

State Auto Financial CORP  
Form 11-K  
June 18, 2018

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

FORM 11-K

S ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934  
For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2017  
OR

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934  
For the transition period from            to  
Commission file number 000-19289

A. Full title of the plan and address of the plan, if different from that of the issuer named below:  
State Auto Insurance Companies Retirement Savings Plan

B. Name of issuer of the securities held pursuant to the plan and the address of its principal executive office:  
State Auto Financial Corporation  
518 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3976

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REQUIRED INFORMATION

The following financial statements and supplemental schedule for the State Auto Insurance Companies Retirement Savings Plan are being filed herewith:

Financial Statements for the two years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016 and Supplemental Schedule for the year ended December 31, 2017

Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm 1

Audited Financial Statements:

Statements of Net Assets Available for Benefits 2

Statements of Changes in Net Assets Available for Benefits 3

Notes to the Financial Statements 4

Supplemental Schedule:

Schedule of Assets (Held at End of Year) 10

The following exhibits are being filed herewith:

Exhibit No. Description

1 Consent of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm Included herein

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Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm

To the Plan Participants, Plan Administrator and Benefits Committee of  
the State Auto Insurance Companies Retirement Savings Plan  
Columbus, Ohio

Opinion on the Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying statements of net assets available for benefits of the State Auto Insurance Companies Retirement Savings Plan (the Plan) as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the related statements of changes in net assets available for benefits for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the related notes and schedule (collectively referred to as the financial statements). In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the net assets available for benefits of the Plan as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the changes in net assets available for benefits for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

These financial statements are the responsibility of the Plan's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Plan's financial statements based on our audits. We are a public accounting firm registered with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) (PCAOB) and are required to be independent with respect to the Plan in accordance with the U.S. federal securities laws and applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB.

We conducted our audits in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement, whether due to error or fraud.

Our audits included performing procedures to assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to error or fraud, and performing procedures that respond to those risks. Such procedures included examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. Our audits also included evaluating the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

Supplemental Information

The supplemental schedule of assets held at end of year has been subjected to audit procedures performed in conjunction with the audit of the Plan's financial statements. The supplemental information is the responsibility of the Plan's management. Our audit procedures included determining whether the supplemental information reconciles to the financial statements or the underlying accounting and other records, as applicable, and performing procedures to test the completeness and accuracy of the information presented in the supplemental information. In forming our opinion on the supplemental information, we evaluated whether the supplemental information, including its form and content, is presented in conformity with the Department of Labor's Rules and Regulations for Reporting and Disclosure under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. In our opinion, the supplemental information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

/s/ Clark, Schaefer, Hackett & Co.

We have served as the Plan's auditor since December 31, 2010.

Columbus, Ohio

June 18, 2018

1

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## STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN

## Statements of Net Assets Available for Benefits

|                                    | December 31   |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                    | 2017          | 2016          |
| Assets                             |               |               |
| Investments, at fair value:        |               |               |
| Registered investment companies    | \$240,148,734 | \$203,044,410 |
| Money market                       | 8,281,186     | 8,965,808     |
| Common/collective trusts           | 74,868,488    | 64,702,345    |
| Affiliated stock                   | 2,212,682     | 2,076,151     |
| Self-directed brokerage accounts   | 5,444,110     | 4,644,324     |
| Total investments                  | 330,955,200   | 283,433,038   |
| Receivables:                       |               |               |
| Employer contributions             | 111,046       | —             |
| Notes receivable from participants | 4,446,867     | 4,257,628     |
| Total receivables                  | 4,557,913     | 4,257,628     |
| Net assets available for benefits  | \$335,513,113 | \$287,690,666 |

See accompanying notes.

## STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN

## Statements of Changes in Net Assets Available for Benefits

|   | Year Ended December 31 |               |
|---|------------------------|---------------|
|   | 2017                   | 2016          |
| Investment income:                                    |                        |               |
| Interest and dividends                                | \$6,843,019            | \$4,689,449   |
| Net appreciation in fair value of investments         | 46,500,772             | 14,168,724    |
| Total investment income                               | 53,343,791             | 18,858,173    |
| Interest income on notes receivable from participants | 152,439                | 142,272       |
| Contributions:  |                        |               |
| Employee contributions                                | 13,370,472             | 12,969,783    |
| Participant rollovers                                 | 1,812,611              | 1,513,282     |
| Employer contributions                                | 9,924,497              | 9,644,359     |
| Total contributions                                   | 25,107,580             | 24,127,424    |
| Deductions:   |                        |               |
| Benefit payments                                      | 30,609,380             | 50,084,206    |
| Participant fees                                      | 171,983                | 160,257       |
| Total deductions                                      | 30,781,363             | 50,244,463    |
| Net increase (decrease)                               | 47,822,447             | (7,116,594 )  |
| Net assets available for benefits:                    |                        |               |
| Beginning of year                                     | 287,690,666            | 294,807,260   |
| End of year   | \$335,513,113          | \$287,690,666 |

See accompanying notes.

STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN

Notes to the Financial Statements

December 31, 2017

1. Description of the Plan

Organization

The State Auto Insurance Companies Retirement Savings Plan (the "Plan") is a defined contribution plan which qualifies as a 401(k) plan. The Plan was adopted effective June 1, 1982, by State Automobile Mutual Insurance Company ("State Auto Mutual") and its affiliates for the purpose of providing a savings plan for the benefit of its employees. In 2010, the Plan was amended to change the Plan's sponsor from State Auto Mutual to its affiliate, State Auto Property & Casualty Insurance Company (the "Company"), the employer of all participants in the Plan.

Effective January 1, 2017, the Plan was amended to clarify how safe harbor matching contributions will be calculated.

The following description of the Plan provides only general information. Participants should refer to the Plan document for a complete description of the Plan.

General

An employee of the Company is eligible to participate in the Plan as of the first day of the pay period coincident with or after the completion of 90 days of employment with the Company provided the employee is or will attain age 21 within the first calendar year that commences after the employee's hire date or the employee's attainment of age 20. A participant will be automatically enrolled in the Plan upon meeting eligibility requirements.

Contributions

Each participant may contribute any whole percentage between 1% and 50% of his or her salary ("basic contribution") up to the maximum Internal Revenue Code (the "Code") limit. Subject to certain limitations, the Company makes safe harbor matching contributions for the first 1% of basic contributions of a participant's salary at the rate of \$1.00 for each \$1.00 contributed by the participant and for basic contributions from 2% to 6% of a participant's salary at the rate of \$0.50 for each \$1.00 contributed by the participant. Participants can change their rate of deferral as of any given pay date. Participants who are automatically enrolled in the Plan and who do not affirmatively elect a different contribution percentage contribute 3% of their salary with automatic increases to 4% in the first plan year following enrollment, 5% in the second plan year following enrollment and 6% in the third and subsequent plan years following enrollment. Participants may also suspend contributions at any time. Total participant contributions may not exceed 50% of a participant's salary.

The Company also makes non-elective contributions of 5% of an eligible participant's salary. Participants eligible for the non-elective contributions are those employees hired on or after January 1, 2010, and those participants who irrevocably elected to freeze their future benefit accruals under the State Auto Insurance Companies Employee Retirement Plan, a defined benefit pension plan, effective June 30, 2010. The percentage of the non-elective contribution is determined by the Compensation Committee of the Board of Directors of the Company and can be changed at its discretion.

All Plan participants who are 50 and older as of the beginning of the calendar year, or who attain age 50 during the calendar year and are making the maximum Code pre-tax contribution of \$18,000 for 2017 and 2016, may make

additional "Catch-up Contributions" of up to \$6,000 for 2017 and 2016.

#### Vesting

Plan participants are fully vested in employee contributions and related net earnings or losses. Plan participants are 100% vested in the safe harbor matching contributions and related earnings or losses after two years. Full vesting in non-elective contributions and related net earnings and losses occurs upon completion of three years of service. Any employee terminating prior to completing years of service requirements for vesting will forfeit the unvested portion of their account. In addition, employer matching contributions and related net earnings or losses are fully vested upon retirement at age 65, death or total and permanent disability. Any forfeiture of non-vested employer contributions and related net earnings or losses is first used to restore balances of participants who are re-employed and any remaining forfeiture reduces future employer contributions. Forfeitures of \$370,789 and \$82,248 were used to reduce the Company's contributions during 2017 and 2016, respectively. At December 31, 2017 and 2016, forfeited non-vested accounts totaled \$488,988 and \$386,184, respectively.



STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES RETIREMENT SAVING PLAN

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

December 31, 2017

Participant's Accounts

Each participant's account is credited with the participant's contributions and allocations of (a) the Company's contributions and (b) Plan earnings, and is charged with applicable participant loan or Qualified Domestic Relations Order ("QDRO") processing fees. Allocations are based on participant earnings or account balances, as defined. The benefit to which a participant is entitled is the benefit that can be provided from the participant's account.

Notes Receivable from Participants

Notes receivable from participants ("loans") are valued at their unpaid balance plus any accrued but unpaid interest. Participants may borrow from their fund accounts a minimum of \$1,000 up to a maximum of the lesser of \$50,000 or 50% of their vested account balance. Loan terms range from one to five years, or up to 10 years for the purchase of a primary residence. The loans are secured by the balance in the participant's account and bear interest at a rate based on the current Reuters prime rate. Principal and interest is paid ratably through bi-weekly payroll deductions.

Administrative Expenses

Certain expenses of maintaining the Plan are paid by the Plan, unless otherwise paid by the Company. Expenses that are paid by the Company are excluded from these financial statements. Fees related to the administration of participant loan and QDRO processing fees are charged directly to the participant's account and are included in administrative expenses. Investment related expenses are included in net appreciation of fair value of investments.

Payment of Benefits

Upon termination of service, participants generally receive a lump-sum amount equal to the value of their vested account less outstanding loan balances.

Participants may semiannually withdraw from their supplemental accumulated contributions and, subject to certain conditions, participants may withdraw from their vested account based on financial hardship. Participants may withdraw the vested portion of employer matching contributions credited to their account prior to January 1, 2008, subject to certain conditions.

Plan Termination

While the Company has not expressed any intent to terminate the Plan or to discontinue contributions, it is free to do so at any time, subject to the provisions set forth in the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. If the Plan terminates at some future date, all participants will become 100% vested in benefits earned as of the termination date.

2. Significant Accounting Policies

Basis of Presentation

The accounting records of the Plan are maintained in conformity with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles ("GAAP").

#### Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

#### Valuation of Investments and Related Investment Income

The investments of the Plan at December 31, 2017 and 2016 consisted of shares of registered investment companies, a money market fund, common/collective trusts, shares of the State Auto Financial Corporation Common Stock Fund (“Affiliated stock”) and self-directed brokerage accounts. The Plan’s investments are stated at fair value. Fair value is the price that would be

5

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STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES RETIREMENT SAVING PLAN

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

December 31, 2017

received to sell an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. See Note 3 for discussion on fair value measurements.

Investment income, including appreciation and depreciation in fair value of investments, is allocated to participant accounts daily based upon the ratio of each participant's account to the total fund balance.

#### Benefit Payments

Benefit payments are recognized when paid.

#### Risks and Uncertainties

The Plan invests in various investment securities. Investment securities are exposed to various risks such as interest rate, market and credit risks. Due to the level of risk associated with certain investment securities, it is at least reasonably possible that changes in the values of investment securities will occur in the near term and that such changes could materially affect participants' account balances and the amounts reported in the Plan's statements of net assets available for benefits.

#### 3. Fair Value Measurements

Below is the fair value hierarchy that categorizes into three levels the inputs to valuation techniques that are used to measure fair value:

• Level 1 includes observable inputs which reflect quoted prices for identical assets or liabilities in active markets at the measurement date.

• Level 2 includes observable inputs for assets or liabilities other than quoted prices included in Level 1, and it includes valuation techniques which use prices for similar assets and liabilities.

• Level 3 includes unobservable inputs which reflect the reporting entity's estimates of the assumptions that market participants would use in pricing the asset or liability (including assumptions about risk).

Transfers between level categorizations may occur due to changes in the availability of market observable inputs. Transfers in and out of level categorizations are reported as having occurred at the beginning of the year in which the transfer occurred. There were no transfers between level categorizations during the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016.

The following is a description of the valuation methods used for assets measured at fair value. There have been no changes in methodologies used at December 31, 2017:

**Registered investment companies:** Registered investment companies are public investment vehicles valued using net asset value ("NAV") provided by the administrator of the mutual fund. The NAV is an unadjusted quoted price on an active market and classified within Level 1 of the fair value hierarchy.

**Money market:** The carrying value approximates fair value and is classified within Level 1 of the fair value hierarchy.

**Common/collective trusts:** The common/collective trusts are public investment vehicles valued using the NAV provided by the fund trustee based on the value of the underlying assets owned by the trust, minus its liabilities, and then divided by the number of shares outstanding. The NAV, as provided by the trustee, is used as a practical expedient to estimate fair value. This practical expedient would not be used if it is determined to be probable that the fund will sell the investment for an amount different from the reported NAV. There are no unfunded commitments

related to the common collective trusts and units are redeemable at NAV on a daily basis.

• **Affiliated stock:** The fair value is based on the unadjusted closing price reported on the active market on which the security is traded and is classified within Level 1 of the fair value hierarchy.

• **Self-directed brokerage accounts:** The self-directed brokerage accounts are comprised primarily of common stock, government and corporate bonds, registered investment companies and interest-bearing cash. The fair value of common stock, corporate and government bonds and registered investment companies, is based on observable market price for an identical asset in an active market and is classified within Level 1 of the fair value hierarchy. The carrying value of the interest-bearing cash approximates fair value and is classified within Level 1 of the fair value hierarchy.

## STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES RETIREMENT SAVING PLAN

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

December 31, 2017

The following tables set forth the Plan's investments within the fair value hierarchy at December 31, 2017 and 2016:

| At December 31, 2017                     | Total         | (Level 1)     | (Level 2) | (Level 3) |
|--|---------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| Registered investment companies          | \$240,148,734 | \$240,148,734 | \$ —      | —         |
| Money market                             | 8,281,186     | 8,281,186     | —         | —         |
| Self-directed brokerage accounts         | 5,444,110     | 5,444,110     | —         | —         |
| Affiliated stock                         | 2,212,682     | 2,212,682     | —         | —         |
| Total assets in the fair value hierarchy | 256,086,712   | 256,086,712   | —         | —         |
| Investments measured at net asset value  | 74,868,488    | —             | —         | —         |
| Total investments at fair value          | \$330,955,200 | \$256,086,712 | \$ —      | —         |

| At December 31, 2016                     | Total         | (Level 1)     | (Level 2) | (Level 3) |
|--|---------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| Registered investment companies          | \$203,044,410 | \$203,044,410 | \$ —      | —         |
| Money market                             | 8,965,808     | 8,965,808     | —         | —         |
| Self-directed brokerage accounts         | 4,644,324     | 4,644,324     | —         | —         |
| Affiliated stock                         | 2,076,151     | 2,076,151     | —         | —         |
| Total assets in the fair value hierarchy | 218,730,693   | 218,730,693   | —         | —         |
| Investments measured at net asset value  | 64,702,345    | —             | —         | —         |
| Total investments at fair value          | \$283,433,038 | \$218,730,693 | \$ —      | —         |

## 4. Federal Income Tax Status

The Plan has received a determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") dated January 19, 2016, stating that the Plan is qualified under Section 401(a) of the Code and the related trust is exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) of the Code. Once qualified, the Plan is required to operate in conformity with the Code to maintain its qualification. The plan administrator believes the Plan is being operated in compliance with the applicable requirements of the Code and, therefore, believes that the Plan, as amended, is qualified and the related trust is tax exempt.

## 5. Reconciliation to Form 5500

The following table sets forth a reconciliation of net assets available for benefits per the financial statements to the Form 5500 at December 31:

|  | 2017          | 2016          |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Net assets available for benefits per the financial statements             | \$335,513,113 | \$287,690,666 |
| Adjustments for loans deemed distributed without post default payments     | (48,158 )     | (60,436 )     |
| Adjustments from contract value to fair value for common collective trusts | (42,611 )     | 37,128        |
| Net assets available for benefits per the Form 5500                        | \$335,422,344 | \$287,667,358 |

The following table sets forth a reconciliation of the changes in net assets per the financial statements to the Form 5500 for the years ended December 31:

| 2017 | 2016 |
|------|------|
|------|------|

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|   |              |               |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| Net increase (decrease) in net assets available for benefits per the financial statements | \$47,822,447 | \$(7,116,594) |
| Adjustments for loans deemed distributed without post default payments:                   |              |               |
| Current year  | (48,158      | ) (60,436     |
| Prior year  | 60,436       | 2,613         |
| Adjustments from fair value to contract value for common collective trusts:               |              |               |
| Current year  | (42,611      | ) 37,128      |
| Prior year  | (37,128      | ) (102,904    |
| Net increase (decrease) in net assets available for benefits per Form 5500                | \$47,754,986 | \$(7,240,193) |

7

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STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES RETIREMENT SAVING PLAN

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

December 31, 2017

6. Transactions with Parties-In-Interest

The Plan invests in certain investments managed by Fidelity Management Trust Company, trustee of the Plan. Transactions in such investments qualify as party-in-interest transactions, which are exempt from the prohibited transaction rules. Participants may also invest in Affiliated stock.

7. Subsequent Event

Effective May 1, 2018, the Plan was amended to freeze the affiliated stock fund investment to new investors.

8

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Supplemental  
Schedule



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State Auto Insurance Companies Retirement Savings Plan

EIN: 57-6010814 PN: 004

Form 5500 Schedule H Line 4(i) - Schedule of Assets (Held at End of Year)

December 31, 2017

| (a) (b)   | (c)        | (e)           |
|---|------------|---------------|
| Identity of Issue   | Shares     | Fair Value    |
| Shares of Registered Investment Companies:                          |            |               |
| MFS Value Fund Class R6   | 557,211    | \$22,600,482  |
| * Fidelity 500 Index Institutional Fund                             | 206,260    | 19,275,008    |
| T. Rowe Price Blue Chip Growth                                      | 179,182    | 17,257,031    |
| Vanguard Institutional Class Total Return Income                    | 127,364    | 2,738,317     |
| * Fidelity Extended Market Index Fund - PR                          | 96,104     | 5,963,244     |
| Meridian Growth Institutional Class                                 | 193,563    | 8,054,154     |
| American Beacon Small Cap Value Institutional Class                 | 223,658    | 6,130,465     |
| MFS Institutional International Equity                              | 568,809    | 14,481,876    |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2015                              | 250,967    | 5,518,758     |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2020                              | 920,943    | 20,748,852    |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2025                              | 1,229,941  | 28,116,442    |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2030                              | 1,355,872  | 31,347,764    |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2035                              | 903,001    | 21,103,133    |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2040                              | 628,556    | 14,846,489    |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2045                              | 495,491    | 11,792,680    |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2050                              | 292,254    | 6,961,491     |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2055                              | 110,993    | 2,648,304     |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2060                              | 23,363     | 557,437       |
| Vanguard Institutional Target RET 2065                              | 313        | 6,807         |
|   |            | \$240,148,734 |
| Money Market:   |            |               |
| * Fidelity Government Money Market Fund - Premium Class             | 8,281,186  | \$8,281,186   |
| Investment in Common/Collective Trusts:                             |            |               |
| * Fidelity Contrafund Commingled Pool                               | 2,993,685  | \$47,809,143  |
| FIAM Core Plus Commingled Pool Class E                              | 511,984    | 10,167,997    |
| * Fidelity Managed Income Portfolio                                 | 14,959,687 | 14,959,687    |
| BlackRock MSCI ACWI ex-U.S. Index Non-Lendable Fund M               | 65,006     | 963,726       |
| U.S. Debt Index Non-Lendable Fund M                                 | 87,009     | 967,935       |
|   |            | \$74,868,488  |
| Affiliated Stock:   |            |               |
| * State Auto Financial Corporation                                  | 75,937     | \$2,211,280   |
| Stock Purchase Account <sup>(1)</sup>                               | —          | 1,402         |
|   |            | \$2,212,682   |
| Self-directed Brokerage Accounts                                    | —          | \$5,444,110   |
| * Notes Receivable from Participants (interest rate 3.25% to 4.25%) | —          | \$4,446,867   |
| Total   |            | \$335,402,067 |

\* Indicates a party-in-interest to the Plan.

(1) The Stock Purchase Account consists of the Fidelity Cash Reserves, a money market fund that is used as a plan-level account in the recordkeeping of the purchases and sales of fractional shares of employer stock. Participants cannot invest their account balances in the Stock

Purchase Account.

Note: Column (d) is not applicable for participant directed investments.

10

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SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the trustees (or other persons who administer the employee benefit plan) have duly caused this annual report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned hereunto duly authorized.

STATE AUTO INSURANCE COMPANIES  
RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN

By: /s/ Steven E. English  
Steven E. English  
Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer

By: /s/ Melissa A. Centers  
Melissa A. Centers  
Senior Vice President, Secretary and General Counsel

Date: June 18, 2018

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EXHIBIT INDEX

Exhibit No. Description

1 Consent of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm Included herein