a finder exemption or regulation, and that will be helpful. But it really won't be all that helpful. It's a good start to allow regulated intermediaries to be able to participate in the structuring of the deal and helping the issuer would be good.

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The SEC can't do it alone. It requires the states and FINRA, but the Commission is the big dog, and I hope that it will be able with its very full rulemaking agenda still be able to take a serious look at this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you, Greg. And you mentioned some -- a few statistics at the beginning, and I'll just ask you again. Is there -- to what extent can you quantify kind of capital left on the table because of the absence of this sort of exemption or regulation?

MR. YADLEY: I don't really --

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: How big is the problem in other words?

MR. YADLEY: I think it's a big problem and I don't have data on that, but there's another aspect of this that I didn't mention that I can't quantify either

MR. BALTIC: No -- (laughter) -- hope not. MR. YADLEY: He's registered now. (Laughter.) MR. BALTIC: Thanks for the presentation, very comprehensive. I just had a question about the FINRA limited corporate finance broker initiative limited concept that was floated I think that was relatively recently. A couple questions around that. Was that a real reform to solve some problem even though it didn't solve, in your view, this problem?

And secondly, wouldn't that have been a golden opportunity to extend and solve this problem? So I'm just wondering without the principal SRO onboard conceptually with this how far it could realistically go. And maybe I'm over-interpreting that, but I just wanted a little context around that process and what maybe really happened there.

MR. YADLEY: Yeah, well, first of all, your conclusion is apt. I think that's right. FINRA needs to be onboard because they're the most logical person to do it. And I understand that in a way you're asking them as a self-regulator to do something that may not be any more profitable for them than it is for a regular brokerdealer or a big firm lawyer to help a little company. So -- but if they're the regulator -- self-regulator of an

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1 but I have experienced it. And that is if you're using

2 an unregistered person and you shouldn't have and lo and

behold you actually raise money as a small company and 4 you get successful and then you're able to afford lawyers

5 and real broker-dealers and they start looking at your 6

capitalization and what you've done to raise that money

and you find out, well, we did this in an exempt Reg D

8 offering and there's no Reg D, there's no documentation.

Who helped you do this? So Charlie. Who's Charlie? Oh, Charlie was CEO of this company. Oh, how did he help you? Well, he helped us structure it and he got us a bunch of leads and what a great guy and we didn't have to pay him anything except he sold us stuff. So now you have an issue.

And the SEC, of course, looks at this and when it's reviewing registration statements and contingent liabilities and if you've had these issues in your past, these are disclosures, they be rescission offers that are a huge liability, and so there are documented deals and people have written about situations like this where things just can't go forward. But I don't have hard numbers.

23 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thoughts? Charles.

24 MR. BALTIC: Greg, thank you. 25

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Are you the Charlie that Greg

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1 industry and this is part of the comprehensive services 2 to be provided by participants in that industry, I think 3 there ought to be a way to do that.

I don't really know what the main thrust of the first initiative was. Maybe John does, but I know that there -- FINRA has been assessing its rules and making other recommendations in areas of other limited activity. They're not treating everybody like Merrill Lynch anymore, but I don't really know.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: D.J.

MR. PAUL: I'll ask a dumb question. Why FINRA? Which is to say why not do it more -- if you're creating kind of a sub-regime that is limited in its activity, we're talking about a finder, so I'm basically going to put buyers and sellers together in a very limited context as defined in this way, maybe limit the amounts, limited to -- essentially why not do it more in RIA model where it doesn't involve FINRA at all? Why not just have a registration with the SEC? Why add that layer? It doesn't sound like FINRA's going to be jumping -- or enthusiastic as you know to do this in the first place.

MR. YADLEY: I think that would be okay, and the SEC staff may wish to express some views here, too. It is an apparatus that somebody's going to have to sort

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of take ownership of, and I'll answer the question, but I think another answer to why FINRA is -- and it doesn't have to be FINRA, it could be somebody else.

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In the same respect that groups are coalescing to be a crowd funding industry and trade association and best practices governance group or verification of an accredited investor status, even some legitimate company that has a business model says, okay, here's a regulatory scheme, we'll take on membership and we'll talk to the SEC and we'll figure out what they think we should be doing and we'll talk to people in the industry and find out what they think we should be doing, and we'll do it. We'll be whatever -- and whatever the SEC wants to allow them to do they could do.

I think the -- an issue with the SEC doing it directly, as I alluded to, is if they take on a regulatory scheme, they have to do something, and I think that's why along the spectrum I think the Commission could -- as we were talking about I think a little bit earlier with Mike, I mean there could be a collaboration with the states and the SEC sort of making it easy and getting out of the way of somebody's doing something.

I don't think the SEC can just say, okay, well, we'll take it on and we'll let the enforcement division handle it. I mean I think there would have to be

1 from you guys. (Laughter.)

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MR. GOMEZ: I was just hoping that by introducing them, I would deflect from Greg looking at me. (Laughter.) And he would start looking down the line.

MS. SEIDEL: It seems to have worked. So these are, as you have noted, issues -- thorny issues, difficult issues that a lot of really smart, good folks have thought about for years in terms of how do we try to balance the competing interests of capital formation, access to capital for small issuers with protection of investors, and you, Greg, alluded to this in terms of a lot of people are in this business trying to do the right thing, but there are folks who are not in the business trying to do the right thing.

And so when we think about these issues and we continue to think about these issues, that balance, how do you strike that right balance I think is key. And so it goes to a lot of things in terms of whether you're talking about exemptions or some type of limited regulation and then how to -- clearly the states need to be involved in that conversation as well. It goes through all the issues of if you have some type of limited regulation who's going to be responsible for carrying out that regulation, and that goes to FINRA --

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regulation and one of the things that happens with licensed people is they get examined. So that in itself would be an issue here. Would there be annual examinations, or would there just be examinations for a cause? Things like that.

MR. PAUL: There are certain professions that seem to be more represented in finders. It's certainly not exhaustive, but attorneys, for example, are oftentimes the ones that are doing the finding. You don't think being a member of a bar is sufficient regulation?

MR. YADLEY: Well, there are, you know, action letters where lawyers have asked the SEC, so look, I'm going to be the lawyer and I'm licensed and I can lose my license if I do bad things and I want to help my client, can I get a fee? It's ancillary activity. And the SEC said, no, you look like a broker-dealer to me.

MR. GOMEZ: One thing we neglected to introduce, our colleagues from the trading and markets. Heather is the chief counsel in the Division of Trading and Markets, and many of you know Joe and Joann who are also in Office of Chief Counsel in Division of Trading and Markets.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. Thank you for that, Sebastian. But I think Greg was really looking for more

is FINRA involved or not.

So a lot of really good issues. I don't have any answers here. I think it's -- again, we continue to think through the issues. I think that the bullets that you laid out at the end of your presentation I think are good places to start and -- or continue, not start, in terms of thinking about a regulatory regime. But again, we have sort of the balancing and just as Dave Shillman was talking about with the venture exchanges, right, there's always this balancing of access to capital, capital formation, but wanting to make sure investors are protected. And whatever you do, whatever we allow, make sure that they're protected.

And as you know, over the years, the definition of broker in the Exchange Act is very broad, and the Commission and its staff has provided guidance over the years, many, many years in terms of when you trigger that registration requirement and when you don't. And so again it's very fact-specific, and we have made some -you know, as you know to the M&A letter that we did last year. So we have made some progress in terms of trying to address some of the more discreet types of behavior that we think don't trigger in the registration requirements. So I don't know if Joe of Joann want to add anything.

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CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Just introduce yourselves and -- Mike.

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MR. PIECIAK: Thanks, Greg. That was a great presentation. I just had a couple of questions. I wonder if you can elaborate as to — in relation to the M&A no action letter, how closely the model rule that NASAA's proposed models that and whether there's any sort of major hiccups with what's being proposed that you care

And then I also wonder are the finders that you're talking about -- is this their profession or are these one-off transactions where they get caught up in a transaction every so often?

MR. YADLEY: I think these are people who are doing it as a business and it may be a sidelight. But again, it depends on who we want to help and we'd like to help everybody, but who can we reasonably help soon. And so I think finder has a connotation. It's extremely limited, but that would be a step forward. It's interesting, and it just, I think as an aside, is we've talked about general solicitation in the 506 concept.

We're gathering data and I'm eager to hear by the end of this fiscal year for the Commission what the statistics will show, but a lot of us out there in the field are still doing 506(b) offerings all the time and time to time, and actually one is a broker-dealer who does an excellent job, I see from time to time raising money for high-tech, high-growth companies. Where I have — I would like to see more professionalism around this aspect of it for the entrepreneurs. I'll give you a good example. We are looking at a company in the middle of Pennsylvania. So I'm in Pittsburgh on the other side of the state of Philadelphia. Everything in between is called Pennsyltucky because it's really kind of — you know, but this is a great little company.

This founder has created some interesting technology around the HDAC industry. And we're very intrigued by it. And however it's a really messy structure because of someone who did this, raised money in advance for them, and they were working with a country attorney who was not a securities person and obviously went out and cut and paste and put them some things together. And so we're looking at it going, well, we really can't invest in this because this is really a mess.

Had there been some structure around these kind of individuals who do this for these entrepreneurs -- and entrepreneurs that are in these kinds of areas are more desperate for money than they are maybe so in a larger metropolitan area. So -- and not as knowledgeable

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not many 506(c), and part of that is that there's a reluctance or a caution at least of many issuers to go out and deal with people they don't know, and we talked about disclosure and access to disclosure.

Keith mentioned, well, you're dealing directly with the issuer, and yeah, you can fend for yourself when you know the issuer and the issuer knows you and there's some expectation of honesty. People responding to an email inquiry or somebody like that that you don't know is just difficult.

And so I think to that extent even a finder who — local communities we were talking about 311 earlier, people who belong to the same organizations or work together in business, I mean those are known quantities and from counsel to the issuers' standpoint, those are the investors I'd like to see them have because they'll be more reliable, and you want your client to be honest with these people. So if you're getting honorable investors, now you're halfway there.

I don't have any just specific thoughts on the NASAA M&A proposal. I mean I think those -- it looks like there's good cooperation and more cooperation on the way, and so I'm sure we'll get to the right result there.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Catherine.

MS. MOTT: I bump into some of these folks from

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because they don't have -- in our city we have 18
 incubators, so you can imagine the kind of support they
 get. Out in the middle of Lancaster or Carlisle, Pa, I
 mean it's -- they're not get that.

And this is a great company with a great opportunity to create a lot of jobs and make a difference with a brand new technology. But I see the need for this as much as sometimes we in the industry kind of frown on people raising money for — or getting paid for raising money. I just think that it makes a lot of sense. I can see that in a lot of pockets in the United States where this might be important to the economic engines of those small, little towns of Pennsylvania or I mean the United States. I don't know. That's just my thoughts on that.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Go ahead, Greg.
MR. YADLEY: You hit on a couple points. One is I think the Angel Capital Association has tried to do is say, okay, you've got money to invest, that's not enough. If you want to be a good investor and really help the company, here's some things to do.

MR. YADLEY: And if I could just --

And D.J.'s provocative question as he asked, why does it have to be FINRA, it wouldn't have to be. It could be just somebody that says, look, we're going to do this right and make it happen. And then at the end of

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the day as this committee has talked about with crowd funding and other issues, the whole goal is to help the company not screw it up at the beginning so that it can go through the system and be successful all the way along. So that's promising.

 $CH \begin{center} AIRMAN GRAHAM: John and then Sara. \end{center}$

MR. BORER: Being in the broker-dealer business, obviously I've got a bias towards people using broker-dealers to help them raise money. But many, many times I've seen -- and this was mentioned -- broker-dealer doesn't want to get involved. But oftentimes the legacy problem -- and Catherine just -- is we come to a company that we really like but they did a lot of this haphazard stuff and maybe they did it perfectly, but there's a lot of ambiguity in what takes place.

And more than once I've run into one of these finders in those contexts that say, yes, I only did it once and I've done it five times now that way. And they'll do it once more. And clarifying the issue so that we who may have to pick up the pieces on the cap table and figure out how to go forward without having to worry about, okay, they're not going to go do this offering but all these people have rescission rights maybe. Can you get an opinion letter on that? And it's almost impossible to clean up that mess.

And the first question my clients ask me is:

Okay, so what's the problem? How do you structure around it? So it's like you come up with -- and you say there's really no way to do it. So I would like -- I would love to have regulatory structure in place for these guys, because I think -- I don't know, Sara, I mean maybe you've seen this more than me, but I think a lot of them really would want to comply with it but it's just too much of a pain to be a broker-dealer. And especially given the compensation that they're getting.

So I'm just wondering are there any — I mean are you guys actively pursuing any particular activities in this area right now? I mean is there like a — is there something like the M&A letter like that's coming down the pike? Are you thinking about this? Or is this not really on your radar screen right now?

MS. SEIDEL: So obviously we can't answer specific -- these --

MR. HEMPILL: Yes. Yes, I know.

MS. SEIDEL: Yeah. So these issues are issues that we're clearly aware of and we continue to think about as I noted before in terms of this has been very helpful to hear the comments, to hear the thoughts, but again, it's a difficult area when you think about what we might do in terms of if you have people engaging in

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CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Sara.

MS. HANKS: Well, actually, what I was going say actually builds on the last three comments, which is this isn't just a matter of investor protection which of course is really important but entrepreneur protection. And to the extent I live in the online investment platform world, we are seeing a lot, and I know that the guys at Trading and Markets, I am always bending their ear about some damn thing or other and really appreciate their responsiveness.

But to the extents you have a gray area and you have no hundreds, hundreds of small companies going through online platforms, some of whom, just a few, have uncertain regulatory status, now you're just churning our more and more rescission offer potential every day. So it is an area where there's some clarity needed. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: John.

MR. HEMPILL: Yeah. And I appreciate having all you folks down here, and it's great to have this body that really knows this stuff. My question for you is the M&A letter was great. But for me it was kind of like saying that wineries during Prohibition could make sacramental wine. It's kind of a limited thing. And that really -- that -- and it doesn't really come up that often in what I do, and I see finders all the time.

activity that falls within what a broker is under the statute and then you start thinking about some type of different regulatory category for them other than full-blown broker-dealer registration and regulation, you start getting into lots of questions about there would be a cost to whatever that regulation, whatever that category is and whether it's a lesser cost there's still a cost, and then what should apply, what should not apply.

Again, it's this balancing of investor protections with wanting to ensure that there's access to capital. So these are very difficult issues in term of practicality. Right? And then if there — if people are engaging in something that doesn't trigger broker registration, we have spoken in some areas, given no action relief in terms of that, but it's very fact-specific.

And so in terms of thinking about how might you take something that's very fact-specific and make it broader -- of a broader applicability, that also is difficult. You don't want to go too broadly inadvertently and end up in a situation where you have concern about investor protections. So --

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. Sonia.
 MS. LUNA: My comments are really more coming

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might be difficult.

2 Micro. It's the invitational, and it started June 1st

- 3 and today is actually the last day of that conference.
- 4 And I sat through several presentations on June 1st and a
- 5 few in the morning on June 2nd. And the observation was

from an observation of a conference at -- it's called LD

6 that several of the companies kept stating that they had 7

a clean cap table. Right?

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So I think they wanted -- this forum, LD Micro Invitational, is more for accredited investors, and I think that when I kept hearing it I didn't understand the context, like why is that such a big deal, talk about your story, tell me about the technology, how are investors going to get more money out of the company. So again, I'm trying to kind of wrap my head about a no action letter.

Isn't there something the SEC can do to kind of for these finders if it's a limited set of transactions you can kind of put a little -- some thought into helping these smaller companies find good individuals, but not overregulate. So again, my comment is more from an observation. I kept asking: Well, why do they have to disclose this or why do they have to explain it? It would just seem intuitive just to tell your story, tell me the current numbers, et cetera.

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Greg, do you have a

that vacuum. That doesn't help anyone. And then we mentioned several examples of kind of the rescission situation that you kind of fall into because there's no one there that is helping to guide the process at that level. And yes, there are issues, but that's no reason kind of walk away from this whole area because resolution

a little bit shortened integrity that kind of step into

9 So it seems to me that essentially, at least 10 what I would like to see is that we essentially recommend 11 to the SEC to take the lead in working with the others involved to come up with a way to kind of legitimize this 12 13 profession, if you will, through probably a combination 14 of exemption and regulation. It's -- I think that -- I 15 mean my sense is that this would certainly help to 16 facilitate in a significant way capital formation for

> So I think that that essential recommendation plus your points at the end of your piece would serve as a recommendation.

> MR. YADLEY: I'd be happy to put that forward as a recommendation.

23 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay.

companies at that level.

MR. PAUL: I know we're running out of time --

PARTICIPANT: Mic.

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recommendation?

MR. YADLEY: I would -- I think that the forum recommendation is as good as any. I noted one of the ones that the forum recommended in 2009 which didn't have a comma for seven lines and it had a lot of bells and whistles to it -- (laughter) -- last couple years has been I think pretty clearly what some of the last people have said is: SEC, please take the lead and work with FINRA and the states to come up with something.

I mean I think the outlines of it -- and I think Heather raises a real issue. I mean there are some legal issues, but it also becomes small political in terms of how you do this. But it does sound as if there's a pretty wide consensus that even in a diverse group such as this it's an issue that's rising on people's radar and it hasn't gone away in 25 years. So if we can do something about it --

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Well, it seems to me that it is a real issue. We're dealing with a sector that we talked about, and you have this issue where people would like to be involved but because of the ambiguity, because of the uncertainty they don't get involved, and so you have -- you don't have legitimate broker-dealers kind of filling that space.

And then you have people that are -- maybe have

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1 MR. PAUL: Sorry. I know we're running out of 2 time, and I, too, have a train to catch, but I would like 3 to humbly suggest that we postpone formalizing any 4 recommendations and pick this up at another time when we 5 have a little bit more leeway to discuss it and put some 6 shape around some of the exemptions that you've alluded 7 to. I would just point out -- and I think everybody 8 knows it, but I want to hit this as hard as possible --9 this is already happening.

What we're trying to do is trying to find a way to either regulate or quantify or make -- it's happening all the time. So it's not a matter of us like creating a facility for some sort of new thing. It's existing, it's in a gray area, and in most instances not a gray are at all; it's actually just not allowed.

So I would rather have more concrete recommendations to make to the SEC, to the Commission than simply like the broad thing like we recommend that you consider it even further. Do I need to make a motion

CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: No, not at all, not at all. Fair point. And I think that we'd probably get to that place, because the idea is, as you suggested, is to draw things into sharper focus so that we are making a recommendation that is concrete. So let's start that

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        process, and then we can pick it up at our telephone
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        conference, and we'll see how much progress we can make
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        between now and then. And if not, then it's back on the
        agenda in September.
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              Okay, well, there are planes to catch and
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        trains to catch, and it's been a long day, but I think
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        it's been productive, and I thank you all for
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        participating.
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              (Whereupon, at 3:38 p.m., the meeting was
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        adjourned.)
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               PROOFREADER'S CERTIFICATE
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      In The Matter of: ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING ON SMALL
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                 AND EMERGING COMPANIES
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      File Number:
                      OS-0603
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                   June 3, 2015
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      Location:
                     Washington, D.C.
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            This is to certify that I, Nicholas Wagner,
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      (the undersigned), do hereby swear and affirm that the
      attached proceedings before the U.S. Securities and
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      Exchange Commission were held according to the record and
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      that this is the original, complete, true and accurate
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      transcript that has been compared to the reporting or
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      recording accomplished at the hearing.
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