

POLICY NUMBER: 2.05.200**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 02/15/24**TITLE:** Global Proxy Voting Policy**SUPERSEDES:** 12/14/23**BOARD ADOPTION:** 02/15/24**REVIEWED:**

PURPOSE

One of the principal forms of participation in corporate governance by investors is through the proxy vote. This policy and the associated guidelines form the basis of the Washington State Investment Board's (WSIB) participation in proxy voting.

The proxy vote is an asset of the WSIB and, as with all assets of the Board, must be managed prudently for the exclusive benefit of the beneficiaries. The root of the corporate governance issue for investors is the separation of ownership from control. The agent—management—may not have the same interests as the principal—the shareholders. Investors invest in equity for good risk adjusted returns, but the power relationship between the investor and the company is unequal. Company management possesses more information and has more ability to act than either the board of directors or the shareholders. The rights of investors to act are limited, sometimes severely. Investors depend on company directors to look after their interests, but the results are not always satisfactory despite the best intentions of the directors. The agency problem may produce a misalignment of interests that can be detrimental to the interests of the shareholders.

The traditional view of corporate governance participation by investors is that an investor who believes governance is important and who is dissatisfied with a company's governance structure will sell the stock. But for institutional investors like the WSIB with their long investment horizon and relatively constant asset allocations, and particularly for those with allocations to passive index funds, exit via stock sales is not a viable option. If exit isn't a prudent option, then prudent active participation becomes even more important.

Corporate governance matters because it is a powerful form of accountability for corporate management that helps to align the interests of owners and managers and thus create an investment climate more favorable to the interests of long-term, patient capital.

POLICY

The WSIB or its delegates will aim—on a best-effort basis—to vote all proposals submitted to shareholders consistent with its fiduciary duty. In exercising its judgment with respect to voting proxies, the WSIB or its delegates are governed by their primary duty to advance the long-term economic value of the investee companies, within the boundaries of prudent and responsible corporate behavior.

The WSIB developed the accompanying guidelines as general principles to guide the exercise of proxy voting rights for global equity investments, with a particular focus on U.S. investments. These guidelines address the major corporate governance issues that are typically raised by shareholders and management. These guidelines are intended to provide general direction as to particular issues. They are not meant as a substitute for careful review of ballot proposals or contextual application of the guidelines to the specific circumstances facing any company and its shareholders at any given time. The WSIB votes the issues expressly addressed in the guidelines in accordance with the guidelines, except where a different result is warranted in the context of the company, the timing, and the issue at hand.

The WSIB examines the issues not expressly addressed in the guidelines on a case-by-case basis in a manner consistent with the relevant principles set forth herein and informed by the research and recommendations of the WSIB's proxy voting advisors. The WSIB reserves the ultimate right, where necessary, and excluding the proxy votes it has contractually delegated to its international managers (as outlined in the International Proxy Voting and Market Differences section below), to specifically direct the exercise of proxy voting rights for any issue, whether or not addressed in the accompanying guidelines.

Duty

The basic fiduciary requirements under common law are the duty of loyalty and the duty of care. The prudent investor rule, as applied to proxy voting, means that a fiduciary must carefully analyze the implications of proxy proposals. These duties are (1) the fiduciary actually votes the proxies the plan is entitled to vote; (2) the fiduciary votes after careful study of the issues; and (3) the fiduciary can show why the votes cast were in the best interest of the plan beneficiaries. Consistent with its duty to maximize returns at a prudent level of risk, the WSIB does use securities lending to generate income and does not have voting rights over shares whilst they are on loan.

Strategic Role

Corporations are a cornerstone of a market economy, and as such should be governed by the principles of accountability and fairness. Shareholders are the owners of corporations and the directors are accountable to the shareholders who elect them. Investment managers and WSIB staff, in turn, are accountable to the Board and its obligation to maximize returns to beneficiaries at a prudent level of risk. This policy is therefore designed to assist the WSIB's staff and investment managers to vote proxies on behalf of the WSIB consistent with the WSIB's obligation to maximize investment return at a prudent level of risk for the exclusive benefit of fund beneficiaries.

Application

This policy and the guidelines are not intended to be a substitute for, or be in conflict with, statutory, regulatory, or stock exchange requirements. Statutory, regulatory, and stock exchange requirements shall provide the minimum requirements.

The Board delegates to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the authority to implement the proxy voting policy and guidelines and to ensure that the WSIB's proxy voting rights are fully and properly exercised. The CEO may make necessary updates and adjustments to the guidelines consistent with any changes in statutory, regulatory, or stock exchange requirements, the overall policy and guidelines, and upon consultation with the Chair of the Board. The Board will review the guidelines annually, at which time any updates and adjustments made to the guidelines by the CEO will be considered for affirmation and approval. The WSIB staff and the WSIB's advisors shall provide the Board with an annual report, and such other periodic reports as may be requested by the Board, summarizing the exercise of the WSIB's proxy voting rights. The WSIB will post its full proxy voting record on the public website quarterly, alongside prior voting records.

Public Equity Investments in Separate Accounts

Proxy voting may be performed by staff, contracted to a third-party vendor, or delegated to the investment manager in accordance with the guidelines developed by the WSIB.

Voting Rights in Commingled Funds

The WSIB invests in commingled funds for use in defined contributions and savings programs, although some commingled funds may be used across various other WSIB investment

programs. The WSIB does not have a direct equity position, but holds units or shares in a commingled fund. The commingled fund is responsible for establishing appropriate guidelines and voting proxies.

The WSIB will work with its fund managers to understand proxy voting issues and provide input where appropriate.

For the specific case of U.S. equity commingled accounts in the defined benefit program, the WSIB will vote proxies in the companies in which the WSIB holds an indirect public equity interest, in accordance with the guidelines developed by the WSIB and as agreed with BlackRock as a part of their Voting Choice Program.

International Proxy Voting and Market Differences

Proxy voting in international markets differs somewhat from proxy voting in the U.S. markets, due to the various country specific laws, customs, and regulations. For this reason, the WSIB typically asks its international managers, who have close knowledge of those intricacies, to vote the proxies in those markets. However, the WSIB will closely monitor these managers' proxy voting practices and policies, and report the international voting activities to the Board annually. Should the WSIB, in consideration of the Board's fiduciary duty, believe that a particular proxy should be voted a particular way, the WSIB may contact the manager to discuss the WSIB's viewpoint and express the WSIB rationale. The manager will retain the right to vote the proxy; however, the WSIB may require that the manager provide in writing a rationale as to why the manager voted the way it did, if different, from the WSIB's expressed view on a particular proxy matter.

International, as used in the policy, means non-U.S. markets.

POLICY REVIEW

The Board shall review this policy at least once every three (3) years to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate.

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PROXY VOTING GUIDELINES

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A Board of Directors ("board") exists to represent shareholders, protect shareholders' interests, and maximize shareholder value. The WSIB seeks board members with a proven record of protecting shareholders and delivering value over the medium- to long-term. In our view, boards working to protect and enhance the best interests of shareholders typically possess substantial independence (the definition of which may vary due to local market practice and regulations) and are comprised of members with a record of positive performance and directors with a breadth and depth of experience.

Board Composition

Director Independence

We look at each individual on the board and examine their relationships with the company, the company's executives, and with other board members. The purpose of this inquiry is to determine whether pre-existing personal, familial, or financial relationships (apart from compensation as a director) are likely to impact the decisions of that board member.

We believe a director is independent if he or she has no material financial, familial or other current relationships with the company, its executives, or other board members except for service on the board and standard fees paid for that service. Relationships that have existed within the past five years prior to the inquiry are usually considered to be "current" for purposes of this test.

Directors are not considered independent if their employer has a material financial relationship with the company. This includes a director who owns or is employed by a group that controls 20 percent or more of the company's voting stock.

Where the company does not disclose the names and backgrounds of director nominees with sufficient time in advance of the shareholder meeting to evaluate their independence and performance, we will consider abstaining on the directors' election.

Board Independence

We believe that U.S. boards should be composed of a minimum of two-thirds independent directors (this proportion will vary for other markets in accordance with local standards). Further, we believe that only independent directors should serve on a company's audit, compensation, nominating, and governance committees. The WSIB votes in a manner that encourages such a makeup or encourages change where this is not the case. We will likewise vote against insiders on this basis, though we rarely vote against a CEO to reduce the number of insiders or affiliates on the board.

We vote against directors who have consulting relationships with the company because we view those relationships as both affecting the board members' ability to act independent of the management from whom the directors received consulting contracts and as potentially interfering with the company's ability to procure services from the best advisor for the issue at hand.

Controlled Company Exception

We note that in the case of a controlled company, we do not vote against directors where the board reflects the makeup of the shareholder population.

Board Diversity

The WSIB recognizes the importance of ensuring that the board is comprised of directors who demonstrate a diverse set of skills, thought, and experience, as such diversity benefits companies by providing a broad range of perspectives and insights. We believe that teams with cognitive diversity and diversity of background can make better decisions, and one way to achieve this is to appoint directors representing a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, a material number of women, as well as self-identification as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

The WSIB closely reviews the composition of the board for representation of diverse director candidates. For companies in the Russell 3000 Index, we will generally vote against the nominating/governance committee chair when fewer than 30 percent of the board seats are held by women. We also expect companies to consider and disclose how they assess racial representation on the board and, for companies in the Russell 1000 Index, will generally vote against the nominating/governance committee chair of a board when director race and ethnicity is not provided. We accept disclosures on either an individual or aggregate basis.

Depending on other factors, including the size of the company, the industry in which the company operates, the state in which the company is headquartered, and the governance profile of the company, we may extend this policy to vote against other nominating committee members. When making these voting decisions, we will carefully review a company's disclosure of its diversity considerations and may refrain from voting against directors of companies outside the Russell 3000 Index, or when boards have provided a sufficient rationale for not having an adequate number of women on the board. Such rationale may include, but is not limited to, a disclosed timetable for addressing the lack of diversity on the board and any notable restrictions in place regarding the board's composition, such as director nomination agreements with significant investors.

Director Accountability

We closely scrutinize board accountability and oversight at companies that demonstrate poor corporate stewardship. Specifically, the WSIB considers it problematic when companies lack oversight mechanisms and board accountability to shareholders.

We generally vote against directors individually, committee members, or the entire board (except new nominees) due to:

- Material failures of governance, stewardship, risk oversight, or fiduciary responsibilities
- Failure to act on a shareholder proposal that received significant support in the previous year
- A lack of responsiveness to significant shareholder opposition to management proposals in the prior year
- Failure to disclose a detailed record of proxy voting results from the last annual meeting
- Implementing bylaw or charter amendments without shareholder approval in a manner that materially diminishes shareholders' rights or that could adversely impact shareholders (including exclusive venue and fee-shifting bylaw provisions)
- Adoption of a poison pill (with a term of more than 12 months), renewal of any existing pill without shareholder approval, or other onerous provisions that may limit shareholders' rights
- The presence of a multi-class share structure and unequal voting rights when the company does not provide for a reasonable sunset of the multi-class share structure (generally seven years or less)

For companies systemically critical to the climate transition such as large companies where emissions and/or climate-related impacts represent a material risk, we may vote against relevant members of the board due to failure to implement a strong governance and disclosure framework related to climate change risk.

Director Performance

We vote in favor of governance structures that will positively drive performance and create shareholder value. The most crucial test of a board's commitment to the company and to its shareholders lies in the actions of the board and its members. The performance of directors as board members, as well as their performance in their roles at other companies is of substantial importance.

We consider the following key performance factors, among many others, in assessing whether to support a board's nominees:

- Did a continuing director show an attention and dedication to shareholder representation by attending at least 75 percent of the board and applicable committee meetings last year?
- Does a continuing director or the director's immediate family members receive perquisites in the form of special compensation or other special benefits not ordinarily conferred on directors?
- Does the nominee sit on an excessive number of public company boards, especially in light of the director's other professional obligations?
- Does the nominee, or a member of their immediate family, provide material professional services to the company presently or in the past?
- Does or would the nominee have an interlocking directorship with an executive of the company?
- Does the nominee have a track record of service as a director or executive at a company where significant performance, transparency, environmental, social, governance, legal, or accounting problems exist or have in the past?
- Is the nominee currently the CFO or other financial executive of the company on whose board the nominee is proposed to serve?

Director Experience

We look for boards with talented directors who have a diversity of backgrounds and experience that will enable them to understand the issues particular to the company where they serve and who collectively have the ability to review and judge the critical issues they decide on behalf of shareholders.

Nominating committee charters, or equivalent, ought to reflect that boards should be diverse, including, in addition to background and experience, such considerations as age, race, gender, and ethnicity, and self-identification as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

Audit Committee Members

Audit committee members should be independent and qualified, with at least some members of the full committee demonstrating key expertise in audit and/or finance (e.g., current or former CPAs/CFOs). The committee should take care to ensure that the auditor is not conflicted or distracted from the audit function and be mindful of the fees paid to the company's independent auditor and the services underlying those fees. It is the duty of the audit committee to oversee the company's independent auditor, its internal controls and the filing of the company's financial statements. Further, we believe shareholders' interests are

best protected when the audit committee allows for shareholder ratification of the independent auditor at each annual meeting.

Board-Related Shareholder Proposals

Independent Chair (Separation of the roles of Chairman and CEO)

The WSIB believes that requiring the chairman's position be filled by an independent director or separating the roles of corporate officers and the chairman of the board, is a better governance structure than a combined executive/chairman position. The role of executives is to manage the business on the basis of the course charted by the board. Executives should be in the position of reporting and answering to the board as it relates to their performance in achieving the goals set out by such board. This becomes much more complicated when management actually sits on or chairs the board.

We view an independent chairman as better able to oversee the executives of the company and set a pro-shareholder agenda, without the management conflicts that a CEO and other executive insiders often face. This, in turn, leads to a more proactive and effective board of directors that is looking out for the interests of shareholders, above all else.

We support proposals to separate the roles of chairman of the board and CEO, except in circumstances where the existing arrangement has worked out to be economically beneficial to shareholders, so as to not warrant a change at the time proposed.

In the absence of an independent chairman, we support the existence of a presiding or lead director with authority to call a board meeting, set the agenda for any board meeting, and to lead sessions of the non-employee directors.

Staggered (Classified) Boards

The WSIB favors the annual election of directors and the repeal of staggered boards. We believe that staggered boards are less accountable to shareholders than boards that are elected annually. In our view, the annual election of directors encourages board members to focus on the interests of shareholders.

Election of Directors by a Majority Vote

The ability to elect directors is a fundamental part of shareholder rights. We believe that the plurality method currently used by a significant number of companies does not provide shareholders with meaningful input on the election of directors, since a director could be elected with as few as one vote. Therefore, we support shareholder or other proposals that recommend or require that companies adopt a majority vote standard for election of directors in uncontested elections. We vote against if no carve-out for a plurality vote standard in contested elections is included.

Proxy Access

The WSIB will consider supporting reasonable proposals requesting shareholders' ability to nominate director candidates to management's proxy ("proxy access"), as we believe that significant, long-term shareholders should have the ability to nominate their representatives to the board. The WSIB reviews proposals requesting proxy access on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the following in our analysis:

- Company size
- Existing or proposed proxy access provisions
- Board independence and diversity of skills, experience, background and tenure
- The shareholder proponent and the rationale for putting forth the proposal at the target company

- The percentage ownership requested and holding period requirement
- Shareholder base in both percentage of ownership and type of shareholder (e.g., hedge fund, activist investor, mutual fund, pension fund, etc.)
- Responsiveness of board and management to shareholders evidenced by progressive shareholder rights policies (e.g., majority voting, declassifying boards, etc.) and reaction to shareholder proposals
- Company performance and steps taken to improve poor performance (e.g., new executives/directors, spin-offs, etc.)
- Existence of anti-takeover protections or other entrenchment devices
- Opportunities for shareholder action (e.g., ability to act by written consent or right to call a special meeting)

In recent years, shareholders have requested that companies amend existing proxy access bylaws (commonly referred to as "fix it" proposals) in order to, for example, change the percentage of proxy access nominees that can be submitted to the board or to allow for a larger group limit for shareholder nominators. We will review such proposals on a case-by-case basis.

CEO Succession Planning

All companies should have succession planning policies and succession plans in place, and boards should periodically review and update them. Guidelines for disclosure of a company's succession planning process should balance the board's interest in keeping business strategies confidential, with shareholders' interests in ensuring that the board is performing its planning duties adequately.

Generally, the WSIB supports proposals seeking disclosure on a CEO succession planning policy, considering, at a minimum, the following factors:

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

Cumulative Voting

Cumulative voting is a voting process that maximizes the ability of minority shareholders to ensure representation of their views on the board by casting as many shares of the stock they own multiplied by the number of directors to be elected, allowing them to cast all their votes for a single (or smaller number of nominees) nominee up for election. Cumulative voting can play an especially important role where a board is controlled mainly by insiders or affiliates, or where the company's ownership structure includes one or more very large shareholders who control a majority-voting block. This voting mechanism allows for the creation of boards that are broadly responsive to the interests of all shareholders rather than simply to a small group of large holders.

The WSIB assess cumulative voting structures and related proposals on a case-by-case basis, factoring in the structure and independence of the board and the governance/shareholder structures. In instances where independence is lacking and shareholder protections are lacking, we will typically support cumulative voting.

However, if a company has adopted a true majority vote standard (i.e., where a director must receive a majority of votes cast to be elected, as opposed to a modified policy indicated by a resignation policy only), we will vote against a cumulative voting proposal, since it may be incompatible with majority voting. Furthermore, when companies have adopted some form of

majority voting, but it falls short of a true majority voting standard, we will vote against cumulative voting proposals if the company has not adopted antitakeover protections and has been responsive to shareholders.

Where a company has not adopted a majority voting standard and is facing both a shareholder proposal to adopt majority voting and a shareholder proposal to adopt cumulative voting, the WSIB will support only the latter.

Mandatory Director Retirement Provisions

Director Term Limits

Term limits are not the best method for pursuing change at the board level. The experience of directors through their service over time can be a valuable asset to shareholders. However, periodic director rotation may be appropriate to ensure a fresh perspective in the boardroom and the generation of new ideas and business strategies. Therefore, where the WSIB believes needed change has not come to the board through other means, and the length of the term is long enough to limit continuous turnover (usually 10 years or more), we may support a term limit.

Director Age Limits

Age limits are not usually in the best interests of shareholders. The experience of directors through their service over time can be a valuable asset to shareholders. Age limits unfairly imply that older or younger directors cannot contribute meaningfully to the oversight of a company.

Board Operations

Shareholders are best served when directors provide effective oversight of management, as well as of each other. Shareholder interests are enhanced when directors have a peer review process, a director training process and an executive review process in place. The WSIB supports proposals calling for these processes, where we believe the board does not have an effective process currently in place.

Director Stock Ownership

Share ownership by directors helps align directors' interests with those of other shareholders. Accordingly, we support reasonable equity compensation of directors and reasonable ownership and holding requirements for directors.

AUDIT-RELATED

Auditor Ratification

The role of the auditor is crucial to protecting shareholder value. Like directors, auditors should be free from conflicts of interest and should assiduously avoid situations that tempt them to make choices between their own interests and those of the public shareholders whom they serve. The WSIB generally supports management's recommendation regarding the selection of an auditor and supports granting the board the authority to fix auditor fees, except in cases where we believe the independence of an incumbent auditor or the integrity of the audit has been compromised.

The WSIB may vote against an auditor and/or authorizing the board to set auditor fees in limited situations, including, among others, the following:

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

- The auditor has a conflict of interest or has failed to properly fulfill its duties
- Any category of non-audit fees exceeds audit fees
- The company has had recent restatements involving auditor errors or late filings
- The company's accounting policies are aggressive
- The company has poor disclosure or a lack of transparency in its financial statements
- The company is changing auditors as a result of a disagreement between the company and the auditor on a matter of accounting principles or practices, financial statement disclosure, or auditing scope or procedures

Auditor Rotation

The WSIB supports audit-related proposals regarding mandatory auditor rotation when the rotation occurs after a reasonable period of time (usually not less than 5-7 years).

TRANSPARENCY & INTEGRITY IN FINANCIAL REPORTING

Shareholders' insight into the value of their investments and the growth potential of that investment is only as good as the information disclosed to shareholders by the company. Shareholders ultimately rely on the board members and the auditors they hire to review and approve the company's financial reporting and disclosure. Transparent disclosure to shareholders and unconflicted presentation of a company's financial position is critical to allow shareholders to make informed investment decisions. Accordingly, we believe that transparency and integrity in financial reporting is one of the most crucial matters for shareholder review and attention. We use proxy voting as a mechanism for supporting companies with transparent disclosure and for demanding transparency where it is lacking.

Accounts and Reports

Many countries require companies to submit the annual financial statements, director reports, and independent auditors' reports to shareholders at a general meeting. Shareholder approval of such proposals does not discharge the board or management. The WSIB generally votes in favor of these proposals, except when there are concerns about the integrity of the statements/reports. However, should the audited financial statements, auditor's report, and/or annual report not be published at the writing of our report, we will abstain from voting on this proposal.

COMPENSATION AND PERFORMANCE

A company's compensation practices are a key indicator of whether the company's board is looking out for the best interests of shareholders. The WSIB believes that executive and equity compensation plans are two of the most critical areas for shareholder scrutiny. First, because the company is using shareholders' money and must always do so prudently; but, equally important, this is an area that has proven to be rife with conflicts and abuse where it is not carefully monitored.

Our analysis of compensation plans is decidedly quantitative and focused on the cost of the plan, as compared to the operating metrics of the business. Our goal is to determine whether a proposed plan is absolutely excessive or is outside a reasonable deviation from the norm for its peers. We do not rely exclusively on relative comparisons, as we believe that there should be some absolute limits to avoid endless upward pressure.

Executive Compensation

Executive compensation should be linked directly with the performance of the business the executive is charged with managing. The WSIB carefully evaluates executive compensation issues at each company whose proxy it votes, to determine whether the compensation to

the company's senior executives is in line with the performance of the business. Pay received by executives at a company should also not exceed those of relevant peers. The WSIB considers peer groups in evaluating executive compensation and compares both the executives' pay and the company's performance to those peers to assess whether the executive pay structure at any given company is appropriate and reasonable.

Excessive Executive Compensation

The "Tax Cut and Jobs Act" had significant implications on Section 162(m) of the Internal Revenue Code, a provision that allowed companies to deduct compensation in excess of \$1 million for the CEO and the next three most highly compensated executive officers, excluding the CFO, if the compensation is performance-based and is paid under shareholder-approved plans. The WSIB does not generally view amendments to equity plans and changes to compensation programs in response to the elimination of tax deductions under 162(m) as problematic. This specifically holds true if such modifications contribute to the maintenance of a sound performance-based compensation program.

Given the shareholder approval requirement of section 162(m), we believe that companies must provide reasonable disclosure to shareholders so that they can make sound judgments about the reasonableness of the proposed plan. We support the plan if the proposal includes specific performance goals, a maximum award pool, and a maximum award amount per employee. We also consider whether the estimated grants are reasonable and in line with the company's peers. Similar principles will be applied to executive compensation in other markets, though the specifics may vary by local market and applicable regulation.

Equity-Based Compensation Plans

The WSIB evaluates option and other equity-based compensation on a case-by-case basis. We believe that equity compensation awards are a useful tool, when not abused, for retaining and for providing appropriate incentives for employees to work to improve the performance of the company. When the cost of the plan is not in line with the performance of the business or are excessive on an absolute basis, or where the company has a pattern of excessive compensation and the proposed plan appears to continue in that tradition, we vote against the plan and encourage the company to return with a reasonable plan that reflects the economics of the business and protects value for shareholders.

We evaluate option plans based on the following overarching principles:

- Companies should seek more shares only when needed
- Plans should be small enough that companies seek approval every 3-4 years (or less) from shareholders
- If a plan is relatively expensive, it should not grant options solely to senior executives and board members
- Annual net share count and voting power dilution should be limited
- Annual cost of the plan (especially if not shown on the income statement) should be reasonable as a percentage of financial results, and in line with the company's peer group
- The expected annual cost of the plan should be proportional to the value of the business
- The intrinsic value received by option grantees in the past should be reasonable compared with the financial results of the business
- Plans should deliver value on a per-employee basis when compared with programs at peer companies

- Plans should not permit re-pricing of stock options
- Plans should not contain excessively liberal administrative or payment terms

The WSIB is assisted by a proprietary model developed by our proxy voting advisors to evaluate plans based on each of these principles and to make recommendations accordingly.

Option Exchanges

We disfavor option exchanges, which re-price options after their initial grant. We believe that employees are more likely to look after the interests of shareholders when they face the same risks shareholders face.

We may support a re-pricing if the following conditions are true:

- Officers and board members do not participate in the program
- The stock decline mirrors the market or industry price decline in terms of timing and approximates the decline in magnitude
- The exchange is value neutral or value creative to shareholders with very conservative assumptions and recognition of the adverse selection problems inherent in voluntary programs
- Management and the board make a cogent case for needing to provide incentives to and retain existing employees, such as being in a competitive employment market

Director Compensation Plans

Non-employee directors should receive compensation for the time and effort they spend serving on the board and its committees. In particular, we support compensation plans that include option grants, or other equity-based awards, which help to align the interests of outside directors with those of shareholders. Director fees should be competitive in order to retain and attract qualified individuals, especially in an environment where the responsibilities of directors are increasing. However, excessive fees represent a financial cost to the company and threaten the objectivity and independence of non-employee directors. Therefore, we believe a balance is required.

Advisory Votes on Compensation

We closely review companies' remuneration practices and disclosure, as outlined in company filings, to evaluate management-submitted advisory compensation vote proposals. In evaluating these proposals, which can be binding or non-binding depending on the country, we examine how well the company has disclosed information pertinent to its compensation programs, encourages long-termism, the extent to which overall compensation is tied to performance, the performance metrics selected by the company, and the levels of remuneration in comparison to company performance and that of its peers.

We support an annual advisory vote on executive compensation, as it provides the greatest degree of accountability and constructive communication by linking the vote to the information presented in the accompanying proxy statement for the annual shareholders' meeting.

Shareholder Proposals on Compensation

Golden Parachutes

The WSIB believes that shareholders' ratification should be required for golden parachute severance agreements that exceed Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines in the U.S. (such as when they exceed 2.99 times the sum of the executive's base salary plus bonus).

Accordingly, we support shareholder or other proposals that provide for such shareholder approval. We will apply similar standards, subject to local considerations, in evaluating “golden parachutes” outside the U.S.

Limit Accelerated Vesting of Equity Awards Upon a Change in Control (Pro-rata Vesting)

In the case of equity awards, their disposition in connection with a change in control is generally provided for under the equity-based incentive plan, under which they are granted. The WSIB believes that such provisions should not “default” to automatic vesting or payout of outstanding awards upon a change in control, but rather should permit that action only as a “last resort” if there is no possibility of the awards being assumed or replaced by the surviving corporation, and subject to acceleration only if the participant’s employment terminates.

Generally, the WSIB supports proposals seeking a policy that prohibits acceleration of the vesting of equity awards to senior executives in the event of a change in control (except for pro rata vesting, considering the time elapsed and attainment of any related performance goals between the award date and the change in control).

Recoupment of Compensation in Specified Circumstances (Clawback Policy)

Many companies have adopted policies that permit recoupment in cases where an executive's fraud, misconduct, or negligence significantly contributed to a restatement of financial results that led to the awarding of unearned incentive compensation. The emerging best practice calls for recoupment not only in such cases, but also when misstated results did not involve outright fraud or misconduct, as new concerns about “risk motivating” incentives have put focus on the potential of robust clawback policies to mitigate that effect. In the U.S., rules adopted by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in effect for 2024 require public companies to maintain policies allowing for recoupment in such cases.

The WSIB assesses, on a case-by-case basis, proposals to recoup incentive cash or stock compensation made to senior executives if it is later determined that the figures upon which incentive compensation is earned turn out to have been in error, or if the senior executive has breached company policy, engaged in any misconduct, or failed to manage or monitor risks that subsequently led to significant financial or reputational harm to the company. In considering whether to support such shareholder proposals, we will take into consideration the following factors:

- The company's recoupment policy (if any)
- The rigor of the recoupment policy focusing on how and under what circumstances the company may recoup incentive or stock compensation
- The company's restatement history or track record of material financial problems
- Whether the company’s policy substantially addresses the concerns raised by the proponent
- Disclosure of recoupment of incentive or stock compensation from senior executives or lack thereof
- Any other relevant factors

In the case where a company discloses that recovery of an amount covered by the new regulation was forgone, we will consider the rationale provided on a case-by-case basis when considering votes on say-on-pay and/or director candidates.

Share Ownership Guidelines

Share ownership requirements for executives are an important tool for aligning management and shareholder interests. We believe that all top employees should be required to build and hold a meaningful level of share ownership over their first years of employment with the company. While we have not identified a level of shareholding that represents best practices for all companies, we believe that companies should determine and implement appropriate requirements. However, we generally vote against shareholder proposals that mandate a minimum amount of stock that directors must own in order to qualify as a director or to remain on the board. While we favor stock ownership on the part of directors, the company should determine the appropriate ownership requirement.

MERGERS, CAPITALIZATION, AND CORPORATE STRUCTURE ISSUES

The WSIB considers corporate structure, capitalization, and merger issues in the context of their economic impact on shareholders. With the help of our advisers, we assess the potential impacts of these types of proposals to ensure that we are exercising our votes consistent with the best value as shareholders.

Mergers, Acquisitions, and Sale of Corporate Assets

We support mergers where we believe that the value being delivered to the WSIB is reasonable and represents the best alternative available to the company. The most critical analysis we undertake is our own analysis, with the help of our advisers, to assess whether the transaction is fair and delivers appropriate value to our fund. However, in coming to a conclusion about the economic benefits of a proposed transaction, we also consider the process employed by the board in reviewing and recommending the merger. We look at whether the board's interests are aligned with shareholders based on the details of the proposed deal. In particular, we look at executive and board member payouts associated with the proposed transaction. We consider the financial advice received by the board in support of its recommendation to ensure that the advice was unbiased and well-reasoned. The overwhelming majority of merger transactions meet these criteria, thus we regularly support them.

Capitalization

Authorized Shares

Adequate capital stock is important to the operation of a company. When analyzing a request for additional shares, we review four common reasons why a company might need additional capital stock beyond what is currently available:

- Stock split
- Anti-takeover defenses
- Financing for acquisitions
- Financing for operations

The WSIB votes for the authorization of additional shares, unless we find that the company does not have a reasonable plan for use of the proposed shares, or we believe the plan is inappropriate (e.g., to fund a poison pill or to serve as a component of some other anti-takeover defense), or where the number of shares far exceeds those needed to accomplish the proposed plan.

Blank Check Preferred Stock and Unequal Voting Rights

Blank check preferred stock which allows the board to implement unequal voting rights and other forms of stock with existing unequal voting rights, are typically counter to the interests of ordinary public shareholders. We believe that each share should have one vote and all shareholders should be treated equally in their ability to set the direction of the

company, based only on their percentage of holdings. Accordingly, we favor the removal or reduction of unequal voting rights wherever possible.

Reverse Stock Splits

We also typically support reverse stock splits because they tend to allow for decreased cost by shareholders in trading the stock, and it may increase marketability of the stock.

Issuance of Shares

Issuing additional shares can dilute existing holders. Further, the availability of additional shares, where the board has discretion to implement a poison pill, can often serve as a deterrent to interested suitors. Accordingly, where we find that the company has not disclosed a detailed plan for use of the proposed shares, or where the number of shares requested are excessive, we typically vote against the issuance. In the case of a private placement, we will also consider whether the company is offering a discount to its share price.

In addition, some companies may request shareholder approval to authorize the board to issue shares with or without preemption rights over a defined time period, in order to allow the board the flexibility to finance operations and future business opportunities. In general, we will support proposals to authorize the board to issue shares, with pre-emption rights, up to a maximum of 100 percent of the issued ordinary share capital of the company. This authority should not exceed 5 years, or less for some countries. If the proposal contains a figure greater than 100 percent, the company should provide an acceptable explanation.

We will also generally support proposals to authorize the board to issue shares without pre-emption rights for a maximum of 20 percent of the issued ordinary share capital of the company. If the proposal contains a figure greater than 20 percent, the company should provide an acceptable explanation. This authority should not exceed 5 years.

Repurchase of Shares

We will recommend voting in favor of a proposal to repurchase shares when the plan includes the following safeguards: (i) a maximum number of shares which may be purchased (typically not more than 15 percent of the issued share capital), and (ii) a maximum price which may be paid for each share (as a percentage of the market price).

Corporate Structure

Multi-Class Share Structures

The WSIB believes multi-class voting structures are typically not in the best interests of common shareholders. Allowing one vote per share generally operates as a safeguard for common shareholders by ensuring that those who hold a significant minority of shares are able to weigh in on issues set forth by the board.

Furthermore, we believe that the economic stake of each shareholder should match their voting power and that no small group of shareholders, family or otherwise, should have voting rights different from those of other shareholders. On matters of governance and shareholder rights, we believe shareholders should have the power to speak and the opportunity to effect change. That power should not be concentrated in the hands of a few for reasons other than economic stake.

We therefore typically support boards and shareholder resolutions that support single class share structures over time.

Bylaw/Corporate Charter Amendments

Offshore Reincorporation

The WSIB considers the stated economic benefits of such a proposed transaction relative to the potential drawbacks of offshore reincorporation, such as decreased shareholder rights, potential business losses (including government contracting) and difficulty realizing tax advantages based on often discussed tax and legal changes by Congress. The WSIB also reviews the relevant law to assess whether the protections built into a particular locale's code are better for shareholders than the existing forum. Where shareholder protections are enhanced or remain the same, we may support the transaction. Ultimately, we take into account all these considerations and attempt to assess the best long-term outcome from a shareholder perspective.

Amendments to the Articles of Association

We will evaluate proposed amendments to a company's articles of association on a case-by-case basis, considering whether:

- Management provides sufficiently valid reasons for the amendments
- Shareholder rights are protected
- There is a negligible or positive impact on shareholder value
- The company is required to do so by law (if applicable)
- They are of a housekeeping nature (updates or corrections)

We are opposed to the practice of bundling several amendments under a single proposal because it prevents shareholders from evaluating each amendment on its own merits. In such cases, we will analyze each change individually. We will vote for the proposal only when we believe that the overall effect of the amendments is in the best interests of shareholders.

SHAREHOLDER RIGHTS AND ANTI-TAKEOVER PROVISIONS

Companies sometimes seek to implement certain provisions in order to create thresholds for the exercise of shareholder rights and thresholds for takeover efforts. Where these thresholds are reasonable and do not unduly impair shareholder value and rights, the WSIB will not oppose them. In many instances, however, these thresholds seek to place undue barriers to the exercise of shareholder rights and undue barriers to legitimate takeover efforts. In such instances, the WSIB will oppose such proposals.

Shareholder Rights

Right of Shareholders to Call a Special Meeting

The WSIB strongly believes that investors should have the ability to call meetings of shareholders between annual meetings to consider matters that require prompt attention. However, in order to prevent abuse and waste of corporate resources by a small minority of shareholders, we believe that shareholders representing at least a sizable minority of shares must support such a meeting prior to its calling. If this threshold is set too low, companies might frequently be subjected to meetings that disrupt normal business operations in order to focus on the interests of only a small minority of owners. Typically we believe this threshold should not fall below 10 to 15 percent of shares, depending on company size.

Shareholder Action by Written Consent

The WSIB is generally supportive of the right for shareholders to act by written consent. However, we believe that special meetings are preferable to action by written consent, as special meetings provide more protection for minority shareholders and better ensure that management is able to respond to the concerns raised by shareholders. Accordingly, in instances where companies have established other means for shareholders to influence a

company's proxy or act outside the annual meeting cycle, the WSIB may consider voting against shareholder proposals requesting that companies adopt a right for shareholders to act by written consent. Specifically, if a company has adopted a special meeting right of 15 percent or below and has adopted reasonable proxy access provisions, the WSIB will generally vote against shareholder proposals asking companies to adopt their bylaws to provide shareholders with the right to action by written consent.

Advance Notice Requirements for Shareholder Ballot Proposals

These proposals typically attempt to require a certain amount of notice before shareholders are allowed to place proposals on the ballot. Notice requirements may be unduly lengthy, such as those that range between 3 to 6 months prior to the annual meeting. These proposals make it very difficult for shareholders to present a proposal or a director nominee, even if that proposal is in the best interests of the company and its shareholders.

We typically vote against proposals that would require advance notice of shareholder proposals or of director nominees. As a provision that may limit shareholders' rights, we also may support proposals advocating for a shareholder vote on potential changes to bylaws.

Anti-Takeover Provisions

Poison Pills (Shareholder Rights Plans)

The WSIB believes that poison pill or similar shareholder rights plans are not in the best interests of the fund or its beneficiaries. Specifically, poison pills can reduce management accountability by substantially limiting opportunities for corporate takeovers. Shareholder rights plans can thus prevent the WSIB from receiving a buy-out premium for our stock. We believe that shareholders should be allowed to vote on whether or not they support such a plan's implementation. This is also an issue in which the interests of management may be very different from ours, and therefore, pursuing shareholders' approval is the best way to safeguard our interests. We generally vote against these plans; however, in certain limited circumstances, we will support the adoption of poison pills that are limited in scope, provide reasonable protection to shareholders, and are designed to provide the board and shareholders adequate time to pursue value-maximizing alternatives.

We are particularly opposed to "dead-hand poison pills" that only allow former directors who have left office to determine whether or not the pill can be revoked.

Supermajority Vote Requirements

Supermajority vote requirements act as impediments to shareholder action on ballot items that are critical to our interests. One key example is in the takeover context where supermajority vote requirements can limit shareholders' power to make decisions on such crucial matters as selling shares at a premium. The WSIB favors a simple majority voting structure. However, for companies with shareholders who have significant ownership levels, we vote case-by-case, taking into account the company's ownership structure, quorum requirements, and vote requirements.

Fair Price Provisions

The WSIB disfavors the use of "Fair Price Provisions" that attempt to dictate the price for all shares in a tender offer situation, as we believe these provisions tend to act like those of a poison pill in discouraging takeover offers.

Litigation Rights (including Exclusive Venue and Fee-Shifting Bylaw Provisions)

Bylaw provisions impacting shareholders' ability to bring suit against the company may include: (1) exclusive venue provisions, which provide that the state of incorporation shall be the sole venue for certain types of litigation; and, (2) fee-shifting provisions that require a shareholder who sues a company unsuccessfully to pay litigation expenses of the defendant corporation.

The WSIB does not support exclusive venue bylaw provisions that require a company's state of incorporation to be the sole venue for certain types of litigation. Additionally, we generally vote against bylaws that mandate fee-shifting whenever plaintiffs are not completely successful on the merits (e.g., shifting the fees even in cases where the plaintiffs are partially successful).

Procedural Matters

Transaction of Other Business at an Annual or Special Meeting of Shareholders

The WSIB believes that shareholders should have a say in all matters up for a vote. Therefore, we do not give our proxy to management with unfettered discretion to vote on any other business items that may properly come before the annual meeting.

Right of the Board to Adjourn a Meeting of Shareholders

The WSIB supports the right of the board to adjourn a meeting of shareholders where we support the proposals put forth by management. Adjourning the meeting, if necessary, can give the board time to solicit the votes of shareholders who may not yet have voted, in order to pass such proposals.

SHAREHOLDER INITIATIVES & MANAGEMENT OF THE FIRM

As a long-term investor, the WSIB favors proposals that are designed to increase or protect shareholder value and/or promote and protect shareholder rights. We typically prefer to leave decisions regarding day-to-day management of the business and policy decisions related to political, social, or environmental issues to management and the board, except where a shareholder proposal demonstrates that a company's operations, practices, or lack of attention pose risks to the current or long-term shareholder value in the company.

We will generally support proposals calling for greater disclosure of risks and risk mitigation actions related to financial, environmental, social, and governance issues, believing that such disclosure tends to be beneficial and in the long-term best interest of the company and its shareholders, absent any meaningful competitive reasons for limiting disclosure.

Climate Change/Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

The WSIB's investment belief on sustainability recognizes climate change as a core risk and opportunity. The WSIB accordingly evaluates how companies are managing their climate-related exposure and how this may affect shareholder value.

Generally, the WSIB supports resolutions requesting that a company disclose information on the impact of climate change and GHG emissions on its operations and investments, considering:

- Availability of company information on the impacts that climate change may have on the company, as well as associated company policies and procedures to address related risks and/or opportunities
- Level of disclosure compared to that of industry peers
- Presence of significant controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's relevant environmental performance

The WSIB evaluates proposals that call for the adoption of GHG reduction goals from products and operations on a case-by-case basis, taking into account:

- Availability of company disclosure of year-over-year GHG emissions performance data
- Level of disclosure is comparable to that of industry peers
- The company's actual GHG emissions performance
- The company's current GHG emission policies, oversight mechanisms, and related initiatives
- Presence of significant, controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's GHG emissions

Sustainability Reporting

The idea of sustainability is a business model that encourages companies to balance current business requirements without compromising future business, societal, and environmental needs. How best to promote sustainable development — defined by the United Nations as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" — has been an area of focus for investors that have long-term investment horizons. When evaluating resolutions calling for a sustainability report, the WSIB reviews the current reporting policies of the company as they relate to sustainability issues and avoiding duplications.

Generally, the WSIB supports proposals requesting that a company report on its policies, initiatives, and oversight mechanisms related to social, economic, and environmental sustainability, unless:

- The company already provides similar information through existing reports or policies, such as an environment, health, and safety (EHS) report; a comprehensive code of corporate conduct; and/or a diversity report
- The company has formally committed to the implementation of a reporting program based on International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) guidelines or a similar standard within a specified time frame

Reporting Contributions and Political Spending

The area of campaign contributions is heavily regulated in the U.S. by federal, state, and local laws, and other countries may also have their own regulations. The WSIB believes that disclosure regarding how a company uses its funds is an important component of corporate accountability. Unfortunately, there is no standardized manner in which companies must disclose their political contributions and spending. It is the WSIB's position that companies should provide an itemized list of the amounts of all political contributions and their corresponding recipients, a list of trade associations to which the company in question belongs, amounts paid to trade associations, and amounts from the company used by trade associations for lobbying – in both memberships and donations. Moreover, the board of directors should maintain oversight and approval of all political spending. The board should only approve contributions that are consistent with the interests of the company and its shareholders.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, we believe that the mechanism for disclosure and the standards for donating are best left to the board's discretion. However, given the broadening of allowable donations as a result of the Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and the move by many companies to provide more specific disclosure about their political contributions, we will support shareholder proposals seeking more disclosure about a company's political donations.

Climate-Related Lobbying

On a global basis, companies have begun providing additional disclosure concerning how they are ensuring that corporate funds are being spent in ways that further their objectives with respect to climate policy. As such, there is a growing acknowledgement by investors and companies that ensuring alignment between stated values and lobbying expenditures, including those of trade associations, is an important consideration. When companies actively lobby, whether directly or indirectly, in a manner that seems to contradict their espoused priorities and positions, it can result in the inefficient use of corporate resources, confuse a company's messages, and expose a company to significant reputational risks. Accordingly, the WSIB will generally vote in favor of proposals requesting more information on a company's climate-related lobbying. When reviewing proposals asking for disclosure on this issue, we will evaluate:

- Whether the requested disclosure would meaningfully benefit shareholders' understanding of the company's policies and positions on this issue
- The industry in which the company operates; (iii) the company's current level of disclosure regarding its direct and indirect lobbying on climate change-related issues
- Any significant controversies related to the Company's management of climate change or its trade association memberships.

While we generally believe that companies should enhance their disclosure on these issues, we will generally vote against any proposals that would require a company to suspend its memberships in industry associations in or otherwise limit a company's ability to participate fully in the trade associations of which it is a member.

Multi-Class Share Structures

The WSIB believes that multi-class voting structures are typically not in the best interests of common shareholders. This is particularly the case when the voting power of one class is significantly different from that of common shareholders, giving a small group of shareholders a significant amount of control over the affairs of the Company. We believe that all shareholders should have a say in decisions that will affect them.

We believe that allowing one vote per share generally operates as a safeguard for common shareholders by ensuring that those who hold a significant minority of shares are able to weigh in on issues set forth by the board, especially in regard to the director election process. Elimination of the multi-class structure creates an even playing field for all shareholders, as well as a board that is more responsive to shareholders. Accordingly, the WSIB will generally vote in favor of proposals that would eliminate a company's multi-class share structure to allow for one vote per share.

Human Rights

Adherence to globally-accepted workplace codes of conduct and human rights standards is a vital part of corporate stewardship. We expect companies to appropriately report on company and company vendor standards, and provide clear explanation of how the approach taken by the company represents the best interest of shareholders. We may favor requests to report on such standards if such information is not already made publicly available. Similarly, the WSIB may support proposals to implement labor and human rights standards if we believe that a company's disclosed practices are not in alignment with globally adopted standards, or if we have concerns regarding recent, significant company controversies, fines, or litigation regarding human rights at the company or its suppliers which may have a potential adverse impact on our long-term economic interests.

Board Diversity

The WSIB supports a diverse board. The WSIB believes a diverse board has benefits that can enhance corporate financial performance, particularly in today's global market place. Nominating committee charters, or equivalent, ought to reflect that boards should be diverse, including such considerations as background, experience, age, race, gender, ethnicity, and self-identification as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Many shareholders believe that the best indicator of a company's commitment to workplace diversity is reflected by the composition of its board.

The WSIB evaluates proposals, asking a company to increase diversity on its board on a case-by-case basis, taking into account:

- The degree of existing diversity on the company's board and among its executive officers
- The level of diversity that exists at the company's industry peers
- The company's established process for addressing diversity
- The independence of the company's nominating committee
- The company's use of an outside search firm to identify potential director nominees
- The presence of recent controversies, fines, or litigation regarding equal employment practices
- The scope of the request, including whether the proposal contains an overly prescriptive request to amend nominating committee charter language