



DIVISION OF
CORPORATION FINANCE

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

December 5, 2022

Edward R. Berk
Deere & Company

Re: Deere & Company (the "Company")
Incoming letter dated October 10, 2022

Dear Edward R. Berk:

This letter is in response to your correspondence concerning the shareholder proposal (the "Proposal") submitted to the Company by National Center for Public Policy Research (the "Proponent") for inclusion in the Company's proxy materials for its upcoming annual meeting of security holders.

There appears to be some basis for your view that the Company may exclude the Proposal under Rule 14a-8(f) because the Proponent did not comply with Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii). As required by Rule 14a-8(f), the Company notified the Proponent of the problem, and the Proponent failed to correct it. Accordingly, we will not recommend enforcement action to the Commission if the Company omits the Proposal from its proxy materials in reliance on Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii) and 14a-8(f).

Copies of all of the correspondence on which this response is based will be made available on our website at <https://www.sec.gov/corpfin/2022-2023-shareholder-proposals-no-action>.

Sincerely,

Rule 14a-8 Review Team

cc: Ethan Peck
National Center for Public Policy Research



Deere & Company
Law Department
One John Deere Place, Moline, IL 61265 USA
Phone: (309) 748-2674
Fax: (309) 749-0085
Email: BerkEdwardR@JohnDeere.com

Edward R. Berk
Corporate Secretary &
Associate General Counsel

October 10, 2022

VIA EMAIL (shareholderproposals@sec.gov)

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

Re: Shareholder Proposal to Deere & Company by the National Center for Public Policy Research

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This letter is submitted on behalf of Deere & Company, a Delaware corporation (the "Company"), pursuant to Rule 14a-8(j) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"), to notify the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "Commission") of the Company's intention to exclude a shareholder proposal and related supporting statement (the "Proposal") submitted by the National Center for Public Policy Research (the "Proponent"), from the Company's proxy materials for its 2023 Annual Meeting of Shareholders (the "2023 Proxy Materials"). For the reasons set forth below, we request confirmation that the Division of Corporation Finance (the "Staff") will not recommend to the Commission that enforcement action be taken if the Company excludes the Proposal from its 2023 Proxy Materials in reliance on the provision of Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii) under the Exchange Act, as described below.

In accordance with Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14D (Nov. 7, 2008) ("SLB 14D"), this letter and its attachments are being e-mailed to the Staff at shareholderproposals@sec.gov. As required by Rule 14a-8(j), this letter and its attachments are concurrently being sent to the Proponent as notice of the Company's intent to omit the Proposal from its 2023 Proxy Materials no later than eighty (80) calendar days before the Company intends to file its definitive 2023 Proxy Materials with the Commission. The Corporation intends to file its definitive 2023 Proxy Materials with the Commission on or about January 11, 2023. Rule 14a-8(k) and SLB 14D provide that shareholder proponents are required to send companies a copy of any correspondence that proponents elect to submit to the Commission or Staff. Accordingly, we hereby notify the Proponent that if the

Proponent elects to submit additional correspondence to the Commission or Staff in response to this letter, a copy of that correspondence should be concurrently provided to the undersigned on behalf of the Company.

I. THE PROPOSAL

The Proposal sets forth the following proposed resolution for the vote of the Company's shareholders at the 2023 Annual Meeting of Shareholders:

Resolved: Shareholders of Deere & Co. ("the Company") request that the Board of Directors commission an audit analyzing the Company's impacts on civil rights and non-discrimination, and the impacts of those issues on the Company's business. The audit may, in the Board's discretion, be conducted by an independent and unbiased third party with input from civil rights organizations, public-interest litigation groups, employees and other stakeholders - of a wide spectrum of viewpoints and perspectives. A report on the audit, prepared at reasonable cost and omitting confidential or proprietary information, should be publicly disclosed on the Company's website.

A full copy of the Proposal and the supporting statement is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

II. BASIS FOR EXCLUSION

As discussed more fully below, the Company believes it may properly omit the Proposal from its 2023 Proxy Materials pursuant to Rule 14a-8(b)(1) and Rule 14a-8(f)(1) because the Proponent failed to provide the Company with a written statement of ability to meet with the Company regarding the Proposal, including dates and times of availability, satisfactory of the requirements of Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii).

III. ANALYSIS

The Proposal May Be Excluded Under Rule 14a-8(b) and Rule 14a-8(f)(1) Because the Proponent Provided the Company with a Deficient Written Statement Regarding the Proponent's Ability to Meet with the Company.

Under Rule 14a-8(f), a company may exclude from its proxy materials a proposal submitted by a proponent who fails to satisfy the procedural requirements set forth in Rule 14a-8(b). Moreover, Rule 14a-8(f)(1) permits a company to exclude a proposal from its proxy materials if (i) the proponent does not satisfy the eligibility requirements in Rule 14a-8(b), (ii) the company notifies the proponent of the deficiency within 14 days of receiving the proposal and (iii) the proponent does not correct the deficiency within 14 days of receipt of the company's deficiency notice. As described below, each of these requirements for exclusion has been satisfied.

Under Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii), a proponent must provide the company with a written statement that the proponent is able to meet with the company in person or via teleconference no less than 10 calendar days, nor more than 30 calendar days, after submission of the shareholder proposal. This written statement must include the proponent's contact information as well as business days and specific times that the proponent is available to discuss with the company. Exchange Act Release No. 34-89964 (Sept. 23, 2020) (the "2020 Release") states that "specific business days and times" means "more than one date and time." The 2020 Release further clarifies that Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii) "will not permit shareholders to identify availability earlier than 10 days after the proposal's submission, so that the company will have sufficient time to consider the proposal prior to engagement taking place."

The Proposal was submitted on August 30, 2022 and the Proponent's cover letter stated that the Proponent "propose[s] as a time for a telephone conference to discuss this proposal September 7, 2022 from 2-5 p.m. eastern (sic)." September 7, 2022, was only eight (8) days following the submission date. In addition, the cover letter only provided one business day of availability. As a result, the Proponent's written statement of availability is deficient under Rule 14a-8(b)(iii) because (a) the proposed September 7, 2022 date of availability is outside of the 10 to 30 calendar day window from the submission date prescribed by Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii), and (b) the written statement did not include "more than one date and time" (see the 2020 Release). The Proposal also failed to include requisite proof of ownership of Company shares for the required period of time under Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(i).

On September 12, 2022, within 14 calendar days of receiving the Proposal as required by Rule 14a-8(f)(1), the Company notified the Proponent in a letter (attached hereto as Exhibit B) sent by e-mail, followed by a courtesy hard copy sent via UPS Next Day Air on that same date, of the procedural deficiencies discussed above (the "Deficiency Letter"). A copy of the confirmation of delivery of the courtesy hardcopy is attached hereto as Exhibit C.

In addition to describing the necessary documentation to prove adequate beneficial ownership of Company shares, the Deficiency Letter notified the Proponent of the requirements of Rule 14a-8(b) with respect to the Proponent's ability to discuss the Proposal with the Company, that the defect could be remedied by providing a written statement that includes the Proponent's availability to discuss the Proposal with the Company on more than one date and time and that such dates and times must be no less than 10 nor more than 30 calendar days after the submission date. The Deficiency Letter also informed the Proponent that the response must be postmarked or transmitted to the Company no later than 14 calendar days from the date of receipt of the Deficiency Letter (*i.e.* September 26, 2022). On September 12, 2022, the Proponent responded via e-mail to the Deficiency Letter sent by e-mail, remedying the proof of ownership deficiency. A copy of that email is attached hereto as Exhibit D. However, the Company has not received a response addressing the deficiency related to the dates and times of availability within the 10 to 30 calendar-day window after the submission date to

discuss the Proposal with the Company as required by Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii) and explained in the 2020 Release.

The Staff has consistently permitted exclusion under Rule 14a-8(f)(1) of shareholder proposals where a proponent has failed to provide timely evidence of eligibility to submit a shareholder proposal in response to a timely deficiency notice from the company. See, e.g., *PPL Corporation* (March 9, 2022) (permitting exclusion under Rule 14a-8(f) of a proposal where the proponent failed to provide the proponent's availability to meet with the company pursuant to Rule 14a-18(b)(1)(iii) after receiving the company's timely deficiency notice); *The Allstate Corporation* (February 8, 2022) (same); *American Tower Corporation* (February 8, 2022) (same); *The Walt Disney Co.* (Sept. 28, 2021)^{1*} (permitting exclusion under Rule 14a-8(f)(1) of a proposal where the proponent failed to supply any evidence of eligibility to submit a shareholder proposal, including the proponent's availability to meet with the company, after receiving the company's timely deficiency notice).

¹ *Citations marked with an asterisk indicate Staff decisions issued without a letter.

IV. CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above, we believe that the Company may properly omit the Proposal from its 2023 Proxy Materials in reliance on Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii) and Rule 14a-8(f). As such, we respectfully request that the Staff concur with our view and not recommend enforcement action to the Commission if the Company omits the Proposal from its 2023 Proxy Materials. Should the Staff have any questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact me at (309) 748-2674 or by email at BerkEdwardR@JohnDeere.com.

Sincerely,



Edward R. Berk
Associate General Counsel and
Corporate Secretary
Deere & Company

CC:

Julie M. Rosales
Deere & Company
Email: RosalesJulieM@JohnDeere.com

Robert M. Hayward, P.C.
Ana Sempertegui
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Email: robert.hayward@kirkland.com; ana.sempertegui@kirkland.com

Ethan Peck
National Center for Public Policy Research
2005 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Email: epeck@nationalcenter.org

Enclosures: Exhibit A
Exhibit B
Exhibit C
Exhibit D

EXHIBIT A



August 30, 2022

Via FedEx to

Edward R. Berk
Corporate Secretary
Deere & Company
One John Deere Place
Moline, Illinois 61265-8098

Dear Mr. Berk,

I hereby submit the enclosed shareholder proposal (“Proposal”) for inclusion in the Deere & Co. (the “Company”) proxy statement to be circulated to Company shareholders in conjunction with the next annual meeting of shareholders. The Proposal is submitted under Rule 14(a)-8 (Proposals of Security Holders) of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission’s proxy regulations.

I submit the Proposal as the Director of the Free Enterprise Project of the National Center for Public Policy Research, which has continuously owned Company stock with a value exceeding \$2,000 for at least 3 years prior to and including the date of this Proposal and which intends to hold these shares through the date of the Company’s 2023 annual meeting of shareholders. A Proof of Ownership letter is forthcoming and will be delivered to the Company.

Pursuant to interpretations of Rule 14(a)-8 by the Securities & Exchange Commission staff, I initially propose as a time for a telephone conference to discuss this proposal September 7, 2022 from 2-5 p.m. eastern. If that proves inconvenient, I hope you will suggest some other times to talk. Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED]@nationalcenter.org so that we can determine the mode and method of that discussion.

Copies of correspondence or a request for a “no-action” letter should be sent to me at the National Center for Public Policy Research, [REDACTED] and emailed to [REDACTED]@nationalcenter.org.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Ethan Peck

cc: Scott Shepard, FEP Director
Enclosure: Shareholder Proposal

Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination Audit Proposal

Resolved: Shareholders of Deere & Co. (“the Company”) request that the Board of Directors commission an audit analyzing the Company’s impacts on civil rights and non-discrimination, and the impacts of those issues on the Company’s business. The audit may, in the Board’s discretion, be conducted by an independent and unbiased third party with input from civil rights organizations, public-interest litigation groups, employees and other stakeholders – of a wide spectrum of viewpoints and perspectives. A report on the audit, prepared at reasonable cost and omitting confidential or proprietary information, should be publicly disclosed on the Company’s website.

Supporting Statement: Tremendous public attention has focused recently on workplace and employment practices. All agree that employee success should be fostered and that no employees should face discrimination, but there is much disagreement about what non-discrimination means.

Concern stretches across the ideological spectrum. Some have pressured companies to adopt “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion” (DEI) programs that seek to establish “racial/social equity,” which appears to mean the distribution of pay and authority on the basis of race, sex, orientation and ethnic categories rather than by merit.¹ Where adopted, such programs raise significant objection, including concern that DEI programs are themselves deeply racist, sexist and otherwise discriminatory.²

Many companies have been found to be sponsoring and promoting overtly and implicitly discriminatory employee-training and other employment and advancement programs, including Bank of America, American Express, Verizon, Pfizer, CVS and John Deere itself.³

¹ <https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1048911/000120677421002182/fdx3894361-def14a.htm#StockholderProposals88>; <https://www.sec.gov/divisions/corpfin/cf-noaction/14a-8/2021/asyousownike051421-14a8-incoming.pdf>; <https://www.sec.gov/divisions/corpfin/cf-noaction/14a-8/2021/nyscrfamazon012521-14a8-incoming.pdf>; https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1666700/000119312521079533/d108785ddef14a.htm#rom108785_58

² <https://www.americanexperiment.org/survey-says-americans-oppose-critical-race-theory/>; <https://www.newsweek.com/majority-americans-hold-negative-view-critical-race-theory-amid-controversy-1601337>; <https://www.newsweek.com/coca-cola-facing-backlash-says-less-white-learning-plan-was-about-workplace-inclusion-1570875>; <https://nypost.com/2021/08/11/american-express-tells-its-workers-capitalism-is-racist/>; <https://www.city-journal.org/verizon-critical-race-theory-training>

³ <https://www.city-journal.org/bank-of-america-racial-reeducation-program>; <https://www.city-journal.org/verizon-critical-race-theory-training>; <https://nypost.com/2021/08/11/american-express-tells-its-workers-capitalism-is-racist/>; <https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/cvs-inclusion-training-critical-race-theory>; <https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/other/pfizer-sets-race-based-hiring-goals-in-the-name-of-fighting-systemic-racism-gender-equity-challenges/ar-AAOISwJ>; <https://www.deere.com/en/our-company/john-deere-careers/why-john-deere/diversity/>

This disagreement and controversy create massive reputational, legal and financial risk. If the Company is, in the name of equity, diversity and inclusion, committing illegal or unconscionable discrimination against employees deemed “non-diverse,” then the Company will suffer in myriad ways – all of them both unforgivable and avoidable.

In developing the audit and report, the Company should consult civil-rights and public-interest law groups – but it must not compound error with bias by relying only on left-leaning organizations. Rather, it must consult groups across the spectrum of viewpoints. This includes right-leaning civil-rights groups representing people of color, such as the Woodson Center⁴ and Project 21,⁵ and groups that defend the rights and liberties of *all* Americans, not merely the ones that many companies label “diverse.” All Americans have civil rights; to behave otherwise is to invite disaster.

Similarly, when including employees in its audit, the Company must allow employees to speak freely without fear of reprisal or disfavor, and in confidential ways. Too many employers have established company stances that themselves chill contributions from employees who disagree with the company’s asserted positions, and then have pretended that the employees who have been empowered by the companies’ partisan positioning represent the true and only voice of all employees. This by itself creates a deeply hostile workplace for some groups of employees, and is both immoral and likely illegal.

⁴ <https://woodsoncenter.org/>

⁵ <https://nationalcenter.org/project-21/>

EXHIBIT B



Deere & Company
Law Department
One John Deere Place, Moline, IL 61265 USA
Phone: (309) 748-2674
Fax: (309) 749-0085
Email: BerkEdwardR@JohnDeere.com

Edward R. Berk
Corporate Secretary &
Associate General Counsel

September 12, 2022

VIA EMAIL AND OVERNIGHT COURIER

National Center for Public Policy Research
Attn: Mr. Ethan Peck

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@nationalcenter.org

Re: Notice of Deficiencies Relating to Stockholder Proposal

Dear Mr. Peck:

On September 2, 2022, we received the stockholder proposal (the "Proposal") sent on behalf of the Free Enterprise Project of the National Center for Public Policy Research (the "Proponent"), which was postmarked August 30, 2022 (the "Submission Date"), for inclusion in Deere & Company's (the "Company") proxy materials for its 2023 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (the "Annual Meeting"). The purpose of this letter is to notify you that we have not received sufficient proof of the Proponent's ownership as required by Rule 14a-8(b) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, and that the Proposal's written statement that the Proponent is able to meet with the Company in person, or via teleconference, is deficient as further set forth below.

Rule 14a-8(b) provides that a stockholder proponent must submit sufficient proof of their continuous ownership for the applicable holding period preceding and including the Submission Date of:

- At least \$2,000 in market value of the Company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least three years; or
- At least \$15,000 in market value of the Company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least two years; or
- At least \$25,000 in market value of the Company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least one year.

Our search of the database of our registered stockholders shows that the Proponent is not a registered stockholder, and as a result, we are unable to verify this ownership requirement. Therefore, pursuant to Rule 14a-8(b), the Proponent must demonstrate its eligibility to submit the Proposal by submitting to us a written statement from the

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"record" holder (usually a bank or broker) verifying that the Proponent has continuously held the requisite number of securities for the applicable holding period preceding and including the Submission Date, as described above. The SEC's Staff Legal Bulletins No. 14F and 14G (together, the "Bulletins") provide additional guidance with respect to the standard for proof of ownership. According to the Bulletins, for purposes of satisfying the proof of ownership requirement under Rule 14a-8(b)(2), only participants in The Depository Trust Company ("DTC") and their affiliates, as described in the Bulletins, should be viewed as "record" holders of securities that are deposited with the DTC. If the Proponent's broker is an introducing broker, the Proponent may also be able to learn the identity and telephone number of the DTC participant through its account statements, because the clearing broker identified on such account statements will generally be the DTC participant. If the DTC participant knows the Proponent's broker's holdings, but does not know the Proponent's holdings, the Proponent can satisfy Rule 14a-8(b)(2) by obtaining and submitting two proof of ownership statements verifying that, as of the Submission Date, the required amount of securities was continuously held for the applicable holding period—one from the Proponent's broker confirming the Proponent's ownership and the other from the DTC participant confirming the broker's ownership.

In addition, pursuant to Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii), the Proponent must provide the Company with a written statement that the Proponent is able to meet with the Company in person or via teleconference no less than 10, nor more than 30 calendar days after the Submission Date. The Proponent must include contact information as well as specific business days and times (which must be between 9:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Central Time) (i.e. more than one date and time) that the Proponent is available to discuss the Proposal with the Company. The cover letter to the Proposal states that the Proponent "propose[s] as a time for a telephone conference to discuss this proposal September 7, 2022 from 2-5 p.m. eastern (sic)." September 7, 2022 is a date that is outside of the 10 to 30 calendar days after the Submission Date required by Rule 14a-8(b)(1)(iii). In addition, the Proponent has only provided one date for availability to discuss the Proposal. To remedy these defects, the Company must timely be provided with a written statement that includes the Proponent's availability to discuss the Proposal with the Company on more than one date and time and such dates and times must be within the 10 to 30 calendar days after the Submission Date.

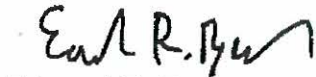
Please respond with the appropriate ownership verification and remedy the procedural defects of the Proposal as per Rule 14a-8 and the guidance set forth in the Bulletins. We have attached copies of the Bulletins and Rule 14a-8 as Exhibit A hereto. The Proponent's response must be postmarked or transmitted electronically with the appropriate documentation and information within 14 calendar days of receipt of this letter, the response timeline imposed by Rule 14a-8(f). If the Proponent does not adequately correct the procedural deficiencies discussed in this letter within the 14 days of receipt of this letter, we may be allowed to exclude the Proposal from consideration at our Annual Meeting and proxy statement. If the Proponent adequately

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Page 3

corrects the procedural defects within the 14-day period, Deere & Company reserves the right to seek relief from the SEC on other grounds, as appropriate.

Please transmit your response electronically to BerkEdwardR@JohnDeere.com. Alternatively, you may address your response to me at the address on this letter.

Sincerely,



Edward R. Berk
Corporate Secretary

Enclosures

EXHIBIT A

Shareholder Proposals

Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14F (CF)

Action: Publication of CF Staff Legal Bulletin

Date: October 18, 2011

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

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

Contacts: For further information, please contact the Division's Office of Chief Counsel by calling (202) 551-3500 or by submitting a web-based request form at https://www.sec.gov/forms/corp_fin_interpretive.

A. The purpose of this bulletin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. The role of the Depository Trust Company

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

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

In *The Hain Celestial Group, Inc.* (Oct. 1, 2008), we took the position that an introducing broker could be considered a "record" holder for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i). An introducing broker is a broker that engages in sales and other activities involving customer contact, such as opening customer accounts and accepting customer orders, but is not permitted to maintain custody of customer funds and securities.⁶ Instead, an introducing broker engages another broker, known as a "clearing broker," to hold custody of client funds and securities, to clear and execute customer trades, and to handle other functions such as issuing confirmations of customer trades and customer account statements. Clearing brokers generally are DTC participants;

introducing brokers generally are not. As introducing brokers generally are not DTC participants, and therefore typically do not appear on DTC's securities position listing, *Hain Celestial* has required companies to accept proof of ownership letters from brokers in cases where, unlike the positions of registered owners and brokers and banks that are DTC participants, the company is unable to verify the positions against its own or its transfer agent's records or against DTC's securities position listing.

In light of questions we have received following two recent court cases relating to proof of ownership under Rule 14a-8⁷ and in light of the Commission's discussion of registered and beneficial owners in the Proxy Mechanics Concept Release, we have reconsidered our views as to what types of brokers and banks should be considered "record" holders under Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i). Because of the transparency of DTC participants' positions in a company's securities, we will take the view going forward that, for Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) purposes, only DTC participants should be viewed as "record" holders of securities that are deposited at DTC. As a result, we will no longer follow *Hain Celestial*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D. The submission of revised proposals

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

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

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

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

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

No. If a shareholder submits revisions to a proposal after the deadline for receiving proposals under Rule 14a-8(e), the company is not required to accept the revisions. However, if the company does not accept the revisions, it must treat the revised proposal as a second proposal and submit a notice stating its intention to exclude the revised proposal, as required by Rule 14a-8(j). The company's notice may cite Rule 14a-8(e) as the reason for excluding the revised proposal. If the company does not accept the revisions and intends to exclude the initial proposal, it would also need to submit its reasons for excluding the initial proposal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ See Rule 14a-8(b).

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

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

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

⁵ See Exchange Act Rule 17Ad-8.

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

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

⁸ *Techna Corp.* (Sept. 20, 1988).

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ See, e.g., *Adoption of Amendments Relating to Proposals by Security Holders*, Release No. 34-12999 (Nov. 22, 1976) [41 FR 52594].

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

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

Modified: Oct. 18, 2011

Shareholder Proposals

Staff Legal Bulletin No. 14G (CF)

Action: Publication of CF Staff Legal Bulletin

Date: October 16, 2012

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

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

Contacts: For further information, please contact the Division's Office of Chief Counsel by calling (202) 551-3500 or by submitting a web-based request form at https://www.sec.gov/forms/corp_fin_interpretive.

A. The purpose of this bulletin

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

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

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

B. Parties that can provide proof of ownership under Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i) for purposes of verifying whether a beneficial owner is eligible to submit a proposal under Rule 14a-8

1. Sufficiency of proof of ownership letters provided by affiliates of DTC participants for purposes of Rule 14a-8(b)(2)(i)

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

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

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

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

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

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

As discussed in Section C of SLB No. 14F, a common error in proof of ownership letters is that they do not verify a proponent's beneficial ownership for the entire one-year period preceding and including the date the proposal was submitted, as required by Rule 14a-8(b)(1). In some cases, the letter speaks as of a date *before* the date the proposal was submitted, thereby leaving a gap between the date of verification and the date the proposal was

submitted. In other cases, the letter speaks as of a date *after* the date the proposal was submitted but covers a period of only one year, thus failing to verify the proponent's beneficial ownership over the required full one-year period preceding the date of the proposal's submission.

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

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

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

D. Use of website addresses in proposals and supporting statements

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

In SLB No. 14, we explained that a reference to a website address in a proposal does not raise the concerns addressed by the 500-word limitation in Rule 14a-8(d). We continue to be of this view and, accordingly, we will continue to count a website address as one word for purposes of Rule 14a-8(d). To the extent that the company seeks the exclusion of a website reference in a proposal, but not the proposal itself, we will continue to follow the guidance stated in SLB No. 14, which provides that references to website addresses in proposals or supporting statements could be subject to exclusion under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) if the information contained on the website is materially false or misleading, irrelevant to the subject matter of the proposal or otherwise in contravention of the proxy rules, including Rule 14a-9.³

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

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

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

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

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

We recognize that if a proposal references a website that is not operational at the time the proposal is submitted, it will be impossible for a company or the staff to evaluate whether the website reference may be excluded. In our view, a reference to a non-operational website in a proposal or supporting statement could be excluded under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) as irrelevant to the subject matter of a proposal. We understand, however, that a proponent may wish to include a reference to a website containing information related to the proposal but wait to activate the website until it becomes clear that the proposal will be included in the company's proxy materials. Therefore, we will not concur that a reference to a website may be excluded as irrelevant under Rule 14a-8(i)(3) on the basis that it is not yet operational if the proponent, at the time the proposal is submitted, provides the company with the materials that are intended for publication on the website and a representation that the website will become operational at, or prior to, the time the company files its definitive proxy materials.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Modified: Oct. 16, 2012

This content is from the eCFR and is authoritative but unofficial.

Title 17 - Commodity and Securities Exchanges

Chapter II - Securities and Exchange Commission

Part 240 - General Rules and Regulations, Securities Exchange Act of 1934

Authority: 15 U.S.C. 77c, 77d, 77g, 77j, 77s, 77z-2, 77z-3, 77eee, 77ggg, 77nnn, 77sss, 77ttt, 78c, 78c-3, 78c-5, 78d, 78e, 78f, 78g, 78i, 78j, 78j-1, 78k, 78k-1, 78l, 78m, 78n, 78n-1, 78o, 78o-4, 78c-10, 78p, 78q, 78q-1, 78s, 78u-5, 78w, 78x, 78dd, 78ll, 78mm, 80a-20, 80a-23, 80a-29, 80a-37, 80b-3, 80b-4, 80b-11, and 7201 *et seq.*, and 8302; 7 U.S.C. 2(c)(2)(E); 12 U.S.C. 5221(e)(3); 18 U.S.C. 1350; Pub. L. 111-203, 939A, 124 Stat. 1376 (2010); and Pub. L. 112-106, sec. 503 and 602, 126 Stat. 326 (2012), unless otherwise noted. Section 240.3a4-1 also issued under secs. 3 and 15, 89 Stat. 97, as amended, 89 Stat. 121 as amended; Section 240.3a12-8 also issued under 15 U.S.C. 78a *et seq.*, particularly secs. 3(a)(12), 15 U.S.C. 78c(a)(12), and 23(a), 15 U.S.C. 78w(a); See *Part 240 for more*

Source: Sections 240.21F-1 through 240.21F-17 appear at 76 FR 34363, June 13, 2011.

Source: 72 FR 33620, June 18, 2007, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Sections 240.16c-1 through 240.16c-4 appear at 56 FR 7273, Feb. 21, 1991, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Sections 240.16b-1 through 240.16b-8 appear at 56 FR 7270, Feb. 21, 1991, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Sections 240.15Fb1-1 through 240.15Fb6-2 appear at 80 FR 49013, Aug. 14, 2015, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Sections 240.15Ca1-1 through 240.15Cc1-1 appear at 52 FR 16839, May 6, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Sections 240.13d-1 through 240.13f-1 appear at 43 FR 18495, Apr. 28, 1978, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Sections 240.12d1-1 through 240.12d-6 appear at 19 FR 670, Feb. 5, 1954, unless otherwise noted.

Source: Sections 240.12b-1 through 240.12b-36 appear at 13 FR 9321, Dec. 31, 1948, unless otherwise noted.

Source: 77 FR 30751, May 23, 2012, unless otherwise noted.

Editorial Note: Nomenclature changes to part 240 appear at 57 FR 36501, Aug. 13, 1992, and 57 FR 47409, Oct. 16, 1992.

§ 240.14a-8 Shareholder proposals.

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

- (a) **Question 1: What is a proposal?** A shareholder proposal is your recommendation or requirement that the company and/or its board of directors take action, which you intend to present at a meeting of the company's shareholders. Your proposal should state as clearly as possible the course of action that you believe the company should follow. If your proposal is placed on the company's proxy card, the company must also provide in the form of proxy means for shareholders to specify by boxes a choice between approval or disapproval, or abstention. Unless otherwise indicated, the word "proposal" as used in this section refers both to your proposal, and to your corresponding statement in support of your proposal (if any).
- (b) **Question 2: Who is eligible to submit a proposal, and how do I demonstrate to the company that I am eligible?**
 - (1) To be eligible to submit a proposal, you must satisfy the following requirements:
 - (i) You must have continuously held:

- (A) At least \$2,000 in market value of the company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least three years; or
 - (B) At least \$15,000 in market value of the company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least two years; or
 - (C) At least \$25,000 in market value of the company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least one year; or
 - (D) The amounts specified in paragraph (b)(3) of this section. This paragraph (b)(1)(i)(D) will expire on the same date that § 240.14a-8(b)(3) expires; and
- (ii) You must provide the company with a written statement that you intend to continue to hold the requisite amount of securities, determined in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(i)(A) through (C) of this section, through the date of the shareholders' meeting for which the proposal is submitted; and
 - (iii) You must provide the company with a written statement that you are able to meet with the company in person or via teleconference no less than 10 calendar days, nor more than 30 calendar days, after submission of the shareholder proposal. You must include your contact information as well as business days and specific times that you are available to discuss the proposal with the company. You must identify times that are within the regular business hours of the company's principal executive offices. If these hours are not disclosed in the company's proxy statement for the prior year's annual meeting, you must identify times that are between 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in the time zone of the company's principal executive offices. If you elect to co-file a proposal, all co-filers must either:
 - (A) Agree to the same dates and times of availability, or
 - (B) Identify a single lead filer who will provide dates and times of the lead filer's availability to engage on behalf of all co-filers; and
 - (iv) If you use a representative to submit a shareholder proposal on your behalf, you must provide the company with written documentation that:
 - (A) Identifies the company to which the proposal is directed;
 - (B) Identifies the annual or special meeting for which the proposal is submitted;
 - (C) Identifies you as the proponent and identifies the person acting on your behalf as your representative;
 - (D) Includes your statement authorizing the designated representative to submit the proposal and otherwise act on your behalf;
 - (E) Identifies the specific topic of the proposal to be submitted;
 - (F) Includes your statement supporting the proposal; and
 - (G) Is signed and dated by you.
 - (v) The requirements of paragraph (b)(1)(iv) of this section shall not apply to shareholders that are entities so long as the representative's authority to act on the shareholder's behalf is apparent and self-evident such that a reasonable person would understand that the agent has authority to submit the proposal and otherwise act on the shareholder's behalf.

- (vi) For purposes of paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, you may not aggregate your holdings with those of another shareholder or group of shareholders to meet the requisite amount of securities necessary to be eligible to submit a proposal.
- (2) One of the following methods must be used to demonstrate your eligibility to submit a proposal:
 - (i) If you are the registered holder of your securities, which means that your name appears in the company's records as a shareholder, the company can verify your eligibility on its own, although you will still have to provide the company with a written statement that you intend to continue to hold the requisite amount of securities, determined in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(i)(A) through (C) of this section, through the date of the meeting of shareholders.
 - (ii) If, like many shareholders, you are not a registered holder, the company likely does not know that you are a shareholder, or how many shares you own. In this case, at the time you submit your proposal, you must prove your eligibility to the company in one of two ways:
 - (A) The first way is to submit to the company a written statement from the "record" holder of your securities (usually a broker or bank) verifying that, at the time you submitted your proposal, you continuously held at least \$2,000, \$15,000, or \$25,000 in market value of the company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least three years, two years, or one year, respectively. You must also include your own written statement that you intend to continue to hold the requisite amount of securities, determined in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(i)(A) through (C) of this section, through the date of the shareholders' meeting for which the proposal is submitted; or
 - (B) The second way to prove ownership applies only if you were required to file, and filed, a Schedule 13D (§ 240.13d-101), Schedule 13G (§ 240.13d-102), Form 3 (§ 249.103 of this chapter), Form 4 (§ 249.104 of this chapter), and/or Form 5 (§ 249.105 of this chapter), or amendments to those documents or updated forms, demonstrating that you meet at least one of the share ownership requirements under paragraph (b)(1)(i)(A) through (C) of this section. If you have filed one or more of these documents with the SEC, you may demonstrate your eligibility to submit a proposal by submitting to the company:
 - (1) A copy of the schedule(s) and/or form(s), and any subsequent amendments reporting a change in your ownership level;
 - (2) Your written statement that you continuously held at least \$2,000, \$15,000, or \$25,000 in market value of the company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least three years, two years, or one year, respectively; and
 - (3) Your written statement that you intend to continue to hold the requisite amount of securities, determined in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(i)(A) through (C) of this section, through the date of the company's annual or special meeting.
- (3) If you continuously held at least \$2,000 of a company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least one year as of January 4, 2021, and you have continuously maintained a minimum investment of at least \$2,000 of such securities from January 4, 2021 through the date the proposal is submitted to the company, you will be eligible to submit a proposal to such company for an annual or special meeting to be held prior to January 1, 2023. If you rely on this provision, you must provide the company with your written statement that you intend to continue to hold at least \$2,000 of such securities through the date of the shareholders' meeting for which the proposal is submitted. You must also follow the procedures set forth in paragraph (b)(2) of this section to demonstrate that:

- (i) You continuously held at least \$2,000 of the company's securities entitled to vote on the proposal for at least one year as of January 4, 2021; and
 - (ii) You have continuously maintained a minimum investment of at least \$2,000 of such securities from January 4, 2021 through the date the proposal is submitted to the company.
 - (iii) This paragraph (b)(3) will expire on January 1, 2023.
- (c) **Question 3: How many proposals may I submit?** Each person may submit no more than one proposal, directly or indirectly, to a company for a particular shareholders' meeting. A person may not rely on the securities holdings of another person for the purpose of meeting the eligibility requirements and submitting multiple proposals for a particular shareholders' meeting.
- (d) **Question 4: How long can my proposal be?** The proposal, including any accompanying supporting statement, may not exceed 500 words.
- (e) **Question 5: What is the deadline for submitting a proposal?**
- (1) If you are submitting your proposal for the company's annual meeting, you can in most cases find the deadline in last year's proxy statement. However, if the company did not hold an annual meeting last year, or has changed the date of its meeting for this year more than 30 days from last year's meeting, you can usually find the deadline in one of the company's quarterly reports on Form 10-Q (§ 249.308a of this chapter), or in shareholder reports of investment companies under § 270.30d-1 of this chapter of the Investment Company Act of 1940. In order to avoid controversy, shareholders should submit their proposals by means, including electronic means, that permit them to prove the date of delivery.
 - (2) The deadline is calculated in the following manner if the proposal is submitted for a regularly scheduled annual meeting. The proposal must be received at the company's principal executive offices not less than 120 calendar days before the date of the company's proxy statement released to shareholders in connection with the previous year's annual meeting. However, if the company did not hold an annual meeting the previous year, or if the date of this year's annual meeting has been changed by more than 30 days from the date of the previous year's meeting, then the deadline is a reasonable time before the company begins to print and send its proxy materials.
 - (3) If you are submitting your proposal for a meeting of shareholders other than a regularly scheduled annual meeting, the deadline is a reasonable time before the company begins to print and send its proxy materials.
- (f) **Question 6: What if I fail to follow one of the eligibility or procedural requirements explained in answers to Questions 1 through 4 of this section?**
- (1) The company may exclude your proposal, but only after it has notified you of the problem, and you have failed adequately to correct it. Within 14 calendar days of receiving your proposal, the company must notify you in writing of any procedural or eligibility deficiencies, as well as of the time frame for your response. Your response must be postmarked, or transmitted electronically, no later than 14 days from the date you received the company's notification. A company need not provide you such notice of a deficiency if the deficiency cannot be remedied, such as if you fail to submit a proposal by the company's properly determined deadline. If the company intends to exclude the proposal, it will later have to make a submission under § 240.14a-8 and provide you with a copy under Question 10 below, § 240.14a-8(i).

- (2) If you fail in your promise to hold the required number of securities through the date of the meeting of shareholders, then the company will be permitted to exclude all of your proposals from its proxy materials for any meeting held in the following two calendar years.
- (g) **Question 7: Who has the burden of persuading the Commission or its staff that my proposal can be excluded? Except as otherwise noted, the burden is on the company to demonstrate that it is entitled to exclude a proposal.**
- (h) **Question 8: Must I appear personally at the shareholders' meeting to present the proposal?**
 - (1) Either you, or your representative who is qualified under state law to present the proposal on your behalf, must attend the meeting to present the proposal. Whether you attend the meeting yourself or send a qualified representative to the meeting in your place, you should make sure that you, or your representative, follow the proper state law procedures for attending the meeting and/or presenting your proposal.
 - (2) If the company holds its shareholder meeting in whole or in part via electronic media, and the company permits you or your representative to present your proposal via such media, then you may appear through electronic media rather than traveling to the meeting to appear in person.
 - (3) If you or your qualified representative fail to appear and present the proposal, without good cause, the company will be permitted to exclude all of your proposals from its proxy materials for any meetings held in the following two calendar years.
- (i) **Question 9: If I have complied with the procedural requirements, on what other bases may a company rely to exclude my proposal?**
 - (1) Improper under state law: If the proposal is not a proper subject for action by shareholders under the laws of the jurisdiction of the company's organization;

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

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

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

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

- (4) **Personal grievance; special interest:** If the proposal relates to the redress of a personal claim or grievance against the company or any other person, or if it is designed to result in a benefit to you, or to further a personal interest, which is not shared by the other shareholders at large;
- (5) **Relevance:** If the proposal relates to operations which account for less than 5 percent of the company's total assets at the end of its most recent fiscal year, and for less than 5 percent of its net earnings and gross sales for its most recent fiscal year, and is not otherwise significantly related to the company's business;
- (6) **Absence of power/authority:** If the company would lack the power or authority to implement the proposal;
- (7) **Management functions:** If the proposal deals with a matter relating to the company's ordinary business operations;
- (8) **Director elections:** If the proposal:
 - (i) Would disqualify a nominee who is standing for election;
 - (ii) Would remove a director from office before his or her term expired;
 - (iii) Questions the competence, business judgment, or character of one or more nominees or directors;
 - (iv) Seeks to include a specific individual in the company's proxy materials for election to the board of directors; or
 - (v) Otherwise could affect the outcome of the upcoming election of directors.
- (9) **Conflicts with company's proposal:** If the proposal directly conflicts with one of the company's own proposals to be submitted to shareholders at the same meeting;

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

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

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

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

(12) **Resubmissions.** If the proposal addresses substantially the same subject matter as a proposal, or proposals, previously included in the company's proxy materials within the preceding five calendar years if the most recent vote occurred within the preceding three calendar years and the most recent vote was:

- (i) Less than 5 percent of the votes cast if previously voted on once;
- (ii) Less than 15 percent of the votes cast if previously voted on twice; or
- (iii) Less than 25 percent of the votes cast if previously voted on three or more times.

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

(j) **Question 10:** What procedures must the company follow if it intends to exclude my proposal?

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

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

- (i) The proposal;
- (ii) An explanation of why the company believes that it may exclude the proposal, which should, if possible, refer to the most recent applicable authority, such as prior Division letters issued under the rule; and
- (iii) A supporting opinion of counsel when such reasons are based on matters of state or foreign law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) The company may elect to include in its proxy statement reasons why it believes shareholders should vote against your proposal. The company is allowed to make arguments reflecting its own point of view, just as you may express your own point of view in your proposal's supporting statement.
- (2) However, if you believe that the company's opposition to your proposal contains materially false or misleading statements that may violate our anti-fraud rule, § 240.14a-9, you should promptly send to the Commission staff and the company a letter explaining the reasons for your view, along with a copy of the company's statements opposing your proposal. To the extent possible, your letter should include specific factual information demonstrating the inaccuracy of the company's claims. Time permitting, you may wish to try to work out your differences with the company by yourself before contacting the Commission staff.
- (3) We require the company to send you a copy of its statements opposing your proposal before it sends its proxy materials, so that you may bring to our attention any materially false or misleading statements, under the following timeframes:
 - (i) If our no-action response requires that you make revisions to your proposal or supporting statement as a condition to requiring the company to include it in its proxy materials, then the company must provide you with a copy of its opposition statements no later than 5 calendar days after the company receives a copy of your revised proposal; or
 - (ii) In all other cases, the company must provide you with a copy of its opposition statements no later than 30 calendar days before its files definitive copies of its proxy statement and form of proxy under § 240.14a-6.

[63 FR 29119, May 28, 1998; 63 FR 50622, 50623, Sept. 22, 1998, as amended at 72 FR 4168, Jan. 29, 2007; 72 FR 70456, Dec. 11, 2007; 73 FR 977, Jan. 4, 2008; 76 FR 6045, Feb. 2, 2011; 75 FR 56782, Sept. 16, 2010; 85 FR 70294, Nov. 4, 2020]

Effective Date Note: At 85 FR 70294, Nov. 4, 2020, § 240.14a-8 was amended by adding paragraph (b)(3), effective Jan. 4, 2021 through Jan. 1, 2023.

EXHIBIT C

Proof of Delivery

Dear Customer,

This notice serves as proof of delivery for the shipment listed below.

Tracking Number

1Z060Y4X0190938286

Weight

1.00 LBS

Service

UPS Next Day Air®

Shipped / Billed On

09/12/2022

Delivered On

09/14/2022 10:26 A.M.

Delivered To



Left At

Front Door

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to serve you. Details are only available for shipments delivered within the last 120 days. Please print for your records if you require this information after 120 days.

Sincerely,

UPS

Tracking results provided by UPS: 10/07/2022 3:43 P.M. EST

EXHIBIT D

From: Ethan Peck [REDACTED]@nationalcenter.org>
Sent: Monday, September 12, 2022 2:36:10 PM
To: Berk Edward R <BerkEdwardR@JohnDeere.com>
Subject: Re: Rule 14a-8 Proposal (DE)

[EXTERNAL]

Thanks for the reply Mr. Berk. Attached is proof of ownership as requested. Please confirm receipt.

Ethan Peck
National Center for Public Policy Research

On Mon, Sep 12, 2022 at 3:05 PM Berk Edward R <BerkEdwardR@johndeere.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Peck:

Please see the attached letter re your recent Rule 14a-8 proposal. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions. Thanks.

Best,

Edward Berk

Edward R. Berk

(he/him/his)

Associate General Counsel and Corporate Secretary

Deere & Company World Headquarters

One John Deere Place

Moline, Illinois 61265, USA

T: +1 309 748 2674

M: +1 309 278 3042

BerkEdwardR@JohnDeere.com

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