

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To provide shareholders with enhanced authority over the nomination,
election, and compensation of public company executives.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. SCHUMER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To provide shareholders with enhanced authority over the
nomination, election, and compensation of public com-
pany executives.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Shareholder Bill of
5 Rights Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

8 (1) among the central causes of the financial
9 and economic crises that the United States faces

1 today has been a widespread failure of corporate
2 governance;

3 (2) within too many of the Nation's most im-
4 portant businesses and financial institutions, both
5 executive management and boards of directors have
6 failed in their most basic duties, including to enact
7 compensation policies that are linked to the long-
8 term profitability of their institutions, to appro-
9 priately analyze and oversee enterprise risk, and
10 most importantly, to prioritize the long-term health
11 of their firms and their shareholders;

12 (3) such failure has led to the loss of trillions
13 of dollars in shareholder value, losses that have been
14 borne by millions of Americans who are shareholders
15 through their pension plans, 401(k) plans, and di-
16 rect investments;

17 (4) a key contributing factor to such failure was
18 the lack of accountability of boards to their ultimate
19 owners, the shareholders;

20 (5) policies that serve to limit the ability of
21 shareholders to nominate and elect board members
22 has served to minimize the accountability of boards
23 and management to shareholders;

24 (6) it has always been the intent of Congress
25 that the Securities and Exchange Commission

1 should have full authority to determine the use of
2 the issuer proxy with regards to the nomination and
3 election of directors by shareholders; and

4 (7) providing a greater voice to shareholders
5 while not impinging on management prerogatives is
6 in the best interests of shareholders, public corpora-
7 tions, and the economy as a whole.

8 **SEC. 3. SHAREHOLDER VOTE ON EXECUTIVE COMPENSA-**
9 **TION DISCLOSURES.**

10 (a) AMENDMENT.—The Securities Exchange Act of
11 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78a et seq.) is amended by inserting after
12 section 14 the following new section:

13 **“SEC. 14A. ANNUAL SHAREHOLDER APPROVAL OF EXECU-**
14 **TIVE COMPENSATION.**

15 “(a) SEPARATE RESOLUTION REQUIRED.—Any
16 proxy or consent or authorization for an annual or other
17 meeting for which the proxy solicitation rules of the Com-
18 mission require compensation disclosure of the share-
19 holders occurring after the end of the 1-year period begin-
20 ning on the date of enactment of this subsection, shall in-
21 clude a separate resolution subject to shareholder vote to
22 approve the compensation of executives as disclosed pursu-
23 ant to the compensation disclosure rules of the Commis-
24 sion (which disclosure shall include the compensation dis-

1 cussion and analysis, the compensation tables, and any re-
2 lated material).

3 “(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—The shareholder
4 vote referred to in subsection (a) shall not be binding on
5 the board of directors and shall not be construed—

6 “(1) as overruling a decision by such board;

7 “(2) to create or imply any change to the cur-
8 rent fiduciary duties of such board;

9 “(3) to create or imply any additional fiduciary
10 duty by such board; or

11 “(4) to restrict or limit the ability of share-
12 holders to make proposals for inclusion in such
13 proxy materials related to executive compensation.

14 “(c) SHAREHOLDER APPROVAL OF GOLDEN PARA-
15 CHUTE COMPENSATION.—

16 “(1) DISCLOSURE.—In any proxy solicitation
17 material for an annual or other meeting of the
18 shareholders occurring after the end of the 1-year
19 period beginning on the date of enactment of this
20 subsection, that concerns an acquisition, merger,
21 consolidation, or proposed sale or other disposition
22 of substantially all of the assets of an issuer, the
23 person making such solicitation shall disclose in the
24 proxy solicitation material, in a clear and simple
25 form in accordance with regulations of the Commis-

1 sion, any agreements or understandings that such
2 person has with any principal executive officers of
3 such issuer (or of the acquiring issuer, if such issuer
4 is not the acquiring issuer) concerning any type of
5 compensation (whether present, deferred, or contin-
6 gent) that are based on or are otherwise related to
7 the acquisition, merger, consolidation, sale, or other
8 disposition, and that have not been subject to a
9 shareholder vote under subsection (a).

10 “(2) SHAREHOLDER APPROVAL.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The proxy solicitation
12 material containing the disclosure required by
13 paragraph (1) shall require a separate share-
14 holder vote to approve such agreements or un-
15 derstandings.

16 “(B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—A vote by
17 the shareholders referred to in subparagraph
18 (A) shall not be binding on the board of direc-
19 tors and shall not be construed—

20 “(i) as overruling a decision by such
21 board;

22 “(ii) to create or imply any change to
23 the current fiduciary duties of such board;

24 “(iii) to create or imply any additional
25 fiduciary duty by such board; or

1 “(iv) to restrict or limit the ability of
2 shareholders to make proposals for inclu-
3 sion in such proxy materials related to ex-
4 ecutive compensation.”.

5 (b) **DEADLINE FOR RULEMAKING.**—Not later than 1
6 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secu-
7 rities and Exchange Commission (in this Act referred to
8 as the “Commission”) shall issue final rules to carry out
9 section 14A of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as
10 added by this section.

11 **SEC. 4. SHAREHOLDER INPUT IN BOARD ELECTIONS.**

12 Section 14A of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934,
13 as added by this Act, is amended by adding at the end
14 the following:

15 “(d) **CONFIRMATION OF COMMISSION AUTHORITY ON**
16 **SHAREHOLDER ACCESS TO PROXIES FOR BOARD NOMI-**
17 **NATIONS.**—

18 “(1) **COMMISSION RULES.**—The Commission
19 shall establish rules relating to the use by share-
20 holders of proxy solicitation materials supplied by
21 the issuer for the purpose of nominating individuals
22 to membership on the board of directors of an
23 issuer.

24 “(2) **SHAREHOLDER REQUIREMENTS.**—The
25 rules of the Commission under this paragraph relat-

1 ing to the use by shareholders of proxy solicitation
2 materials supplied by the issuer for the purpose of
3 nominating individuals to membership on the board
4 of directors of an issuer may not provide for such
5 use, unless the shareholder, or a group of share-
6 holders acting by agreement, has beneficially owned
7 an aggregate of not less than one percent of the vot-
8 ing securities of the issuer, directly or indirectly, for
9 at least the 2-year period preceding the date of the
10 next scheduled annual meeting of the issuer.”.

11 **SEC. 5. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STANDARDS.**

12 Section 14A of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934,
13 as added by this Act, is amended by adding at the end
14 the following:

15 “(e) CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STANDARDS.—

16 “(1) LISTING STANDARDS.—

17 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year
18 after the date of enactment of this subsection,
19 the Commission shall, by rule, direct the na-
20 tional securities exchanges and national securi-
21 ties associations to prohibit the listing of any
22 security of an issuer that is not in compliance
23 with any of the requirements of paragraphs (2)
24 through (5), notwithstanding any other provi-
25 sion of law.

1 “(B) OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLY AND
2 CURE.—The rules under this paragraph shall
3 provide for appropriate procedures for an issuer
4 to have an opportunity to come into compliance
5 with the requirements of this subsection and to
6 cure any defects that would be the basis for a
7 prohibition under subparagraph (A), before the
8 imposition of such prohibition.

9 “(C) AUTHORITY TO EXEMPT.—The Com-
10 mission may, by rule or order, exempt certain
11 issuers from any or all of the requirements of
12 this subsection and the rules issued under this
13 subsection, based on the size of the issuer, mar-
14 ket capitalization, public float, number of share-
15 holders of record, or other criteria, as the Com-
16 mission deems necessary or appropriate.

17 “(2) DIRECTOR INDEPENDENCE.—Each issuer
18 shall provide in governing documents or in a public
19 statement of corporate policy that, consistent with
20 the status of the issuer as a company having a class
21 of equity securities that are registered under sub-
22 section (b) or (g) of section 12, the chairperson of
23 the board of directors of the issuer—

24 “(A) shall be independent, as determined
25 in accordance with the rules of the exchange on

1 which the securities of such issuer are listed,
2 and otherwise by rule of the Commission; and

3 “(B) shall not have previously served as an
4 executive officer of the issuer.

5 “(3) ANNUAL ELECTIONS REQUIRED.—Each
6 issuer shall provide in its governing documents that
7 each member of the board of directors of the issuer
8 shall be subject to annual election by the share-
9 holders. Nothing in this subsection may be construed
10 to establish a maximum period of service, or other-
11 wise limit the terms of service, on the board of direc-
12 tors of an issuer.

13 “(4) COMMISSION RULES ON ELECTIONS.—In
14 board elections—

15 “(A) directors in uncontested elections
16 shall be elected by a majority of votes cast as
17 to each nominee;

18 “(B) if such election is contested, where
19 the number of nominees exceeds the number of
20 directors to be elected, directors shall be elected
21 by the vote of a plurality of the shares rep-
22 resented at an any meeting and entitled to vote;
23 and

1 “(C) if a member of the board of directors
2 of an issuer is not elected to a new term in an
3 uncontested election—

4 “(i) such director shall tender his or
5 her resignation to the board of directors;
6 and

7 “(ii) the board of directors shall—

8 “(I) accept such resignation;

9 “(II) determine a date on which
10 such resignation will take effect, with-
11 in a reasonable period of time, as es-
12 tablished by the Commission; and

13 “(III) make that date public
14 within a reasonable period of time.

15 “(5) RISK COMMITTEE.—

16 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Each issuer shall, 1
17 year after the date of issuance of final rules
18 under paragraph (2), establish a risk com-
19 mittee, comprised entirely of independent direc-
20 tors, which shall be responsible for the estab-
21 lishment and evaluation of the risk management
22 practices of the issuer.

23 “(B) COMMISSION RULEMAKING.—The
24 Commission shall issue final rules regarding the
25 establishment of risk committees under this

1 paragraph, not later than 1 year after the date
2 of enactment of this subsection.”.