

Annual Meetings Face Protests from the "99 Percent"

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The Occupy Wall Street Movement has turned its focus on annual meetings, which one media outlet is calling “a rare public forum in U.S. business.” [News reports](#) indicate that a coalition of unions and other organizations calling itself the “99% Power” intends to target more than 200 meetings, although only a few dozen companies were listed on [its website](#). Some of these organizations sponsored trainings for those interested shareholder protests. Reportedly, over 1,000 demonstrators descended upon the Wells Fargo meeting site, where activists bought single shares of stock to gain entrance and over a dozen were ejected for disrupting the meeting. The press today reported that GE’s annual meeting was delayed in order to remove two dozen people chanting at the beginning. GE confronted about 100 protestors in Detroit. Videos of the demonstrations outside the meetings, as well as the protestors’ efforts during the meetings, have been posted online.

The focus of these particular agitators are not the items on the proxy ballots. At Wells Fargo, demonstrators targeted the bank’s foreclosure and lending practices and mortgage operations. The anger directed at GE stems from reports about its tax rate. The protests also did not seem to affect the voting results. Wells Fargo saw over 96% support for its advisory vote on executive compensation and GE received over 92% in favor. It appears that the first proxy access shareholder proposal to be voted on this season at Wells Fargo did not pass. According to various articles, the shareholder proposal that received the highest support at that meeting, at 38%, was one to split the chairman and CEO roles. The same proposal won 22% of the vote at GE. As Ted Allen discussed recently in [his blog](#), shareholders of 44 companies will vote on independent chair proposals this season.

If you have any questions regarding the matters covered in this publication, please reach out to any of the lawyers listed below or your usual Davis Polk contact.

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