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# **PROXY VOTING AND GOVERNANCE POLICY**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As an investment adviser, we are shareholder advocates and have a fiduciary duty to make investment decisions that are in our clients' best interests by maximizing the value of their shares. Proxy voting is an integral part of this process, through which we support strong corporate governance structures, shareholder rights, and transparency.

Where we have agreed to vote proxies on behalf of our client accounts, we have an obligation to vote proxies in a timely manner and we apply the principles in this policy to our proxy decisions. We believe a company's environmental, social and governance ("**ESG**") practices may have a significant effect on the value of the company, and we take these factors into consideration when voting. For additional information regarding our ESG policies and practices, please refer to our firm's Statement of Policy Regarding Responsible Investment ("**RI Policy**").

This Proxy Voting and Governance Policy ("**Proxy Voting and Governance Policy**" or "**Policy**"), which outlines our policies for proxy voting and includes a wide range of issues that often appear on proxies, applies to all of AB's investment management subsidiaries and investment services groups investing on behalf of clients globally. It is intended for use by those involved in the proxy voting decision-making process and those responsible for the administration of proxy voting ("**members of Responsible Investment team**"), in order to ensure that our proxy voting policies and procedures are implemented consistently.

We sometimes manage accounts where proxy voting is directed by clients or newly-acquired subsidiary companies. In these cases, voting decisions may deviate from this Policy.

## 2. RESEARCH UNDERPINS DECISION MAKING

As a research-driven firm, we approach our proxy voting responsibilities with the same commitment to rigorous research and engagement that we apply to all of our investment activities. The different investment philosophies utilized by our investment teams may occasionally result in different conclusions being drawn regarding certain proposals and, in turn, may result in the members of Responsible Investment team making different voting decisions on the same proposal. Nevertheless, the members of Responsible Investment team vote proxies with the goal of maximizing the value of the securities in client portfolios.

In addition to our firm-wide proxy voting policies, we have a Proxy Voting and Governance Committee ("**Proxy Voting and Governance Committee**" or "**Committee**"), which provides oversight and includes senior investment professionals from Equities, Legal personnel and Operations personnel. It is the responsibility of the Committee to evaluate and maintain proxy voting procedures and guidelines, to evaluate proposals and issues not covered by these guidelines, to consider changes in policy, and to review the Policy no less frequently than annually. In addition, the Committee meets at least three times a year and as necessary to address special situations.

### RESEARCH SERVICES

We subscribe to the corporate governance and proxy research services of vendors such as Institutional Shareholder Services Inc. ("**ISS**") and Glass Lewis at different levels. All our investment professionals can access these materials via the members of Responsible Investment team and/or the Committee.

### ENGAGEMENT

In evaluating proxy issues and determining our votes, we welcome and seek out the points of view of various parties. Internally, members of Responsible Investment team may consult the Committee, Chief Investment Officers, Portfolio Managers, and/or Research Analysts across our equities platforms, and Portfolio Managers who manage accounts a stock is held. Externally, we may engage with companies in advance of their Annual General Meeting, and throughout the year. We believe engagement provides the opportunity to share our philosophy, our corporate governance values, and more importantly, affect positive change. Also, these meetings often are joint efforts between the investment professionals, who are best positioned to comment on company-specific details, and members of Responsible Investment team, who offer a more holistic view of governance practices and relevant trends. In addition, we engage with shareholder proposal proponents and other stakeholders to understand different viewpoints and objectives.

## 3. PROXY VOTING GUIDELINES

Our proxy voting guidelines are both principles-based and rules-based. We adhere to a core set of principles that are described in this Policy. We assess each proxy proposal in light of these principles. Our proxy voting "litmus test" will always be what we view as most likely to maximize long-term shareholder value. We believe that authority and accountability for setting and executing corporate policies, goals and compensation generally should rest with the board of

directors and senior management. In return, we support strong investor rights that allow shareholders to hold directors and management accountable if they fail to act in the best interests of shareholders.

With this as a backdrop, our proxy voting guidelines pertaining to specific issues are set forth below. We generally vote proposals in accordance with these guidelines but, consistent with our “principles-based” approach to proxy voting, we may deviate from the guidelines if warranted by the specific facts and circumstances of the situation (i.e., if, under the circumstances, we believe that deviating from our stated policy is necessary to help maximize long-term shareholder value). In addition, these guidelines are not intended to address all issues that may appear on all proxy ballots. We will evaluate on a case-by-case basis any proposal not specifically addressed by these guidelines, whether submitted by management or shareholders, always keeping in mind our fiduciary duty to make voting decisions that, by maximizing long-term shareholder value, are in our clients’ best interests.

### 3.1 BOARD AND DIRECTOR PROPOSALS

#### 1. Establish New Board Committees and Elect Board Members with Specific Expertise (SHP) **CASE-BY-CASE**

We believe that establishing committees should be the prerogative of a well-functioning board of directors. However, we may support shareholder proposals to establish additional board committees to address specific shareholder issues, including ESG issues. We consider on a case-by-case basis proposals that require the addition of a board member with a specific area of expertise.

#### 2. Changes in Board Structure and Amending the Articles of Incorporation

**FOR**

Companies may propose various provisions with respect to the structure of the board of directors, including changing the manner in which board vacancies are filled, directors are nominated and the number of directors. Such proposals may require amending the charter or by-laws or may otherwise require shareholder approval. When these proposals are not controversial or meant as an anti-takeover device, which is generally the case, we vote in their favor. However, if we believe a proposal is intended as an anti-takeover device and diminishes shareholder rights, we generally vote against.

We may vote against directors for amending by-laws without seeking shareholder approval and/or restricting or diminishing shareholder rights.

#### 3. Classified Boards

**AGAINST**

A classified board typically is divided into three separate classes. Each class holds office for a term of two or three years. Only a portion of the board can be elected or replaced each year. Because this type of proposal has fundamental anti-takeover implications, we generally oppose the adoption of classified boards unless there is a justifiable financial reason or an adequate sunset provision exists. We may also vote against directors that fail to implement shareholder approved proposals to declassify boards that we previously supported.

#### 4. Director Liability and Indemnification

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Some companies argue that increased indemnification and decreased liability for directors are important to ensure the continued availability of competent directors. However, others argue that the risk of such personal liability minimizes the propensity for corruption and recklessness.

We generally support indemnification provisions that are consistent with the local jurisdiction in which the company has been formed. We vote in favor of proposals adopting indemnification for directors with respect to acts conducted in the normal course of business. We also vote in favor of proposals that expand coverage for directors and officers where, despite an unsuccessful legal defense, we believe the director or officer acted in good faith and in the best interests of the company. We oppose proposals to indemnify directors for gross negligence.

#### 5. Disclose CEO Succession Plan (SHP)

**FOR**

Proposals like these are often suggested by shareholders of companies with long-tenured CEOs and/or high employee turnover rates. Even though some markets might not require the disclosure of a CEO succession plan, we do think it is good business practice and will support these proposals.

#### 6. Election of Directors

**FOR**

The election of directors is an important vote. We expect directors to represent shareholder interests at the company and maximize shareholder value. We generally vote in favor of the management-proposed slate of directors while considering a number of factors, including local market best practice. We believe companies should have a majority of independent directors and independent key committees. However, we will incorporate local market regulation and corporate

governance codes into our decision making. We may support more progressive requirements than those implemented in a local market if we believe more progressive requirements may improve corporate governance practices. We will generally regard a director as independent if the director satisfies the criteria for independence (i) espoused by the primary exchange on which the company's shares are traded, or (ii) set forth in the code we determine to be best practice in the country where the subject company is domiciled and may take into account affiliations, related-party transactions and prior service to the company. We consider the election of directors who are "bundled" on a single slate to be a poor governance practice and vote on a case-by-case basis considering the amount of information available and an assessment of the group's qualifications.

In addition:

- + We believe that directors have a duty to respond to shareholder actions that have received significant shareholder support. We may vote against directors (or withhold votes for directors if plurality voting applies) who fail to act on key issues. We oppose directors who fail to attend at least 75% of board meetings within a given year without a reasonable excuse.
- + We may abstain or vote against (depending on a company's history of disclosure in this regard) directors of issuers where there is insufficient information about the nominees disclosed in the proxy statement.
- + We may vote against directors for poor compensation, audit or governance practices including the lack of a formal key committee.
- + We may vote against directors for unilateral bylaw amendments that diminish shareholder rights.

We also may consider engaging company management (by phone, in writing and in person), until any issues have been satisfactorily resolved.

#### **a. Controlled Company Exemption**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

In certain markets, a different standard for director independence may be applicable for controlled companies, which are companies where more than 50% of the voting power is held by an individual, group or another company, or as otherwise defined by local market standards. We may take these local standards into consideration when determining the appropriate level of independence required for the board and key committees.

Exchanges in certain jurisdictions do not have a controlled company exemption (or something similar). In such a jurisdiction, if a company has a majority shareholder or group of related majority shareholders with a majority economic interest, we generally will not oppose that company's directors simply because the board does not include a majority of independent members, although we may take local standards into consideration when determining the appropriate level of independence required for the board and key committees. We will, however, consider these directors in a negative light if the company has a history of violating the rights of minority shareholders.

#### **b. Voting for Director Nominees in a Contested Election**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Votes in a contested election of directors are evaluated on a case-by-case basis with the goal of maximizing shareholder value.

### **7. Board Capacity**

We believe that incorporating an assessment of each director's capacity into consideration for a director election is essential to promote meaningful board oversight of the management. AB currently votes against the appointment of directors who occupy, or would occupy following the vote, 4 or more board seats for non-CEOs, 3 or more board seats for the sitting CEO of the company in question and 2 or more board seats for sitting CEOs of companies other than the company under consideration. We may also exercise flexibility on occasions where the "over-boarded" director nominee's presence on the board is critical, based on company specific contexts in absence of any notable accountability concerns.

### **8. Board Diversity**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Diversity is an important element of assessing the board's quality, as it promotes wider range of perspectives to be considered for companies to both strategize and mitigate risks. In line with this view, several European countries legally require a quota of female directors. Other European countries have a comply-or-explain policy. In the U.S., California requires corporations headquartered in the State of California to have at least one female director on board.

We believe that boards should develop, as a part of their refreshment process, a framework for identifying diverse candidates for all open board positions. We believe diversity is broader than gender and should also take into consideration factors such as business experience, ethnicity, tenure and nationality. As such, we generally vote in favor of proposals that encourage the adoption of a diverse search policy (“Rooney Rule”), assuring that each director search includes at least one woman, and in the US, at least one underrepresented person of color, in the slate of nominees. In addition, AB will generally vote against the nominating/governance committee chair, or a relevant incumbent member in case of classified boards, when the board has no female members. This approach applies globally excluding Japan.

#### **9. Independent Lead Director (SHP)**

**FOR**

We support shareholder proposals that request a company to amend its by-laws to establish an independent lead director, if the position of chairman is non-independent. We view the existence of a strong independent lead director, whose role is robust and includes clearly defined duties and responsibilities, such as the authority to call meetings and approve agendas, as a good example of the sufficient counter-balancing governance. If a company has such an independent lead director in place, we will generally oppose a proposal to require an independent board chairman, barring any additional board leadership concerns.

#### **10. Limit Term of Directorship (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

These proposals seek to limit the term during which a director may serve on a board to a set number of years.

Accounting for local market practice, we generally consider a number of factors, such as overall level of board independence, director qualifications, tenure, board diversity and board effectiveness in representing our interests as shareholders, in assessing whether limiting directorship terms is in shareholders’ best interests. Accordingly, we evaluate these items case-by-case.

#### **11. Majority of Independent<sup>1</sup> Directors (SHP)**

**FOR**

Each company’s board of directors has a duty to act in the best interest of the company’s shareholders at all times. We believe that these interests are best served by having directors who bring objectivity to the company and are free from potential conflicts of interests. Accordingly, we support proposals seeking a majority of independent directors on the board while taking into consideration local market regulation and corporate governance codes.

#### **12. Majority of Independent Directors on Key Committees (SHP)**

**FOR**

In order to ensure that those who evaluate management’s performance, recruit directors and set management’s compensation are free from conflicts of interests, we believe that the audit<sup>2</sup>, nominating/governance, and compensation committees should be composed of a majority of independent directors while taking into consideration local market regulation, corporate governance codes, and controlled company status.

#### **13. Majority Votes for Directors (SHP)**

**FOR**

We believe that good corporate governance requires shareholders to have a meaningful voice in the affairs of the company. This objective is strengthened if directors are elected by a majority of votes cast at an annual meeting rather than by the plurality method commonly used. With plurality voting a director could be elected by a single affirmative vote even if the rest of the votes were withheld.

We further believe that majority voting provisions will lead to greater director accountability. Therefore, we support shareholder proposals that companies amend their by-laws to provide that director nominees be elected by an affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast, provided the proposal includes a carve-out to provide for plurality voting in contested elections where the number of nominees exceeds the number of directors to be elected.

#### **14. Removal of Directors Without Cause (SHP)**

**FOR**

Company by-laws sometimes define cause very narrowly, including only conditions of criminal indictment, final adverse adjudication that fiduciary duties were breached or incapacitation, while also providing shareholders with the right to remove directors only upon “cause”.

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this Policy, generally, we will consider a director independent if the director satisfies the independence definition set forth in the listing standards of the exchange on which the common stock is listed. However, we may deem local independence classification criteria insufficient.

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the SEC rules, adopted pursuant to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, as of October 31, 2004, each U.S. listed issuer must have a fully independent audit committee.

We believe that the circumstances under which shareholders have the right to remove directors should not be limited to those traditionally defined by companies as “cause”. We also believe that shareholders should have the right to conduct a vote to remove directors who fail to perform in a manner consistent with their fiduciary duties or representative of shareholders’ best interests. And, while we would prefer shareholder proposals that seek to broaden the definition of “cause” to include situations like these, we generally support proposals that would provide shareholders with the right to remove directors without cause.

**15. Require Independent Board Chairman (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

We believe there can be benefits to an executive chairman and to having the positions of chairman and CEO combined as well as split. When the chair is non-independent the company must have sufficient counter-balancing governance in place, generally through a strong independent lead director. Also, for companies with smaller market capitalizations, separate chairman and CEO positions may not be practical.

**3.2 COMPENSATION PROPOSALS**

**16. Pro Rata Vesting of Equity Compensation Awards-Change in Control (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

We examine proposals on the treatment of equity awards in the event of a change in control on a case-by-case basis. If a change in control is accompanied by termination of employment, often referred to as a double-trigger, we generally support accelerated vesting of equity awards. If, however, there is no termination agreement in connection with a change in control, often referred to as a single-trigger, we generally prefer pro rata vesting of outstanding equity awards.

**17. Adopt Policies to Prohibit any Death Benefits to Senior Executives (SHP)**

**AGAINST**

We view these bundled proposals as too restrictive and conclude that blanket restrictions on any and all such benefits, including the payment of life insurance premiums for senior executives, could put a company at a competitive disadvantage.

**18. Advisory Vote to Ratify Directors’ Compensation (SHP)**

**FOR**

Similar to advisory votes on executive compensation, shareholders may request a non-binding advisory vote to approve compensation given to board members. We generally support this item.

**19. Amend Executive Compensation Plan Tied to Performance (Bonus Banking) (SHP)**

**AGAINST**

These proposals seek to force a company to amend executive compensation plans such that compensation awards tied to performance are deferred for shareholder specified and extended periods of time. As a result, awards may be adjusted downward if performance goals achieved during the vesting period are not sustained during the added deferral period.

We believe that most companies have adequate vesting schedules and clawbacks in place. Under such circumstances, we will oppose these proposals. However, if a company does not have what we believe to be adequate vesting and/or clawback requirements, we decide these proposals on a case-by-case basis.

**20. Approve Remuneration for Directors and Auditors**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

We will vote on a case-by-case basis where we are asked to approve remuneration for directors or auditors. We will generally oppose performance-based remuneration for non-executive directors as this may compromise independent oversight. However, where disclosure relating to the details of such remuneration is inadequate or provided without sufficient time for us to consider our vote, we may abstain or vote against, depending on the adequacy of the company’s prior disclosures in this regard and the local market practice.

**21. Approve Retirement Bonuses for Directors (Japan and South Korea)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Retirement bonuses are customary in Japan and South Korea. Companies seek approval to give the board authority to grant retirement bonuses for directors and/or auditors and to leave the exact amount of bonuses to the board’s discretion. We will analyze such proposals on a case-by-case basis, considering management’s commitment to maximizing long-term shareholder value. However, when the details of the retirement bonus are inadequate or undisclosed, we may abstain or vote against.

**22. Approve Special Payments to Continuing Directors and Auditors (Japan)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

In conjunction with the abolition of a company’s retirement allowance system, we will generally support special payment allowances for continuing directors and auditors if there is no evidence of their independence becoming impaired. However, when the details of the special payments are inadequate or undisclosed, we may abstain or vote against.

### **23. Disclose Executive and Director Pay (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

The United States Securities and Exchange Commissions (“SEC”) has adopted rules requiring increased and/or enhanced compensation-related and corporate governance-related disclosure in proxy statements and Forms 10-K. Similar steps have been taken by regulators in foreign jurisdictions. We believe the rules enacted by the SEC and various foreign regulators generally ensure more complete and transparent disclosure. Therefore, while we will consider them on a case-by-case basis (analyzing whether there are any relevant disclosure concerns), we generally vote against shareholder proposals seeking additional disclosure of executive and director compensation, including proposals that seek to specify the measurement of performance-based compensation, if the company is subject to SEC rules or similar rules espoused by a regulator in a foreign jurisdiction. Similarly, we generally support proposals seeking additional disclosure of executive and director compensation if the company is not subject to any such rules.

### **24. Executive and Employee Compensation Plans, Policies and Reports**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Compensation plans (“**Compensation Plans**”) usually are complex and are a major corporate expense, so we evaluate them carefully and on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, however, we assess each proposed Compensation Plan within the framework of four guiding principles, each of which ensures a company’s Compensation Plan helps to align the long-term interests of management with shareholders:

- + Valid measures of business performance tied to the firm’s strategy and shareholder value creation, which are clearly articulated and incorporate appropriate time periods, should be utilized;
- + Compensation costs should be managed in the same way as any other expense;
- + Compensation should reflect management’s handling, or failure to handle, any recent social, environmental, governance, ethical or legal issue that had a significant adverse financial or reputational effect on the company; and
- + In granting compensatory awards, management should exhibit a history of integrity and decision-making based on logic and well thought out processes.

We may oppose plans which include, and directors who establish, compensation plan provisions deemed to be poor practice such as automatic acceleration of equity, or single-triggered, in the event of a change in control.

Although votes on compensation plans are by nature only broad indications of shareholder views, they do lead to more compensation-related dialogue between management and shareholders and help ensure that management and shareholders meet their common objective: maximizing shareholder value.

In markets where votes on compensation plans are not required for all companies, we will support shareholder proposals asking the board to adopt such a vote on an advisory basis.

Where disclosure relating to the details of Compensation Plans is inadequate or provided without sufficient time for us to consider our vote, we may abstain or vote against, depending on the adequacy of the company’s prior disclosures in this regard. Where appropriate, we may raise the issue with the company directly or take other steps.

### **25. Limit Executive Pay (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

We believe that management and directors, within reason, should be given latitude in determining the mix and types of awards offered to executive officers. We vote against shareholder proposals seeking to limit executive pay if we deem them too restrictive. Depending on our analysis of the specific circumstances, we are generally against requiring a company to adopt a policy prohibiting tax gross up payments to senior executives.

### **26. Mandatory Holding Periods (SHP)**

**AGAINST**

We generally vote against shareholder proposals asking companies to require a company’s executives to hold stock for a specified period of time after acquiring that stock by exercising company-issued stock options (i.e., precluding “cashless” option exercises), unless we believe implementing a mandatory holding period is necessary to help resolve underlying problems at a company that have hurt, and may continue to hurt, shareholder value. We are generally in favor of reasonable stock ownership guidelines for executives.

### **27. Performance-Based Stock Option Plans (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

These shareholder proposals require a company to adopt a policy that all or a portion of future stock options granted to executives be performance-based. Performance-based options usually take the form of indexed options (where the option sale price is linked to the company’s stock performance versus an industry index), premium priced options (where the strike price is significantly above the market price at the time of the grant) or performance vesting options (where options



vest when the company's stock price exceeds a specific target). Proponents argue that performance-based options provide an incentive for executives to outperform the market as a whole and prevent management from being rewarded for average performance. We believe that management, within reason, should be given latitude in determining the mix and types of awards it offers. However, we recognize the benefit of linking a portion of executive compensation to certain types of performance benchmarks. While we will not support proposals that require all options to be performance-based, we will generally support proposals that require a portion of options granted to senior executives be performance-based. However, because performance-based options can also result in unfavorable tax treatment and the company may already have in place an option plan that sufficiently ties executive stock option plans to the company's performance, we will consider such proposals on a case-by-case basis.

**28. Prohibit Relocation Benefits to Senior Executives (SHP)**

**AGAINST**

We do not consider such perquisites to be problematic pay practices as long as they are properly disclosed. Therefore we will vote against shareholder proposals asking to prohibit relocation benefits.

**29. Recovery of Performance-Based Compensation (SHP)**

**FOR**

We generally support shareholder proposals requiring the board to seek recovery of performance-based compensation awards to senior management and directors in the event of a fraud or other reasons that resulted in the detriment to shareholder value and/or company reputation due to gross ethical lapses. In deciding how to vote, we consider the adequacy of existing company clawback policy, if any.

**30. Submit Golden Parachutes/Severance Plans to a Shareholder Vote (SHP)**

**FOR**

Golden Parachutes assure key officers of a company lucrative compensation packages if the company is acquired and/or if the new owners terminate such officers. We recognize that offering generous compensation packages that are triggered by a change in control may help attract qualified officers. However, such compensation packages cannot be so excessive that they are unfair to shareholders or make the company unattractive to potential bidders, thereby serving as a constructive anti-takeover mechanism. Accordingly, we support proposals to submit severance plans (including supplemental retirement plans), to a shareholder vote, and we review proposals to ratify or redeem such plans retrospectively on a case-by-case basis.

**31. Submit Golden Parachutes/Severance Plans to a Shareholder Vote Prior to Their Being Negotiated by Management (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

We believe that in order to attract qualified employees, companies must be free to negotiate compensation packages without shareholder interference. However, shareholders must be given an opportunity to analyze a compensation plan's final, material terms in order to ensure it is within acceptable limits. Accordingly, we evaluate proposals that require submitting severance plans and/or employment contracts for a shareholder vote prior to being negotiated by management on a case-by-case basis.

**32. Submit Survivor Benefit Compensation Plan to Shareholder Vote (SHP)**

**FOR**

Survivor benefit compensation plans, or "golden coffins", can require a company to make substantial payments or awards to a senior executive's beneficiaries following the death of the senior executive. The compensation can take the form of unearned salary or bonuses, accelerated vesting or the continuation in force of unvested equity grants, perquisites and other payments or awards. This compensation would not include compensation that the senior executive chooses to defer during his or her lifetime.

We recognize that offering generous compensation packages that are triggered by the passing of senior executives may help attract qualified officers. However, such compensation packages cannot be so excessive that they are unfair to shareholders or make the company unattractive to potential bidders, thereby serving as a constructive anti-takeover mechanism.

**3.3 CAPITAL CHANGES AND ANTI-TAKEOVER PROPOSALS**

**33. Amend Exclusive Forum Bylaw (SHP)**

**AGAINST**

We will generally oppose proposals that ask the board to repeal the company's exclusive forum bylaw. Such bylaws require certain legal action against the company to take place in the state of the company's incorporation. The courts within the state of incorporation are considered best suited to interpret that state's laws.

#### **34. Amend Net Operating Loss (“NOL”) Rights Plans**

**FOR**

NOL Rights Plans are established to protect a company’s net operating loss carry forwards and tax credits, which can be used to offset future income. We believe this is a reasonable strategy for a company to employ. Accordingly, we will vote in favor of NOL Rights Plans unless we believe the terms of the NOL Rights Plan may provide for a long-term anti-takeover device.

#### **35. Authorize Share Repurchase**

**FOR**

We generally support share repurchase proposals that are part of a well-articulated and well-conceived capital strategy. We assess proposals to give the board unlimited authorization to repurchase shares on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, we would generally support the use of derivative instruments (e.g., put options and call options) as part of a share repurchase plan absent a compelling reason to the contrary. Also, absent a specific concern at the company, we will generally support a repurchase plan that could be continued during a takeover period.

#### **36. Blank Check Preferred Stock**

**AGAINST**

Blank check preferred stock proposals authorize the issuance of certain preferred stock at some future point in time and allow the board to establish voting, dividend, conversion and other rights at the time of issuance. While blank check preferred stock can provide a corporation with the flexibility needed to meet changing financial conditions, it also may be used as the vehicle for implementing a “poison pill” defense or some other entrenchment device.

We are concerned that, once this stock has been authorized, shareholders have no further power to determine how or when it will be allocated. Accordingly, we generally oppose this type of proposal.

#### **37. Corporate Restructurings, Merger Proposals and Spin-Offs**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Proposals requesting shareholder approval of corporate restructurings, merger proposals and spin-offs are determined on a case-by-case basis. In evaluating these proposals and determining our votes, we are singularly focused on meeting our goal of maximizing long-term shareholder value.

#### **38. Elimination of Preemptive Rights**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Preemptive rights allow the shareholders of the company to buy newly-issued shares before they are offered to the public in order to maintain their percentage ownership. We believe that, because preemptive rights are an important shareholder right, careful scrutiny must be given to management’s attempts to eliminate them. However, because preemptive rights can be prohibitively expensive to widely-held companies, the benefit of such rights will be weighed against the economic effect of maintaining them.

#### **39. Expensing Stock Options (SHP)**

**FOR**

US generally-accepted accounting principles require companies to expense stock options, as do the accounting rules in many other jurisdictions (including those jurisdictions that have adopted IFRS -- international financial reporting standards). If a company is domiciled in a jurisdiction where the accounting rules do not already require the expensing of stock options, we will support shareholder proposals requiring this practice and disclosing information about it.

#### **40. Fair Price Provisions**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

A fair price provision in the company’s charter or by laws is designed to ensure that each shareholder’s securities will be purchased at the same price if the corporation is acquired under a plan not agreed to by the board. In most instances, the provision requires that any tender offer made by a third party must be made to all shareholders at the same price.

Fair pricing provisions attempt to prevent the “two tiered front loaded offer” where the acquirer of a company initially offers a premium for a sufficient percentage of shares of the company to gain control and subsequently makes an offer for the remaining shares at a much lower price. The remaining shareholders have no choice but to accept the offer. The two tiered approach is coercive as it compels a shareholder to sell his or her shares immediately in order to receive the higher price per share. This type of tactic has caused many states to adopt fair price provision statutes to restrict this practice.

We consider fair price provisions on a case-by-case basis. We oppose any provision where there is evidence that management intends to use the provision as an anti-takeover device as well as any provision where the shareholder vote requirement is greater than a majority of disinterested shares (i.e., shares beneficially owned by individuals other than the acquiring party).

#### 41. Increase Authorized Common Stock

CASE-BY-CASE

In general we regard increases in authorized common stock as serving a legitimate corporate purpose when used to: implement a stock split, aid in a recapitalization or acquisition, raise needed capital for the firm, or provide for employee savings plans, stock option plans or executive compensation plans. That said, we may oppose a particular proposed increase if we consider the authorization likely to lower the share price (this would happen, for example, if the firm were proposing to use the proceeds to overpay for an acquisition, to invest in a project unlikely to earn the firm's cost of capital, or to compensate employees well above market rates). We oppose increases in authorized common stock where there is evidence that the shares are to be used to implement a "poison pill" or another form of anti-takeover device, or if the issuance of new shares would, in our judgment, excessively dilute the value of the outstanding shares upon issuance. In addition, a satisfactory explanation of a company's intentions—going beyond the standard "general corporate purposes"—must be disclosed in the proxy statement for proposals requesting an increase of greater than 100% of the shares outstanding. We view the use of derivatives, particularly warrants, as legitimate capital-raising instruments and apply these same principles to their use as we do to the authorization of common stock. Under certain circumstances where we believe it is important for shareholders to have an opportunity to maintain their proportional ownership, we may oppose proposals requesting shareholders approve the issuance of additional shares if those shares do not include preemptive rights.

In Hong Kong, it is common for companies to request board authority to issue new shares up to 20% of outstanding share capital. The authority typically lapses after one year. We may vote against plans that do not prohibit issuing shares at a discount, taking into account whether a company has a history of doing so.

#### 42. Issuance of Equity Without Preemptive Rights

FOR

We are generally in favor of issuances of equity without preemptive rights of up to 30% of a company's outstanding shares unless there is concern that the issuance will be used in a manner that could hurt shareholder value (e.g., issuing the equity at a discount from the current market price or using the equity to help create a "poison pill" mechanism).

#### 43. Multi Class Equity Structures

CASE-BY-CASE

The *one share, one vote principle* – stating that voting power should be proportional to an investor's economic ownership – is generally preferred in order to hold the board accountable to shareholders. Multi-class structures, however, may be beneficial, for a period of time, allowing management to focus on longer-term value creation, which benefits all shareholders. In these instances, we evaluate proposals of share issuances to perpetuate the structure on a case-by-case basis and expect the company to attach provisions that will either eliminate or phase out existing multi-class vote structures when appropriate and in a cost-effective manner (often referred to as "Sunset Provisions), or require periodic shareholder reauthorization. We expect Board's to routinely review existing multi-class vote structures and share their current view. If the above criteria is not met, we may vote against the board.

#### 44. Net Long Position Requirement

FOR

We support proposals that require the ownership level needed to call a special meeting to be based on the net long position of a shareholder or shareholder group. This standard ensures that a significant economic interest accompanies the voting power.

#### 45. Reincorporation

CASE-BY-CASE

There are many valid business reasons a corporation may choose to reincorporate in another jurisdiction. We perform a case-by-case review of such proposals, taking into consideration management's stated reasons for the proposed move.

Careful scrutiny also will be given to proposals that seek approval to reincorporate in countries that serve as tax havens. When evaluating such proposals, we consider factors such as the location of the company's business, the statutory protections available in the country to enforce shareholder rights and the tax consequences of the reincorporation to shareholders.

#### 46. Reincorporation to Another Jurisdiction to Permit Majority Voting or Other Changes in Corporate Governance (SHP)

CASE-BY-CASE

If a shareholder proposes that a company move to a jurisdiction where majority voting (among other shareholder-friendly conditions) is permitted, we will generally oppose the move notwithstanding the fact that we favor majority voting for directors. Our rationale is that the legal costs, taxes, other expenses and other factors, such as business disruption, in almost all cases would be material and outweigh the benefit of majority voting. If, however, we should find that these costs are not material and/or do not outweigh the benefit of majority voting, we may vote in favor of this kind of proposal. We will

evaluate similarly proposals that would require reincorporation in another state to accomplish other changes in corporate governance.

#### **47. Stock Splits**

**FOR**

Stock splits are intended to increase the liquidity of a company's common stock by lowering the price, thereby making the stock seem more attractive to small investors. We generally vote in favor of stock split proposals.

#### **48. Submit Company's Shareholder Rights Plan to Shareholder Vote (SHP)**

**FOR**

Most shareholder rights plans (also known as "poison pills") permit the shareholders of a target company involved in a hostile takeover to acquire shares of the target company, the acquiring company, or both, at a substantial discount once a "triggering event" occurs. A triggering event is usually a hostile tender offer or the acquisition by an outside party of a certain percentage of the target company's stock. Because most plans exclude the hostile bidder from the purchase, the effect in most instances is to dilute the equity interest and the voting rights of the potential acquirer once the plan is triggered. A shareholder rights plan is designed to discourage potential acquirers from acquiring shares to make a bid for the issuer. We believe that measures that impede takeovers or entrench management not only infringe on the rights of shareholders but also may have a detrimental effect on the value of the company.

We support shareholder proposals that seek to require the company to submit a shareholder rights plan to a shareholder vote. We evaluate on a case-by-case basis proposals to implement or eliminate a shareholder rights plan.

#### **49. Transferrable Stock Options**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

In cases where a compensation plan includes a transferable stock option program, we will consider the plan on a case-by-case basis.

These programs allow stock options to be transferred to third parties in exchange for cash or stock. In effect, management becomes insulated from the downside risk of holding a stock option, while the ordinary shareholder remains exposed to downside risk. This insulation may unacceptably remove management's exposure to downside risk, which significantly misaligns management and shareholder interests. Accordingly, we generally vote against these programs if the transfer can be executed without shareholder approval, is available to executive officers or non-employee directors, or we consider the available disclosure relating to the mechanics and structure of the program to be insufficient to determine the costs, benefits and key terms of the program.

### **3.4 AUDITOR PROPOSALS**

#### **50. Appointment of Auditors**

**FOR**

We believe that the company is in the best position to choose its accounting firm, and we generally support management's recommendation.

We recognize that there may be inherent conflicts when a company's independent auditors perform substantial non-audit related services for the company. Therefore, in reviewing a proposed auditor, we will consider the amount of fees paid for non-audit related services performed compared to the total audit fees paid by the company to the auditing firm, and whether there are any other reasons for us to question the independence or performance of the firm's auditor such as, for example, tenure. We generally will deem as excessive the non-audit fees paid by a company to its auditor if those fees account for 50% or more of total fees paid. In the UK market, which utilizes a different calculation, we adhere to a non-audit fee cap of 100% of audit fees. Under these circumstances, we generally vote against the auditor and the directors, in particular the members of the company's audit committee. In addition, we generally vote against authorizing the audit committee to set the remuneration of such auditors. We exclude from this analysis non-audit fees related to IPOs, bankruptcy emergence, and spin-offs and other extraordinary events. We may vote against or abstain due to a lack of disclosure of the name of the auditor while taking into account local market practice.

#### **51. Approval of Financial Statements**

**FOR**

In some markets, companies are required to submit their financial statements for shareholder approval. This is generally a routine item and, as such, we will vote for the approval of financial statements unless there are appropriate reasons to vote otherwise. We may vote against if the information is not available in advance of the meeting.

## **52. Approval of Internal Statutory Auditors**

**FOR**

Some markets (e.g., Japan) require the annual election of internal statutory auditors. Internal statutory auditors have a number of duties, including supervising management, ensuring compliance with the articles of association and reporting to a company's board on certain financial issues. In most cases, the election of internal statutory auditors is a routine item and we will support management's nominee provided that the nominee meets the regulatory requirements for serving as internal statutory auditors. However, we may vote against nominees who are designated independent statutory auditors who serve as executives of a subsidiary or affiliate of the issuer or if there are other reasons to question the independence of the nominees.

## **53. Limitation of Liability of External Statutory Auditors (Japan)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

In Japan, companies may limit the liability of external statutory auditors in the event of a shareholder lawsuit through any of three mechanisms: (i) submitting the proposed limits to shareholder vote; (ii) setting limits by modifying the company's articles of incorporation; and (iii) setting limits in contracts with outside directors, outside statutory auditors and external audit firms (requires a modification to the company's articles of incorporation). A vote by 3% or more of shareholders can nullify a limit set through the second mechanism. The third mechanism has historically been the most prevalent.

We review proposals to set limits on auditor liability on a case-by-case basis, considering whether such a provision is necessary to secure appointment and whether it helps to maximize long-term shareholder value.

## **54. Separating Auditors and Consultants (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

We believe that a company serves its shareholders' interests by avoiding potential conflicts of interest that might interfere with an auditor's independent judgment. SEC rules adopted as a result of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 attempted to address these concerns by prohibiting certain services by a company's independent auditors and requiring additional disclosure of other non-audit related services.

We evaluate on a case-by-case basis proposals that go beyond the SEC rules or other local market standards by prohibiting auditors from performing other non-audit services or calling for the board to adopt a policy to ensure auditor independence.

We take into consideration the policies and procedures the company already has in place to ensure auditor independence and non-audit fees as a percentage of total fees paid to the auditor are not excessive.

### **3.5 SHAREHOLDER ACCESS AND VOTING PROPOSALS**

## **55. A Shareholder's Right to Call Special Meetings (SHP)**

**FOR**

Most state corporation statutes (though not Delaware, where many US issuers are domiciled) allow shareholders to call a special meeting when they want to take action on certain matters that arise between regularly-scheduled annual meetings. This right may apply only if a shareholder, or a group of shareholders, owns a specified percentage as defined by the relevant company bylaws.

We recognize the importance of the right of shareholders to remove poorly-performing directors, respond to takeover offers and take other actions without having to wait for the next annual meeting. However, we also believe it is important to protect companies and shareholders from nuisance proposals. We further believe that striking a balance between these competing interests will maximize shareholder value. We believe that encouraging active share ownership among shareholders generally is beneficial to shareholders and helps maximize shareholder value. Accordingly, we will generally support a proposal to establish shareholders' right to call a special meeting unless we see a potential abuse of the right based on the company's current share ownership structure.

## **56. Adopt Cumulative Voting (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Cumulative voting is a method of electing directors that enables each shareholder to multiply the number of his or her shares by the number of directors being considered. A shareholder may then cast the total votes for any one director or a selected group of directors. For example, a holder of 10 shares normally casts 10 votes for each of 12 nominees to the board thus giving the shareholder 120 (10 × 12) votes. Under cumulative voting, the shareholder may cast all 120 votes for a single nominee, 60 for two, 40 for three, or any other combination that the shareholder may choose.

We believe that encouraging activism among shareholders generally is beneficial to shareholders and helps maximize shareholder value. Cumulative voting supports the interests of minority shareholders in contested elections by enabling

them to concentrate their votes and dramatically increase their chances of electing a dissident director to a board. Accordingly, we generally will support shareholder proposals to restore or provide for cumulative voting and we generally will oppose management proposals to eliminate cumulative voting. However, we may oppose cumulative voting if a company has in place both proxy access, which allows shareholders to nominate directors to the company's ballot, and majority voting (with a carve-out for plurality voting in situations where there are more nominees than seats), which requires each director to receive the affirmative vote of a majority of votes cast and, we believe, leads to greater director accountability to shareholders.

Also, we support cumulative voting at controlled companies regardless of any other shareholder protections that may be in place.

**57. Adopt Cumulative Voting in Dual Shareholder Class Structures (SHP)**

**FOR**

In dual class structures (such as A&B shares) where the shareholders with a majority economic interest have a minority voting interest, we generally vote in favor of cumulative voting for those shareholders.

**58. Early Disclosure of Voting Results (SHP)**

**AGAINST**

These proposals seek to require a company to disclose votes sooner than is required by the local market. In the US, the SEC requires disclosure in the first periodic report filed after the company's annual meeting which we believe is reasonable. We do not support requests that require disclosure earlier than the time required by the local regulator.

**59. Limiting a Shareholder's Right to Call Special Meetings**

**AGAINST**

Companies contend that limitations on shareholders' rights to call special meetings are needed to prevent minority shareholders from taking control of the company's agenda. However, such limits also have anti-takeover implications because they prevent a shareholder or a group of shareholders who have acquired a significant stake in the company from forcing management to address urgent issues, such as the potential sale of the company. Because most states prohibit shareholders from abusing this right, we see no justifiable reason for management to eliminate this fundamental shareholder right. Accordingly, we generally will vote against such proposals.

In addition, if the board of directors, without shareholder consent, raises the ownership threshold a shareholder must reach before the shareholder can call a special meeting, we will vote against those directors.

**60. Permit a Shareholder's Right to Act by Written Consent (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Action by written consent enables a large shareholder or group of shareholders to initiate votes on corporate matters prior to the annual meeting. We believe this is a fundamental shareholder right and, accordingly, will generally support shareholder proposals seeking to restore this right. However, in cases where a company has a majority shareholder or group of related majority shareholders with majority economic interest, we will oppose proposals seeking to restore this right as there is a potential risk of abuse by the majority shareholder or group of majority shareholders. We may also vote against the proposal if the company provides shareholders a right to call special meetings with an ownership threshold of 15% or below in absence of material restrictions, as we believe that shareholder access rights should be considered from a holistic view rather than promoting all possible access rights that may impede one another in contrast to long-term shareholder value.

**61. Proxy Access for Annual Meetings (SHP) (Management)**

**FOR**

These proposals allow "qualified shareholders" to nominate directors. We generally vote in favor of management and shareholder proposals for proxy access that employ guidelines reflecting the SEC framework for proxy access (adopted by the SEC in 2010, but vacated by the DC Circuit Court of Appeals in 2011), which would have allowed a single shareholder, or group of shareholders, who hold at least 3% of the voting power for at least three years continuously to nominate up to 25% of the current board seats, or two directors, for inclusion in the subject company's annual proxy statement alongside management nominees.

We may vote against proposals that use requirements that are stricter than the SEC's framework including implementation restrictions and against individual board members, or entire boards, who exclude from their ballot properly submitted shareholder proxy access proposals or compete against shareholder proxy access proposals with stricter management proposals on the same ballot. We will generally vote in favor of proposals that seek to amend an existing right to more closely align with the SEC framework.

We will evaluate on a case-by-case basis proposals with less stringent requirements than the vacated SEC framework.

From time to time we may receive requests to join with other shareholders to support a shareholder action. We may, for example, receive requests to join a voting block for purposes of influencing management. If the third parties requesting our participation are not affiliated with us and have no business relationships with us, we will consider the request on a case-by-case basis. However, where the requesting party has a business relationship with us (e.g., the requesting party is a client or a significant service provider), agreeing to such a request may pose a potential conflict of interest. As a fiduciary we have an obligation to vote proxies in the best interest of our clients (without regard to our own interests in generating and maintaining business with our other clients) and given our desire to avoid even the appearance of a conflict, we will generally decline such a request.

#### **62. Reduce Meeting Notification from 21 Days to 14 Days (UK)**

**FOR**

Companies in the United Kingdom may, with shareholder approval, reduce the notice period for extraordinary general meetings from 21 days to 14 days.

A reduced notice period expedites the process of obtaining shareholder approval of additional financing needs and other important matters. Accordingly, we support these proposals.

#### **63. Shareholder Proponent Engagement Process (SHP)**

**FOR**

We believe that proper corporate governance requires that proposals receiving support from a majority of shareholders be considered and implemented by the company. Accordingly, we support establishing an engagement process between shareholders and management to ensure proponents of majority-supported proposals, have an established means of communicating with management.

#### **64. Supermajority Vote Requirements**

**AGAINST**

A supermajority vote requirement is a charter or by-law requirement that, when implemented, raises the percentage (higher than the customary simple majority) of shareholder votes needed to approve certain proposals, such as mergers, changes of control, or proposals to amend or repeal a portion of the Articles of Incorporation.

In most instances, we oppose these proposals and support shareholder proposals that seek to reinstate the simple majority vote requirement. However we may support supermajority vote requirements at controlled companies as a protection to minority shareholders from unilateral action of the controlling shareholder.

### **3.6 ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND DISCLOSURE PROPOSALS**

#### **65. Animal Welfare (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

These proposals may include reporting requests or policy adoption on items such as pig gestation crates and animal welfare in the supply chain

For proposals requesting companies to adopt a policy, we will carefully consider existing policies and the company's incorporation of national standards and best practices. In addition, we will evaluate the potential enactment of new regulations, as well as any investment risk related to the specific issue.

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports and disclosure while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

#### **66. Climate Change (SHP)**

**FOR**

Proposals addressing climate change concerns are plentiful and their scope varies. Climate change increasingly receives investor attention as a potentially critical and material risk to the sustainability of a wide range of business-specific activities. These proposals may include emissions standards or reduction targets, quantitative goals, and impact assessments. We generally support these proposals, while taking into account the materiality of the issue and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

For proposals requesting companies to adopt a policy, we will carefully consider existing policies and the company's incorporation of national standards and best practices. In addition, we will evaluate the potential enactment of new regulations, as well as any investment risk related to the specific issue.

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports and disclosure while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

**67. Charitable Contributions (SHP) (MGMT)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

Proposals relating to charitable contributions may be sponsored by either management or shareholders.

Management proposals may ask to approve the amount for charitable contributions.

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports and disclosure while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

**68. Environmental Proposals (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

These proposals can include reporting and policy adoption requests in a wide variety of areas, including, but not limited to, (nuclear) waste, deforestation, packaging and recycling, renewable energy, toxic material, palm oil and water.

For proposals requesting companies to adopt a policy, we will carefully consider existing policies and the company's incorporation of national standards and best practices. In addition, we will evaluate the potential enactment of new regulations, as well as any investment risk related to the specific issue.

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

**69. Genetically Altered or Engineered Food and Pesticides (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

These proposals may include reporting requests on pesticides monitoring/use and Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) as well as GMO labeling.

For proposals requesting companies to adopt a policy, we will carefully consider existing policies and the company's incorporation of national standards and best practices. In addition, we will evaluate the potential enactment of new regulations, as well as any investment risk related to the specific issue.

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

**70. Health Proposals (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

These proposals may include reports on pharmaceutical pricing, antibiotic use in the meat supply, and tobacco products. We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports while taking into account the current reporting policies of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

For proposals requesting companies to adopt a policy, we will carefully consider existing policies and the company's incorporation of national standards and best practices. In addition, we will evaluate the potential enactment of new regulations, as well as any investment risk related to the specific issue. We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports and disclosure while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

**71. Human Rights Policies and Reports (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

These proposals may include reporting requests on human rights risk assessment, humanitarian engagement and mediation policies, working conditions, adopting policies on supply chain worker fees and expanding existing policies in these areas. We recognize that many companies have complex supply chains which have led to increased awareness of supply chain issues as an investment risk.

For proposals requesting companies to adopt a policy, we will carefully consider existing policies and the company's incorporation of national standards and best practices. In addition, we will evaluate the potential enactment of new regulations, as well as any investment risk related to the specific issue.

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports and disclosure while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.



**72. Include Sustainability as a Performance Measure (SHP)**

**CASE-BY-CASE**

We believe management and directors should be given latitude in determining appropriate performance measurements. While doing so, consideration should be given to how long-term sustainability issues might affect future company performance. Therefore, we will evaluate on a case-by-case basis proposals requesting companies to consider incorporating specific, measurable, practical goals consisting of sustainability principles and environmental impacts as metrics for incentive compensation and how they are linked with our objectives as long-term shareholders.

**73. Lobbying and Political Spending (SHP)**

**FOR**

We generally vote in favor of proposals requesting increased disclosure of political contributions and lobbying expenses, including those paid to trade organizations and political action committees, whether at the federal, state, or local level. These proposals may increase transparency.

**74. Other Business**

**AGAINST**

In certain jurisdictions, these proposals allow management to act on issues that shareholders may raise at the annual meeting. Because it is impossible to know what issues may be raised, we will vote against these proposals.

**75. Reimbursement of Shareholder Expenses (SHP)**

**AGAINST**

These shareholder proposals would require companies to reimburse the expenses of shareholders who submit proposals that receive a majority of votes cast or the cost of proxy contest expenses. We generally vote against these proposals, unless reimbursement occurs only in cases where management fails to implement a majority passed shareholder proposal, in which case we may vote in favor.

**76. Sustainability Report (SHP)**

**FOR**

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports and disclosure while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

**77. Work Place: Diversity (SHP)**

**FOR**

We generally support shareholder proposals calling for reports and disclosure surrounding workplace diversity while taking into account existing policies and procedures of the company and whether the proposed information is of added benefit to shareholders.

We generally support proposals requiring a company to amend its Equal Employment Opportunity policies to prohibit workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender ID.

**78. Work Place: Gender Pay Equity(SHP)**

**FOR**

A report on pay disparity between genders typically compares the difference between male and female median earnings expressed as a percentage of male earnings and may include, statistics and rationale pertaining to changes in the size of the gap, recommended actions, and information on whether greater oversight is needed over certain aspects of the company's compensation policies.

The SEC requires US issuers with fiscal years ending on or after January 1, 2017, to contrast CEO pay with median employee pay. This requirement, however, does not specifically address gender pay equity issues in such pay disparity reports. Accordingly, we will generally support proposals requiring gender pay metrics, taking into account the specific metrics and scope of the information requested and whether the SEC's requirement renders the proposal unnecessary.

## 4. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

As a fiduciary, we always must act in our clients' best interests. We strive to avoid even the appearance of a conflict that may compromise the trust our clients have placed in us, and we insist on strict adherence to fiduciary standards and compliance with all applicable federal and state securities laws. We have adopted a comprehensive Code of Business Conduct and Ethics ("**Code**") to help us meet these obligations. As part of this responsibility and as expressed throughout the Code, we place the interests of our clients first and attempt to avoid any perceived or actual conflicts of interest.

AllianceBernstein L.P. ("**AB**") recognizes that there may be a potential material conflict of interest when we vote a proxy solicited by an issuer that sponsors a retirement plan we manage (or administer), that distributes AB-sponsored mutual funds, or with which AB or one or more of our employees have another business or personal relationship that may affect how we vote on the issuer's proxy. Similarly, we may have a potential material conflict of interest when deciding how to vote on a proposal sponsored or supported by a shareholder group that is a client. In order to avoid any perceived or actual conflict of interest, the procedures set forth below in sections 4.2 through 4.8 have been established for use when we encounter a potential conflict to ensure that our voting decisions are based on maximizing shareholder value and are not the product of a conflict.

### 4.2 ADHERENCE TO STATED PROXY VOTING POLICIES

Votes generally are cast in accordance with this policy<sup>3</sup>. In situations where our policy is case-by-case, this Manual often provides criteria that will guide our decision. In situations where our policy on a particular issue is case-by-case and the vote cannot be clearly decided by an application of our stated policy, a member of the Committee or his/her designee will make the voting decision in accordance with the basic principle of our policy to vote proxies with the intention of maximizing the value of the securities in our client accounts. In these situations, the voting rationale must be documented either on the voting platform of our proxy research services vendor, by retaining relevant emails or another appropriate method. Where appropriate, the views of investment professionals are considered. All votes cast contrary to our stated voting policy on specific issues must be documented. On an annual basis, the Committee will receive a report of all such votes so as to confirm adherence of the policy.

### 4.3 DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS

When considering a proxy proposal, members of the Committee or investment professionals involved in the decision-making process must disclose to the Committee any potential conflict (including personal relationships) of which they are aware and any substantive contact that they have had with any interested outside party (including the issuer or shareholder group sponsoring a proposal) regarding the proposal. Any previously unknown conflict will be recorded on the Potential Conflicts List (discussed below). If a member of the Committee has a conflict of interest, he or she must also remove himself or herself from the decision-making process.

### 4.4 POTENTIAL CONFLICTS LIST

No less frequently than annually, a list of companies and organizations whose proxies may pose potential conflicts of interest is compiled by the Legal and Compliance Department (the "**Potential Conflicts List**"). The Potential Conflicts List generally includes:

- + Publicly-traded clients of AB;
- + Publicly-traded companies that distribute AB mutual funds;
- + Bernstein private clients who are directors, officers, or 10% shareholders of publicly traded companies;
- + Publicly-traded companies which are sell-side clients of our affiliated broker-dealer, SCB&Co.;
- + Companies where an employee of AB or AXA Equitable Holdings, Inc., the parent company of AB, has identified an interest;
- + Publicly-traded affiliated companies;
- + Clients who sponsor, publicly support or have material interest in a proposal upon which we will be eligible to vote;
- + Publicly-traded companies targeted by the AFL-CIO for voting;
- + Any other conflict of which a Committee member becomes aware<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> From time to time a client may request that we vote their proxies consistent with AFL-CIO guidelines or the policy of the National Association of Pension Funds. In those situations, AB reserves the right to depart from those policies if we believe it to be in the client's best interests.

<sup>4</sup> The Committee must notify the Legal and Compliance Department promptly of any previously unknown conflict.

We determine our votes for all meetings of companies that may present a conflict by applying the tests described in Section 4.5 below. We document all instances when the Conflicts Officer determines our vote.

#### **4.5 DETERMINE EXISTENCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

When we encounter a potential conflict of interest, we review our proposed vote using the following analysis to ensure our voting decision does not generate a conflict of interest:

- + If our proposed vote is consistent with the Policy, no further review is necessary.
- + If our proposed vote is contrary to our Policy, we would take the following steps:
  - + If our proposed vote is contrary to the Policy and our client's recommended vote on the proposal is consistent with our fiduciary duty, no further review is necessary.
  - + If our proposed vote is contrary to the Policy or is not covered by the Policy and is consistent with our client's position and the views of our proxy research services vendor, no further review is necessary.
  - + If our proposed vote is contrary to the Policy or is not covered herein, is consistent with our client's recommended vote on the proposal and is contrary to the views of our proxy research service vendor, the vote will be presented to the Conflicts Officer. The Conflicts Officer will determine whether the proposed vote is reasonable. If the Conflicts Officer cannot determine that the proposed vote is reasonable, the Conflicts Officer may instruct AB to refer the votes back to the client(s) or take other actions as the Conflicts Officer deems appropriate. The Conflicts Officer's review will be documented using a Proxy Voting Conflict of Interest Form (a copy of which is attached hereto).

In the event the firm's ultimate vote is in conflict with the client's recommended vote, we will treat the client as if it had chosen to direct its own proxy vote for that vote only.

#### **4.6 REVIEW OF THIRD PARTY RESEARCH SERVICE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Committee takes reasonable steps to verify that the proxy research service vendor to which we have a full-level subscription is, in fact, independent based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances. This includes reviewing proxy research service vendor's conflict management procedures on an annual basis. When reviewing these conflict management procedures, we will consider, among other things, whether the proxy research service vendor (i) has the capacity and competency to adequately analyze proxy issues; and (ii) can offer research in an impartial manner and in the best interests of our clients.

#### **4.7 CONFIDENTIAL VOTING**

It is AB's policy to support confidentiality before the actual vote has been cast. Employees are prohibited from revealing how we intend to vote except to (i) members of the Committee; (ii) Portfolio Managers who hold the security in their managed accounts; (iii) the Research Analyst(s) who cover(s) the security; (iv) clients, upon request, for the securities held in their portfolios; and (v) clients who do not hold the security or for whom AB does not have proxy voting authority, but who provide AB with a signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement. Once the votes have been cast, they are made public in accordance with mutual fund proxy vote disclosures required by the SEC, and we generally post all votes to our public website the quarter after the vote has been cast.

We may participate in proxy surveys conducted by shareholder groups or consultants so long as such participation does not compromise our confidential voting policy. Specifically, prior to our required SEC disclosures each year, we may respond to surveys asking about our proxy voting policies, but not any specific votes. After our mutual fund proxy vote disclosures required by the SEC each year have been made public and/or votes have been posted to our public website, we may respond to surveys that cover specific votes in addition to our voting policies.

On occasion, clients for whom we do not have proxy voting authority may ask us how AB's Proxy Voting and Governance Policy would be implemented. A member of the Committee or one or more members of Responsible Investment team may provide the results of a potential implementation of the AB policy to the client's account subject to an understanding with the client that the implementation shall remain confidential.

Any substantive contact regarding proxy issues from the issuer, the issuer's agent or a shareholder group sponsoring a proposal must be reported to the Committee if such contact was material to a decision to vote contrary to this Policy. Routine administrative inquiries from proxy solicitors need not be reported.

#### 4.8 A NOTE REGARDING AB'S STRUCTURE

AB and AllianceBernstein Holding L.P. (“**AB Holding**”) are Delaware limited partnerships. As limited partnerships, neither company is required to produce an annual proxy statement or hold an annual shareholder meeting. In addition, the general partner of AB and AB Holding, AllianceBernstein Corporation is a wholly-owned subsidiary of AXA Equitable Holdings, Inc.

As a result, most of the positions we express in this Proxy Voting Policy are inapplicable to our business. For example, although units in AB Holding are publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange (“**NYSE**”), the NYSE Listed Company Manual exempts limited partnerships and controlled companies from compliance with various listing requirements, including the requirement that our board have a majority of independent directors.

#### 5. VOTING TRANSPARENCY

We publish our voting records on our website quarterly, 30 days after the end of the previous quarter. Many clients have requested that we provide them with periodic reports on how we voted their proxies. Clients may obtain information about how we voted proxies on their behalf by contacting their Advisor.

#### 6. RECORDKEEPING

All of the records referenced below will be kept in an easily accessible place for at least the length of time required by local regulation and custom, and, if such local regulation requires that records are kept for less than five years from the end of the fiscal year during which the last entry was made on such record, we will follow the US rule of five years. If the local regulation requires that records are kept for more than five years, we will comply with the local regulation. We maintain the vast majority of these records electronically.

##### 6.1 PROXY VOTING AND GOVERNANCE POLICY

The Proxy Voting and Governance Policy shall be maintained in the Legal and Compliance Department and posted on our company intranet and on the AB website:

<https://www.alliancebernstein.com/abcom/web/linkedsite.aspx?key=ab.retail.proxyvoting.mf>

##### 6.2 PROXY STATEMENTS RECEIVED REGARDING CLIENT SECURITIES

For US Securities<sup>5</sup>, AB relies on the SEC to maintain copies of each proxy statement we receive regarding client securities. For Non-US Securities, we rely on ISS, our proxy voting agent, to retain such proxy statements.

##### 6.3 RECORDS OF VOTES CAST ON BEHALF OF CLIENTS

Records of votes cast by AB are retained electronically by our proxy research service vendor.

##### 6.4 RECORDS OF CLIENTS REQUESTS FOR PROXY VOTING INFORMATION

Copies of written requests from clients for information on how AB voted their proxies shall be maintained by the Legal and Compliance Department. Responses to written and oral requests for information on how we voted clients' proxies will be kept in the Client Group.

##### 6.5 DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY AB THAT ARE MATERIAL TO VOTING DECISIONS

The Committee is responsible for maintaining documents prepared by the Committee or any AB employee that were material to a voting decision. Therefore, where an investment professional's opinion is essential to the voting decision, the recommendation from investment professionals must be made in writing to the A member of Responsible Investment team.

#### 7. PROXY VOTING PROCEDURES

##### 7.1 VOTE ADMINISTRATION

In an effort to increase the efficiency of voting proxies, AB uses ISS to act as its voting agent for our clients' holdings globally.

Issuers initially send proxy information to the custodians of our client accounts. We instruct these custodian banks to direct proxy related materials to ISS's offices. ISS provides us with research related to each resolution. A Members of

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<sup>5</sup> US securities are defined as securities of issuers required to make reports pursuant to §12 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended. Non-US securities are defined as all other securities.

Responsible Investment team review the ballots via ISS's web platform, ProxyExchange. Using ProxyExchange, the Members of Responsible Investment team submit our voting decision. ISS then returns the proxy ballot forms to the designated returnee for tabulation.

If necessary, any paper ballots we receive will be voted online using ProxyVote or via mail or fax.

## **7.2 SHARE BLOCKING**

Proxy voting in certain countries requires "share blocking." Shareholders wishing to vote their proxies must deposit their shares shortly before the date of the meeting (usually one week) with a designated depository. During this blocking period, shares that will be voted at the meeting cannot be sold until the meeting has taken place and the shares are returned to the clients' custodian banks. We may determine that the value of exercising the vote is outweighed by the detriment of not being able to sell the shares during this period. In cases where we want to retain the ability to trade shares, we may abstain from voting those shares.

We seek to vote all proxies for securities held in client accounts for which we have proxy voting authority. However, in some markets administrative issues beyond our control may sometimes prevent us from voting such proxies. For example, we may receive meeting notices after the cut-off date for voting or without enough time to fully consider the proxy. Similarly, proxy materials for some issuers may not contain disclosure sufficient to arrive at a voting decision, in which cases we may abstain from voting. Some markets outside the US require periodic renewals of powers of attorney that local agents must have from our clients prior to implementing our voting instructions.

## **7.3 LOANED SECURITIES**

Many of our clients have entered into securities lending arrangements with agent lenders to generate additional revenue. We will not be able to vote securities that are on loan under these types of arrangements. However, under rare circumstances, for voting issues that may have a significant impact on the investment, we may request that clients or custodians recall securities that are on loan if we determine that the benefit of voting outweighs the costs and lost revenue to the client or fund and the administrative burden of retrieving the securities. For the SRI labeled Thematic funds, we recall U.S. securities on loan to vote proxies and have discontinued lending for non-U.S. securities.

## **PROXY VOTING AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The members of the Committee establish general proxy policies for AB and consider specific proxy voting matters as necessary. Members include senior investment personnel and representatives of the Legal and Compliance Department and the Operations Department.

If you have questions or desire additional information about this Policy, please contact the Proxy Team at: [ProxyTeam@alliancebernstein.com](mailto:ProxyTeam@alliancebernstein.com).

## PROXY VOTING GUIDELINE SUMMARY

Shareholder Proposal	For	Against	Case-by-Case
<b>Board and Director Proposals</b>			
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<b>Compensation Proposals</b>			
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Shareholder Proposal	For	Against	Case-by-Case
+ Mandatory Holding Periods		+	
+ Performance-Based Stock Option Plans			+
+ Prohibit Relocation Benefits to Senior Executives		+	
+ Recovery of Performance-Based Compensation	+		
+ Submit Golden Parachutes/Severance Plans to a Shareholder Vote		+	
+ Submit Golden Parachutes/Severance Plans to a Shareholder Vote prior to their being Negotiated by Management			+
+ Submit Survivor Benefit Compensation Plans to a Shareholder Vote	+		
<b>Capital Changes and Anti-Take Over Proposals</b>			
+ Amend Exclusive Forum Bylaw		+	
Amend Net Operating Loss (“NOL”) Rights Plans	+		
Authorize Share Repurchase	+		
Blank Check Preferred Stock		+	
Corporate Restructurings, Merger Proposals and Spin-Offs			+
Elimination of Preemptive Rights			+
+ Expensing Stock Options	+		
Fair Price Provisions			+
Increase Authorized Common Stock			+
Issuance of Equity without Preemptive Rights	+		
Issuance of Stock with Unequal Voting Rights			+
Net Long Position Requirement	+		
Reincorporation			+
+ Reincorporation to Another jurisdiction to Permit Majority Voting or Other Changes in Corporate Governance			+
Stock Splits	+		
+ Submit Company’s Shareholder Rights Plan to a Shareholder Vote	+		
Transferrable Stock Options			+
<b>Auditor Proposals</b>			
Appointment of Auditors	+		
Approval of Financial Statements	+		
Approval of Internal Statutory Auditors	+		
+ Limit Compensation Consultant Services		+	
Limitation of Liability of External Statutory Auditors (Japan)			+
+ Separating Auditors and Consultants			+
<b>Shareholder Access &amp; Voting Proposals</b>			
+ A Shareholder’s Right to Call Special Meetings	+		
+ Adopt Cumulative Voting			+
+ Adopt Cumulative Voting in Dual Shareholder Class Structures	+		

Shareholder Proposal	For	Against	Case-by-Case
+ Early Disclosure of Voting Results		+	
+ Implement Confidential Voting	+		
Limiting a Shareholder's Right to Call Special Meetings		+	
+ Permit a Shareholder's Right to Act by Written Consent			+
+ Proxy Access for Annual Meetings	+		
Reduce Meeting Notification from 21 Days to 14 Days (UK)	+		
+ Rotation of Locale for Annual Meeting		+	
+ Shareholder Proponent Engagement Process	+		
Supermajority Vote Requirements		+	
<b>Environmental &amp; Social, Disclosure Proposals</b>			
+ Animal Welfare			+
+ Climate Change			+
+ Carbon Accounting	+		
+ Carbon Risk	+		
+ Charitable Contributions			+
+ Environmental Proposals			+
+ Genetically Altered or Engineered Food and Pesticides			+
+ Health Proposals			+
+ Pharmaceutical Pricing (US)			+
+ Human Rights Policies and Reports			+
+ Include Sustainability as a Performance Measure (SHP)			+
+ Lobbying and Political Spending	+		
+ Other Business		+	
+ Reimbursement of Shareholder Expenses		+	
+ Sustainability Report			+
+ Work Place: Diversity	+		
+ Work Place: Pay Disparity			+



PROXY VOTING CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORM

Name of Security

[Empty box for Name of Security]

Date of Shareholder Meeting

[Empty box for Date of Shareholder Meeting]

Short Description of the conflict (client, mutual fund distributor, etc.):

[Multiple shaded horizontal bars for conflict description]

- 1. Is our proposed vote on all issues consistent with our stated proxy voting policy? .....  Yes  No  
If yes, stop here and sign below as no further review is necessary.
- 2. Is our proposed vote contrary to our client's position? .....  Yes  No  
If yes, stop here and sign below as no further review is necessary.
- 3. Is our proposed vote consistent with the views of Institutional Shareholder Services? .....  Yes  No  
If yes, stop here and sign below as no further review is necessary.

Please attach a memo containing the following information and documentation supporting the proxy voting decision:

- + A list of the issue(s) where our proposed vote is contrary to our stated policy (director election, cumulative voting, compensation)
- + A description of any substantive contact with any interested outside party and a proxy voting and governance committee or an AB investment professional that was material to our voting decision. Please include date, attendees, titles, organization they represent and topics discussed. If there was no such contact, please note as such.
- + If the Independent Compliance Officer has NOT determined that the proposed vote is reasonable, please explain and indicate what action has been, or will be taken.

AB Conflicts Officer Approval (if necessary. Email approval is acceptable.):

I hereby confirm that the proxy voting decision referenced on this form is reasonable.

Prepared by:

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

AB Conflicts Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed form and all supporting documentation to the Conflicts Officer in the Legal and Compliance Department and keep a copy for your records.

## STATEMENT OF POLICY REGARDING RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT, ESG AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

### 1. Introduction

AllianceBernstein L.P. (“**AB**” or “**we**”) is appointed by our clients as an investment manager with a fiduciary responsibility to help them achieve their investment objectives over the long term. Generally, our clients’ objective is to maximize the financial return of their portfolios within appropriate risk parameters. AB has long recognized that environmental, social and governance (“**ESG**”) issues can impact the performance of investment portfolios. Accordingly, we have sought to integrate ESG factors into our investment process to the extent that the integration of such factors is consistent with our fiduciary duty to help our clients achieve their investment objectives and protect their economic interests.

Our policy draws a distinction between how the Principles for Responsible Investment (“**PRI**” or “**Principles**”), and Socially Responsible Investing (“**SRI**”) incorporate ESG factors. PRI is based on the premise that, because ESG issues can affect investment performance, appropriate consideration of ESG issues and engagement regarding them is firmly within the bounds of a mainstream investment manager’s fiduciary duties to its clients. Furthermore, PRI is intended to be applied only in ways that are consistent with those mainstream fiduciary duties.

SRI, which refers to a spectrum of investment strategies that seek to integrate ethical, moral, sustainability and other non-financial factors into the investment process, generally involves exclusion and/or divestment, as well as investment guidelines that restrict investments. AB may accept such guideline restrictions upon client request.

### 2. Approach to ESG

Our long-standing policy has been to include ESG factors in our extensive fundamental research and consider them carefully when we believe they are material to our forecasts and investment decisions. If we determine that these aspects of an issuer’s past, current or anticipated behavior are material to its future expected returns, we address these concerns in our forecasts, research reviews, investment decisions and engagement. In addition, we have well-developed proxy voting policies that incorporate ESG issues and engagement.

### 3. Commitment to the PRI

In recent years, we have gained greater clarity on how the PRI initiative, based on information from PRI Advisory Council members and from other signatories, provides a framework for incorporating ESG factors into investment research and decision-making. Furthermore, our industry has become, over time, more aware of the importance of ESG factors. We acknowledge these developments and seek to refine what has been our process in this area.

After careful consideration, we determined that becoming a PRI signatory would enhance our current ESG practices and align with our fiduciary duties to our clients as a mainstream investment manager. Accordingly, we became a signatory, effective November 1, 2011.

In signing the PRI, AB as an investment manager publicly commits to adopt and implement all six Principles, where consistent with our fiduciary responsibilities, and to make progress over time on implementation of the Principles.

The six Principles are:

1. We will incorporate ESG issues into investment research and decision-making processes.

**AB Examples:** ESG issues are included in the research analysis process. In some cases, external service providers of ESG-related tools are utilized; we have conducted proxy voting training and will have continued and expanded training for investment professionals to incorporate ESG issues into investment analysis and decision-making processes across our firm.

2. We will be active owners and incorporate ESG issues into our ownership policies and practices.

**AB Examples:** We are active owners through our proxy voting process (for additional information, please refer to our *Statement of Policies and Procedures for Proxy Voting Manual*); we engage issuers on ESG matters in our investment research process (we define “engagement” as discussions with management about ESG issues when they are, or we believe they are reasonably likely to become, material).

3. We will seek appropriate disclosure on ESG issues by the entities in which we invest.

**AB Examples:** Generally, we support transparency regarding ESG issues when we conclude the disclosure is reasonable. Similarly, in proxy voting, we will support shareholder initiatives and resolutions promoting ESG disclosure when we conclude the disclosure is reasonable.

4. We will promote acceptance and implementation of the Principles within the investment industry.

**AB Examples:** By signing the PRI, we have taken an important first step in promoting acceptance and implementation of the six Principles within our industry.

5. We will work together to enhance our effectiveness in implementing the Principles.

**AB Examples:** We will engage with clients and participate in forums with other PRI signatories to better understand how the PRI are applied in our respective businesses. As a PRI signatory, we have access to information, tools and other signatories to help ensure that we are effective in our endeavors to implement the PRI.

6. We will report on our activities and progress towards implementing the Principles.

**AB Examples:** We will respond to the 2012 PRI questionnaire and disclose PRI scores from the questionnaire in response to inquiries from clients and in requests for proposals; we will provide examples as requested concerning active ownership activities (voting, engagement or policy dialogue).

#### 4. RI Committee

Our firm's RI Committee provides AB stakeholders, including employees, clients, prospects, consultants and service providers alike, with a resource within our firm on which they can rely for information regarding our approach to ESG issues and how those issues are incorporated in different ways by the PRI and SRI. Additionally, the RI Committee is responsible for assisting AB personnel to further implement our firm's RI policies and practices, and, over time, to make progress on implementing all six Principles.

The RI Committee has a diverse membership, including senior representatives from investments, distribution/sales and legal. The Committee is chaired by Linda Giuliano, Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer-Equities.

If you have questions or desire additional information about this Policy, we encourage you to contact the RI Committee at [Rlinquiries@alliancebernstein.com](mailto:Rlinquiries@alliancebernstein.com).