

# STATEMENT OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MAY 2, 2022

## FIRST TRUST VARIABLE INSURANCE TRUST

### FIRST TRUST DORSEY WRIGHT TACTICAL CORE PORTFOLIO

CLASS I

CLASS II

This Statement of Additional Information (“SAI”) is not a prospectus. It should be read in conjunction with the prospectus dated May 2, 2022, as it may be revised from time to time (the “Prospectus”), for the First Trust Dorsey Wright Tactical Core Portfolio (the “Fund”), a series of First Trust Variable Insurance Trust (the “Trust”). Capitalized terms used herein that are not defined have the same meaning as in the Prospectus, unless otherwise noted. A copy of the Prospectus may be obtained without charge by writing to the Trust’s distributor, First Trust Portfolios L.P., 120 East Liberty Drive, Suite 400, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, or by calling toll free at (800) 621-1675.

The audited financial statements for the Fund’s most recent fiscal year appear in the Fund’s Annual Report to Shareholders dated December 31, 2021, which was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC”) on March 9, 2022. The financial statements from the Annual Report are incorporated herein by reference. The Annual Report is available without charge by calling (800) 621-1675 or by visiting the SEC’s website at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov).

## Table of Contents

General Information and History .....	1
Investment Objective and Policies .....	2
Investment Strategies .....	3
Sublicense Agreement .....	9
Investment Risks .....	10
Management of the Fund .....	13
Code of Ethics .....	19
Proxy Voting Policies and Procedures .....	20
Control Persons and Principal Holders of Securities .....	20
Investment Advisory and Other Services .....	20
Rule 12b-1 Plan .....	25
Other Payments to Financial Intermediaries .....	25
Brokerage Allocations .....	26
Frequent Trading and Market Timing .....	27
Policy Regarding Disclosure of Portfolio Holdings .....	28
Voting Rights and General Fund Information .....	28
Share Classes .....	29
Purchases, Redemptions and Pricing of Shares .....	29
Certain Federal Income Tax Matters .....	31
Additional Information .....	32
Financial Statements .....	32
Exhibit A – Proxy Voting Guidelines .....	A-1
Exhibit B – Credit Rating Definitions .....	B-1

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND HISTORY

The Trust was organized as a Massachusetts business trust on December 14, 2011 and is authorized to issue an unlimited number of shares in one or more series. The Trust is an open-end management investment company, registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended (the "1940 Act"). The Trust currently offers shares in five series. This SAI relates to the Fund, which is a diversified series.

The Fund, as a series of the Trust, represents a beneficial interest in a separate portfolio of securities and other assets, with its own objective and policies. Shares of the Fund are sold only to variable insurance accounts (each an "Account") to fund the benefits of the variable annuity and variable life insurance contracts (the "Contracts") issued by life insurance companies writing variable annuity contracts and variable life insurance contracts (each a "Participating Insurance Company").

The Board of Trustees of the Trust (the "Board," "Board of Trustees" or "Trustees") has the right to establish additional series in the future, to determine the preferences, voting powers, rights and privileges thereof and to modify such preferences, voting powers, rights and privileges without shareholder approval. Shares of any series may also be divided into one or more classes at the discretion of the Trustees.

The Trust or any series or class thereof may be terminated at any time by the Board of Trustees upon written notice to the shareholders.

Each share has one vote with respect to matters upon which a shareholder vote is required consistent with the requirements of the 1940 Act and the rules promulgated thereunder. Shares of all series of the Trust vote together as a single class except as otherwise required by the 1940 Act or if the matter being voted on affects only a particular series, and, if a matter affects a particular series differently from other series, the shares of that series will vote separately on such matter. The Trust's Declaration of Trust (the "Declaration") requires a shareholder vote only on those matters where the 1940 Act requires a vote of shareholders and otherwise permits the Trustees to take actions without seeking the consent of shareholders. For example, the Declaration gives the Trustees broad authority to approve reorganizations between the Fund and another entity or the sale of all or substantially all of the Fund's assets, or the termination of the Trust or the Fund without shareholder approval if the 1940 Act would not require such approval.

The Declaration provides that by becoming a shareholder of the Fund, each shareholder shall be expressly held to have agreed to be bound by the provisions of the Declaration and to any By-laws adopted by the Trust. The Declaration provides that, except as set forth therein and authorized by the Trustees, shareholders have no rights, privileges, claims or remedies under any contract or agreement entered into by the Trust or the Fund with any service provider or other agent to or contractor with the Trust or the Fund including, without limitation, any third party beneficiary rights.

The Declaration may, except in limited circumstances, be amended by the Trustees in any respect without a shareholder vote. The Declaration provides that the Trustees may establish the number of Trustees and that vacancies on the Board of Trustees may be filled by the remaining Trustees, except when election of Trustees by the shareholders is required under the 1940 Act. Trustees are then elected by a plurality of votes cast by shareholders at a meeting at which a quorum is present. The Declaration also provides that Trustees may be removed, with or without cause, by a vote of shareholders holding at least two-thirds of the voting power of the Trust, or by a vote of two-thirds of the remaining Trustees. The provisions of the Declaration relating to the election and removal of Trustees may not be amended without the approval of two-thirds of the Trustees.

The holders of Fund shares are required to disclose information on direct or indirect ownership of Fund shares as may be required to comply with various laws applicable to the Fund or as the Trustees may determine, and ownership of Fund shares may be disclosed by the Fund if so required by law or regulation. In addition, pursuant to the Declaration, the Trustees may, in their discretion, require the Trust to redeem shares held by any shareholder for any reason under terms set by the Trustees.

The Declaration provides a detailed process for the bringing of derivative actions by shareholders in order to permit legitimate inquiries and claims while avoiding the time, expense, distraction and other harm that can be caused to the Fund or its shareholders as a result of spurious shareholder demands and derivative actions. In addition, the Declaration provides that actions that are derivative in nature may not be brought directly. Prior to bringing a derivative action, a demand must first be made on the Trustees. The Declaration details various information, certifications, undertakings and acknowledgements that must be included in the demand. Following receipt of the demand, the Trustees have a period of 90 days, which may be extended by an additional 60 days, to consider the demand. If a majority of the Trustees who are considered independent for the purposes of considering the demand determine that maintaining the suit would not be in the best interests of the Fund, the Trustees are required to reject the demand and the complaining shareholder may not proceed with the derivative

action unless the shareholder is able to sustain the burden of proof to a court that the decision of the Trustees not to pursue the requested action was not a good faith exercise of their business judgment on behalf of the Fund. In making such a determination, a Trustee is not considered to have a personal financial interest by virtue of being compensated for his or her services as a Trustee. If a demand is rejected, the complaining shareholder will be responsible for the costs and expenses (including attorneys' fees) incurred by the Fund in connection with the consideration of the demand under a number of circumstances. In addition, if a court determines that a derivative action was made without reasonable cause or for an improper purpose, or if a derivative or direct action is dismissed on the basis of a failure to comply with the procedural provisions relating to shareholder actions as set forth in the Declaration, or if a direct action is dismissed by a court for failure to state a claim, the shareholder bringing the action may be responsible for the Fund's costs, including attorneys' fees.

The provisions of the Declaration provide that any direct or derivative action commenced by a shareholder must be brought only in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts (Boston Division) or if any such action may not be brought in that court, then in the Business Litigation Session of Suffolk Superior Court in Massachusetts (the "*Chosen Courts*"). Except as prohibited by applicable law, if a shareholder commences an applicable action in a court other than a Chosen Court without the consent of the Fund, then such shareholder may be obligated to reimburse the Fund and any applicable Trustee or officer of the Fund made party to such proceeding for the costs and expenses (including attorneys' fees) incurred in connection with any successful motion to dismiss, stay or transfer of the action. The Declaration also provides that any shareholder bringing an action against the Fund waives the right to trial by jury to the fullest extent permitted by law.

The Trust is not required to and does not intend to hold annual meetings of shareholders.

Under Massachusetts law applicable to Massachusetts business trusts, shareholders of such a trust may, under certain circumstances, be held personally liable as partners for its obligations. However, the Declaration contains an express disclaimer of shareholder liability for acts or obligations of the Trust and requires that notice of this disclaimer be given in each agreement, obligation or instrument entered into or executed by the Trust or the Trustees. The Declaration further provides for indemnification out of the assets and property of the Trust for all losses and expenses of any shareholder held personally liable for the obligations of the Trust. Thus, the risk of a shareholder incurring financial loss on account of shareholder liability is limited to circumstances in which both inadequate insurance existed and the Trust or the Fund itself was unable to meet its obligations.

The Declaration further provides that a Trustee acting in his or her capacity as Trustee is not personally liable to any person other than the Trust, for any act, omission, or obligation of the Trust. The Declaration requires the Trust to indemnify any persons who are or who have been Trustees, officers or employees of the Trust for any liability for actions or failure to act except to the extent prohibited by applicable federal law. In making any determination as to whether any person is entitled to the advancement of expenses in connection with a claim for which indemnification is sought, such person is entitled to a rebuttable presumption that he or she did not engage in conduct for which indemnification is not available. The Declaration provides that any Trustee who serves as chair of the Board of Trustees or of a committee of the Board of Trustees, as lead independent Trustee or as audit committee financial expert, or in any other similar capacity will not be subject to any greater standard of care or liability because of such position.

The Declaration further provides that no provision of the Declaration will restrict any shareholder rights expressly granted by the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended or the 1940 Act, or any rule, regulation or order of the Securities Exchange Commission thereunder.

The Fund is advised by First Trust Advisors L.P. (the "*Advisor*" or "*First Trust*").

## **INVESTMENT OBJECTIVE AND POLICIES**

The Prospectus describes the investment objective and certain policies of the Fund. The following supplements the information contained in the Prospectus concerning the investment objective and policies of the Fund.

The Fund is subject to the following fundamental policies, which may not be changed without approval of the holders of a majority of the outstanding voting securities (as such term is defined in the 1940 Act) of the Fund:

- (1) The Fund may not issue senior securities, except as permitted under the 1940 Act.
- (2) The Fund may not borrow money, except as permitted under the 1940 Act.

- (3) The Fund will not underwrite the securities of other issuers except to the extent the Fund may be considered an underwriter under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "1933 Act"), in connection with the purchase and sale of portfolio securities.
- (4) The Fund will not purchase or sell real estate or interests therein, unless acquired as a result of ownership of securities or other instruments (but this shall not prohibit the Fund from purchasing or selling securities or other instruments backed by real estate or of issuers engaged in real estate activities).
- (5) The Fund may not make loans to other persons, except through (i) the purchase of debt securities permissible under the Fund's investment policies, (ii) repurchase agreements, or (iii) the lending of portfolio securities, *provided* that no such loan of portfolio securities may be made by the Fund if, as a result, the aggregate of such loans would exceed 33⅓% of the value of the Fund's total assets.
- (6) The Fund may not purchase or sell physical commodities unless acquired as a result of ownership of securities or other instruments (but this shall not prevent the Fund from purchasing or selling options, futures contracts, forward contracts or other derivative instruments, or from investing in securities or other instruments backed by physical commodities).
- (7) The Fund may not invest more than 25% of its assets in securities of issuers in any one industry or group of industries, except to the extent that the Index that the Fund is based upon concentrates in an industry or a group of industries. This restriction does not apply to obligations issued or guaranteed by the U.S. government, its agencies or instrumentalities, or securities of other investment companies.

For purposes of applying restriction (1) above, under the 1940 Act as currently in effect, the Fund is not permitted to issue senior securities, except that the Fund may borrow from any bank if, immediately after such borrowing and at all times thereafter, the value of the Fund's total assets is at least 300% of the principal amount of all of the Fund's borrowings (*i.e.*, the principal amount of the borrowings may not exceed 33⅓% of the Fund's total assets). In the event that such asset coverage shall at any time fall below 300% the Fund shall, within three days thereafter (not including Sundays and holidays), reduce the amount of its borrowings to an extent that the asset coverage of such borrowings shall be at least 300%.

Except for restriction (2) above, if a percentage restriction is adhered to at the time of investment, a later increase in percentage resulting from a change in market value of the investment or the total assets will not constitute a violation of that restriction. With respect to restriction (2), if the limitations are exceeded as a result of a change in market value then the Fund will reduce the amount of borrowings within three days thereafter to the extent necessary to comply with the limitations (not including Sundays and holidays).

The fundamental investment limitations set forth above limit the Fund's ability to engage in certain investment practices and purchase securities or other instruments to the extent permitted by, or consistent with, applicable law. As such, these limitations will change as the statute, rules, regulations or orders (or, if applicable, interpretations) change, and no shareholder vote will be required or sought.

The Fund's investment objective and the foregoing fundamental policies of the Fund may not be changed without the affirmative vote of the majority of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund. The 1940 Act defines a majority vote as the vote of the lesser of (i) 67% or more of the voting securities represented at a meeting at which more than 50% of the outstanding securities are represented; or (ii) more than 50% of the outstanding voting securities. Certain matters under the 1940 Act which must be submitted to a vote of the holders of the outstanding voting securities of a series or class, shall not be deemed to have been effectively acted upon unless approved by the holders of a majority of the outstanding voting shares of each series or class affected by such matter.

In addition to the foregoing fundamental policies, the Fund is also subject to strategies and policies discussed herein which, unless otherwise noted, are non-fundamental restrictions and policies and may be changed by the Board of Trustees.

## **INVESTMENT STRATEGIES**

The investment objective of the Fund is to seek to provide total return. The Fund seeks to achieve its investment objective by investing, under normal market conditions, at least 80% of its net assets (plus any investment borrowings) in exchange-traded funds ("*ETFs*") and cash and cash equivalents that comprise the Dorsey Wright Tactical Tilt Moderate Core Index (the "*Index*"). It is expected that a majority of the *ETFs* in which the Fund invests will be advised by First Trust. The *Index* is owned and was developed by Dorsey, Wright & Associates (the "*Index Provider*"). The *Index* is constructed pursuant to the

Index Provider's proprietary methodology, which takes into account the performance of four distinct assets classes relative to one another. The Index is designed to strategically allocate its investments among (i)domestic equity securities; (ii)international equity securities; (iii)fixed income securities; and (iv)cash and cash equivalents. The Index will gain exposure to the first three asset classes by investing in ETFs that invest in such assets.

As of February 28, 2022, the "investable universe" of the Index included the following ETFs, among others: First Trust Consumer Discretionary AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Consumer Staples AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Energy AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Financials AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Health Care AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Industrials/Producer Durables AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Materials AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Technology AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Utilities AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Nasdaq Bank ETF, First Trust Nasdaq Oil & Gas ETF, First Trust Nasdaq Food & Beverage ETF, First Trust Nasdaq Pharmaceuticals ETF, First Trust Nasdaq Semiconductor ETF, First Trust Nasdaq Transportation ETF, First Trust Large Cap Core AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Mid Cap Core AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Small Cap Core AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Large Cap Value AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Large Cap Growth AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Mid Cap Growth AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Mid Cap Value AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Small Cap Growth AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Small Cap Value AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust NASDAQ-100 Ex-Technology Sector Index Fund, First Trust NASDAQ-100-Technology Sector Index Fund, First Trust NYSE Arca Biotechnology Index Fund, First Trust S&P REIT Index Fund, First Trust Dow Jones Internet Index Fund, First Trust Asia Pacific ex-Japan AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Developed Markets ex-US AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Emerging Markets AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Europe AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Latin America AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Eurozone AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Brazil AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Enhanced Short Maturity ETF, First Trust China AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Germany AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Japan AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust Switzerland AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust United Kingdom AlphaDEX® Fund, First Trust BICK Index Fund, First Trust Dow Jones Global Select Dividend Index Fund, First Trust Chindia ETF, First Trust STOXX® European Select Dividend Index Fund, SPDR® Portfolio Long Term Treasury ETF, SPDR® Portfolio Intermediate Term Treasury ETF, SPDR® Portfolio Aggregate Bond ETF, SPDR® Portfolio TIPSETF, SPDR® Bloomberg International Treasury Bond ETF, SPDR® Bloomberg 1-3 Month T-Bill ETF, SPDR® Portfolio Intermediate Term Corporate Bond ETF, SPDR® Bloomberg High Yield Bond ETF, SPDR® Portfolio Long Term Corporate Bond ETF, SPDR® Bloomberg Short Term International Treasury Bond ETF, SPDR® Bloomberg Emerging Markets Local Bond ETF, SPDR® Portfolio Mortgage Backed Bond ETF, SPDR® Portfolio Short Term Corporate Bond ETF, SPDR® Bloomberg Convertible Securities ETF, SPDR® Bloomberg International Corporate Bond ETF, SPDR® ICE Preferred Stock ETF, iShares® Core U.S. Aggregate Bond ETF, SPDR® FTSE International Government Inflation-Protected Bond ETF, SPDR Nuveen Bloomberg Short Term Municipal Bond ETF, SPDR Blackstone Senior Loan ETF, SPDR Nuveen Bloomberg Municipal Bond ETF, SPDR Bloomberg Investment Grade Floating Rate ETF and First Trust India Nifty 50 Equal Weight ETF.

This list is not exhaustive and is subject to change.

## Types of Investments

The following information supplements the discussion of the Fund's investment objective, policies and strategies that appears in the Prospectus.

**Corporate Bonds.** The ETFs in which the Fund invests will invest in corporate bonds. Corporate bonds, also known as fixed-income securities, are debt obligations issued by corporations. Corporate bonds are generally used by corporations to borrow money from investors. Corporate bonds may be either secured or unsecured. Collateral used for secured debt includes, but is not limited to, real property, machinery, equipment, accounts receivable, stocks, bonds or notes. If a corporate bond is unsecured, it is known as a debenture. Holders of corporate bonds, as creditors, have a prior legal claim over common and preferred stockholders as to both income and assets of the issuer for the principal and interest due them and may have a prior claim over other creditors if liens or mortgages are involved. Interest on corporate bonds may be fixed or floating, or the securities may be zero coupon fixed-income securities which pay no interest. Interest on corporate bonds is typically paid semi-annually and is fully taxable to the holder of the bonds. Corporate bonds contain elements of both interest rate risk and credit risk. The market value of a corporate bond generally may be expected to rise and fall inversely with changes in interest rates and may also be affected by the credit rating of the issuer, the issuer's performance and perceptions of the issuer in the marketplace. Corporate bonds usually yield more than government or agency bonds due to the presence of credit risk.

**Equities.** The ETFs in which the Fund invests will invest in equity securities. Equity securities represent an ownership position in a company. The prices of equity securities fluctuate based on, among other things, events specific to their issuers and market, economic, and other conditions. Equity securities may include common and preferred stocks. Common stocks include the common stock of any class or series of a domestic or foreign corporation or any similar equity interest, such as a

trust or partnership interest. These investments may or may not pay dividends and may or may not carry voting rights. Common stock occupies the most junior position in a company's capital structure. The Fund may also invest in warrants and rights related to common stocks.

The ETFs in which the Fund invests may also invest in preferred equity securities. Preferred stock, unlike common stock, offers a stated dividend rate payable from the issuer's earnings. Preferred stock dividends may be cumulative or non-cumulative, participating or action rate. If interest rates rise, the fixed dividend on preferred stocks may be less attractive, causing the price of preferred stocks to decline. Preferred stock may have mandatory sinking fund provisions, as well as call/redemption provisions prior to maturity, a negative feature when interest rates decline.

**Fixed Income Investments and Cash Equivalents.** The Fund may invest in fixed income investments and cash equivalents as part of its principal investment strategy and for temporary or defensive purposes to provide income, liquidity and preserve capital.

Fixed income investments and cash equivalents held by the Fund may include, without limitation, the types of investments set forth below.

- (1) The Fund may invest in U.S. government securities, including bills, notes and bonds differing as to maturity and rates of interest, which are either issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury or by U.S. government agencies or instrumentalities. U.S. government securities include securities that are issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury, by various agencies of the U.S. government, or by various instrumentalities that have been established or sponsored by the U.S. government. U.S. Treasury securities are backed by the "full faith and credit" of the United States. Securities issued or guaranteed by federal agencies and U.S. government-sponsored instrumentalities may or may not be backed by the full faith and credit of the United States. Some of the U.S. government agencies that issue or guarantee securities include the Export-Import Bank of the United States, the Farmers Home Administration, the Federal Housing Administration, the Maritime Administration, the Small Business Administration and The Tennessee Valley Authority. An instrumentality of the U.S. government is a government agency organized under federal charter with government supervision. Instrumentalities issuing or guaranteeing securities include, among others, the Federal Home Loan Banks, the Federal Land Banks, the Central Bank for Cooperatives, Federal Intermediate Credit Banks and the Federal National Mortgage Association ("*Fannie Mae*"). In the case of those U.S. government securities not backed by the full faith and credit of the United States, the investor must look principally to the agency or instrumentality issuing or guaranteeing the security for ultimate repayment and may not be able to assert a claim against the United States itself in the event that the agency or instrumentality does not meet its commitment. The U.S. government, its agencies and instrumentalities do not guarantee the market value of their securities; consequently, the value of such securities may fluctuate.
- (2) The Fund may invest in certificates of deposit issued against funds deposited in a bank or savings and loan association. Such certificates are for a definite period of time, earn a specified rate of return and are normally negotiable. If such certificates of deposit are non-negotiable, they will be considered illiquid securities and be subject to the Fund's 15% restriction on investments in illiquid securities. Pursuant to the certificate of deposit, the issuer agrees to pay the amount deposited plus interest to the bearer of the certificate on the date specified thereon. Under current FDIC regulations, the maximum insurance payable as to any one certificate of deposit is \$250,000; therefore, certificates of deposit purchased by the Fund may not be fully insured. The Fund may only invest in certificates of deposit issued by U.S. banks with at least \$1 billion in assets.
- (3) The Fund may invest in bankers' acceptances, which are short-term credit instruments used to finance commercial transactions. Generally, an acceptance is a time draft drawn on a bank by an exporter or an importer to obtain a stated amount of funds to pay for specific merchandise. The draft is then "accepted" by a bank that, in effect, unconditionally guarantees to pay the face value of the instrument on its maturity date. The acceptance may then be held by the accepting bank as an asset or it may be sold in the secondary market at the going rate of interest for a specific maturity.
- (4) The Fund may invest in repurchase agreements, which involve purchases of debt securities with counterparties that are deemed by the Advisor to present acceptable credit risks. In such an action, at the time the Fund purchases the security, it simultaneously agrees to resell and redeliver the security to the seller, who also simultaneously agrees to buy back the security at a fixed price and time. This assures a predetermined yield for the Fund during its holding period since the resale price is always greater than the purchase price and reflects an agreed-upon market rate. Such actions afford an opportunity for the Fund to invest temporarily available cash. The Fund

may enter into repurchase agreements only with respect to obligations of the U.S. government, its agencies or instrumentalities, certificates of deposit or bankers' acceptances in which the Fund may invest. Repurchase agreements may be considered loans to the seller, collateralized by the underlying securities. The risk to the Fund is limited to the ability of the seller to pay the agreed-upon sum on the repurchase date; in the event of default, the repurchase agreement provides that the affected Fund is entitled to sell the underlying collateral. If the value of the collateral declines after the agreement is entered into, however, and if the seller defaults under a repurchase agreement when the value of the underlying collateral is less than the repurchase price, the Fund could incur a loss of both principal and interest. The portfolio managers monitor the value of the collateral at the time the action is entered into and at all times during the term of the repurchase agreement. The portfolio managers do so in an effort to determine that the value of the collateral always equals or exceeds the agreed-upon repurchase price to be paid to the Fund. If the seller were to be subject to a federal bankruptcy proceeding, the ability of the Fund to liquidate the collateral could be delayed or impaired because of certain provisions of the bankruptcy laws.

- (5) The Fund may invest in bank time deposits, which are monies kept on deposit with banks or savings and loan associations for a stated period of time at a fixed rate of interest. There may be penalties for the early withdrawal of such time deposits, in which case the yields of these investments will be reduced.
- (6) The Fund may invest in commercial paper, which are short-term unsecured promissory notes, including variable rate master demand notes issued by corporations to finance their current operations. Master demand notes are direct lending arrangements between the Fund and a corporation. There is no secondary market for the notes. However, they are redeemable by the Fund at any time. The Fund's portfolio managers will consider the financial condition of the corporation (e.g., earning power, cash flow and other liquidity ratios) and will continuously monitor the corporation's ability to meet all of its financial obligations, because the Fund's liquidity might be impaired if the corporation were unable to pay principal and interest on demand. The Fund may invest in commercial paper only if it has received the highest rating from at least one nationally recognized statistical rating organization or, if unrated, judged by First Trust to be of comparable quality.
- (7) The Fund may invest in shares of money market funds, as consistent with its investment objective and policies. Shares of money market funds are subject to management fees and other expenses of those funds. Therefore, investments in money market funds will cause the Fund to bear proportionately the costs incurred by the money market funds' operations. At the same time, the Fund will continue to pay its own management fees and expenses with respect to all of its assets, including any portion invested in the shares of other investment companies. Although money market funds that operate in accordance with Rule 2a-7 under the 1940 Act seek to preserve a \$1.00 share price. It is possible for the Fund to lose money by investing in money market funds.

**High Yield Securities.** The ETFs in which the Fund invests may invest in high yield securities, which are commonly referred to as "junk" bonds and are rated below-investment grade at the time of purchase. The ratings of a rating agency represent its opinion as to the quality of securities it undertakes to rate. Ratings are not absolute standards of quality; consequently, securities with the same maturity, duration, coupon, and rating may have different yields. If a security owned by the Fund is subsequently downgraded, the Fund will not be required to dispose of such security.

Because the risk of default is higher for below-investment grade securities than investment grade securities, the underlying ETFs' research and credit analysis will be an especially important part of managing securities of this type. The underlying ETFs will attempt to identify those issuers of below-investment grade securities whose financial condition the ETFs believe are adequate to meet future obligations or who have improved or are expected to improve in the future. The underlying ETFs' analysis primarily focuses on valuation and credit quality. Factors considered include, but are not limited to, interest or dividend coverage, balance sheet leverage, free cash flow, asset coverage, earnings prospects, relative value and the experience and managerial strength of the issuer focuses on relative values based on such factors as interest or dividend coverage, asset coverage, earnings prospects and the experience and managerial strength of the issuer.

**Illiquid Investments.** The Fund may invest in illiquid investments (i.e., any investment that the Fund reasonably expects cannot be sold or disposed of in current market conditions in seven calendar days or less without the sale or disposition significantly changing the market value of the investment). For purposes of this restriction, illiquid investments may include, but are not limited to, certain restricted securities (securities the disposition of which is restricted under the federal securities laws), securities that may only be resold pursuant to Rule 144A under the 1933 Act, and repurchase agreements with maturities in excess of seven days, among others. However, the Fund will not acquire illiquid investments if, as a result, such securities would comprise more than 15% of the value of the Fund's net assets. The Advisor, subject to oversight by the Board of Trustees,



has the ultimate authority to determine, to the extent permissible under the federal securities laws, which investments are liquid or illiquid for purposes of this 15% limitation under the Fund's liquidity risk management program, adopted pursuant to Rule 22e-4 under the 1940 Act.

Restricted securities may be sold only in privately negotiated transactions or in a public offering with respect to which a registration statement is in effect under the 1933 Act. Where registration is required, the Fund may be obligated to pay all or part of the registration expenses and a considerable period may elapse between the time of the decision to sell and the time the Fund may be permitted to sell a security under an effective registration statement. If, during such a period, adverse market conditions were to develop, the Fund might obtain a less favorable price than that which prevailed when it decided to sell. Illiquid investments will be priced at fair value as determined in good faith under procedures adopted by the Board of Trustees. If, through the appreciation of illiquid investments or the depreciation of liquid investments, the Fund should be in a position where more than 15% of the value of its net assets are invested in illiquid investments, including restricted securities which are not readily marketable, the Advisor will report such occurrence to the Board of Trustees and take such steps as are deemed advisable to protect liquidity in accordance with the Fund's liquidity risk management program.

**Investment Companies and Pooled Investment Vehicles.** The Fund invests in other pooled investment vehicles, including ETFs. As a shareholder in a pooled investment vehicle, the Fund will bear its ratable share of that vehicle's expenses, and would remain subject to payment of that vehicle's management fees with respect to assets so invested. Normally shareholders are subject to duplicative expenses to the extent the Fund invests in other pooled investment vehicles. In addition, the Fund will incur brokerage costs when purchasing and selling shares of ETFs and closed-end funds. Other pooled investment vehicles may be leveraged, and the net asset value and market value of their securities will therefore be more volatile and the yield to shareholders will tend to fluctuate more than the yield of unleveraged pooled investment vehicles.

The Fund may invest in the securities of ETFs in excess of the limits imposed under the 1940 Act pursuant to exemptive orders obtained by certain First Trust and ETFs and their sponsors from the SEC. An ETF is a fund that holds a portfolio of securities and trades on a securities exchange and its shares may, at times, trade at a premium or discount to its net asset value. Additionally, the Fund may invest in certain investment companies in excess of the limits imposed under the 1940 Act, subject to certain terms and conditions, pursuant to an exemptive order that the SEC has issued to the Trust.

**Loans.** The Fund may invest in ETFs that invest in fixed and floating rate loans ("*Loans*"). Loans may include senior floating rate loans ("*Senior Loans*") and secured and unsecured loans, second lien or more junior loans and bridge loans ("*Junior Loans*"). Loans are typically arranged through private negotiations between borrowers in the United States or in foreign or emerging markets which are generally corporate issuers. The underlying ETFs may invest in Loans by purchasing assignments of all or a portion of Loans ("*Assignments*") or Loan participations ("*Participations*") from third parties.

An underlying ETF has direct rights against the Obligor on the Loan when it purchases an Assignment. Assignments are arranged through private negotiations between potential assignees and potential assignors. With respect to Participations, typically, the underlying ETF will have a contractual relationship only with the Lender and not with the Obligor. The agreement governing Participations may limit the rights of the Fund to vote on certain changes which may be made to the Loan agreement, such as waiving a breach of a covenant. However, the holder of a Participation will generally have the right to vote on certain fundamental issues such as changes in principal amount, payment dates and interest rate. Participations may entail certain risks relating to the creditworthiness of the parties from which the participations are obtained.

A Loan is typically originated, negotiated and structured by a U.S. or foreign commercial bank, insurance company, finance company or other financial institution (the "*Agent*") for a group of Loan investors. The Agent typically administers and enforces the Loan on behalf of the other Loan investors in the syndicate. The Agent's duties may include responsibility for the collection of principal and interest payments from the Obligor and the apportionment of these payments to the credit of all Loan investors. The Agent is also typically responsible for monitoring compliance with the covenants contained in the Loan agreement based upon reports prepared by the Obligor. In addition, an institution, typically but not always the Agent, holds any collateral on behalf of the Loan investors. In the event of a default by the Obligor, it is possible, though unlikely, that an underlying ETF could receive a portion of the borrower's collateral. If an underlying ETF receives collateral other than cash, any proceeds received from liquidation of such collateral will be available for investment as part of the Fund's portfolio.

In the process of buying, selling and holding Senior Loans, an underlying ETF may receive and/or pay certain fees. These fees are in addition to interest payments received and may include facility fees, commitment fees, commissions and prepayment penalty fees. When an underlying ETF buys or sells a Loan it may pay a fee. In certain circumstances, an underlying ETF may receive a prepayment penalty fee upon prepayment of a Loan.

There may be instances in which an underlying ETF is required to vote upon amendments to certain of the Loans in which it invests. In these cases, an underlying ETF will attempt to ensure that such amendments are voted consistently and solely in the best interests of an underlying ETF.

**Additional Information Concerning Senior Loans.** The Fund invests in ETFs that may invest in Senior Loans, which typically hold the most senior position in the capital structure of the Obligor, are typically secured with specific collateral and have a claim on the assets and/or stock of the Obligor that is senior to that held by subordinated debt-holders and shareholders of the Obligor. Collateral for Senior Loans may include (i) working capital assets, such as accounts receivable and inventory; (ii) tangible fixed assets, such as real property, buildings and equipment; (iii) intangible assets, such as trademarks and patent rights; and/or (iv) security interests in shares of stock of subsidiaries or affiliates.

**Municipal Bonds.** The two general classifications of municipal bonds are "*general obligation*" bonds and "*revenue*" bonds. General obligation bonds are secured by the governmental issuer's pledge of its faith, credit and taxing power for the payment of principal and interest upon a default by the issuer of its principal and interest payment obligations. They are usually paid from general revenues of the issuing governmental entity. Revenue bonds, on the other hand, are usually payable only out of a specific revenue source rather than from general revenues. Revenue bonds ordinarily are not backed by the faith, credit or general taxing power of the issuing governmental entity. The principal and interest on revenue bonds for private facilities are typically paid out of rents or other specified payments made to the issuing governmental entity by a private company which uses or operates the facilities. Examples of these types of obligations are industrial revenue bond and pollution control revenue bonds. Industrial revenue bonds are issued by governmental entities to provide financing aid to community facilities such as hospitals, hotels, business or residential complexes, convention halls and sport complexes. Pollution control revenue bonds are issued to finance air, water and solids pollution control systems for privately operated industrial or commercial facilities.

Revenue bonds for private facilities usually do not represent a pledge of the credit, general revenues or taxing powers of issuing governmental entity. Instead, the private company operating the facility is the sole source of payment of the obligation. Sometimes, the funds for payment of revenue bonds come solely from revenue generated by operation of the facility. Federal income tax laws place substantial limitations on industrial revenue bonds, and particularly certain specified private activity bonds issued after August 7, 1986. In the future, legislation could be introduced in Congress which could further restrict or eliminate the income tax exemption for interest on debt obligations in which the underlying ETFs may invest.

**Non-U.S. Investments.** The ETFs in which the Fund invest in non U.S. securities, which may include securities denominated in non-U.S. currencies. Non-U.S. debt securities in which an underlying ETF may invest include debt securities issued or guaranteed by companies organized under the laws of countries other than the United States (including emerging markets), debt securities issued or guaranteed by foreign, national, provincial, state, municipal or other governments with taxing authority or by their agencies or instrumentalities and debt obligations of supranational governmental entities such as the World Bank or European Union. Non-U.S. debt securities also include U.S. dollar-denominated debt obligations, such as "*Yankee Dollar*" obligations, of foreign issuers and of supra-national government entities. Yankee Dollar obligations are U.S. dollar-denominated obligations issued in the U.S. capital markets by foreign corporations, banks and governments. Foreign debt securities also may be traded on foreign securities exchanges or in over the counter ("*OTC*") capital markets. An underlying ETF's non-U.S. investments may be denominated in currencies other than the U.S. dollar. To the extent an underlying ETF invests in such instruments, the value of the assets of the Fund as measured in U.S. dollars will be affected by changes in exchange rates. Generally, an underlying ETF's currency exchange transactions will be conducted on a spot (*i.e.*, cash) basis at the spot rate prevailing in the currency exchange market. The cost of an underlying ETF's currency exchange transactions will generally be the difference between the bid and offer spot rate of the currency being purchased or sold. In order to protect against uncertainty in the level of future currency exchange rates, an underlying ETF is authorized to enter into various currency exchange transactions.

**U.S. Government Securities.** The Fund may invest in U.S. government securities, including bills, notes and bonds differing as to maturity and rates of interest, which are either issued or guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury or by U.S. government agencies or instrumentalities. U.S. government agency securities include securities issued by: (a) the Federal Housing Administration, Farmers Home Administration, Export-Import Bank of United States, Small Business Administration, and the Government National Mortgage Association, whose securities are supported by the full faith and credit of the United States; (b) the Federal Home Loan Banks, Federal Intermediate Credit Banks, and the Tennessee Valley Authority, whose securities are supported by the right of the agency to borrow from the U.S. Treasury; (c) Federal National Mortgage Association ("*FNMA*" or "*Fannie Mae*") and Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation ("*FHLMC*" or "*Freddie Mac*") which are government-sponsored organizations owned entirely by private stockholders and whose securities are guaranteed as to principal and interest by the federal government;

and (d) the Student Loan Marketing Association, whose securities are supported only by its credit. In September 2008, FNMA was placed into conservatorship overseen by the Federal Housing Finance Agency ("FHFA"). As conservator, FHFA will succeed to the rights, titles, powers and privileges of FNMA and any stockholder, officer or director of the company with respect to FNMA and its assets and title to all books, records and company assets held by any other custodian or third party. FHFA is charged with operating FNMA. While the U.S. government provides financial support to such U.S. government-sponsored agencies or instrumentalities, no assurance can be given that it always will do so since it is not so obligated by law. The U.S. government, its agencies, and instrumentalities do not guarantee the market value of their securities, and consequently, the value of such securities may fluctuate.

## Portfolio Turnover

The Fund buys and sells portfolio securities in the normal course of its investment activities. The proportion of the Fund's investment portfolio that is bought and sold during a year is known as the Fund's portfolio turnover rate. A portfolio turnover rate of 100% would occur, for example, if all of the portfolio securities (other than short-term securities) were replaced once during the fiscal year. A high portfolio turnover rate could result in the payment by the Fund of increased brokerage costs, expenses and taxes. The portfolio turnover rates for the specified periods are set forth in the table below. Significant variations in portfolio turnover from year-to-year are generally the result of fluctuations in the size of a Fund or changes to a Fund's portfolio holdings.

<b>Portfolio Turnover Rate</b>	
<b>Fiscal Year Ended December 31,</b>	
<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
78%	284%

## SUBLICENSE AGREEMENT

The Trust, on behalf of the Fund, relies on a product license agreement (the "*Product License Agreement*") by and between the Index Provider and First Trust and a related sublicense agreement (the "*Sublicense Agreement*") with First Trust that grants the Trust, on behalf of the Fund, a non-exclusive and non-transferable sublicense to use certain intellectual property of the Index Provider, in connection with the issuance, distribution, marketing and/or promotion of the Fund. Pursuant to the Sublicense Agreement, the Fund has agreed to be bound by certain provisions of the Product License Agreement. Pursuant to the Product License Agreement, First Trust will pay the Index Provider an annual license fee. Under the Sublicense Agreement, the Fund will reimburse First Trust for its costs associated with the Product License Agreement.

## Disclaimers

First Trust does not guarantee the accuracy and/or the completeness of the Index or any data included therein, and First Trust shall have no liability for any errors, omissions or interruptions therein. First Trust makes no warranty, express or implied, as to results to be obtained by the Fund, owners of the shares of the Fund or any other person or entity from the use of the Index or any data included therein. First Trust makes no express or implied warranties, and expressly disclaims all warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose or use with respect to the Index or any data included therein. Without limiting any of the foregoing, in no event shall First Trust have any liability for any special, punitive, direct, indirect or consequential damages (including lost profits) arising out of matters relating to the use of the Index, even if notified of the possibility of such damages.

The Fund is not sponsored, endorsed, sold or promoted by the Dorsey, Wright & Associates, LLC (together with its affiliates, "*Dorsey Wright*"). Dorsey Wright makes no representation or warranty, express or implied, to the owners of the Fund or any member of the public regarding the advisability of trading in the Fund. Dorsey Wright's only relationship to First Trust is the licensing of certain trademarks and trade names of Dorsey Wright and of the Index, which is determined, composed and calculated by Dorsey Wright, or its agent, without regard to First Trust or the Fund. Dorsey Wright has no obligation to take the needs of First Trust or the owners of the Fund into consideration in determining, composing or calculating the Index. Dorsey Wright is not responsible for and has not participated in the determination of the timing of, prices at, or quantities of the Fund to be listed or in the determination or calculation of the equation by which shares of the Fund is to be converted into cash. Dorsey Wright has no obligation or liability in connection with the administration, marketing or trading of the Fund.

DORSEY WRIGHT DOES NOT GUARANTEE THE ACCURACY AND/OR THE COMPLETENESS OF THE INDEX OR ANY DATA INCLUDED THEREIN AND DORSEY WRIGHT SHALL HAVE NO LIABILITY FOR ANY ERRORS, OMISSIONS, OR INTERRUPTIONS THEREIN. DORSEY WRIGHT MAKES NO WARRANTY, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, AS TO RESULTS TO BE OBTAINED BY FIRST TRUST, OWNERS OF THE FUND, OR ANY OTHER PERSON OR ENTITY FROM THE USE OF THE INDEX OR ANY DATA INCLUDED THEREIN. DORSEY WRIGHT MAKES NO EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, AND EXPRESSLY DISCLAIMS ALL WARRANTIES, OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE OR USE WITH RESPECT TO THE INDEX OR ANY DATA INCLUDED THEREIN, WITHOUT LIMITING ANY OF THE FOREGOING, IN NO EVENT SHALL DORSEY WRIGHT HAVE ANY LIABILITY FOR ANY LOST PROFITS OR INDIRECT, PUNITIVE, SPECIAL OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING LOST PROFITS), EVEN IF NOTIFIED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES. THERE ARE NO THIRD PARTY BENEFICIARIES OF ANY AGREEMENTS OR ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN DORSEY WRIGHT AND FIRST TRUST.

## **INVESTMENT RISKS**

The following risk disclosure supplements the discussion of the Fund's investment risks that appears in the Prospectus.

### ***Overview***

An investment in the Fund should be made with an understanding of the risks that an investment in the Fund's shares entails, including the risk that the financial condition of the issuers of the securities held by the ETFs in which the Fund invests or the general condition of the securities market may worsen and the value of the securities and therefore the value of the Fund may decline. The Fund may not be an appropriate investment for those who are unable or unwilling to assume the risks involved generally with such an investment. The past market and earnings performance of any of the securities included in the Fund is not predictive of their future performance.

### ***Additional Market Disruption Risk***

In February 2022, Russia commenced a military attack on Ukraine. In response, various countries, including the United States, issued broad-ranging sanctions on Russia and certain Russian companies and individuals. The hostilities between the two countries may escalate and any existing or future sanctions could have a severe adverse effect on Russia's economy, currency, companies and region as well as negatively impact other regional and global economic markets of the world (including Europe and the United States), companies in such countries and various sectors, industries and markets for securities and commodities globally, such as oil and natural gas. Accordingly, the hostilities and sanctions may have a negative effect on a Fund's investments and performance beyond any direct exposure to Russian issuers or those of adjoining geographic regions. Russia may also take retaliatory actions or countermeasures, such as cyberattacks and espionage, which may negatively impact the countries and companies in which a Fund may invest. The extent and duration of the military action or future escalation of such hostilities; the extent and impact of existing and any future sanctions, market disruptions and volatility; and the result of any diplomatic negotiations cannot be predicted. These and any related events could have a significant negative impact on certain of a Fund's investments as well as a Fund's performance, and the value or liquidity of certain securities held by a Fund may decline significantly.

### ***Common Stock Risk***

Equity securities are especially susceptible to general market movements and to volatile increases and decreases of value as market confidence in and perceptions of the issuers change. These perceptions are based on unpredictable factors including expectations regarding government, economic, monetary and fiscal policies, inflation and interest rates, economic expansion or contraction, and global or regional political, economic or banking crises. First Trust cannot predict the direction or scope of any of these factors. Shareholders of common stocks have rights to receive payments from the issuers of those common stocks that are generally subordinate to those of creditors of, or holders of debt obligations or preferred stocks of, such issuers.

Shareholders of common stocks of the type held by the underlying ETFs have a right to receive dividends only when and if, and in the amounts, declared by the issuer's board of directors and have a right to participate in amounts available for distribution by the issuer only after all other claims on the issuer have been paid or otherwise been settled. Common stocks do not represent an obligation of the issuer and, therefore, do not offer any assurance of income or provide the same degree of protection of capital as do debt securities. The issuance of additional debt securities or preferred stock will create prior claims for payment of principal, interest and dividends which could adversely affect the ability and inclination of the issuer to declare or pay dividends on its common stock or the rights of holders of common stock with respect to assets of the issuer upon liquidation or bankruptcy. The value of common stocks is subject to market fluctuations for as long as the common stocks remain outstanding, and thus the value of the equity securities in the underlying ETFs will fluctuate over the life of the underlying ETFs and may be more or less than the price at which they were purchased by the underlying ETFs. The equity securities held

in the underlying ETFs may appreciate or depreciate in value (or pay dividends) depending on the full range of economic and market influences affecting these securities, including the impact of the underlying ETF's purchase and sale of the equity securities and other factors.

Holders of common stocks incur more risk than holders of preferred stocks and debt obligations because common stockholders, as owners of the entity, have generally inferior rights to receive payments from the issuer in comparison with the rights of creditors of, or holders of debt obligations or preferred stocks issued by, the issuer. Cumulative preferred stock dividends must be paid before common stock dividends and any cumulative preferred stock dividend omitted is added to future dividends payable to the holders of cumulative preferred stock. Preferred stockholders are also generally entitled to rights on liquidation which are senior to those of common stockholders.

### ***Currency Risk***

Changes in currency exchange rates may affect net asset value, the value of dividends and interest earned, and gains and losses realized on the sale of securities.

### ***Depository Receipts Risk***

The ETFs in which the Fund invests may hold securities of certain non U.S. companies in the form of depository receipts. Depository Receipts may not necessarily be denominated in the same currency as the underlying securities into which they may be converted. American Depository Receipts ("ADRs") are receipts typically issued by a U.S. bank or trust company that evidence ownership of underlying securities issued by a foreign corporation. European Depository Receipts ("EDRs") are receipts issued by a European bank or trust company evidencing ownership of securities issued by a foreign corporation. New York shares are typically issued by a company incorporated in the Netherlands and represent a direct interest in the company. Unlike traditional depository receipts, New York share programs do not involve custody of the Dutch shares of the company. Global Depository Receipts ("GDRs") are receipts issued throughout the world that evidence a similar arrangement. ADRs, EDRs and GDRs may trade in foreign currencies that differ from the currency the underlying security for each ADR, EDR or GDR principally trades in. Global shares are the actual (ordinary) shares of a non-U.S. company which trade both in the home market and the United States. Generally, ADRs and New York shares, in registered form, are designed for use in the U.S. securities markets. EDRs, in registered form, are used to access European markets. GDRs, in registered form, are tradable both in the United States and in Europe and are designed for use throughout the world. Global shares are represented by the same share certificate in the United States and the home market, and separate registrars in the United States and the home country are maintained. In most cases, purchases occurring on a U.S. exchange would be reflected on the U.S. registrar. Global shares may also be eligible to list on exchanges in addition to the United States and the home country. The Fund may hold unsponsored Depository Receipts. The issuers of unsponsored Depository Receipts are not obligated to disclose material information in the United States; therefore, there may be less information available regarding such issuers and there may not be a correlation between such information and the market value of the Depository Receipts.

### ***Fixed Income Securities Risk***

The risks of investing in fixed income securities, including the bonds in which the underlying ETFs may invest, include: the risk that an issuer or guarantor of a security will be unable to pay some or all of the principal and interest when due (credit risk); the risk that an underlying ETF may not be able to sell some or all of the securities it holds, either at the price it values the security or at any price (liquidity risk); and the risk that the rates of interest income generated by the fixed income investments of the underlying ETFs may decline due to a decrease in market interest rates and that the market prices of the fixed income investments of the underlying ETFs may decline due to an increase in market interest rates (interest rate risk).

The debt securities in which the underlying ETFs may invest may provide for fixed or variable principal payments and various types of interest rate and reset terms, including fixed rate, adjustable rate, zero coupon, contingent, deferred, payment-in-kind and auction rate features. Certain debt securities are "perpetual" in that they have no maturity date. Certain debt securities are zero coupon bonds. A zero coupon bond is a bond that does not pay interest either for the entire life of the obligations or for an initial period after the issuance of the obligation.

### ***High-Yield Securities Risk***

The ETFs in which the Fund invests may invest in securities that are not rated by a Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organization ("NRSRO"), registered with the SEC or any state securities commission or listed on any national securities exchange. To the extent that such high-yield securities are rated, they typically will be rated below-investment grade and are subject to an increased risk of default in the payment of principal and interest as well as other risks.

### ***Liquidity Risk***

Whether or not the equity securities comprising the ETFs in which the Fund invests are listed on a securities exchange, the principal trading market for certain of the equity securities in which the underlying ETFs invest may be in the OTC market. As a result, the existence of a liquid trading market for the equity securities may depend on whether dealers will make a market in the equity securities. There can be no assurance that a market will be made for any of the equity securities, that any market for the equity securities will be maintained or that there will be sufficient liquidity of the equity securities in any markets made. The price at which the equity securities are held in the underlying ETFs will be adversely affected if trading markets for the equity securities are limited or absent.

### ***Litigation Risk***

At any time litigation may be instituted on a variety of grounds with respect to the ETFs held by the Fund. The Fund is unable to predict whether litigation that has been or will be instituted might have a material adverse effect on the Fund.

### ***Market Risk***

Market risk is the risk that a particular security, or shares of the Fund in general, may fall in value. Securities are subject to market fluctuations caused by such factors as economic, political, regulatory or market developments, changes in interest rates and perceived trends in securities prices. Shares of the Fund could decline in value or underperform other investments due to short-term market movements or any longer periods during more prolonged market downturns. In addition, local, regional or global events such as war, acts of terrorism, spread of infectious diseases or other public health issues, recessions, or other events could have a significant negative impact on the Fund and its investments. Such events may affect certain geographic regions, countries, sectors and industries more significantly than others. Such events could adversely affect the prices and liquidity of the Fund's portfolio securities or other instruments and could result in disruptions in the trading markets. Any of such circumstances could have a materially negative impact on the value of a Fund's shares and result in increased market volatility. During any such events, the Fund's shares may trade at increased premiums or discounts to their net asset value.

Health crises caused by the outbreak of infectious diseases or other public health issues, may exacerbate other pre-existing political, social, economic, market and financial risks. The impact of any such events, could negatively affect the global economy, as well as the economies of individual countries or regions, the financial performance of individual companies, sectors and industries, and the markets in general in significant and unforeseen ways. Any such impact could adversely affect the prices and liquidity of the securities and other instruments in which the Fund invests and negatively impact the Fund's investment return. For example, an outbreak of a respiratory disease designated as COVID-19 was first detected in China in December 2019 and subsequently spread internationally. The transmission of COVID-19 and efforts to contain its spread resulted in international, national and local border closings and other significant travel restrictions and disruptions, significant disruptions to business operations, supply chains and customer activity, event cancellations and restrictions, service cancellations, reductions and other changes, significant challenges in healthcare service preparation and delivery, and quarantines, as well as general concern and uncertainty that negatively affected the economic environment. While the development of vaccines has slowed the spread of the virus and allowed for the resumption of reasonably normal business activity in the United States, many countries continue to impose lockdown measures in an attempt to slow the spread. Additionally, there is no guarantee that vaccines will be effective against emerging variants of the disease. The impact of this COVID-19 pandemic may be short term or may last for an extended period of time, and in either case could result in a substantial economic downturn or recession.

In addition, the operations of the Fund, the Advisor and the Fund's other service providers may be significantly impacted, or even temporarily or permanently halted, as a result of government quarantine measures, voluntary and precautionary restrictions on travel or meetings and other factors related to a public health emergency, including its potential adverse impact on the health of any such entity's personnel.

### ***Non-U.S. Securities Risk***

An investment in non-U.S. securities involves risks in addition to the usual risks inherent in domestic investments, including currency risk. The value of a non-U.S. security in U.S. dollars tends to decrease when the value of the U.S. dollar rises against the non-U.S. currency in which the security is denominated and tends to increase when the value of the U.S. dollar falls against such currency. Non-U.S. securities are affected by the fact that in many countries there is less publicly available information about issuers than is available in the reports and ratings published about companies in the United States and companies may not be subject to uniform accounting, auditing and financial reporting standards. Other risks inherent in non U.S. investments may include expropriation; confiscatory taxation; withholding taxes on dividends and interest; less extensive regulation of non-U.S. brokers, securities markets and issuers; diplomatic developments; and political or social instability. Non-U.S. economies may differ favorably or unfavorably from the U.S. economy in various respects, and many non-U.S. securities are

less liquid and their prices tend to be more volatile than comparable U.S. securities. From time to time, non-U.S. securities may be difficult to liquidate rapidly without adverse price effects.

## MANAGEMENT OF THE FUND

### Trustees and Officers

The general supervision of the duties performed for the Fund under the investment management agreement and sub-advisory agreements is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. There are six Trustees of the Trust, one of whom is an "interested person" (as the term is defined in the 1940 Act) and five of whom are Trustees who are not officers or employees of First Trust or any of its affiliates ("*Independent Trustees*"). The Trustees set broad policies for the Fund, choose the Trust's officers and hire the Trust's investment advisor and sub-advisors. The officers of the Trust manage its day-to-day operations and are responsible to the Board of Trustees. The following is a list of the Trustees and executive officers of the Trust and a statement of their present positions and principal occupations during the past five years, the number of portfolios each Trustee oversees and the other directorships they have held during the past five years, if applicable. Each Trustee has been elected for an indefinite term. The officers of the Trust serve indefinite terms. Each Trustee, except for James A. Bowen, is an Independent Trustee. Mr. Bowen is deemed an "interested person" (as that term is defined in the 1940 Act) ("*Interested Trustee*") of the Trust due to his position as Chief Executive Officer of First Trust, investment advisor to the Fund. The following table identifies the Trustees and Officers of the Trust. Unless otherwise indicated, the address of all persons below is c/o First Trust Advisors L.P., 120 East Liberty Drive, Suite 400, Wheaton, IL 60187.

Name and Year of Birth	Position and Offices with Trust	Term of Office and Year First Elected or Appointed	Principal Occupations During Past 5 Years	Number of Portfolios in the First Trust Fund Complex Overseen by Trustee	Other Trusteeships or Directorships Held by Trustee During the Past 5 Years
<b>TRUSTEE WHO IS AN INTERESTED PERSON OF THE TRUST</b>					
James A. Bowen <sup>(1)</sup> 1955	Chairman of the Board and Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indefinite term</li> <li>• Since inception</li> </ul>	Chief Executive Officer, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.; Chairman of the Board of Directors, BondWave LLC (Software Development Company) and Stonebridge Advisors LLC (Investment Advisor)	218 Portfolios	None
<b>INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES</b>					
Richard E. Erickson 1951	Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indefinite term</li> <li>• Since inception</li> </ul>	Physician, Edward-Elmhurst Medical Group; Physician and Officer, Wheaton Orthopedics (1990 to 2021)	218 Portfolios	None
Thomas R. Kadlec 1957	Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indefinite term</li> <li>• Since inception</li> </ul>	President, ADM Investor Services, Inc. (Futures Commission Merchant)	218 Portfolios	Director of ADM Investor Services, Inc., ADM Investor Services International, ADMIS Hong Kong Ltd., ADMIS Singapore Ltd., Futures Industry Association, and National Futures Association

Name and Year of Birth	Position and Offices with Trust	Term of Office and Year First Elected or Appointed	Principal Occupations During Past 5 Years	Number of Portfolios in the First Trust Fund Complex Overseen by Trustee	Other Trusteeships or Directorships Held by Trustee During the Past 5 Years
<b>INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES</b>					
Denise M. Keefe 1964	Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since 2021</li> </ul>	Executive Vice President, Advocate Aurora Health and President, Advocate Aurora Continuing Health Division (Integrated Healthcare System)	218 Portfolios	Director and Board Chair of Advocate Home Health Services, Advocate Home Care Products and Advocate Hospice; Director and Board Chair of Aurora At Home (since 2018); Director of Advocate Physician Partners Accountable Care Organization; Director and Board Chair of RML Long Term Acute Care Hospitals; and Director of Senior Helpers (since 2021)
Robert F. Keith 1956	Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since inception</li> </ul>	President, Hibs Enterprises (Financial and Management Consulting)	218 Portfolios	Director of Trust Company of Illinois
Niel B. Nielson 1954	Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since inception</li> </ul>	Senior Advisor (August 2018 to present), Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer (January 2015 to August 2018), Pelita Harapan Educational Foundation (Educational Products and Services)	218 Portfolios	None

Name and Year of Birth	Position and Offices with Trust	Term of Office and Length of Service	Principal Occupations During Past 5 Years
<b>OFFICERS OF THE TRUST</b>			
James M. Dykas 1966	President and Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since January 2016</li> </ul>	Managing Director and Chief Financial Officer (January 2016 to present), Controller (January 2011 to January 2016), Senior Vice President (April 2007 to January 2016), First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.; Chief Financial Officer (January 2016 to present), BondWave LLC (Software Development Company) and Stonebridge Advisors LLC (Investment Advisor)
W. Scott Jardine 1960	Secretary and Chief Legal Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since inception</li> </ul>	General Counsel, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.; Secretary and General Counsel, BondWave LLC; and Secretary, Stonebridge Advisors LLC
Daniel J. Lindquist 1970	Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since inception</li> </ul>	Managing Director, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Kristi A. Maher 1966	Chief Compliance Officer and Assistant Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since inception</li> </ul>	Deputy General Counsel, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Donald P. Swade 1972	Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Accounting Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since January 2016</li> </ul>	Senior Vice President (July 2016 to Present), Vice President (April 2012 to July 2016), First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Roger F. Testin 1966	Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite term</li> <li>Since inception</li> </ul>	Senior Vice President, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.

(1) Mr. Bowen is deemed an "interested person" of the Trust due to his position as Chief Executive Officer of First Trust, investment advisor of the Fund.



## Unitary Board Leadership Structure

Each Trustee serves as a trustee of all open-end and closed-end funds in the First Trust Fund Complex (as defined below), which is known as a "unitary" board leadership structure. Each Trustee currently serves as a trustee of First Trust Series Fund and First Trust Variable Insurance Trust, open-end funds with eight portfolios advised by First Trust; First Trust Senior Floating Rate Income Fund II, Macquarie/First Trust Global Infrastructure/Utilities Dividend & Income Fund, First Trust Energy Income and Growth Fund, First Trust Enhanced Equity Income Fund, First Trust/Aberdeen Global Opportunity Income Fund, First Trust Mortgage Income Fund, First Trust/Aberdeen Emerging Opportunity Fund, First Trust Specialty Finance and Financial Opportunities Fund, First Trust High Income Long/Short Fund, First Trust Energy Infrastructure Fund, First Trust MLP and Energy Income Fund, First Trust Intermediate Duration Preferred & Income Fund, First Trust Dynamic Europe Equity Income Fund, First Trust New Opportunities MLP & Energy Fund, and First Trust High Yield Opportunities 2027 Term Fund, closed-end funds advised by First Trust; and First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund, First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund II, First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund III, First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund IV, First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund V, First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund VI, First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund VII, First Trust Exchange-Traded Fund VIII, First Trust Exchange-Traded AlphaDEX<sup>®</sup> Fund and First Trust Exchange-Traded AlphaDEX<sup>®</sup> Fund II, exchange-traded funds with 195 portfolios advised by First Trust (each a "First Trust Fund" and collectively, the "First Trust Fund Complex"). None of the Trustees who are not "interested persons" of the Trust, nor any of their immediate family members, has ever been a director, officer or employee of, or consultant to, First Trust, First Trust Portfolios L.P. or their affiliates.

The management of the Fund, including general supervision of the duties performed for the Fund under the investment management agreement between the Trust, on behalf of the Fund, and the Advisor, is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. The Trustees set broad policies for the Fund, choose the Trust's officers and hire the Fund's investment advisor, sub-advisors and other service providers. The officers of the Trust manage the day-to-day operations and are responsible to the Board. The Board is composed of five Independent Trustees and one Interested Trustee. The Interested Trustee, James A. Bowen, serves as the Chairman of the Board for each fund in the First Trust Fund Complex.

The same six persons serve as Trustees on the Board and on the Boards of all other First Trust Funds. The unitary board structure was adopted for the First Trust Funds because of the efficiencies it achieves with respect to the governance and oversight of the First Trust Funds. Each First Trust Fund is subject to the rules and regulations of the 1940 Act (and other applicable securities laws), which means that many of the First Trust Funds face similar issues with respect to certain of their fundamental activities, including risk management, portfolio liquidity, portfolio valuation and financial reporting. Because of the similar and often overlapping issues facing the First Trust Funds, the Board of the First Trust Funds believes that maintaining a unitary board structure promotes efficiency and consistency in the governance and oversight of all First Trust Funds and reduces the costs, administrative burdens and possible conflicts that may result from having multiple boards. In adopting a unitary board structure, the Trustees seek to provide effective governance through establishing a board the overall composition of which will, as a body, possess the appropriate skills, diversity, independence and experience to oversee the Fund's business.

Annually, the Board reviews its governance structure and the committee structures, their performance and functions, and it reviews any processes that would enhance Board governance over the Fund's business. The Board has determined that its leadership structure, including the unitary board and committee structure, is appropriate based on the characteristics of the funds it serves and the characteristics of the First Trust Fund Complex as a whole.

In order to streamline communication between the Advisor and the Independent Trustees and create certain efficiencies, the Board has a Lead Independent Trustee who is responsible for: (i) coordinating activities of the Independent Trustees; (ii) working with the Advisor, Fund counsel and the independent legal counsel to the Independent Trustees to determine the agenda for Board meetings; (iii) serving as the principal contact for and facilitating communication between the Independent Trustees and the Fund's service providers, particularly the Advisor; and (iv) any other duties that the Independent Trustees may delegate to the Lead Independent Trustee. The Lead Independent Trustee is selected by the Independent Trustees and serves a three-year term or until his or her successor is selected.

The Board has established five standing committees (as described below) and has delegated certain of its responsibilities to those committees. The Board and its committees meet frequently throughout the year to oversee the Fund's activities, review contractual arrangements with and performance of service providers, oversee compliance with regulatory requirements and review Fund performance. The Independent Trustees are represented by independent legal counsel at all Board and committee meetings (other than meetings of the Executive Committee and Dividend Committee). Generally, the Board acts by majority vote of all the Trustees, including a majority vote of the Independent Trustees if required by applicable law.

The four Committee Chairmen and the Lead Independent Trustee rotate every three years in serving as Chairman of the Audit Committee, the Nominating and Governance Committee, the Valuation Committee or the Dividend Committee, or as Lead Independent Trustee. The Lead Independent Trustee and immediately preceding Lead Independent Trustee also serve on the Executive Committee with the Interested Trustee.

The five standing committees of the First Trust Fund Complex are: the Executive Committee, the Nominating and Governance Committee, the Valuation Committee, the Audit Committee and the Dividend Committee. The Executive Committee, which meets between Board meetings, is authorized to exercise all powers of and to act in the place of the Board of Trustees to the extent permitted by the Trust's Declaration of Trust and By Laws. Mr. Nielson, Mr. Bowen and Dr. Erickson are members of the Executive Committee. During the last fiscal year, the Executive Committee did not meet.

The Nominating and Governance Committee is responsible for appointing and nominating non-interested persons to the Board of Trustees. Messrs. Kadlec, Keith, Nielson, Dr. Erickson and Ms. Keefe are members of the Nominating and Governance Committee. If there is no vacancy on the Board of Trustees, the Board will not actively seek recommendations from other parties, including shareholders. The Board of Trustees adopted a mandatory retirement age of 75 for Trustees, beyond which age Trustees are ineligible to serve. The Committee will not consider new trustee candidates who are 72 years of age or older or will turn 72 years old during the initial term. When a vacancy on the Board of Trustees occurs or is anticipated to occur and nominations are sought to fill such vacancy, the Nominating and Governance Committee may seek nominations from those sources it deems appropriate in its discretion, including shareholders of the applicable Fund. To submit a recommendation for nomination as a candidate for a position on the Board of Trustees, shareholders of the applicable Fund should mail such recommendation to W. Scott Jardine, Secretary, at the Trust's address, 120 East Liberty Drive, Suite 400, Wheaton, Illinois 60187. Such recommendation shall include the following information: (i) evidence of Fund ownership of the person or entity recommending the candidate (if a Fund shareholder); (ii) a full description of the proposed candidate's background, including education, experience, current employment and date of birth; (iii) names and addresses of at least three professional references for the candidate; (iv) information as to whether the candidate is an "interested person" in relation to the Fund, as such term is defined in the 1940 Act, and such other information that may be considered to impair the candidate's independence; and (v) any other information that may be helpful to the Committee in evaluating the candidate. If a recommendation is received with satisfactorily completed information regarding a candidate during a time when a vacancy exists on the Board or during such other time as the Nominating and Governance Committee is accepting recommendations, the recommendation will be forwarded to the Chairman of the Nominating and Governance Committee and to counsel to the Independent Trustees. During the last fiscal year, the Nominating and Governance Committee held four meetings.

The Valuation Committee is responsible for the oversight of the valuation procedures of the Fund (the "*Valuation Procedures*"), for determining the fair value of the Fund's securities or other assets under certain circumstances as described in the Valuation Procedures and for evaluating the performance of any pricing service for the Fund. Messrs. Kadlec, Keith, Nielson, Dr. Erickson and Ms. Keefe are members of the Valuation Committee. During the last fiscal year, the Valuation Committee held four meetings.

The Audit Committee is responsible for overseeing the Fund's accounting and financial reporting process, the system of internal controls and audit process and for evaluating and appointing independent auditors (subject also to Board approval). Messrs. Kadlec, Keith, Nielson, Dr. Erickson and Ms. Keefe serve on the Audit Committee. During the last fiscal year, the Audit Committee held seven meetings.

The Dividend Committee is responsible for assisting the Board in, or assuming the authority and power of the Board with respect to, the declaration and setting of the Fund's dividends. Messrs. Erickson and Nielson serve on the Dividend Committee. During the last fiscal year, the Dividend Committee did not meet.

## **Executive Officers**

The executive officers of the Trust hold the same positions with each fund in the First Trust Fund Complex (representing 218 portfolios) as they hold with the Trust.

## **Risk Oversight**

As part of the general oversight of the Fund, the Board is involved in the risk oversight of the Fund. The Board has adopted and periodically reviews policies and procedures designed to address the Fund's risks. Oversight of investment and compliance risk, including oversight of any sub-advisors, is performed primarily at the Board level in conjunction with the Advisor's investment oversight group and the Trust's Chief Compliance Officer ("CCO"). Oversight of other risks also occurs

at the committee level. The Advisor's investment oversight group reports to the Board at quarterly meetings regarding, among other things, Fund performance and the various drivers of such performance. The Board reviews reports on the Fund's and the service providers' compliance policies and procedures at each quarterly Board meeting and receives an annual report from the CCO regarding the operations of the Fund's and the service providers' compliance programs. In addition, the Independent Trustees meet privately each quarter with the CCO. The Audit Committee reviews with the Advisor the Fund's major financial risk exposures and the steps the Advisor has taken to monitor and control these exposures, including the Fund's risk assessment and risk management policies and guidelines. The Audit Committee also, as appropriate, reviews in a general manner the processes other Board committees have in place with respect to risk assessment and risk management. The Nominating and Governance Committee monitors all matters related to the corporate governance of the Fund. The Valuation Committee monitors valuation risk and compliance with the Fund's Valuation Procedures and oversees the pricing services and actions by the Advisor's Pricing Committee with respect to the valuation of portfolio securities.

Not all risks that may affect the Fund can be identified nor can controls be developed to eliminate or mitigate their occurrence or effects. It may not be practical or cost effective to eliminate or mitigate certain risks, the processes and controls employed to address certain risks may be limited in their effectiveness, and some risks are simply beyond the reasonable control of the Fund or the Advisor or other service providers. For instance, as the use of Internet technology has become more prevalent, the Fund and its service providers have become more susceptible to potential operational risks through breaches in cyber security (generally, intentional and unintentional events that may cause the Fund or a service provider to lose proprietary information, suffer data corruption or lose operational capacity). There can be no guarantee that any risk management systems established by the Fund, its service providers, or issuers of the securities in which the Fund invests to reduce cyber security risks will succeed, and the Fund cannot control such systems put in place by service providers, issuers or other third parties whose operations may affect the Fund and/or their shareholders. Moreover, it is necessary to bear certain risks (such as investment-related risks) to achieve the Fund's goals. As a result of the foregoing and other factors, the Fund's ability to manage risk is subject to substantial limitations.

## **Board Diversification and Trustee Qualifications**

As described above, the Nominating and Governance Committee of the Board oversees matters related to the selection and nomination of Trustees. The Nominating and Governance Committee seeks to establish an effective Board with an appropriate range of skills and diversity, including, as appropriate, differences in background, professional experience, education, vocation, and other individual characteristics and traits in the aggregate. Each Trustee must meet certain basic requirements, including relevant skills and experience, time availability and, if qualifying as an Independent Trustee, independence from the Advisor and any sub-advisors or other service providers, including any affiliates of these entities.

Listed below for each current Trustee are the experiences, qualifications and attributes that led to the conclusion, as of the date of this SAI, that each current Trustee should serve as a Trustee in light of the Trust's business and structure.

Richard E. Erickson, M.D., is an orthopedic surgeon with Edward-Elmhurst Medical Group. He was previously President of Wheaton Orthopedics, a co-owner and director of a fitness center and a limited partner of two real estate companies. Dr. Erickson has served as a Trustee of each First Trust Fund since its inception and of the First Trust Funds since 1999. Dr. Erickson has also served as the Lead Independent Trustee (2008 - 2009 and 2017 - 2019) and on the Executive Committee (2008 - 2009 and 2017 - present), Chairman of the Nominating and Governance Committee (2003 - 2007 and 2014 - 2016), Chairman of the Audit Committee (2012 - 2013) and Chairman of the Valuation Committee (June 2006 - 2007 and 2010 - 2011) of the First Trust Funds. He currently serves as Chairman of the Valuation Committee (since January 1, 2020) of the First Trust Funds.

Thomas R. Kadlec is President of ADM Investor Services Inc. ("ADMIS"), a futures commission merchant and wholly-owned subsidiary of the Archer Daniels Midland Company ("ADM"). Mr. Kadlec has been employed by ADMIS and its affiliates since 1990 in various accounting, financial, operations and risk management capacities. Mr. Kadlec serves on the boards of several international affiliates of ADMIS and served as a member of ADM's Integrated Risk Committee from 2008 - 2018, which was tasked with the duty of implementing and communicating enterprise-wide risk management. In 2014, Mr. Kadlec was elected to the board of the Futures Industry Association. In 2017, Mr. Kadlec was elected to the board of the National Futures Association. Mr. Kadlec has served as a Trustee of each First Trust Fund since its inception. Mr. Kadlec also served on the Executive Committee from the organization of the first First Trust closed-end fund in 2003 through 2005 (and 2014 - 2019) until he was elected as the first Lead Independent Trustee in December 2005, serving as such through 2007 (and 2014 - 2016). He also served as Chairman of the Valuation Committee (2008 - 2009 and 2017 - 2019), Chairman of the Audit Committee (2010 - 2011)

and Chairman of the Nominating and Governance Committee (2012 - 2013). He currently serves as Chairman of the Audit Committee (since January 1, 2020) of the First Trust Funds.

Denise M. Keefe is Executive Vice President of Advocate Aurora Health and President of Advocate Aurora Continuing Health Division (together, "Advocate"), one of the largest integrated healthcare systems in the U.S. serving Illinois and Wisconsin. Ms. Keefe has been employed by Advocate since 1993 and is responsible for the Continuing Health Division's strategic direction, fiscal management, business development, revenue enhancement, operational efficiencies, and human resource management of 4,000 employees. Ms. Keefe also currently serves on the boards of several organizations within the Advocate Aurora Continuing Health Division and other health care organizations, including RML Long Term Acute Care Hospitals (since 2014) and Senior Helpers (since 2021). Prior thereto, Ms. Keefe was Corporate Vice President, Marketing and Business Development for the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago (1989 - 1992) and a former Board Member of Sherman West Court Skilled Nursing Facility. Ms. Keefe has served as a Trustee of the First Trust Funds and on the Audit Committee, Nominating and Governance Committee and Valuation Committee of the First Trust Funds since November 1, 2021.

Robert F. Keith is President of Hibs Enterprises, a financial and management consulting firm. Mr. Keith has been with Hibs Enterprises since 2003. Prior thereto, Mr. Keith spent 18 years with ServiceMaster and Aramark, including three years as President and COO of ServiceMaster Consumer Services, where he led the initial expansion of certain products overseas; five years as President and COO of ServiceMaster Management Services; and two years as President of Aramark ServiceMaster Management Services. Mr. Keith is a certified public accountant and also has held the positions of Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer of ServiceMaster, at which time he oversaw the financial aspects of ServiceMaster's expansion of its Management Services division into Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Mr. Keith has served as a Trustee of the First Trust Funds since June 2006. Mr. Keith has also served as the Chairman of the Audit Committee (2008 - 2009 and 2017 - 2019), Chairman of the Nominating and Governance Committee (2010 - 2011) and Chairman of the Valuation Committee (2014 - 2016) of the First Trust Funds. He served as Lead Independent Trustee and on the Executive Committee (2012 - 2016) and currently serves as Chairman of the Nominating and Governance Committee (since January 1, 2020) of the First Trust Funds.

Niel B. Nielson, Ph.D., has been the Senior Advisor of Pelita Harapan Educational Foundation, a global provider of educational products and services since August 2018. Prior thereto, Mr. Nielson served as the Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of Pelita Harapan Educational Foundation for three years. Mr. Nielson formerly served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Dew Learning LLC from June 2012 through September 2014. Mr. Nielson formerly served as President of Covenant College (2002 - 2012), and as a partner and trader (of options and futures contracts for hedging options) for Ritchie Capital Markets Group (1996 - 1997), where he held an administrative management position at this proprietary derivatives trading company. He also held prior positions in new business development for ServiceMaster Management Services Company and in personnel and human resources for NationsBank of North Carolina, N.A. and Chicago Research and Trading Group, Ltd. ("CRT"). His international experience includes serving as a director of CRT Europe, Inc. for two years, directing out of London all aspects of business conducted by the U.K. and European subsidiary of CRT. Prior to that, Mr. Nielson was a trader and manager at CRT in Chicago. Mr. Nielson has served as a Trustee of each First Trust Fund since its inception and of the First Trust Funds since 1999. Mr. Nielson has also served as the Chairman of the Audit Committee (2003 - 2006 and 2014 - 2016), Chairman of the Valuation Committee (2007 - 2008), Chairman of the Nominating and Governance Committee (2008 - 2009 and 2017 - 2019) and Lead Independent Trustee and a member of the Executive Committee (2010 - 2011). He currently serves as Lead Independent Trustee and on the Executive Committee (since January 1, 2020) and as Chairman of the Dividend Committee (since October 19, 2020) of the First Trust Funds.

James A. Bowen is Chief Executive Officer of First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P. Mr. Bowen is involved in the day-to-day management of the First Trust Funds and serves on the Executive Committee. He has over 35 years of experience in the investment company business in sales, sales management and executive management. Mr. Bowen has served as a Trustee of each First Trust Fund since its inception and of the First Trust Funds since 1999.

Effective January 1, 2020, the fixed annual retainer paid to the Independent Trustees is \$255,000 per year and an annual per fund fee of \$2,500 for each closed-end fund and actively managed fund, \$750 for each defined outcome fund and \$250 for each index fund. The fixed annual retainer is allocated equally among each fund in the First Trust Fund Complex rather than being allocated pro rata based on each fund's net assets. Additionally, the Lead Independent Trustee is paid \$30,000 annually, the Chairman of the Audit Committee or Valuation Committee are each paid \$20,000 annually and the Chairman of the Nominating and Governance Committee is paid \$10,000 annually to serve in such capacities with compensation allocated pro rata among each fund in the First Trust Fund Complex based on its net assets.

The following table sets forth the total compensation (including reimbursement for travel and out-of-pocket expenses) paid by the Fund and the compensation paid by the First Trust Fund Complex to each of the Independent Trustees for services

during the fiscal year and the calendar year ended December 31, 2021, respectively. The Trust has no retirement or pension plans. The officers and Trustee who are “interested persons” as designated above serve without any compensation from the Trust. The Trust has no employees. Its officers are compensated by First Trust.

<b>Name of Trustee</b>	<b>Total Compensation from the Fund <sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>Total Compensation from the First Trust Fund Complex <sup>(2)</sup></b>
Richard E. Erickson	\$3,756	\$509,393
Thomas R. Kadlec	\$3,756	\$509,393
Denise M. Keefe <sup>(3)</sup>	\$ 923	\$125,813
Robert F. Keith	\$3,752	\$499,393
Niel B. Nielson	\$3,762	\$519,393

(1) The compensation paid by the Fund to the Independent Trustees for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021 for services to the Fund.

(2) The total compensation paid to the Independent Trustees for the calendar year ended December 31, 2021 for services to the 219 portfolios existing in 2021, which consisted of 8 open-end mutual funds, 16 closed-end funds and 195 exchange-traded funds.

(3) Ms. Keefe was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the First Trust Funds effective November 1, 2021.

The following table sets forth the dollar range of equity securities beneficially owned by the Trustees in the Fund and in other funds overseen by the Trustees in the First Trust Fund Complex as of December 31, 2021:

<b>Trustee</b>	<b>Dollar Range of Equity Securities in the Fund (Number of Shares Held)</b>	<b>Aggregate Dollar Range of Equity Securities in All Registered Investment Companies Overseen by Trustee in the First Trust Fund Complex</b>
<b>Interested Trustee</b>		
James A. Bowen	None	Over \$100,000
<b>Independent Trustees</b>		
Richard E. Erickson	None	Over \$100,000
Thomas R. Kadlec	None	Over \$100,000
Denise M. Keefe	None	None
Robert F. Keith	None	Over \$100,000
Niel B. Nielson	None	Over \$100,000

As of March 31, 2022, the Independent Trustees of the Trust and their immediate family members did not own beneficially or of record any class of securities of an investment advisor or principal underwriter of the Fund or any person directly or indirectly controlling, controlled by or under common control with an investment advisor or principal underwriter of the Fund.

As of March 31, 2022, the officers and Trustees, in the aggregate, owned less than 1% of the shares of the Fund.

As of March 31, 2022, the Advisor did not own any shares of the Fund.

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

To mitigate the possibility that the Fund will be adversely affected by personal trading of employees, the Trust, First Trust and First Trust Portfolios have adopted Codes of Ethics under Rule 17j-1 of the 1940 Act. These Codes contain policies restricting securities trading in personal accounts of the officers, Trustees and others who normally come into possession of information on portfolio transactions. These Codes are on public file with, and are available from, the SEC. An employee of First Trust or FTP could hold shares of the First Trust Dorsey Wright Tactical Core Portfolio, if he or she were to purchase a variable annuity or variable life insurance policy that included the Fund as a “sub-Fund selection” and as long as the Fund was not included on FTP’s restricted list.

## PROXY VOTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Trust has adopted a proxy voting policy that seeks to ensure that proxies for securities held by the Fund are voted consistently with the best interests of the Fund.

The Board has delegated to First Trust the proxy voting responsibilities for the Fund and has directed First Trust to vote proxies consistent with the Fund's best interests. First Trust has engaged the services of Institutional Shareholder Services Inc. ("ISS"), to make recommendations to First Trust on the voting of proxies relating to securities held by the Fund. If First Trust manages the assets of a company or its pension plan and any of First Trust's clients hold any securities of that company, First Trust will generally vote proxies relating to such company's securities in accordance with the ISS recommendations to avoid any conflict of interest. While these guidelines are not intended to be all inclusive, they do provide guidance on First Trust's general voting policies.

To the extent that the Fund invests in other registered investment companies ("*acquired funds*"), it may do so subject to the restrictions of Section 12(d)(1) of the 1940 Act and the related rules and interpretations. The ability of the Fund to invest in acquired funds under the 1940 Act and the related rules and interpretations is conditioned upon complying with a number of undertakings, some of which require the Funds to vote their shares in an acquired fund in the same proportion as other holders of the acquired fund's shares. As a result, to the extent that the Fund, or another registered investment company advised by First Trust invests in an acquired fund, First Trust will vote shares of that acquired fund in the same proportion as the other holders of that acquired fund's shares to the extent required by the 1940 Act and the related rules and interpretations.

First Trust has adopted the ISS Proxy Voting Guidelines. While these guidelines are not intended to be all-inclusive, they do provide guidance on First Trust's general voting policies. First Trust's use of the ISS Proxy Voting Guidelines is not intended to constrain First Trust's consideration of any proxy proposal, and there may be times when First Trust deviates from the ISS Proxy Voting Guidelines. First Trust retains final authority and fiduciary responsibility for proxy voting. The ISS Proxy Voting Guidelines are attached hereto as *Exhibit A*.

Information regarding how the Fund voted proxies (if any) relating to portfolio securities during the most recent 12-month period ended June 30 is available upon request and without charge on the Fund's website at [www.ftportfolios.com](http://www.ftportfolios.com), by calling (800) 621-1675 or by accessing the SEC's website at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov).

## CONTROL PERSONS AND PRINCIPAL HOLDERS OF SECURITIES

To the extent required by applicable law, Participating Insurance Companies will solicit voting instructions from owners of the variable annuity and variable life insurance Contracts. All shares in the Fund will be voted by Participating Insurance Companies in accordance with voting instructions received from such Contract owners. Participating Insurance Companies will vote all of the shares which they are entitled to vote in the same proportion as the voting instructions given by variable annuity and variable life insurance Contract owners, on the issues presented. Participating Insurance Companies will also vote all shares owned in their own names proportional to such ownership. As a result of this proportional voting, a small number of Contract owners may have the ability to determine the outcome of any item voted on by the Fund.

## INVESTMENT ADVISORY AND OTHER SERVICES

### Investment Advisor

First Trust Advisors L.P., 120 East Liberty Drive, Suite 400, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, is the investment advisor to the Fund. As investment advisor, First Trust provides the Fund with professional investment supervision and management and permits any of its officers or employees to serve without compensation as Trustees or officers of the Trust if elected to such positions. First Trust provides the Fund with discretionary investment services and certain other services necessary with the management of the portfolio. Specifically, First Trust is responsible for supervising and directing the investments of the Fund in accordance with the Fund's investment objective(s), program, and restrictions as provided in the Prospectus and this SAI. First Trust is responsible for effecting all security transactions on behalf of the Fund. First Trust is also responsible for compliance with the provisions of the Code, applicable to the Fund (relating to the diversification requirements applicable to investments in underlying variable annuity and variable life insurance Contracts).

First Trust is a limited partnership with one limited partner, Grace Partners of DuPage L.P., and one general partner, The Charger Corporation. Grace Partners of DuPage L.P. is a limited partnership with one general partner, The Charger Corporation,

and a number of limited partners. The Charger Corporation is an Illinois corporation controlled by James A. Bowen, the Chief Executive Officer of First Trust. First Trust discharges its responsibilities subject to the policies of the Fund.

First Trust is also advisor to 8 open-end funds, 16 closed-end funds and 10 exchange-traded funds consisting of 195 series and is the evaluator and portfolio supervisor of certain unit investment trusts sponsored by First Trust Portfolios. FTP specializes in the underwriting, trading and distribution of unit investment trusts and other securities.

First Trust acts as investment advisor to the Fund pursuant to an investment management agreement (the “*Investment Management Agreement*”). The Investment Management Agreement continues in effect for the Fund from year to year after its initial two-year term so long as its continuation is approved at least annually by the Trustees including a majority of the Trustees who are not parties to such agreement or interested persons of any such party except in their capacity as Trustees of the Trust, or the interest holders of the Fund. It may be terminated at any time upon 60 days’ notice by either party, or by a majority vote of the outstanding shares of the Fund, and will terminate automatically upon assignment. Additional Fund may be subject to a different agreement. The Investment Management Agreement provides that First Trust, its partners, directors, officers, employees, and certain other persons performing specific functions for the Fund will only be liable to the Fund for losses resulting from willful misfeasance, bad faith, gross negligence, or reckless disregard of their obligations and duties under the agreement. As compensation for its services, the Fund pay First Trust a fee as described in the Prospectus. Provisions regarding expense limitations are described in the Prospectus.

Pursuant to the Investment Management Agreement between First Trust and the Trust, First Trust is paid an annual management fee of 0.35% of the Fund’s average daily net assets. The Fund is responsible for all of its expenses, including the investment advisory fees, costs of transfer agency, custody, fund administration, legal, audit and other services, interest, taxes, brokerage commissions and other expenses connected with the execution of portfolio transactions, distribution and service fees pursuant to a 12b-1 plan, if any, acquired fund fees and expenses, and extraordinary expenses. First Trust has agreed to waive fees and/or pay Fund expenses to the extent necessary to prevent the annual operating expenses of the Class I shares and Class II shares (excluding interest expense, brokerage commissions and other trading expenses, taxes and extraordinary expenses) from exceeding 1.30% and 1.05%, respectively, (the “*Expense Caps*”) at least until May 1, 2023. This contractual agreement shall continue until the earlier of (i) its termination at the direction of the Trust’s Board of Trustees or (ii) upon the termination of the Fund’s management agreement with First Trust, however, it is expected to remain in place for no less than one year from the date of this prospectus. Expenses borne and fees waived by First Trust are subject to reimbursement by the Fund up to three years from the date the fee or expense was incurred by the Fund, but no reimbursement payment will be made by the Fund at any time if it would result in a Class’s expenses (excluding interest expense, brokerage commissions and other trading expenses, taxes and extraordinary expenses) exceeding (i) the applicable Expense Cap in place for the most recent fiscal year for which such Expense Cap was in place, (ii) the applicable Expense Cap in place at the time the fees were waived, or (iii) the current Expense Cap.

The Fund paid the following advisory fees to First Trust and First Trust waived and reimbursed the amounts set forth below for the periods specified:

<b>Amount of Management Fees (Net of Fee Waivers and Expense Reimbursements By First Trust)</b>			<b>Amount of Fees Waived and Expenses Reimbursed By First Trust</b>		
<b>Fiscal Year Ended December 31,</b>			<b>Fiscal Year Ended December 31,</b>		
<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$301,093	\$264,357	\$251,423

### **Investment Committee**

The Investment Committee of First Trust (the “*Investment Committee*”) is jointly and primarily responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund’s portfolios. There are currently seven members of the Investment Committee, as follows:

Name	Position with First Trust	Length of Service with First Trust	Principal Occupation During Past Five Years
Daniel J. Lindquist	Chairman of the Investment Committee and Managing Director	Since 2004	Managing Director, (July 2012 to Present), Senior Vice President (September 2005 to July 2012), First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Jon C. Erickson	Senior Vice President	Since 1994	Senior Vice President, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
David G. McGarel	Chief Investment Officer, Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director	Since 1997	Chief Investment Officer (June 2012 to present), Managing Director (July 2012 to Present); Senior Vice President (January 2004 to July 2012), First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Roger F. Testin	Senior Vice President	Since 2001	Senior Vice President, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Todd Larson	Senior Vice President	Since 2007	Senior Vice President (2007 to Present), First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Chris A. Peterson	Senior Vice President	Since 2000	Senior Vice President, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.
Eric Maisel	Senior Vice President	Since 2008	Senior Vice President, First Trust Advisors L.P. and First Trust Portfolios L.P.

**Daniel J. Lindquist, CFA:** Mr. Lindquist is Chairman of First Trust's Investment Committee (the "*Investment Committee*") and presides over Investment Committee meetings. Mr. Lindquist is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Fund's investment strategies.

**Jon C. Erickson, CFA:** As the head of First Trust's Equity Research Group, Mr. Erickson is responsible for determining the securities to be purchased and sold by funds that do not utilize quantitative investment strategies.

**David G. McGarel, CFA:** As First Trust's Chief Investment Officer, Mr. McGarel consults with the Investment Committee on market conditions and First Trust's general investment philosophy. As Chief Operating Officer, Mr. McGarel is responsible for First Trust and FTP operations, including information systems, trust administration and First Trust administration.

**Roger F. Testin, CFA:** As head of First Trust's Portfolio Management Group, Mr. Testin is responsible for executing the instructions of the Strategy Research Group and Equity Research Group.

**Todd Larson, CFA:** Mr. Larson serves as a Senior Portfolio Manager for the First Trust Investment Grade Fixed Income Team.

**Chris A. Peterson, CFA:** Mr. Peterson is a Senior Vice President and head of the strategy research group at First Trust. Mr. Peterson is responsible for developing and implementing quantitative equity investment strategies.

**Eric Maisel:** Mr. Maisel serves as a Portfolio Manager for First Trust's Fixed Income Group.

## Compensation

The compensation structure for each member of the Investment Committee is based upon a fixed salary as well as a discretionary bonus determined by the management of First Trust. Salaries are determined by management and are based upon an individual's position and overall value to the firm. Bonuses are also determined by management and are based upon an individual's overall contribution to the success of the firm and the profitability of the firm. Salaries and bonuses for members of each Investment Committee are not based upon criteria such as Fund performance or the value of assets included in the Fund's portfolio. In addition, Mr. Erickson, Mr. Lindquist, Mr. McGarel and Mr. Peterson also have an indirect ownership stake in the firm and will therefore receive their allocable share of ownership-related distributions.

Each Investment Committee member manages the investment vehicles and accounts (other than the Trust) with the number of accounts and assets, as of December 31, 2021 set forth in the following table:



## Accounts Managed by Investment Committee

Investment Committee Member	Registered Investment Companies Number of Accounts (\$ Assets)	Other Pooled Investment Vehicles Number of Accounts (\$ Assets)	Other Accounts Number of Accounts (\$ Assets)
Daniel J. Lindquist	114 (\$101,667,682,626)	42 (\$1,971,188,673)	1,394 (\$618,038,182)
David G. McGarel	115 (\$101,670,941,587)	42 (\$1,971,188,673)	1,394 (\$618,038,182)
Jon C. Erickson	113 (\$101,629,394,633)	42 (\$1,971,188,673)	1,394 (\$618,038,182)
Roger F. Testin	113 (\$101,629,394,633)	42 (\$1,971,188,673)	1,394 (\$618,038,182)
Chris A. Peterson	115 (\$101,670,941,587)	42 (\$1,971,188,673)	1,394 (\$618,038,182)
Todd Larson	6 (\$4,748,548,092)	N/A	8 (\$4,200,372)
Eric Maisel	3 (\$4,661,509,759)	N/A	8 (\$4,200,372)

**Conflicts.** None of the accounts managed by the Investment Committee pay an advisory fee that is based upon the performance of the account. In addition, First Trust believes that there are no material conflicts of interest that may arise in connection with the Investment Committee's management of the Fund's investments and the investments of the other accounts managed by the Investment Committee. However, because the investment strategies of many of the other accounts managed by the Investment Committee are based on fairly mechanical investment processes, the Investment Committee may recommend that certain clients sell and other clients buy a given security at the same time. In addition, because the investment strategies of the Fund and other accounts managed by the Investment Committee generally result in the clients investing in readily available securities, First Trust believes that there should not be material conflicts in the allocation of investment opportunities between the Fund and other accounts managed by the Investment Committee. No member of the Investment Committee owns shares in the Fund.

### Distributor

First Trust Portfolios L.P., 120 East Liberty Drive, Suite 400, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, serves as the principal underwriter of the shares of the Fund pursuant to a "best efforts" arrangement as provided by a distribution agreement with the Trust on behalf of the Fund (the "*Distribution Agreement*"). FTP is affiliated with First Trust. The officers of the Trust described as being associated with First Trust and FTP are affiliated persons of both the Trust and FTP. Pursuant to the Distribution Agreement, the Fund appointed FTP to be its agent for the distribution of the Fund's shares on a continuous offering basis. FTP sells shares of the Fund to Accounts. Pursuant to the Distribution Agreement, FTP, at its own expense, finances certain activities incident to the sale and distribution of the shares of the Fund, including printing and distribution of Prospectus and SAI to other than existing shareholders and the printing and distributing of sales literature and advertising. FTP does not receive underwriting commissions for its sale of shares of the Fund, but may receive compensation pursuant to a Rule 12b-1 plan adopted by the Trust on behalf of the Fund and described herein under the section entitled "Rule 12b-1 Plan."

### Administrator

The Fund pays an administration fee as set forth in the Prospectus to cover expenses incurred by Participating Insurance Companies in connection with the administration of the Fund, Accounts and the Contracts. First Trust may also pay an additional administrative fee to Participating Insurance Companies for the Fund as set forth in the Fund's Prospectus. The services provided by Participating Insurance Companies shall include, among others, the following: (i) coordinating matters relating to the operation of the Accounts with the Fund, including any necessary coordination with the custodian, transfer agent, dividend disbursing agent, recordkeeping agent, accountants, attorneys, and other parties performing services or operational functions for the Fund; (ii) coordinating the preparation of the necessary documents with the SEC and other federal and state regulatory authorities as may be required; (iii) taking such other action as may be required by applicable law with respect to the foregoing, including without limitation the rules and regulations of the SEC and of state insurance authorities and other regulatory agencies; and (iv) coordinating with First Trust regarding investment limitations and parameters imposed on funding vehicles for variable annuities by the insurance laws of the various states and by the Code. For the periods specified below, the Fund paid administration fees to the Participating Insurance Companies.

**Administrative Fees Paid to  
Participating Insurance Companies**

Fiscal Year Ended December 31,		
2021	2020	2019
\$125,717	\$90,489	\$97,481

Participating Insurance Companies also may make their officers and employees available to the Trustees and officers of the Trust for consultation and discussions regarding the operations of Accounts and the Contracts in connection with the administration of the Fund and services provided to the Fund.

### **Transfer Agent**

BNY Mellon Investment Servicing (US) Inc. (“BNY”), with corporate offices at 301 Bellevue Parkway, Wilmington, Delaware 19809, serves as the transfer and dividend disbursing agent for the Fund pursuant to a Transfer Agency Agreement (the “*Transfer Agency Agreement*”). Under the Transfer Agency Agreement, BNY maintains member registrations; performs services relating to member trading activity; and provides purchase and redemption services in accordance with instruction from the Trust.

### **Administration and Accounting Services Agreement**

Brown Brothers Harriman & Co., 50 Post Office Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02110, (“BBH”) serves as the Trust’s administrator and fund accounting agent pursuant to an Administration and Accounting Services Agreement (the “*Administration Agreement*”). BBH has agreed to furnish to the Trust statistical and research data, clerical, accounting and bookkeeping services, and certain other services required. In addition, BBH has agreed to prepare and file various reports with appropriate regulatory agencies. The Administration Agreement provides that BBH shall be obligated to exercise care and diligence in the performance of its duties, to act in good faith and to use its best efforts, within reasonable limits, in performing services thereunder. BBH shall be responsible for failure to perform its duties under the Administration Agreement arising out of its willful misfeasance, bad faith, gross negligence or reckless disregard. The Administration Agreement provides that BBH shall not be liable for any error of judgment or mistake of law or any loss suffered by the Trust or the Fund in connection with the performance of the agreement, except a loss resulting from willful misfeasance, gross negligence or reckless disregard by it of its duties and obligations thereunder. The fees paid to BBH for its services pursuant to the Administration Agreement are below.

**Aggregate Amount Paid to Administrator**

Fiscal Year Ended December 31,		
2021	2020	2019
\$52,498	\$52,641	\$52,498

### **Custodian**

BBH (the “*Custodian*”) acts as Custodian for the Fund pursuant to a Custodian Agreement between BBH and the Trust on behalf of the Fund (the “*Custodian Agreement*”). The Custodian has custody of all securities and cash of the Trust maintained in the United States and attends to the collection of principal and income and payment for and collection of proceeds of securities bought and sold by the Fund.

Pursuant to a letter agreement between BBH and the Trust on behalf of the Fund, the Trust has agreed to pay BBH fees for services provided under the Custodian Agreement.

### **Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm**

The Fund’s independent registered public accounting firm, Deloitte & Touche LLP (“*Deloitte*”), 111 South Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606, audits the Fund’s financial statements and performs other related audit services.

## **RULE 12B-1 PLAN**

The Trust has adopted a plan (the “Plan”) pursuant to Rule 12b-1 under the 1940 Act, which provides that Class I shares of the Fund will be subject to an annual 12b-1 service fee. Class II shares of the Fund are not subject to the 12b-1 service fee. The Trust has adopted the Plan to encourage each Participating Insurance Company to provide services to owners of shares of the Fund and to promote future sales of the Fund.

First Trust Portfolios serves as selling agent of the Fund. In this capacity, FTP manages the offering of the Fund's shares and is responsible for all sales and promotional activities. In order to compensate FTP for its costs in connection with these activities, the Fund has adopted a service plan for Class I shares under Rule 12b-1 under the 1940 Act. FTP uses the service fee to compensate each Participating Insurance Company for providing account services to Contract owners. These services include establishing and maintaining Contract owners' accounts, supplying information to Contract owners, delivering fund materials to Contract owners, answering inquiries, and providing other personal services to Contract owners. The Fund may spend up to 0.25% per year of the average daily net assets attributable to Class I shares as a service fee under the Plan. Class II shares are not subject to the 12b-1 service fee. In addition, the Plan permits First Trust to use a portion of its advisory fee to compensate FTP for expenses incurred in connection with the sale of the Fund's shares including, without limitation, compensation of its sales force, expenses of printing and distributing the Prospectus to persons other than shareholders or Contract owners, expenses of preparing, printing and distributing advertising and sales literature and reports to shareholders and Contract owners used in connection with the sale of the Fund's shares, certain other expenses associated with the servicing of shares of the Fund, and any service-related expenses that may be authorized from time to time by the Board of Trustees.

For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021, the Fund paid \$156,178 to Participating Insurance Companies under the Plan for providing account services.

As a result, none of the 12b-1 service fees were paid by FTP for: advertising, printing, and mailing of Prospectus to other than current interest holders, compensation to underwriters, compensation to broker/dealers, compensation to sales personnel, interest, carrying, or other financing charges and any other charges.

Under the Trust's Plan, the Trust will report quarterly to the Board of Trustees for its review all amounts expended under the Plan. The Plan may be terminated at any time with respect to the Fund, without the payment of any penalty, by a vote of a majority of the Trustees who are not “interested persons” and who have no direct or indirect financial interest in the Plan or by vote of a majority of the outstanding voting securities of the Fund on not more than sixty (60) days' written notice. The Plan may be renewed from year to year if approved by a vote of the Board of Trustees and a vote of the non-interested Trustees who have no direct or indirect financial interest in the Plan cast in person at a meeting called for the purpose of voting on the Plan. The Plan may be continued only if the Trustees who vote to approve such continuance conclude, in the exercise of reasonable business judgment and in light of their fiduciary duties under the applicable law, that there is a reasonable likelihood that the Plan will benefit the Fund and its shareholders. The Plan may not be amended to increase materially the cost which the Fund may bear under the Plan without the approval of the shareholders of the Fund, and any other material amendments of the Plan must be approved by the Independent Trustees by a vote cast in person at a meeting called for the purpose of considering such amendments. During the existence of the Plan, the selection and nomination of the Independent Trustees of the Trust will be committed to the discretion of the Independent Trustees then in office. With the exception of FTP and its affiliates, no “interested person” of the Trust (as that term is defined in the 1940 Act) and no Trustee of the Trust has a direct or indirect financial interest in the operation of the Plan or any related agreement.

## **OTHER PAYMENTS TO FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES**

In addition to the administrative fees and certain payments related to 12b-1 service fees paid by FTP to Participating Insurance Companies and other financial intermediaries as previously described, First Trust or its affiliates may from time to time make additional payments, out of its own resources, to Participating Insurance Companies or other financial intermediaries that sell shares of the Fund in order to promote the sales and retention of shares of the Fund by those firms and their customers. The amounts of these payments vary by Participating Insurance Company or financial intermediary and, with respect to a given firm, are typically calculated by reference to the amount of the firm's recent gross sales of Fund shares and/or total assets of the Fund held by the firm's customers. The level of payments that First Trust is willing to provide to a particular Participating Insurance Company or financial intermediary may be affected by, among other factors, the firm's total assets held in and recent net investments into the Fund, the firm's level of participation in Fund sales and marketing programs and the firm's compensation program for its registered representatives who sell Fund shares and provide services to Fund shareholders. First Trust or its affiliates may also make payments to Participating Insurance Companies or financial intermediaries in connection with sales

meetings, due diligence meetings, prospecting seminars and other meetings at which First Trust or its affiliates promotes its products and services. First Trust may also make payments to Participating Insurance Companies or certain financial intermediaries for certain administrative services, including record keeping and sub-accounting of shareholder accounts pursuant to a sub-transfer agency, omnibus account service or sub-accounting agreement. All fees payable by First Trust under this category of services may be charged back to the Fund, subject to approval by the Board.

The Fund also pays an administrative services fee to Participating Insurance Companies equal to 0.20% of the Fund's average daily net assets. The administrative services fee reimburses the Participating Insurance Companies for various recordkeeping and other administrative services related to the Contracts.

## **BROKERAGE ALLOCATIONS**

First Trust is responsible for decisions to buy and sell securities for the Fund and for the placement of the Fund's securities business, the negotiation of the commissions to be paid on brokered transactions, the prices for principal trades in securities, and the allocation of portfolio brokerage and principal business. It is the policy of First Trust to seek the best execution at the best security price available with respect to each transaction, and with respect to brokered transactions in light of the overall quality of brokerage and research services provided to First Trust and its clients. The best price to the Fund means the best net price without regard to the mix between purchase or sale price and commission, if any. Purchases may be made from underwriters, dealers and, on occasion, the issuers. Commissions will be paid on the Fund's futures and options transactions, if any. The purchase price of portfolio securities purchased from an underwriter or dealer may include underwriting commissions and dealer spreads. The Fund may pay markups on principal transactions. In selecting broker-dealers and in negotiating commissions, First Trust considers, among other things, the firm's reliability, the quality of its execution services on a continuing basis and its financial condition. Fund portfolio transactions may be effected with broker-dealers who have assisted investors in the purchase of shares.

Section 28(e) of the 1934 Act permits an investment advisor, under certain circumstances, to cause an account to pay a broker or dealer who supplies brokerage and research services a commission for effecting a transaction in excess of the amount of commission another broker or dealer would have charged for effecting the transaction. Brokerage and research services include (a) furnishing advice as to the value of securities, the advisability of investing, purchasing or selling securities, and the availability of securities or purchasers or sellers of securities; (b) furnishing analyses and reports concerning issuers, industries, securities, economic factors and trends, portfolio strategy and the performance of accounts; and (c) effecting securities transactions and performing functions incidental thereto (such as clearance, settlement and custody). Such brokerage and research services are often referred to as "soft dollars." First Trust has advised the Board of Trustees that it does not currently intend to use soft dollars.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, in selecting brokers, First Trust may in the future consider investment and market information and other research, such as economic, securities and performance measurement research, provided by such brokers, and the quality and reliability of brokerage services, including execution capability, performance and financial responsibility. Accordingly, the commissions charged by any such broker may be greater than the amount another firm might charge if First Trust determines in good faith that the amount of such commissions is reasonable in relation to the value of the research information and brokerage services provided by such broker to First Trust or the Trust. In addition, First Trust must determine that the research information received in this manner provides the Fund with benefits by supplementing the research otherwise available to the Fund. The Investment Management Agreement provides that such higher commissions will not be paid by the Fund unless First Trust determines in good faith that the amount is reasonable in relation to the services provided. The investment advisory fees paid by the Fund to First Trust under the Investment Management Agreement would not be reduced as a result of receipt by First Trust of research services.

First Trust places portfolio transactions for other advisory accounts advised by it, and research services furnished by firms through which the Fund effects securities transactions may be used by First Trust in servicing all of its accounts; not all of such services may be used by First Trust in connection with the Fund. First Trust believes it is not possible to measure separately the benefits from research services to each of the accounts (including the Fund) advised by it. Because the volume and nature of the trading activities of the accounts are not uniform, the amount of commissions in excess of those charged by another broker paid by each account for brokerage and research services will vary. However, First Trust believes such costs to the Fund will not be disproportionate to the benefits received by the Fund on a continuing basis. First Trust seeks to allocate portfolio transactions equitably whenever concurrent decisions are made to purchase or sell securities by the Fund and another advisory account. In some cases, this procedure could have an adverse effect on the price or the amount of securities available to the Fund. In making such allocations between the Fund and other advisory accounts, the main factors considered by First Trust

are the respective investment objectives, the relative size of portfolio holding of the same or comparable securities, the availability of cash for investment and the size of investment commitments generally held.

## Brokerage Commissions

The following table sets forth the aggregate amount of brokerage commissions paid by the Fund for the specified periods.

### Aggregate Amount of Brokerage Commissions

Fiscal Year Ended December 31,		
2021	2020	2019
\$19,031	\$62,926	\$7,809

During the fiscal year ended December 31, 2021, the Fund did not acquire shares of a regular broker or dealer of the Fund as defined in Rule 10b-1 under the 1940 Act.

## FREQUENT TRADING AND MARKET TIMING

The Fund has adopted a market timing/frequent trading policy (the "*Frequent Trading Policy*"). Market timing may be generally described as the practice of frequently buying and selling investment company shares in order to take advantage of a perceived arbitrage opportunity. Most often the practice has involved Funds that invest principally in non-U.S. securities. Market timing can have negative consequences for long-term investors in the Fund. First of all, the practice has the effect of "*siphoning*" a portion of the fund's gains and effectively diluting the returns to long-term investors. Additionally, if such activity occurs frequently and involves large amounts, it will affect how the portfolio manager manages the fund (likely forcing the manager to hold a larger portion of the fund's assets in cash or otherwise interfering with the efficient management of the portfolio). The practice would also likely have the effect of increasing transaction costs, which would be borne by all investors. All interests of the Fund are issued to, and redeemed from, Accounts. Furthermore, such sales and redemptions are affected only in response to purchases and redemptions of the related variable annuity sub-accounts sold by Participating Insurance Companies to their policyholders or transfers among the sub-accounts. Therefore, the Fund's risk of exposure to market timing is limited to such attempts as might be made through the sub-accounts.

Due to the fact that all shares of the Fund are issued to, and redeemed from, Accounts, it is difficult for the Fund to monitor trading by a particular investor. However, FTP has entered into an agreement with each Participating Insurance Company that permits the Fund, or its designee, to receive certain identity and transaction information and requires each Participating Insurance Company to follow any Fund instructions regarding the restriction or prohibition of certain future purchases or exchanges by shareholders in certain circumstances. The Fund may rely on each Participating Insurance Company to adopt policies and procedures or may rely on their own policies and procedures with respect to transfers into or from the Account. In addition, First Trust's portfolio management personnel will monitor activity within the portfolios of the Fund and will report any unusual activity to the Trust's Chief Compliance Officer.

Technical limitations in operational systems at Participating Insurance Companies or at FTP may limit the Fund ability to detect and prevent frequent trading. In addition, the Fund may permit Participating Insurance Companies to enforce their own internal policies and procedures concerning frequent trading. Such policies may differ from the Fund Frequent Trading Policy and may be approved for use in instances where the Fund reasonably believes that the Participating Insurance Company's policies and procedures effectively discourage inappropriate trading activity. Shareholders holding their accounts with Participating Insurance Companies may wish to contact the Participating Insurance Company for information regarding its frequent trading policy. Although the Fund does not knowingly permit frequent trading, it cannot guarantee that it will be able to identify and restrict all frequent trading activity.

The Fund reserves the right in its sole discretion to waive unintentional or minor violations (including transactions below certain dollar thresholds) if it determines that doing so would not harm the interests of the Fund's shareholders. These include, among others, redemptions pursuant to systematic withdrawal plans, redemptions in connection with the total disability or death of the investor and involuntary redemptions by operation of law, redemptions in payment of account or plan fees. The Fund may also modify or suspend the Frequent Trading Policy without notice during periods of market stress or other unusual circumstances.

The Fund reserves the right to impose restrictions on purchases or exchanges that are more restrictive than those stated above if it determines, in its sole discretion that a transaction or a series of transactions involves market timing or excessive trading that may be detrimental to such Fund's shareholders. The Fund also reserve the right to reject any purchase orders, including exchange purchases, for any reason. For example, the Fund may refuse purchase orders if such Fund would be unable to invest the proceeds from the purchase order in accordance with the Fund's investment policies and/or objective(s), or if the Fund would be adversely affected by the size of the transaction, the frequency of trading in the account or various other factors.

## **POLICY REGARDING DISCLOSURE OF PORTFOLIO HOLDINGS**

The Trust has adopted a policy regarding the disclosure of portfolio holdings (the "*Disclosure Policy*"). The purpose of the Disclosure Policy is to outline the Fund's policies and procedures with respect to the disclosure of portfolio holdings in order to comply with SEC requirements.

A listing of the portfolio holdings of the Fund generally shall not be provided to any person, including any investor of the Fund, until such time as the portfolio holdings have been filed with the SEC on Form N-PORT or Form N-CSR, as applicable, and posted on the Fund's website. Any person, including any investor of a Fund that requests a listing of the Fund's portfolio holdings, shall be provided with the portfolio holdings list most recently made publicly available pursuant to this Disclosure Policy (and/or portfolio holdings as of earlier periods that previously have been made publicly available, if requested).

Neither the Fund, First Trust, nor any other party shall receive any compensation whatsoever in connection with the disclosure of information about the portfolio securities of the Fund.

The Fund may on occasion release certain nonpublic portfolio information to selected parties if (i) the Trust's CCO determines such disclosure is consistent with a legitimate business purpose of the Fund; and (ii) the recipient is subject to a duty of confidentiality with respect to the information, including a duty not to trade on the nonpublic information. In this connection, selective disclosure of portfolio holdings will be made on an ongoing basis in the normal course of investment and administrative operations to service providers, which, to the best of the Trust's knowledge, include proxy voting services (including ISS), fund accountants and custodians (including BNY and BONY), as well as its financial printers (including Fitzgerald Marketing & Communications, LLC) and mailing service (GComm and Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc.), performance attribution vendors (including Factset Research Systems), tracking agencies (including Lipper, Inc., Morningstar, Inc., Standard & Poor's and Thomson Financial), accounting and auditing services (including Deloitte) and legal counsel to the Fund, the Independent Trustees or investment advisor (including Vedder Price P.C. and Chapman and Cutler LLP). All such third parties shall be bound by a Code of Ethics or similar insider trading policy or confidentiality agreement or duty prohibiting their use of any portfolio holdings information in an improper manner.

The Disclosure Policy will be monitored by the Trust's CCO. Any violations of the Disclosure Policy will be reported by the Trust's CCO to the Trust's Board of Trustees at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

These procedures were designed to ensure that disclosure of information about portfolio securities is in the best interests of the Fund, including the procedures to address conflicts between the interests of the Fund's shareholders, on the one hand, and those of the Fund's investment advisor; principal underwriter; or any of their respective affiliated persons, on the other.

## **VOTING RIGHTS AND GENERAL FUND INFORMATION**

Shareholders are entitled to one vote for each share held. Shareholders may vote on the election of Trustees and on other matters submitted to meetings of shareholders.

To the extent required by applicable law, Participating Insurance Companies will solicit voting instructions from owners of variable annuity and variable life insurance Contracts. All shares in a Fund will be voted by Participating Insurance Companies in accordance with voting instructions received from such Contract owners. A Participating Insurance Company will vote all of the shares, which it is entitled to vote in the same proportion as the voting instructions given by Contract owners, on the issues presented. Participating Insurance Companies will also vote all shares owned in their own names proportional to such ownership. As a result of this proportional voting, a small number of Contract owners may have the ability to determine the outcome of any item voted on by the Fund.

Each issued and outstanding share of a Fund is entitled to participate equally in dividends and distributions, if any, declared by the Fund, and in the net assets of the Fund remaining upon liquidation or dissolution after outstanding liabilities

are satisfied. The shares of the Fund, when issued, are fully paid and non-assessable. They have no preemptive, conversion, cumulative dividend or similar rights. The Fund can only be owned by Accounts. Shares in the Fund do not have cumulative rights. This means that owners of more than half of the Trust's shares voting for election of Trustees can elect all the Trustees if they so choose. Then, the remaining shareholders would not be able to elect any Trustees.

The Board of Trustees has the right to establish additional series in the future, to change Fund series, if applicable, and to determine the preferences, voting powers, rights and privileges thereof.

The Fund is not required and do not intend to hold annual meetings of shareholders. Shareholders owning more than 10% of the outstanding shares of the Fund have the right to call a special meeting to remove Trustees or for any other purpose.

## SHARE CLASSES

Each class of shares of the Fund represents an interest in the same portfolio of investments. Each class of shares is identical in all respects except that each class bears its own class expenses, including service expenses, if applicable, and each class has exclusive voting rights with respect to any distribution or service plan applicable to its shares. As a result of the differences in the expenses borne by each class of shares, net income per share, dividends per share and net asset value per share will vary among the Fund's classes of shares.

Shareholders of each class will share expenses proportionately for services that are received equally by all shareholders. A particular class of shares will bear only those expenses that are directly attributable to that class, where the type or amount of services received by a class varies from one class to another. For example, class-specific expenses generally will include 12b-1 service fees for Class I shares.

### Class I Shares

Class I shares may be purchased at a public offering price equal to the applicable net asset value per share without any sales charge. Class I shares are also subject to an annual 12b-1 service fee of 0.25% to compensate Participating Insurance Companies for providing you with ongoing financial advice and other account services. See the section entitled "Rule 12B-1 Plan." Class I shares are not subject to a distribution fee.

### Class II Shares

Class II shares may be purchased at a public offering price equal to the applicable net asset value per share without any sales charge. Class II shares are not subject to 12b-1 service or distribution fees. Contact your Participating Insurance Company for more information regarding the availability of Class II shares.

## PURCHASES, REDEMPTIONS AND PRICING OF SHARES

Accounts will purchase shares of the Fund at their net asset value. Shares are purchased using premiums received on Contracts issued by Accounts. Accounts are funded by shares of the Fund.

All investments in the Trust are credited to the shareholder's account in the form of full and fractional shares of the Fund (rounded to the nearest 1/1000 of a share). The Trust does not issue share certificates.

As stated in the Prospectus, the net asset value of a Fund's shares is determined once each day the New York Stock Exchange (the "NYSE") is open at the close of the regular trading session on the NYSE (normally 4:00 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday). The net asset value of a Fund's shares is not determined on days when the NYSE is closed. The NYSE holidays are generally: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

The Fund per-share net asset value for each class of the Fund is determined by dividing the total value of the securities and other assets attributable to such class, less liabilities attributable to such class, by the total number of shares outstanding for such class. The Fund net asset value may not be calculated on days during which the Fund receives no orders to purchase shares and no shares are tendered for redemption. In determining net asset value, portfolio securities for the Fund for which accurate market quotations are readily available will be valued by the fund accounting agent as follows:

- (1) Common stocks and other equity securities listed on any national or foreign exchange other than Nasdaq and the London Stock Exchange Alternative Investment Market ("AIM") will be valued at the last sale price on the

exchange on which they are principally traded, or the official closing price for Nasdaq and AIM securities. Portfolio securities traded on more than one securities exchange are valued at the last sale price or official closing price, as applicable, on the Business Day as of which such value is being determined at the close of the exchange representing the principal market for such securities.

- (2) Shares of open-end funds are valued at fair value which is based on NAV per share.
- (3) Securities traded in the OTC market are fair valued at the mean of their most recent bid and asked price, if available, and otherwise at their closing bid price.
- (4) Exchange-traded options and futures contracts are valued at the closing price in the market where such contracts are principally traded. If no closing price is available, they will be fair valued at the mean of their most recent bid and asked price, if available, and otherwise at their closing bid price. OTC options and futures contracts are fair valued at the mean of their most recent bid and asked price, if available, and otherwise at their closing bid price.
- (5) Forward foreign currency contracts are fair valued at the current day's interpolated foreign exchange rate, as calculated using the current day's spot rate, and the 30-, 60-, 90- and 180- day forward rates provided by an independent pricing service or by certain independent dealers in such contracts.

In addition, the following types of securities will be valued as follows:

- (1) Corporate bonds, corporate notes, U.S. government securities and other debt securities are fair valued on the basis of valuations provided by dealers who make markets in such securities or by an independent pricing service approved by the Trusts' Board of Trustees, which may use the following valuation inputs when available:
  - (i) benchmark yields;
  - (ii) reported trades;
  - (iii) broker/dealer quotes;
  - (iv) issuer spreads;
  - (v) benchmark securities;
  - (vi) bids and offers; and
  - (vii) reference data including market research publications.

Securities traded in an OTC market are fair valued at the mean of their most recent bid and asked price, if available, and otherwise at their closing bid price.

- (2) Fixed-income securities, convertible securities, interest rate swaps, credit default swaps, total return swaps, currency swaps, currency-linked notes, credit-linked notes and other similar instruments will be fair valued using a pricing service.
- (3) Fixed-income and other debt securities having a remaining maturity of 60 days or less when purchased are fair valued at cost adjusted for amortization of premiums and accretion of discounts (amortized cost), provided the Advisor's Pricing Committee has determined that the use of amortized cost is an appropriate reflection of fair value given market and issuer specific conditions existing at the time of the determination. Factors that may be considered in determining the appropriateness of the use of amortized cost include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - (i) the credit conditions in the relevant market and changes thereto;
  - (ii) the liquidity conditions in the relevant market and changes thereto;
  - (iii) the interest rate conditions in the relevant market and changes thereto (such as significant changes in interest rates);
  - (iv) issuer-specific conditions (such as significant credit deterioration); and



- (v) any other market-based data the Advisor's Pricing Committee considers relevant. In this regard, the Advisor's Pricing Committee may use last-obtained market-based data to assist it when valuing portfolio securities using amortized cost.
- (4) Repurchase agreements will be valued as follows. Overnight repurchase agreements will be fair valued at cost when it represents the best estimate of fair value. Term repurchase agreements (*i.e.*, those whose maturity exceeds seven days) will be fair valued by First Trust at the average of the bid quotations obtained daily from at least two recognized dealers.

The value of any portfolio security held by the Fund for which market quotations are not readily available will be determined by First Trust in a manner that most fairly reflects fair value of the security on the valuation date, based on a consideration of all available information.

Certain securities may not be able to be priced by pre-established pricing methods. Such securities may be valued by the Board of Trustees or its delegate, the Advisor's Pricing Committee, at fair value. These securities generally include, but are not limited to, restricted securities (securities that may not be publicly sold without registration under the 1933 Act) for which a pricing service is unable to provide a market price; securities whose trading has been formally suspended; a security whose market or fair value price is not available from a pre-established pricing source; a security with respect to which an event has occurred that is likely to materially affect the value of the security after the market has closed but before the calculation of Fund net asset value (as may be the case in foreign markets on which the security is primarily traded) or is likely to make it difficult or impossible to obtain a reliable market quotation; and a security whose price, as provided by the pricing service, does not reflect the security's fair value. Fair value prices represent any prices not considered market value prices and are either obtained from a pricing service or are determined by the Advisor's Pricing Committee. Market value prices represent last sale or official closing prices from a national or foreign exchange (*i.e.*, a regulated market) and are primarily obtained from pricing services. If no market price or official close price is available from either a pricing service or no quotations are available from one or more brokers or if the Advisor's Pricing Committee has reason to question the reliability or accuracy of a price supplied or the use of amortized cost, the value of any portfolio security held by a Fund for which reliable market prices/quotations are not readily available will be determined by the Advisor's Pricing Committee in a manner that most appropriately reflects fair market value of the security on the valuation date, based on a consideration of all available information. When fair value prices are used, generally they will differ from market quotations or official closing prices on the applicable exchange.

The Fund may suspend the right of redemption for the Fund only under the following unusual circumstances: (i) when the NYSE is closed (other than weekends and holidays) or trading is restricted; (ii) when trading in the markets normally utilized is restricted, or when an emergency exists as determined by the SEC so that disposal of the Fund's investments or determination of its net assets is not reasonably practicable; or (iii) during any period when the SEC may permit.

## **CERTAIN FEDERAL INCOME TAX MATTERS**

The Fund intends to qualify annually and to elect to be treated as a "regulated investment company" under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (the "*Code*"). All of the beneficial interests in the Fund are expected to be held by the Accounts of the Participating Insurance Companies and public access to the Fund is expected to be available exclusively through the purchase of a variable annuity or a variable life insurance contract (the "*Contracts*") offered by Participating Insurance Companies. This section does not discuss the federal income tax consequences of investing in the Fund or of owning the Contracts. This may not be sufficient for the purpose of avoiding penalties under federal tax law. Participating Insurance Companies and owners of Contracts should seek advice based on their individual circumstances from their own tax advisor. Tax disclosure relating to the Contracts that offer the Fund as an investment alternative is to be contained in the Prospectus for those Contracts.

Section 817(h) of the Code imposes certain diversification standards on the underlying assets of segregated asset accounts on which variable annuity and variable life insurance contracts such as the Contracts are based. Failure to satisfy those standards at any time would result in imposition of Federal income tax on a Contract owner in a manner different from, and generally less favorable than, the federal income tax treatment otherwise applicable to owners of variable annuity and variable life insurance contracts. Generally, if all of the beneficial interests in the Fund are held by segregated asset accounts of insurance companies and public access to the Fund is available exclusively through the purchase of certain variable contracts, the segregated asset accounts are treated as holding a *pro rata* portion of each asset of the Fund directly for purposes of the diversification rules of Section 817(h) of the Code.

Section 817(h)(2) provides that a segregated asset account upon which contracts such as the Contracts is based is treated as meeting the diversification standards if, as of the close of each quarter, the assets in the account meet the diversification

requirements for a regulated investment company and no more than 55% of the value of those assets consist of cash, cash items, U.S. government securities and securities of other regulated investment companies. The Treasury Regulations amplify the diversification standards set forth in Section 817(h) and provide an alternative to the provision described above. Under the regulations, the investments of a segregated asset account generally will be deemed adequately diversified only if: (i) no more than 55% of the value of the total assets of the account is represented by any one investment; (ii) no more than 70% of such value is represented by any two investments; (iii) no more than 80% of such value is represented by any three investments; and (iv) no more than 90% of such value is represented by any four investments. For purposes of these Regulations, all securities of the same issuer are treated as a single investment, but in the case of U.S. government securities, each United States government agency or instrumentality is treated as a separate issuer.

The Fund will be managed with the intention of complying with these diversification requirements. It is possible that, in order to comply with these requirements, less desirable investment decisions may be made which could affect the investment performance of the Fund.

### **Capital Loss Carry-forward**

Under the Regulated Investment Company Modernization Act of 2010, net capital losses of the Fund incurred in taxable years beginning after December 22, 2010 may be carried forward indefinitely, and their character is retained as short-term and/or long-term losses. To the extent that these loss carry-forwards are used to offset future capital gains, it is probable that the capital gains so offset will not be distributed to Fund shareholders. As of December 31, 2021, the Fund had no non-expiring capital loss carryforwards for federal income tax purposes. The Fund is subject to certain limitations, under U.S. tax rules, on the use of capital loss carry-forwards and net unrealized built-in losses. These limitations generally apply when there has been a 50% change in ownership.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Shareholder Inquiries**

All inquiries regarding the Fund should be directed your Participating Insurance Company who can contact the Fund on your behalf by calling (888) 373-5776, or by mail to the Trust, c/o BNY Mellon Investment Servicing (US) Inc., P.O. Box 9788, Providence, RI 02940.

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

The audited financial statements and notes thereto for the Fund, contained in the Annual Report to Shareholders dated December 31, 2021, are incorporated by reference into this Statement of Additional Information and have been audited by Deloitte & Touche LLP, independent registered public accounting firm, whose report also appears in the Annual Report and is also incorporated by reference herein. No other parts of the Annual Report are incorporated by reference herein. The Annual Report is available without charge by calling (800) 621-1675 or by visiting the SEC's website at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov).



# UNITED STATES

## Concise Proxy Voting Guidelines

---

### Benchmark Policy Recommendations

Effective for Meetings on or after February 1, 2022

Published December 14, 2021

---

The policies contained herein are a sampling only of selected key ISS U.S. proxy voting guidelines, and are not intended to be exhaustive. The complete guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.issgovernance.com/policy-gateway/voting-policies/>

## Board of Directors

### Voting on Director Nominees in Uncontested Elections

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for director nominees, except under the following circumstances (with new nominees<sup>1</sup> considered on case-by-case basis):

### Independence

Vote against<sup>2</sup> or withhold from non-independent directors (Executive Directors and Non-Independent Non-Executive Directors per ISS' Classification of Directors) when:

- Independent directors comprise 50 percent or less of the board;
- The non-independent director serves on the audit, compensation, or nominating committee;
- The company lacks an audit, compensation, or nominating committee so that the full board functions as that committee; or
- The company lacks a formal nominating committee, even if the board attests that the independent directors fulfill the functions of such a committee.

### Composition

**Attendance at Board and Committee Meetings:** Generally vote against or withhold from directors (except nominees who served only part of the fiscal year<sup>3</sup>) who attend less than 75 percent of the aggregate of their board and committee meetings for the period for which they served, unless an acceptable reason for absences is disclosed in the proxy or another SEC filing. Acceptable reasons for director absences are generally limited to the following:

- Medical issues/illness;
- Family emergencies; and
- Missing only one meeting (when the total of all meetings is three or fewer).

In cases of chronic poor attendance without reasonable justification, in addition to voting against the director(s) with poor attendance, generally vote against or withhold from appropriate members of the nominating/governance committees or the full board.

---

<sup>1</sup> A "new nominee" is a director who is being presented for election by shareholders for the first time. Recommendations on new nominees who have served for less than one year are made on a case-by-case basis depending on the timing of their appointment and the problematic governance issue in question.

<sup>2</sup> In general, companies with a plurality vote standard use "Withhold" as the contrary vote option in director elections; companies with a majority vote standard use "Against". However, it will vary by company and the proxy must be checked to determine the valid contrary vote option for the particular company.

<sup>3</sup> Nominees who served for only part of the fiscal year are generally exempted from the attendance policy.

If the proxy disclosure is unclear and insufficient to determine whether a director attended at least 75 percent of the aggregate of his/her board and committee meetings during his/her period of service, vote against or withhold from the director(s) in question.

**Overboarded Directors:** Generally vote against or withhold from individual directors who:

- ▶ Sit on more than five public company boards; or
- ▶ Are CEOs of public companies who sit on the boards of more than two public companies besides their own – withhold only at their outside boards<sup>4</sup>.

**Gender Diversity:** For companies in the Russell 3000 or S&P 1500 indices, generally vote against or withhold from the chair of the nominating committee (or other directors on a case-by-case basis) at companies where there are no women on the company's board. An exception will be made if there was a woman on the board at the preceding annual meeting and the board makes a firm commitment to return to a gender-diverse status within a year.

This policy will also apply for companies not in the Russell 3000 and S&P 1500 indices, effective for meetings on or after **Feb. 1, 2023**.

**Racial and/or Ethnic Diversity:** For companies in the Russell 3000 or S&P 1500 indices, generally vote against or withhold from the chair of the nominating committee (or other directors on a case-by-case basis) where the board has no apparent racially or ethnically diverse members<sup>5</sup>. An exception will be made if there was racial and/or ethnic diversity on the board at the preceding annual meeting and the board makes a firm commitment to appoint at least one racial and/or ethnic diverse member within a year.

## Responsiveness

Vote case-by-case on individual directors, committee members, or the entire board of directors as appropriate if:

- ▶ The board failed to act on a shareholder proposal that received the support of a majority of the shares cast in the previous year or failed to act on a management proposal seeking to ratify an existing charter/bylaw provision that received opposition of a majority of the shares cast in the previous year. Factors that will be considered are:
  - ▶ Disclosed outreach efforts by the board to shareholders in the wake of the vote;
  - ▶ Rationale provided in the proxy statement for the level of implementation;
  - ▶ The subject matter of the proposal;
  - ▶ The level of support for and opposition to the resolution in past meetings;
  - ▶ Actions taken by the board in response to the majority vote and its engagement with shareholders;
  - ▶ The continuation of the underlying issue as a voting item on the ballot (as either shareholder or management proposals); and
  - ▶ Other factors as appropriate.
- ▶ The board failed to act on takeover offers where the majority of shares are tendered;
- ▶ At the previous board election, any director received more than 50 percent withhold/against votes of the shares cast and the company has failed to address the issue(s) that caused the high withhold/against vote.

Vote case-by-case on Compensation Committee members (or, in exceptional cases, the full board) and the Say on Pay proposal if:

- ▶ The company's previous say-on-pay received the support of less than 70 percent of votes cast. Factors that will be considered are:
  - ▶ The company's response, including:

<sup>4</sup> Although all of a CEO's subsidiary boards with publicly-traded common stock will be counted as separate boards, ISS will not recommend a withhold vote for the CEO of a parent company board or any of the controlled (>50 percent ownership) subsidiaries of that parent but may do so at subsidiaries that are less than 50 percent controlled and boards outside the parent/subsidiary relationships.

<sup>5</sup> Aggregate diversity statistics provided by the board will only be considered if specific to racial and/or ethnic diversity.

- ▶ Disclosure of engagement efforts with major institutional investors, including the frequency and timing of engagements and the company participants (including whether independent directors participated);
  - ▶ Disclosure of the specific concerns voiced by dissenting shareholders that led to the say-on-pay opposition;
  - ▶ Disclosure of specific and meaningful actions taken to address shareholders' concerns;
  - ▶ Other recent compensation actions taken by the company;
  - ▶ Whether the issues raised are recurring or isolated;
  - ▶ The company's ownership structure; and
  - ▶ Whether the support level was less than 50 percent, which would warrant the highest degree of responsiveness.
- ▶ The board implements an advisory vote on executive compensation on a less frequent basis than the frequency that received the plurality of votes cast.

## Accountability

### *Problematic Takeover Defenses/Governance Structure*

**Poison Pills:** Vote against or withhold from all nominees (except new nominees<sup>1</sup>, who should be considered case-by-case) if:

- ▶ The company has a poison pill that was not approved by shareholders<sup>6</sup>. However, vote case-by-case on nominees if the board adopts an initial pill with a term of one year or less, depending on the disclosed rationale for the adoption, and other factors as relevant (such as a commitment to put any renewal to a shareholder vote).
- ▶ The board makes a material adverse modification to an existing pill, including, but not limited to, extension, renewal, or lowering the trigger, without shareholder approval; or
- ▶ The pill, whether short-term<sup>7</sup> or long-term, has a deadhand or slowhand feature.

**Classified Board Structure:** The board is classified, and a continuing director responsible for a problematic governance issue at the board/committee level that would warrant a withhold/against vote recommendation is not up for election. All appropriate nominees (except new) may be held accountable.

**Removal of Shareholder Discretion on Classified Boards:** The company has opted into, or failed to opt out of, state laws requiring a classified board structure.

**Director Performance Evaluation:** The board lacks mechanisms to promote accountability and oversight, coupled with sustained poor performance relative to peers. Sustained poor performance is measured by one-, three-, and five-year total shareholder returns in the bottom half of a company's four-digit GICS industry group (Russell 3000 companies only). Take into consideration the company's operational metrics and other factors as warranted. Problematic provisions include but are not limited to:

- ▶ A classified board structure;
- ▶ A supermajority vote requirement;
- ▶ Either a plurality vote standard in uncontested director elections, or a majority vote standard in contested elections;
- ▶ The inability of shareholders to call special meetings;
- ▶ The inability of shareholders to act by written consent;
- ▶ A multi-class capital structure; and/or
- ▶ A non-shareholder-approved poison pill.

<sup>6</sup> Public shareholders only, approval prior to a company's becoming public is insufficient.

<sup>7</sup> If the short-term pill with a deadhand or slowhand feature is enacted but expires before the next shareholder vote, ISS will generally still recommend withhold/against nominees at the next shareholder meeting following its adoption.

**Unilateral Bylaw/Charter Amendments and Problematic Capital Structures:** Generally vote against or withhold from directors individually, committee members, or the entire board (except new nominees<sup>1</sup>, who should be considered case-by-case) if the board amends the company's bylaws or charter without shareholder approval in a manner that materially diminishes shareholders' rights or that could adversely impact shareholders, considering the following factors:

- ▶ The board's rationale for adopting the bylaw/charter amendment without shareholder ratification;
- ▶ Disclosure by the company of any significant engagement with shareholders regarding the amendment;
- ▶ The level of impairment of shareholders' rights caused by the board's unilateral amendment to the bylaws/charter;
- ▶ The board's track record with regard to unilateral board action on bylaw/charter amendments or other entrenchment provisions;
- ▶ The company's ownership structure;
- ▶ The company's existing governance provisions;
- ▶ The timing of the board's amendment to the bylaws/charter in connection with a significant business development; and
- ▶ Other factors, as deemed appropriate, that may be relevant to determine the impact of the amendment on shareholders.

Unless the adverse amendment is reversed or submitted to a binding shareholder vote, in subsequent years vote case-by-case on director nominees. Generally, vote against (except new nominees<sup>1</sup>, who should be considered case-by-case) if the directors:

- ▶ Classified the board;
- ▶ Adopted supermajority vote requirements to amend the bylaws or charter; or
- ▶ Eliminated shareholders' ability to amend bylaws.

## Unequal Voting Rights

**Problematic Capital Structure – Newly Public Companies:** For 2022, for newly public companies<sup>8</sup>, generally vote against or withhold from the entire board (except new nominees<sup>1</sup>, who should be considered case-by-case) if, prior to or in connection with the company's public offering, the company or its board implemented a multi-class capital structure in which the classes have unequal voting rights without subjecting the multi-class capital structure to a reasonable time-based sunset. In assessing the reasonableness of a time-based sunset provision, consideration will be given to the company's lifespan, its post-IPO ownership structure and the board's disclosed rationale for the sunset period selected. No sunset period of more than seven years from the date of the IPO will be considered to be reasonable.

Continue to vote against or withhold from incumbent directors in subsequent years, unless the problematic capital structure is reversed or removed.

**Common Stock Capital Structure with Unequal Voting Rights:** Starting **Feb 1, 2023**, generally vote withhold or against directors individually, committee members, or the entire board (except new nominees<sup>1</sup>, who should be considered case-by-case), if the company employs a common stock structure with unequal voting rights<sup>9</sup>.

Exceptions to this policy will generally be limited to:

- ▶ Newly-public companies<sup>8</sup> with a sunset provision of no more than seven years from the date of going public;
- ▶ Limited Partnerships and the Operating Partnership (OP) unit structure of REITs;
- ▶ Situations where the unequal voting rights are considered de minimis; or
- ▶ The company provides sufficient protections for minority shareholders, such as allowing minority shareholders a regular binding vote on whether the capital structure should be maintained.

<sup>8</sup> Newly-public companies generally include companies that emerge from bankruptcy, SPAC transactions, spin-offs, direct listings, and those who complete a traditional initial public offering.

<sup>9</sup> This generally includes classes of common stock that have additional votes per share than other shares; classes of shares that are not entitled to vote on all the same ballot items or nominees; or stock with time-phased voting rights ("loyalty shares").

**Problematic Governance Structure – Newly Public Companies:** For newly public companies<sup>8</sup>, generally vote against or withhold from directors individually, committee members, or the entire board (except new nominees<sup>1</sup>, who should be considered case-by-case) if, prior to or in connection with the company's public offering, the company or its board adopted the following bylaw or charter provisions that are considered to be materially adverse to shareholder rights:

- Supermajority vote requirements to amend the bylaws or charter;
- A classified board structure; or
- Other egregious provisions.

A reasonable sunset provision will be considered a mitigating factor.

Unless the adverse provision is reversed or removed, vote case-by-case on director nominees in subsequent years.

**Management Proposals to Ratify Existing Charter or Bylaw Provisions:** Vote against/withhold from individual directors, members of the governance committee, or the full board, where boards ask shareholders to ratify existing charter or bylaw provisions considering the following factors:

- The presence of a shareholder proposal addressing the same issue on the same ballot;
- The board's rationale for seeking ratification;
- Disclosure of actions to be taken by the board should the ratification proposal fail;
- Disclosure of shareholder engagement regarding the board's ratification request;
- The level of impairment to shareholders' rights caused by the existing provision;
- The history of management and shareholder proposals on the provision at the company's past meetings;
- Whether the current provision was adopted in response to the shareholder proposal;
- The company's ownership structure; and
- Previous use of ratification proposals to exclude shareholder proposals.

### **Restrictions on Shareholders' Rights**

**Restricting Binding Shareholder Proposals:** Generally, vote against or withhold from the members of the governance committee if:

- The company's governing documents impose undue restrictions on shareholders' ability to amend the bylaws. Such restrictions include but are not limited to: outright prohibition on the submission of binding shareholder proposals or share ownership requirements, subject matter restrictions, or time holding requirements in excess of SEC Rule 14a-8. Vote against or withhold on an ongoing basis.

Submission of management proposals to approve or ratify requirements in excess of SEC Rule 14a-8 for the submission of binding bylaw amendments will generally be viewed as an insufficient restoration of shareholders' rights. Generally continue to vote against or withhold on an ongoing basis until shareholders are provided with an unfettered ability to amend the bylaws or a proposal providing for such unfettered right is submitted for shareholder approval.

### **Problematic Audit-Related Practices**

Generally vote against or withhold from the members of the Audit Committee if:

- The non-audit fees paid to the auditor are excessive;
- The company receives an adverse opinion on the company's financial statements from its auditor; or
- There is persuasive evidence that the Audit Committee entered into an inappropriate indemnification agreement with its auditor that limits the ability of the company, or its shareholders, to pursue legitimate legal recourse against the audit firm.

Vote case-by-case on members of the Audit Committee and potentially the full board if:



- ▶ Poor accounting practices are identified that rise to a level of serious concern, such as: fraud; misapplication of GAAP; and material weaknesses identified in Section 404 disclosures. Examine the severity, breadth, chronological sequence, and duration, as well as the company's efforts at remediation or corrective actions, in determining whether withhold/against votes are warranted.

### **Problematic Compensation Practices**

In the absence of an Advisory Vote on Executive Compensation (Say on Pay) ballot item or in egregious situations, vote against or withhold from the members of the Compensation Committee and potentially the full board if:

- ▶ There is an unmitigated misalignment between CEO pay and company performance (pay for performance);
- ▶ The company maintains significant problematic pay practices; or
- ▶ The board exhibits a significant level of poor communication and responsiveness to shareholders.

Generally, vote against or withhold from the Compensation Committee chair, other committee members, or potentially the full board if:

- ▶ The company fails to include a Say on Pay ballot item when required under SEC provisions, or under the company's declared frequency of say on pay; or
- ▶ The company fails to include a Frequency of Say on Pay ballot item when required under SEC provisions.

Generally vote against members of the board committee responsible for approving/setting non-employee director compensation if there is a pattern (i.e. two or more years) of awarding excessive non-employee director compensation without disclosing a compelling rationale or other mitigating factors.

### **Problematic Pledging of Company Stock:**

Vote against the members of the committee that oversees risks related to pledging, or the full board, where a significant level of pledged company stock by executives or directors raises concerns. The following factors will be considered:

- ▶ The presence of an anti-pledging policy, disclosed in the proxy statement, that prohibits future pledging activity;
- ▶ The magnitude of aggregate pledged shares in terms of total common shares outstanding, market value, and trading volume;
- ▶ Disclosure of progress or lack thereof in reducing the magnitude of aggregate pledged shares over time;
- ▶ Disclosure in the proxy statement that shares subject to stock ownership and holding requirements do not include pledged company stock; and
- ▶ Any other relevant factors.

### **Climate Accountability**

For companies that are significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters, through their operations or value chain<sup>10</sup>, generally vote against or withhold from the incumbent chair of the responsible committee (or other directors on a case-by-case basis) in cases where ISS determines that the company is not taking the minimum steps needed to understand, assess, and mitigate risks related to climate change to the company and the larger economy.

For **2022**, minimum steps to understand and mitigate those risks are considered to be the following. Both minimum criteria will be required to be in compliance:

- ▶ Detailed disclosure of climate-related risks, such as according to the framework established by the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), including:
  - ▶ Board governance measures;
  - ▶ Corporate strategy;

<sup>10</sup> For 2022, companies defined as "significant GHG emitters" will be those on the current Climate Action 100+ Focus Group list.

- Risk management analyses; and
- Metrics and targets.
- Appropriate GHG emissions reduction targets.

For **2022**, "appropriate GHG emissions reductions targets" will be any well-defined GHG reduction targets. Targets for Scope 3 emissions will not be required for 2022 but the targets should cover at least a significant portion of the company's direct emissions. Expectations about what constitutes "minimum steps to mitigate risks related to climate change" will increase over time.

### Governance Failures

Under extraordinary circumstances, vote against or withhold from directors individually, committee members, or the entire board, due to:

- Material failures of governance, stewardship, risk oversight<sup>11</sup>, or fiduciary responsibilities at the company;
- Failure to replace management as appropriate; or
- Egregious actions related to a director's service on other boards that raise substantial doubt about his or her ability to effectively oversee management and serve the best interests of shareholders at any company.

### Voting on Director Nominees in Contested Elections

#### Vote-No Campaigns

- **General Recommendation:** In cases where companies are targeted in connection with public "vote-no" campaigns, evaluate director nominees under the existing governance policies for voting on director nominees in uncontested elections. Take into consideration the arguments submitted by shareholders and other publicly available information.

#### Proxy Contests/Proxy Access

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on the election of directors in contested elections, considering the following factors:
  - Long-term financial performance of the company relative to its industry;
  - Management's track record;
  - Background to the contested election;
  - Nominee qualifications and any compensatory arrangements;
  - Strategic plan of dissident slate and quality of the critique against management;
  - Likelihood that the proposed goals and objectives can be achieved (both slates); and
  - Stock ownership positions.

In the case of candidates nominated pursuant to proxy access, vote case-by-case considering any applicable factors listed above or additional factors which may be relevant, including those that are specific to the company, to the nominee(s) and/or to the nature of the election (such as whether there are more candidates than board seats).

<sup>11</sup> Examples of failure of risk oversight include but are not limited to: bribery; large or serial fines or sanctions from regulatory bodies; demonstrably poor risk oversight of environmental and social issues, including climate change; significant adverse legal judgments or settlement; or hedging of company stock.

---

## Other Board-Related Proposals

### Independent Board Chair

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for shareholder proposals requiring that the board chair position be filled by an independent director, taking into consideration the following:
  - The scope and rationale of the proposal;
  - The company's current board leadership structure;
  - The company's governance structure and practices;
  - Company performance; and
  - Any other relevant factors that may be applicable.

The following factors will increase the likelihood of a "for" recommendation:

- A majority non-independent board and/or the presence of non-independent directors on key board committees;
- A weak or poorly-defined lead independent director role that fails to serve as an appropriate counterbalance to a combined CEO/chair role;
- The presence of an executive or non-independent chair in addition to the CEO, a recent recombination of the role of CEO and chair, and/or departure from a structure with an independent chair;
- Evidence that the board has failed to oversee and address material risks facing the company;
- A material governance failure, particularly if the board has failed to adequately respond to shareholder concerns or if the board has materially diminished shareholder rights; or
- Evidence that the board has failed to intervene when management's interests are contrary to shareholders' interests.

## Shareholder Rights & Defenses

### Shareholder Ability to Act by Written Consent

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote against management and shareholder proposals to restrict or prohibit shareholders' ability to act by written consent.
- **Generally vote for management and shareholder proposals that provide shareholders with the ability to act by written consent, taking into account the following factors:**
  - Shareholders' current right to act by written consent;
  - The consent threshold;
  - The inclusion of exclusionary or prohibitive language;
  - Investor ownership structure; and
  - Shareholder support of, and management's response to, previous shareholder proposals.
- **Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals if, in addition to the considerations above, the company has the following governance and antitakeover provisions:**
  - An unfettered<sup>12</sup> right for shareholders to call special meetings at a 10 percent threshold;
  - A majority vote standard in uncontested director elections;
  - No non-shareholder-approved pill; and

---

<sup>12</sup> "Unfettered" means no restrictions on agenda items, no restrictions on the number of shareholders who can group together to reach the 10 percent threshold, and only reasonable limits on when a meeting can be called: no greater than 30 days after the last annual meeting and no greater than 90 prior to the next annual meeting.

- ▶ An annually elected board.

## Shareholder Ability to Call Special Meetings

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote against management or shareholder proposals to restrict or prohibit shareholders' ability to call special meetings.

Generally vote for management or shareholder proposals that provide shareholders with the ability to call special meetings taking into account the following factors:

- ▶ Shareholders' current right to call special meetings;
- ▶ Minimum ownership threshold necessary to call special meetings (10 percent preferred);
- ▶ The inclusion of exclusionary or prohibitive language;
- ▶ Investor ownership structure; and
- ▶ Shareholder support of, and management's response to, previous shareholder proposals.

## Virtual Shareholder Meetings

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for management proposals allowing for the convening of shareholder meetings by electronic means, so long as they do not preclude in-person meetings. Companies are encouraged to disclose the circumstances under which virtual-only<sup>13</sup> meetings would be held, and to allow for comparable rights and opportunities for shareholders to participate electronically as they would have during an in-person meeting.

Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals concerning virtual-only meetings, considering:

- ▶ Scope and rationale of the proposal; and
- ▶ Concerns identified with the company's prior meeting practices.

## Capital/Restructuring

### Common Stock Authorization

#### General Authorization Requests

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to increase the number of authorized shares of common stock that are to be used for general corporate purposes.
  - ▶ If share usage (outstanding plus reserved) is less than 50% of the current authorized shares, vote for an increase of up to **50%** of current authorized shares.
  - ▶ If share usage is 50% to 100% of the current authorized, vote for an increase of up to **100%** of current authorized shares.
  - ▶ If share usage is greater than current authorized shares, vote for an increase of up to the current share usage.
  - ▶ In the case of a stock split, the allowable increase is calculated (per above) based on the post-split adjusted authorization.

Generally vote against proposed increases, even if within the above ratios, if the proposal or the company's prior or ongoing use of authorized shares is problematic, including, but not limited to:

<sup>13</sup> Virtual-only shareholder meeting" refers to a meeting of shareholders that is held exclusively using technology without a corresponding in-person meeting.

- ▶ The proposal seeks to increase the number of authorized shares of the class of common stock that has superior voting rights to other share classes;
- ▶ On the same ballot is a proposal for a reverse split for which support is warranted despite the fact that it would result in an excessive increase in the share authorization;
- ▶ The company has a non-shareholder approved poison pill (including an NOL pill); or
- ▶ The company has previous sizeable placements (within the past 3 years) of stock with insiders at prices substantially below market value, or with problematic voting rights, without shareholder approval.

However, generally vote for proposed increases beyond the above ratios or problematic situations when there is disclosure of specific and severe risks to shareholders of not approving the request, such as:

- ▶ In, or subsequent to, the company's most recent 10-K filing, the company discloses that there is substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern;
- ▶ The company states that there is a risk of imminent bankruptcy or imminent liquidation if shareholders do not approve the increase in authorized capital; or
- ▶ A government body has in the past year required the company to increase its capital ratios.

For companies incorporated in states that allow increases in authorized capital without shareholder approval, generally vote withhold or against all nominees if a unilateral capital authorization increase does not conform to the above policies.

### Specific Authorization Requests

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals to increase the number of authorized common shares where the primary purpose of the increase is to issue shares in connection with transaction(s) (such as acquisitions, SPAC transactions, private placements, or similar transactions) on the same ballot, or disclosed in the proxy statement, that warrant support. For such transactions, the allowable increase will be the greater of:
  - ▶ twice the amount needed to support the transactions on the ballot, and
  - ▶ the allowable increase as calculated for general issuances above.

### Mergers and Acquisitions

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on mergers and acquisitions. Review and evaluate the merits and drawbacks of the proposed transaction, balancing various and sometimes countervailing factors including:
  - ▶ *Valuation* - Is the value to be received by the target shareholders (or paid by the acquirer) reasonable? While the fairness opinion may provide an initial starting point for assessing valuation reasonableness, emphasis is placed on the offer premium, market reaction, and strategic rationale.
  - ▶ *Market reaction* - How has the market responded to the proposed deal? A negative market reaction should cause closer scrutiny of a deal.
  - ▶ *Strategic rationale* - Does the deal make sense strategically? From where is the value derived? Cost and revenue synergies should not be overly aggressive or optimistic, but reasonably achievable. Management should also have a favorable track record of successful integration of historical acquisitions.
  - ▶ *Negotiations and process* - Were the terms of the transaction negotiated at arm's-length? Was the process fair and equitable? A fair process helps to ensure the best price for shareholders. Significant negotiation "wins" can also signify the deal makers' competency. The comprehensiveness of the sales process (e.g., full auction, partial auction, no auction) can also affect shareholder value.
  - ▶ *Conflicts of interest* - Are insiders benefiting from the transaction disproportionately and inappropriately as compared to non-insider shareholders? As the result of potential conflicts, the directors and officers of the company may be more likely to vote to approve a merger than if they did not hold these interests. Consider whether these interests may have influenced these directors and officers to support or recommend the merger. The CIC figure presented

in the "ISS Transaction Summary" section of this report is an aggregate figure that can in certain cases be a misleading indicator of the true value transfer from shareholders to insiders. Where such figure appears to be excessive, analyze the underlying assumptions to determine whether a potential conflict exists.

- ▶ *Governance* - Will the combined company have a better or worse governance profile than the current governance profiles of the respective parties to the transaction? If the governance profile is to change for the worse, the burden is on the company to prove that other issues (such as valuation) outweigh any deterioration in governance.

## Compensation

### Executive Pay Evaluation

Underlying all evaluations are five global principles that most investors expect corporations to adhere to in designing and administering executive and director compensation programs:

- ▶ Maintain appropriate pay-for-performance alignment, with emphasis on long-term shareholder value: This principle encompasses overall executive pay practices, which must be designed to attract, retain, and appropriately motivate the key employees who drive shareholder value creation over the long term. It will take into consideration, among other factors, the link between pay and performance; the mix between fixed and variable pay; performance goals; and equity-based plan costs;
- ▶ Avoid arrangements that risk "pay for failure": This principle addresses the appropriateness of long or indefinite contracts, excessive severance packages, and guaranteed compensation;
- ▶ Maintain an independent and effective compensation committee: This principle promotes oversight of executive pay programs by directors with appropriate skills, knowledge, experience, and a sound process for compensation decision-making (e.g., including access to independent expertise and advice when needed);
- ▶ Provide shareholders with clear, comprehensive compensation disclosures: This principle underscores the importance of informative and timely disclosures that enable shareholders to evaluate executive pay practices fully and fairly;
- ▶ Avoid inappropriate pay to non-executive directors: This principle recognizes the interests of shareholders in ensuring that compensation to outside directors is reasonable and does not compromise their independence and ability to make appropriate judgments in overseeing managers' pay and performance. At the market level, it may incorporate a variety of generally accepted best practices.

### Advisory Votes on Executive Compensation – Management Proposals (Say-on-Pay)

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on ballot items related to executive pay and practices, as well as certain aspects of outside director compensation.

Vote against Advisory Votes on Executive Compensation (Say-on-Pay or "SOP") if:

- ▶ There is an unmitigated misalignment between CEO pay and company performance (pay for performance);
- ▶ The company maintains significant problematic pay practices;
- ▶ The board exhibits a significant level of poor communication and responsiveness to shareholders.

Vote against or withhold from the members of the Compensation Committee and potentially the full board if:

- ▶ There is no SOP on the ballot, and an against vote on an SOP would otherwise be warranted due to pay-for-performance misalignment, problematic pay practices, or the lack of adequate responsiveness on compensation issues raised previously, or a combination thereof;
- ▶ The board fails to respond adequately to a previous SOP proposal that received less than 70 percent support of votes cast;

- ▶ The company has recently practiced or approved problematic pay practices, such as option repricing or option backdating; or
- ▶ The situation is egregious.

## Primary Evaluation Factors for Executive Pay

### Pay-for-Performance Evaluation

ISS annually conducts a pay-for-performance analysis to identify strong or satisfactory alignment between pay and performance over a sustained period. With respect to companies in the S&P1500, Russell 3000, or Russell 3000E Indices<sup>14</sup>, this analysis considers the following:

1. Peer Group<sup>15</sup> Alignment:
  - ▶ The degree of alignment between the company's annualized TSR rank and the CEO's annualized total pay rank within a peer group, each measured over a three-year period.
  - ▶ The rankings of CEO total pay and company financial performance within a peer group, each measured over a three-year period.
  - ▶ The multiple of the CEO's total pay relative to the peer group median in the most recent fiscal year.
2. Absolute Alignment<sup>16</sup> – the absolute alignment between the trend in CEO pay and company TSR over the prior five fiscal years – i.e., the difference between the trend in annual pay changes and the trend in annualized TSR during the period.

If the above analysis demonstrates significant unsatisfactory long-term pay-for-performance alignment or, in the case of companies outside the Russell indices, a misalignment between pay and performance is otherwise suggested, our analysis may include any of the following qualitative factors, as relevant to an evaluation of how various pay elements may work to encourage or to undermine long-term value creation and alignment with shareholder interests:

- ▶ The ratio of performance- to time-based incentive awards;
- ▶ The overall ratio of performance-based compensation to fixed or discretionary pay;
- ▶ The rigor of performance goals;
- ▶ The complexity and risks around pay program design;
- ▶ The transparency and clarity of disclosure;
- ▶ The company's peer group benchmarking practices;
- ▶ Financial/operational results, both absolute and relative to peers;
- ▶ Special circumstances related to, for example, a new CEO in the prior FY or anomalous equity grant practices (e.g., bi-annual awards);
- ▶ Realizable pay<sup>17</sup> compared to grant pay; and
- ▶ Any other factors deemed relevant.

### Problematic Pay Practices

The focus is on executive compensation practices that contravene the global pay principles, including:

- ▶ Problematic practices related to non-performance-based compensation elements;

<sup>14</sup> The Russell 3000E Index includes approximately 4,000 of the largest U.S. equity securities.

<sup>15</sup> The revised peer group is generally comprised of 14-24 companies that are selected using market cap, revenue (or assets for certain financial firms), GICS industry group, and company's selected peers' GICS industry group, with size constraints, via a process designed to select peers that are comparable to the subject company in terms of revenue/assets and industry, and also within a market-cap bucket that is reflective of the company's market cap. For Oil, Gas & Consumable Fuels companies, market cap is the only size determinant.

<sup>16</sup> Only Russell 3000 Index companies are subject to the Absolute Alignment analysis.

<sup>17</sup> ISS research reports include realizable pay for S&P1500 companies.

- › Incentives that may motivate excessive risk-taking or present a windfall risk; and
- › Pay decisions that circumvent pay-for-performance, such as options backdating or waiving performance requirements.

#### **Problematic Pay Practices related to Non-Performance-Based Compensation Elements**

Pay elements that are not directly based on performance are generally evaluated case-by-case considering the context of a company's overall pay program and demonstrated pay-for-performance philosophy. Please refer to ISS' U.S. Compensation Policies FAQ document for detail on specific pay practices that have been identified as potentially problematic and may lead to negative recommendations if they are deemed to be inappropriate or unjustified relative to executive pay best practices. The list below highlights the problematic practices that carry significant weight in this overall consideration and may result in adverse vote recommendations:

- › Repricing or replacing of underwater stock options/SARS without prior shareholder approval (including cash buyouts and voluntary surrender of underwater options);
- › Extraordinary perquisites or tax gross-ups;
- › New or materially amended agreements that provide for:
  - › Excessive termination or CIC severance payments (generally exceeding 3 times base salary and average/target/most recent bonus);
  - › CIC severance payments without involuntary job loss or substantial diminution of duties ("single" or "modified single" triggers) or in connection with a problematic Good Reason definition;
  - › CIC excise tax gross-up entitlements (including "modified" gross-ups);
  - › Multi-year guaranteed awards that are not at risk due to rigorous performance conditions;
- › Liberal CIC definition combined with any single-trigger CIC benefits;
- › Insufficient executive compensation disclosure by externally-managed issuers (EMIs) such that a reasonable assessment of pay programs and practices applicable to the EMI's executives is not possible;
- › Any other provision or practice deemed to be egregious and present a significant risk to investors.

#### **Options Backdating**

The following factors should be examined case-by-case to allow for distinctions to be made between "sloppy" plan administration versus deliberate action or fraud:

- › Reason and motive for the options backdating issue, such as inadvertent vs. deliberate grant date changes;
- › Duration of options backdating;
- › Size of restatement due to options backdating;
- › Corrective actions taken by the board or compensation committee, such as canceling or re-pricing backdated options, the recouping of option gains on backdated grants; and
- › Adoption of a grant policy that prohibits backdating and creates a fixed grant schedule or window period for equity grants in the future.

#### **Compensation Committee Communications and Responsiveness**

Consider the following factors case-by-case when evaluating ballot items related to executive pay on the board's responsiveness to investor input and engagement on compensation issues:

- › Failure to respond to majority-supported shareholder proposals on executive pay topics; or
- › Failure to adequately respond to the company's previous say-on-pay proposal that received the support of less than 70 percent of votes cast, taking into account:
  - › Disclosure of engagement efforts with major institutional investors, including the frequency and timing of engagements and the company participants (including whether independent directors participated);
  - › Disclosure of the specific concerns voiced by dissenting shareholders that led to the say-on-pay opposition;
  - › Disclosure of specific and meaningful actions taken to address shareholders' concerns;
  - › Other recent compensation actions taken by the company;
  - › Whether the issues raised are recurring or isolated;



- ▶ The company's ownership structure; and
- ▶ Whether the support level was less than 50 percent, which would warrant the highest degree of responsiveness.

### Equity-Based and Other Incentive Plans

Please refer to ISS' U.S. Equity Compensation Plans FAQ document for additional details on the Equity Plan Scorecard policy.

- ▶ **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on certain equity-based compensation plans<sup>18</sup> depending on a combination of certain plan features and equity grant practices, where positive factors may counterbalance negative factors, and vice versa, as evaluated using an "Equity Plan Scorecard" (EPSC) approach with three pillars:
  - ▶ **Plan Cost:** The total estimated cost of the company's equity plans relative to industry/market cap peers, measured by the company's estimated Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) in relation to peers and considering both:
    - ▶ SVT based on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants, plus outstanding unvested/unexercised grants; and
    - ▶ SVT based only on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants.
  - ▶ **Plan Features:**
    - ▶ Quality of disclosure around vesting upon a change in control (CIC);
    - ▶ Discretionary vesting authority;
    - ▶ Liberal share recycling on various award types;
    - ▶ Lack of minimum vesting period for grants made under the plan;
    - ▶ Dividends payable prior to award vesting.
  - ▶ **Grant Practices:**
    - ▶ The company's three-year burn rate relative to its industry/market cap peers;
    - ▶ Vesting requirements in CEO's recent equity grants (3-year look-back);
    - ▶ The estimated duration of the plan (based on the sum of shares remaining available and the new shares requested, divided by the average annual shares granted in the prior three years);
    - ▶ The proportion of the CEO's most recent equity grants/awards subject to performance conditions;
    - ▶ Whether the company maintains a sufficient claw-back policy;
    - ▶ Whether the company maintains sufficient post-exercise/vesting share-holding requirements.

Generally vote against the plan proposal if the combination of above factors indicates that the plan is not, overall, in shareholders' interests, or if any of the following egregious factors ("overriding factors") apply:

- ▶ Awards may vest in connection with a liberal change-of-control definition;
- ▶ The plan would permit repricing or cash buyout of underwater options without shareholder approval (either by expressly permitting it – for NYSE and Nasdaq listed companies – or by not prohibiting it when the company has a history of repricing – for non-listed companies);
- ▶ The plan is a vehicle for problematic pay practices or a significant pay-for-performance disconnect under certain circumstances;
- ▶ The plan is excessively dilutive to shareholders' holdings;
- ▶ The plan contains an evergreen (automatic share replenishment) feature; or
- ▶ Any other plan features are determined to have a significant negative impact on shareholder interests.

<sup>18</sup> Proposals evaluated under the EPSC policy generally include those to approve or amend (1) stock option plans for employees and/or employees and directors, (2) restricted stock plans for employees and/or employees and directors, and (3) omnibus stock incentive plans for employees and/or employees and directors; amended plans will be further evaluated case-by-case.

---

## Social and Environmental Issues

### Global Approach

Issues covered under the policy include a wide range of topics, including consumer and product safety, environment and energy, labor standards and human rights, workplace and board diversity, and corporate political issues. While a variety of factors goes into each analysis, the overall principle guiding all vote recommendations focuses on how the proposal may enhance or protect shareholder value in either the short or long term.

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote case-by-case, examining primarily whether implementation of the proposal is likely to enhance or protect shareholder value. The following factors will be considered:
  - If the issues presented in the proposal are more appropriately or effectively dealt with through legislation or government regulation;
  - If the company has already responded in an appropriate and sufficient manner to the issue(s) raised in the proposal;
  - Whether the proposal's request is unduly burdensome (scope or timeframe) or overly prescriptive;
  - The company's approach compared with any industry standard practices for addressing the issue(s) raised by the proposal;
  - Whether there are significant controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's environmental or social practices;
  - If the proposal requests increased disclosure or greater transparency, whether reasonable and sufficient information is currently available to shareholders from the company or from other publicly available sources; and
  - If the proposal requests increased disclosure or greater transparency, whether implementation would reveal proprietary or confidential information that could place the company at a competitive disadvantage.

### Say on Climate (SoC) Management Proposals

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on management proposals that request shareholders to approve the company's climate transition action plan<sup>19</sup>, taking into account the completeness and rigor of the plan. Information that will be considered where available includes the following:
  - The extent to which the company's climate related disclosures are in line with TCFD recommendations and meet other market standards;
  - Disclosure of its operational and supply chain GHG emissions (Scopes 1, 2, and 3);
  - The completeness and rigor of company's short-, medium-, and long-term targets for reducing operational and supply chain GHG emissions (Scopes 1, 2, and 3 if relevant);
  - Whether the company has sought and received third-party approval that its targets are science-based;
  - Whether the company has made a commitment to be "net zero" for operational and supply chain emissions (Scopes 1, 2, and 3) by 2050;
  - Whether the company discloses a commitment to report on the implementation of its plan in subsequent years;
  - Whether the company's climate data has received third-party assurance;
  - Disclosure of how the company's lobbying activities and its capital expenditures align with company strategy;
  - Whether there are specific industry decarbonization challenges; and
  - The company's related commitment, disclosure, and performance compared to its industry peers.

---

<sup>19</sup> Variations of this request also include climate transition related ambitions, or commitment to reporting on the implementation of a climate plan.

---

## Say on Climate (SoC) Shareholder Proposals

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on shareholder proposals that request the company to disclose a report providing its GHG emissions levels and reduction targets and/or its upcoming/approved climate transition action plan and provide shareholders the opportunity to express approval or disapproval of its GHG emissions reduction plan, taking into account information such as the following:
  - The completeness and rigor of the company's climate-related disclosure;
  - The company's actual GHG emissions performance;
  - Whether the company has been the subject of recent, significant violations, fines, litigation, or controversy related to its GHG emissions; and
  - Whether the proposal's request is unduly burdensome (scope or timeframe) or overly prescriptive.

## Climate Change/Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

- **General Recommendation:** Generally vote for resolutions requesting that a company disclose information on the financial, physical, or regulatory risks it faces related to climate change on its operations and investments or on how the company identifies, measures, and manages such risks, considering:
  - Whether the company already provides current, publicly-available information on the impact that climate change may have on the company as well as associated company policies and procedures to address related risks and/or opportunities;
  - The company's level of disclosure compared to industry peers; and
  - Whether there are significant controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's climate change-related performance.

Generally vote for proposals requesting a report on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from company operations and/or products and operations, unless:

- The company already discloses current, publicly-available information on the impacts that GHG emissions may have on the company as well as associated company policies and procedures to address related risks and/or opportunities;
- The company's level of disclosure is comparable to that of industry peers; and
- There are no significant, controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's GHG emissions.

Vote case-by-case on proposals that call for the adoption of GHG reduction goals from products and operations, taking into account:

- Whether the company provides disclosure of year-over-year GHG emissions performance data;
- Whether company disclosure lags behind industry peers;
- The company's actual GHG emissions performance;
- The company's current GHG emission policies, oversight mechanisms, and related initiatives; and
- Whether the company has been the subject of recent, significant violations, fines, litigation, or controversy related to GHG emissions.

## Racial Equity and/or Civil Rights Audit Guidelines

- **General Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals asking a company to conduct an independent racial equity and/or civil rights audit, taking into account:
  - The company's established process or framework for addressing racial inequity and discrimination internally;

- ▶ Whether the company has issued a public statement related to its racial justice efforts in recent years, or has committed to internal policy review;
- ▶ Whether the company has engaged with impacted communities, stakeholders, and civil rights experts,
- ▶ The company's track record in recent years of racial justice measures and outreach externally;
- ▶ Whether the company has been the subject of recent controversy, litigation, or regulatory actions related to racial inequity or discrimination; and
- ▶ Whether the company's actions are aligned with market norms on civil rights, and racial or ethnic diversity.

---

**We empower investors and companies to build  
for long-term and sustainable growth by providing  
high-quality data, analytics, and insight.**

#### GET STARTED WITH ISS SOLUTIONS

Email [sales@issgovernance.com](mailto:sales@issgovernance.com) or visit [issgovernance.com](http://issgovernance.com) for more information.

Founded in 1985, the Institutional Shareholder Services group of companies ("ISS") is the world's leading provider of corporate governance and responsible investment solutions alongside fund intelligence and services, events, and editorial content for institutional investors, globally. ISS' solutions include objective governance research and recommendations; responsible investment data, analytics, and research; end-to-end proxy voting and distribution solutions; turnkey securities class-action claims management (provided by Securities Class Action Services, LLC); reliable global governance data and modeling tools; asset management intelligence, portfolio execution and monitoring, fund services, and media. Clients rely on ISS' expertise to help them make informed investment decisions.

This document and all of the information contained in it, including without limitation all text, data, graphs, and charts (collectively, the "Information") is the property of Institutional Shareholder Services Inc. (ISS), its subsidiaries, or, in some cases third party suppliers.

The Information has not been submitted to, nor received approval from, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission or any other regulatory body. None of the Information constitutes an offer to sell (or a solicitation of an offer to buy), or a promotion or recommendation of, any security, financial product or other investment vehicle or any trading strategy, and ISS does not endorse, approve, or otherwise express any opinion regarding any issuer, securities, financial products or instruments or trading strategies.

The user of the Information assumes the entire risk of any use it may make or permit to be made of the Information.

ISS MAKES NO EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES OR REPRESENTATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE INFORMATION AND EXPRESSLY DISCLAIMS ALL IMPLIED WARRANTIES (INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF ORIGINALITY, ACCURACY, TIMELINESS, NON-INFRINGEMENT, COMPLETENESS, MERCHANTABILITY, AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE) WITH RESPECT TO ANY OF THE INFORMATION.

Without limiting any of the foregoing and to the maximum extent permitted by law, in no event shall ISS have any liability regarding any of the Information for any direct, indirect, special, punitive, consequential (including lost profits), or any other damages even if notified of the possibility of such damages. The foregoing shall not exclude or limit any liability that may not by applicable law be excluded or limited.

© 2021 | Institutional Shareholder Services and/or its affiliates

## EXHIBIT B – CREDIT RATING DEFINITIONS

### Standard & Poor's

A Standard & Poor's issue credit rating is a forward-looking opinion about the creditworthiness of an obligor with respect to a specific financial obligation, a specific class of financial obligations, or a specific financial program (including ratings on medium-term note programs and commercial paper programs). It takes into consideration the creditworthiness of guarantors, insurers, or other forms of credit enhancement on the obligation and takes into account the currency in which the obligation is denominated. The opinion reflects Standard & Poor's view of the obligor's capacity and willingness to meet its financial commitments as they come due, and may assess terms, such as collateral security and subordination, which could affect ultimate payment in the event of default.

### LONG-TERM ISSUE CREDIT RATINGS

Issue credit ratings are based, in varying degrees, on the following considerations:

1. Likelihood of payment: capacity and willingness of the obligor to meet its financial commitment on an obligation in accordance with the terms of the obligation;
2. Nature of and provisions of the obligation and the promise S&P imputes;
3. Protection afforded by, and relative position of, the obligation in the event of bankruptcy, reorganization, or other arrangement under the laws of bankruptcy and other laws affecting creditors' rights.

The issue rating definitions are an assessment of default risk, but may incorporate an assessment of relative seniority or ultimate recovery in the event of default. Junior obligations are typically rated lower than senior obligations, to reflect the lower priority in bankruptcy, as noted above. (Such differentiation may apply when an entity has both senior and subordinated obligations, secured and unsecured obligations, or operating company and holding company obligations.)

<b>AAA</b>	An obligation rated "AAA" has the highest rating assigned by Standard & Poor's. The obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitment on the obligation is extremely strong.
<b>AA</b>	An obligation rated "AA" differs from the highest rated obligations only in small degree. The obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitment on the obligation is very strong.
<b>A</b>	An obligation rated "A" is somewhat more susceptible to the adverse effects of changes in circumstances and economic conditions than obligations in higher rated categories. However, the obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitment on the obligation is still strong.
<b>BBB</b>	An obligation rated "BBB" exhibits adequate protection parameters. However, adverse economic conditions or changing circumstances are more likely to lead to a weakened capacity of the obligor to meet its financial commitment on the obligation.

Obligations rated "BB," "B," "CCC," "CC" and "C" are regarded as having significant speculative characteristics. "BB" indicates the least degree of speculation and "C" the highest. While such obligations will likely have some quality and protective characteristics, these may be outweighed by large uncertainties or major exposures to adverse conditions.

<b>BB</b>	An obligation rated "BB" is less vulnerable to nonpayment than other speculative issues. However, it faces major ongoing uncertainties or exposure to adverse business, financial, or economic conditions which could lead to the obligor's inadequate capacity to meet its financial commitment on the obligation.
<b>B</b>	An obligation rated "B" is more vulnerable to nonpayment than obligations rated "BB," but the obligor currently has the capacity to meet its financial commitment on the obligation. Adverse business, financial, or economic conditions will likely impair the obligor's capacity or willingness to meet its financial commitment on the obligation.
<b>CCC</b>	An obligation rated "CCC" is currently vulnerable to nonpayment, and is dependent upon favorable business, financial, and economic conditions for the obligor to meet its financial commitment on the obligation. In the event of adverse business, financial, or economic conditions, the obligor is not likely to have the capacity to meet its financial commitment on the obligation.
<b>CC</b>	An obligation rated "CC" is currently highly vulnerable to nonpayment. The "CC" rating is used when a default has not yet occurred but S&P expects default to be a virtual certainty regardless of the anticipated time to default.

<b>C</b>	An obligation rated "C" is currently highly vulnerable to nonpayment and the obligation is expected to have lower relative seniority or lower ultimate recovery compared to obligations that are rated higher.
<b>D</b>	An obligation rated "D" is in default or in breach of an imputed promise. For non-hybrid capital instruments, the "D" rating category is used when payments on an obligation are not made on the date due unless S&P believes that such payments will be made within five business days in the absence of a stated grace period or within the earlier of the stated grace period or 30 calendar days. The "D" rating also will be used upon the filing of a bankruptcy petition or the taking of similar action and where default on an obligation is a virtual certainty, for example due to automatic stay provisions. An obligation's rating is lowered to 'D' if it is subject to a distressed exchange offer.

**Plus (+) or Minus (-):** The ratings from "AA" to "CCC" may be modified by the addition of a plus or minus sign to show relative standing within the major rating categories.

## Moody's Investors Service, Inc.

A brief description of the applicable Moody's Investors Service, Inc. ("*Moody's*") rating symbols and their meanings (as published by Moody's) follows.

Ratings assigned on Moody's global long-term and short-term rating scales are forward-looking opinions of the relative credit risks of financial obligations issued by non-financial corporates, financial institutions, structured finance vehicles, project finance vehicles, and public sector entities. Long-term ratings are assigned to issuers or obligations with an original maturity of one year or more and reflect both on the likelihood of a default on contractually promised payments and the expected financial loss suffered in the event of default. Short-term ratings are assigned to obligations with an original maturity of thirteen months or less and reflect the likelihood of a default on contractually promised payments.

## LONG-TERM OBLIGATION RATINGS

<b>Aaa</b>	Obligations rated Aaa are judged to be of the highest quality, subject to the lowest level of credit risk.
<b>Aa</b>	Obligations rated Aa are judged to be of high quality and are subject to very low credit risk.
<b>A</b>	Obligations rated A are judged to be upper-medium grade and are subject to low credit risk.
<b>Baa</b>	Obligations rated Baa are judged to be medium-grade and subject to moderate credit risk and as such may possess certain speculative characteristics.
<b>Ba</b>	Obligations rated Ba are judged to be speculative and are subject to substantial credit risk.
<b>B</b>	Obligations rated B are considered speculative and are subject to high credit risk.
<b>Caa</b>	Obligations rated Caa are judged to be speculative of poor standing and are subject to very high credit risk.
<b>Ca</b>	Obligations rated Ca are highly speculative and are likely in, or very near, default, with some prospect of recovery of principal and interest.
<b>C</b>	Obligations rated C are the lowest rated and are typically in default, with little prospect for recovery of principal or interest.

**Note:** Moody's appends numerical modifiers 1, 2, and 3 to each generic rating classification from Aa through Caa. The modifier 1 indicates that the obligation ranks in the higher end of its generic rating category; the modifier 2 indicates a mid-range ranking; and the modifier 3 indicates a ranking in the lower end of that generic rating category.

## Fitch Ratings

A brief description of the applicable Fitch Ratings ("*Fitch*") ratings symbols and meanings (as published by Fitch) follows:

Fitch's credit ratings provide an opinion on the relative ability of an entity to meet financial commitments, such as interest, preferred dividends, repayment of principal, insurance claims or counterparty obligations. Credit ratings are used by investors as indications of the likelihood of receiving the money owed to them in accordance with the terms on which they invested. The agency's credit ratings cover the global spectrum of corporate, sovereign (including supranational and sub-national), financial, bank, insurance, municipal and other public finance entities and the securities or other obligations they issue, as well as structured finance securities backed by receivables or other financial assets.

The terms "investment grade" and "speculative grade" have established themselves over time as shorthand to describe the categories 'AAA' to 'BBB' (investment grade) and 'BB' to 'D' (speculative grade). The terms "investment grade" and "speculative grade" are market conventions, and do not imply any recommendation or endorsement of a specific security for investment

purposes. "Investment grade" categories indicate relatively low to moderate credit risk, while ratings in the "speculative" categories either signal a higher level of credit risk or that a default has already occurred.

A designation of "Not Rated" or "NR" is used to denote securities not rated by Fitch where Fitch has rated some, but not all, securities comprising an issuance capital structure.

Credit ratings express risk in relative rank order, which is to say they are ordinal measures of credit risk and are not predictive of a specific frequency of default or loss.

Fitch's credit ratings do not directly address any risk other than credit risk. In particular, ratings do not deal with the risk of a market value loss on a rated security due to changes in interest rates, liquidity and other market considerations. However, in terms of payment obligation on the rated liability, market risk may be considered to the extent that it influences the ability of an issuer to pay upon a commitment. Ratings nonetheless do not reflect market risk to the extent that they influence the size or other conditionality of the obligation to pay upon a commitment (for example, in the case of index-linked bonds).

In the default components of ratings assigned to individual obligations or instruments, the agency typically rates to the likelihood of non-payment or default in accordance with the terms of that instrument's documentation. In limited cases, Fitch may include additional considerations (i.e. rate to a higher or lower standard than that implied in the obligation's documentation). In such cases, the agency will make clear the assumptions underlying the agency's opinion in the accompanying rating commentary.

## INTERNATIONAL LONG-TERM RATINGS

### Issuer Credit Rating Scales

<b>AAA</b>	Highest credit quality. 'AAA' ratings denote the lowest expectation of default risk. They are assigned only in cases of exceptionally strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is highly unlikely to be adversely affected by foreseeable events.
<b>AA</b>	Very high credit quality. 'AA' ratings denote expectations of very low default risk. They indicate very strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events.
<b>A</b>	High credit quality. 'A' ratings denote expectations of low default risk. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be more vulnerable to adverse business or economic conditions than is the case for higher ratings.
<b>BBB</b>	Good credit quality. 'BBB' ratings indicate that expectations of default risk are currently low. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered adequate but adverse business or economic conditions are more likely to impair this capacity.
<b>BB</b>	Speculative. 'BB' ratings indicate an elevated vulnerability to default risk, particularly in the event of adverse changes in business or economic conditions over time; however, business or financial flexibility exists which supports the servicing of financial commitments.
<b>B</b>	Highly speculative. 'B' ratings indicate that material default risk is present, but a limited margin of safety remains. Financial commitments are currently being met; however, capacity for continued payment is vulnerable to deterioration in the business and economic environment.
<b>CCC</b>	Substantial credit risk. Default is a real possibility.
<b>CC</b>	Very high levels of credit risk. Default of some kind appears probable.
<b>C</b>	Exceptionally high levels of credit risk. Default is imminent or inevitable, or the issuer is in standstill. Conditions that are indicative of a 'C' category rating for an issuer include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the issuer has entered into a grace or cure period following non-payment of a material financial obligation;</li> <li>• the issuer has entered into a temporary negotiated waiver or standstill agreement following a payment default on a material financial obligation; or</li> <li>• Fitch otherwise believes a condition of 'RD' or 'D' to be imminent or inevitable, including through the formal announcement of a distressed debt exchange.</li> </ul>



<b>RD</b>	<p>Restricted default. 'RD' ratings indicate an issuer that in Fitch's opinion has experienced an uncured payment default on a bond, loan or other material financial obligation but which has not entered into bankruptcy filings, administration, receivership, liquidation or other formal winding-up procedure, and which has not otherwise ceased operating. This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the selective payment default on a specific class or currency of debt;</li> <li>• the uncured expiry of any applicable grace period, cure period or default forbearance period following a payment default on a bank loan, capital markets security or other material financial obligation;</li> <li>• the extension of multiple waivers or forbearance periods upon a payment default on one or more material financial obligations, either in series or in parallel; or</li> <li>• execution of a distressed debt exchange on one or more material financial obligations.</li> </ul>
<b>D</b>	<p>Default. 'D' ratings indicate an issuer that in Fitch's opinion has entered into bankruptcy filings, administration, receivership, liquidation or other formal winding-up procedure, or which has otherwise ceased business.</p>

Default ratings are not assigned prospectively to entities or their obligations; within this context, non-payment on an instrument that contains a deferral feature or grace period will generally not be considered a default until after the expiration of the deferral or grace period, unless a default is otherwise driven by bankruptcy or other similar circumstance, or by a distressed debt exchange.

"Imminent" default typically refers to the occasion where a payment default has been intimated by the issuer, and is all but inevitable. This may, for example, be where an issuer has missed a scheduled payment, but (as is typical) has a grace period during which it may cure the payment default. Another alternative would be where an issuer has formally announced a distressed debt exchange, but the date of the exchange still lies several days or weeks in the immediate future.

In all cases, the assignment of a default rating reflects the agency's opinion as to the most appropriate rating category consistent with the rest of its universe of ratings, and may differ from the definition of default under the terms of an issuer's financial obligations or local commercial practice.