

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

SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION
Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the Securities
Exchange Act of 1934

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- Preliminary Proxy Statement.
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- Definitive Proxy Statement.
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Colfax Corporation

(Name of Registrant as Specified In Its Charter)

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COLFAX CORPORATION

8170 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Suite 180
Fulton, Maryland 20759

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

April 3, 2014

To Our Stockholders:

Notice is hereby given that the 2014 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (the "Annual Meeting") of Colfax Corporation will be held at the Maple Lawn Community Center located at 7600 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Fulton, Maryland 20759 on Wednesday, May 14, 2014 at 3:00 p.m., local time, for the following purposes:

1. To elect the nine members of the Board of Directors named in the attached proxy statement;
2. To ratify the appointment of Ernst & Young LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2014;
3. To hold an advisory vote to approve our executive compensation; and
4. To consider any other matters that properly come before the Annual Meeting or any adjournment or postponement thereof.

The accompanying proxy statement describes the matters to be considered at the Annual Meeting. Only stockholders of record at the close of business on March 20, 2014 are entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the Annual Meeting and at any adjournments or postponements thereof.

We are pleased to take advantage of the Securities and Exchange Commission rules that allow us to furnish our proxy materials and our annual report to stockholders on the Internet. We believe that posting these materials on the Internet enables us to provide our stockholders with the information that they need more quickly while lowering our costs of printing and delivery and reducing the environmental impact of our Annual Meeting.

As a stockholder of Colfax, your vote is important. Whether or not you plan to attend the Annual Meeting in person, we urge you to vote your shares at your earliest convenience.

By Order of the Board of Directors

A. Lynne Puckett
Secretary

Fulton, Maryland
April 3, 2014

COLFAX CORPORATION

8170 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Suite 180
Fulton, Maryland 20759

PROXY STATEMENT FOR ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

May 14, 2014

This Proxy Statement (the "Proxy Statement") is furnished in connection with the solicitation by the Board of Directors (the "Board") of Colfax Corporation (hereinafter, "Colfax," "we," "us" and the "Company") of proxies for use at the 2014 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (the "Annual Meeting") to be held at the Maple Lawn Community Center located at 7600 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Fulton, Maryland 20759 on Wednesday, May 14, 2014, at 3:00 p.m. local time, and at any adjournments or postponements thereof. The Board has made this Proxy Statement and the accompanying Notice of Annual Meeting available on the Internet. We first made these materials available to the Company's stockholders entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting on or about April 3, 2014.

The purpose of the meeting is to: elect the nine members of the Board named in this Proxy Statement; ratify the selection of Ernst & Young LLP as the Company's independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2014; hold an advisory vote to approve our executive compensation, as described in this Proxy Statement; and consider any other matters that properly come before the Annual Meeting or any adjournment or postponement thereof.

Important Notice Regarding the Availability of Proxy Materials for the Stockholder Meeting to be Held on May 14, 2014: Our Annual Report to Stockholders and this Proxy Statement are available at www.proxyvote.com.

Pursuant to the "notice and access" rules adopted by the Securities and Exchange Commission, we have elected to provide stockholders access to our proxy materials primarily over the Internet. Accordingly, on or about April 3, 2014 we sent a Notice of Internet Availability of Proxy Materials (the "Notice") to our stockholders entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting as of the close of business on March 20, 2014, the record date of the meeting. The Notice includes instructions on how to access our proxy materials over the Internet and how to request a printed copy of these materials. In addition, by following the instructions in the Notice, stockholders may request to receive proxy materials in printed form by mail or electronically by e-mail on an ongoing basis.

Choosing to receive your future proxy materials by e-mail will save us the cost of printing and mailing documents to you and will reduce the impact of our annual meetings on the environment. If you choose to receive future proxy materials by e-mail, you will receive an e-mail next year with instructions containing a link to those materials and a link to the proxy voting site. Your election to receive proxy materials by e-mail will remain in effect until you terminate it.

OUTSTANDING STOCK AND VOTING RIGHTS

The Board has fixed the close of business on March 20, 2014 (the "Record Date") as the record date for determining the stockholders entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the Annual Meeting. Only stockholders of record on that date will be entitled to vote. Proxies will be voted as specified in the stockholder's proxy. In the absence of specific instructions, proxies will be voted in accordance with the Company's recommendations and in the discretion of the proxy holders on any other matter which properly comes before the meeting or any adjournment or postponement thereof. The

Board has selected Mitchell P. Rales and Steven E. Simms to act as proxies with full power of substitution.

Any stockholder of record giving a proxy has the power to revoke the proxy at any time before it is exercised by either (i) delivering a written notice of revocation to Colfax Corporation at 8170 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Suite 180, Fulton, Maryland 20759, Attn: Corporate Secretary, (ii) delivering prior to the Annual Meeting a properly executed and subsequently dated proxy, or (iii) attending the Annual Meeting and voting in person. Attendance at the Annual Meeting will not cause your previously granted proxy to be revoked unless you specifically so request. A beneficial stockholder who owns common stock in street name, meaning through a bank, broker or other nominee, should contact that entity to revoke a previously given proxy.

The Company will bear the total expense of this solicitation, including reimbursement paid to brokerage firms and others for their expenses in forwarding material regarding the Annual Meeting to beneficial owners. Solicitation of proxies may be made

personally or by mail, telephone, Internet, e-mail or facsimile by officers and other management employees of the Company, who will receive no additional compensation for their services.

The holders of shares of the Company's common stock are entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting. As of the Record Date, 123,562,063 shares of the Company's common stock were outstanding. Each outstanding share of the Company's common stock entitles the holder to one vote on all matters brought before the Annual Meeting.

A list of stockholders of record as of the Record Date will be available for inspection during ordinary business hours at our corporate headquarters located at 8170 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Suite 180, Fulton, Maryland 20759, for 10 days prior to the date of our Annual Meeting. The list will also be available for inspection at the Annual Meeting.

The quorum necessary to conduct business at the Annual Meeting consists of a majority of the shares of the Company's stock outstanding on the Record Date and entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting, either present in person or represented by proxy. Abstentions and broker non-votes (described below) are counted for purposes of determining the presence or absence of a quorum. In accordance with the Company's Amended and Restated Bylaws (the "Bylaws"), to be elected each director nominee must receive a majority of the votes cast with respect to that director's election. Incumbent directors nominated for election by the Board are required, as a condition to such nomination, to submit a conditional letter of resignation to the Chairman of the Board. In the event that a nominee for director does not receive a majority of the votes cast at the Annual Meeting with respect to his or her election, the Board will promptly consider whether to accept or reject the conditional resignation of that nominee, or whether other action should be taken. The Board will then take action and will publicly disclose its decision and the rationale behind it no later than 90 days following the certification of election results.

The affirmative vote of a majority of the shares present in person or represented by proxy at the Annual Meeting and entitled to vote is required for the ratification of the appointment of Ernst & Young LLP as the Company's independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2014 and for the approval of the advisory vote on our executive compensation.

Abstentions will have no effect on the election of directors but will have the same effect as a vote against the ratification of the appointment of Ernst & Young LLP or the approval of the advisory vote on our executive compensation.

Under the rules of the New York Stock Exchange (the "NYSE"), on the ratification of the selection of our registered public accounting firm, brokerage firms may vote in their discretion on behalf of clients who have not furnished voting instructions. In contrast, brokerage firms that have not received voting instructions from their clients may not vote on the election of our directors and the approval of the advisory vote on our executive compensation, resulting in a "broker non-vote" on these proposals. Broker non-votes are not counted in determining whether a director nominee is elected or whether the election of directors, advisory vote on our executive compensation is approved.

Only stockholders as of the Record Date are entitled to attend the Annual Meeting in person. The names of stockholders of record will be on a list at the Annual Meeting and such stockholders may gain entry with a government-issued photo identification, such as a driver's license, state-issued ID card, or passport. Beneficial stockholders who own common stock in street name, meaning through a bank, broker or other nominee, must present a government-issued photo identification and proof of beneficial stock ownership as of the Record Date (such as the Notice of Internet Availability, a copy of the proxy card received if one was sent to the stockholder or an account statement or other similar evidence showing stock ownership as of the Record Date) in order to gain entry to the Annual Meeting. Representatives of an entity that owns stock of the Company must present government-issued photo identification, evidence that they are the entity's authorized representative or proxyholder and, if the entity is a

beneficial owner, proof of the entity's beneficial stock ownership as of the Record Date. A person who is not a stockholder will be entitled to admission only if he or she presents a valid legal proxy from a stockholder of record and government-issued photo identification. Please note that the use of cameras (including cell phones with photographic capabilities), recording devices and other electronic devices is strictly prohibited at the meeting.

PROPOSAL 1

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

The Company's directors will be elected at the Annual Meeting to serve until the next annual meeting of the Company and until their successors are duly elected and qualified. At the recommendation of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee, the Board has nominated the following persons to serve as directors for the term beginning at the Annual Meeting on May 14, 2014: Mitchell P. Rales, Steven E. Simms, Clay H. Kiefaber, Patrick W. Allender, Thomas S. Gayner, Rhonda L. Jordan, San W. Orr, III, A. Clayton Perfall, and Rajiv Vinnakota. All nominees are currently serving on the Board.

Mr. Orr was nominated for election to the Board pursuant to the Company's Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation, which provides BDT CF Acquisition Vehicle, LLC (the "BDT Investor") the right, among other things, to nominate for election to the Board and certain of its committees (subject to applicable law and the listing standards of the NYSE) up to 2 of 11 directors, depending on the beneficial ownership of the BDT Investor (and certain of its permitted transferees) of the Company's securities. Based on the BDT Investor's beneficial ownership of 13.1% of our outstanding common stock as the Record Date, the BDT Investor currently has the right to nominate one director for election to the Board. Mr. Orr has not been named to any committees of the Board. Mr. Orr is a Partner and the Chief Operating Officer of BDT Capital Partners, LLC ("BDT Capital"), the ultimate parent company of the BDT Investor and an affiliate of BDT & Company, LLC. The nomination rights granted to the BDT Investor were approved in connection with the Company's acquisition of the entire share capital of Charter International plc (the "Charter Acquisition"), pursuant to which the Company, on September 12, 2011, entered into a securities purchase agreement with the BDT Investor. Information regarding certain related person transactions with BDT & Company, LLC and its affiliates is provided below under "Certain Relationships and Related Person Transactions."

Director Qualifications

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee considers, among other things, the following criteria in selecting and, in the case of nominations made by the BDT Investor and other stockholders, reviewing director nominees:

- personal and professional integrity;
- skills, business experience and industry knowledge useful to the oversight of the Company based on the perceived needs of the Company and the Board at any given time;
- the ability and willingness to devote the required amount of time to the Company's affairs, including attendance at Board and committee meetings;
- the interest, capacity and willingness to serve the long-term interests of the Company and its stockholders; and
- the lack of any personal or professional relationships that would adversely affect a candidate's ability to serve the best interests of the Company and its stockholders.

Pursuant to its charter, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee also reviews, among other qualifications, the perspective, broad business judgment and leadership, business creativity and vision, and diversity of potential directors, all in the context of the needs of the Board at that time. We believe that Board membership should reflect diversity in its broadest sense, including persons diverse in geography, gender, and ethnicity, and we seek independent directors who represent a mix of backgrounds and experiences that will enhance the quality of the Board's deliberations and decisions. The charter of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee affirmatively recognizes diversity as one of the criteria for consideration in the selection of director nominees, and in its deliberations and discussions concerning potential director appointments the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee has paid particular attention to diversity together with all other qualifying attributes. In addition, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee annually considers its effectiveness in achieving

these objectives as a part of its assessment of the overall composition of the Board. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee looks for candidates with the expertise, skills, knowledge and experience that, when taken together with that of other members of the Board, will lead to a Board that is effective, collegial and responsive to the needs of the Company. As further discussed below, numerous members of our Board have experience with the business systems that are an integral part of our Company culture. In addition, we feel that the familiarity of certain Board members with our business system from their work experiences at Danaher Corporation and at our Company, combined with strong input from varied and sophisticated business backgrounds, provides us with a Board that is both functional and collegial while able to draw on a broad range of expertise in the consideration of complex issues.

The biographies of each of the nominees below contain information regarding the experiences, qualifications, attributes or skills that the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee and the Board considered in determining that the person should serve as a director of the Company.

The Board has been informed that all of the nominees listed below are willing to serve as directors, but if any of them should decline or be unable to act as a director, the individuals named in the proxies may vote for a substitute designated by the Board. The Company has no reason to believe that any nominee will be unable or unwilling to serve.

Nominees for Director

The names of the nominees for director, their ages as of March 20, 2014, principal occupations, employment and other public company board service during at least the last five years, periods of service as a director of the Company, and the experiences, qualifications, attributes and skills of each nominee are set forth below:

Mitchell P. Rales (57) is a co-founder of Colfax and has served as a director of the Company since its founding in 1995. He is the Chairman of our Board of Directors. Mr. Rales is a co-founder and has served as a member of the Board of Directors of Danaher Corporation since 1983 and as Chairman of Danaher's Executive Committee since 1984. He has been a principal in a number of private business entities with interests in manufacturing companies and publicly traded securities for over 25 years. Mr. Rales was instrumental in the founding of our Company and has played a key leadership role on our Board since that time. He helped create the Danaher Business System, on which the Colfax Business System is modeled, and has provided critical strategic guidance to the Company during its development and growth. In addition, as a result of Mr. Rales' substantial ownership stake in our Company, he is well-positioned to understand, articulate and advocate for the rights and interests of the Company's stockholders.

Steven E. Simms (58) has served as a director of the Company since July 27, 2011 and has been our President and Chief Executive Officer since April 2012. Mr. Simms served as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Apex Tools, a joint venture between the Danaher Tool Group and Cooper Tools from July 2010 until February 1, 2013 and is a former Executive Vice President of Danaher Corporation. Mr. Simms held a variety of leadership roles during his 11-year career at Danaher. He became Executive Vice President in 2000 and served in that role through his retirement in 2007, during which time he was instrumental in Danaher's international growth and success. He previously served as Vice President—Group Executive from 1998 to 2000 and as an executive in Danaher's tools and components business from 1996 to 1998. Prior to joining Danaher, Mr. Simms held roles of increasing authority at Black & Decker Corporation and the Quaker Oats Company. Mr. Simms' day-to-day leadership of Colfax, combined with his significant international business experience and familiarity with the Danaher Business System, gives the Board an invaluable Company-focused perspective supplemented by his global operational expertise.

Clay Kiefaber (58) has served as a director of the Company since May 13, 2008. He is our Executive Vice President, Chief Executive Officer ESAB Global and was previously our President and Chief Executive Officer from January 2010 through April 2012. Prior to joining Colfax as an executive in January 2010, he spent nearly 20 years in increasingly senior executive positions at Masco Corporation, a manufacturer of home improvement and building products and a provider of building services. Most recently, he was a Group President, where he was responsible for a \$2.8 billion group of building construction components. Prior to becoming a Group President at Masco, Mr. Kiefaber was Group Vice President of Masco Builder Cabinet Group. He previously spent 14 years in increasingly senior positions in Masco's Merillat Industries subsidiary. Mr. Kiefaber's background provides him with a deep understanding of manufacturing operations, strategy and lean business systems, and his crucial role at our largest business adds a key management viewpoint to our Board.

Patrick W. Allender (67) has served as a director of the Company since May 13, 2008. He is the former Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Danaher Corporation, where he served from 1987 until his retirement in 2007. Prior to joining Danaher, Mr. Allender was an audit partner with a large international accounting firm. Mr. Allender is a director of Brady Corporation, where he is a member of the audit and corporate governance committees

and the chairman of the finance committee, and a director of Diebold, Incorporated, where he is a member of the board governance committee and chairman of the audit committee. Mr. Allender's prior experience as the Chief Financial Officer of a publicly traded company provides him with substantial expertise in financial reporting and risk management. In addition, his familiarity with the Danaher Business System provides targeted insight on the nature of the Company's operations to the Board.

Thomas S. Gayner (52) has served as a director of the Company since May 13, 2008. He is President and Chief Investment Officer of Markel Corporation, a financial holding company whose principal business markets and underwrites specialty insurance products. Since 1990, Mr. Gayner has served as President of Markel Gayner Asset Management, Inc. Mr. Gayner served as a director of Markel Corporation from 1998 to 2003. Mr. Gayner currently serves on the Board of Directors of Graham Holdings Company. Mr. Gayner also serves as a director of 13 funds managed by The Davis Funds. Through his experience and investment knowledge with the Markel Corporation as well as his service on the boards and committees of other publicly traded companies, Mr. Gayner brings extensive leadership, financial acumen and public company expertise to our Board.

Rhonda L. Jordan (56) has served as a director of the Company since February 17, 2009. She served as President, Global Health & Wellness, and Sustainability for Kraft Foods Inc. until 2012 and in that role led the development of Kraft's health & wellness and sustainability strategies and plans for the company, including marketing, product development, technology, alliances and acquisitions. Prior to being named President, Health & Wellness in 2010, she was the President of the Cheese and Dairy business unit of Kraft. From 2006 to 2008 she served as the President of the Grocery business unit of Kraft and from 2004 to 2005 she was the Senior Vice President, Global Marketing of Kraft Cheese and Dairy. Ms. Jordan is a director of Ingredion Incorporated, where she is a member of the compensation committee, and of Bush Brothers & Company. Ms. Jordan's management and operations experience within a large, global corporation gives her an important strategic voice in Board deliberations, and her knowledge and decision making with respect to business unit development and sustainable top-line performance makes her a valued member of our Board.

San W. Orr, III (44) has served as a director of the Company since February 22, 2012. He is Partner & Chief Operating Officer of the investment firm BDT Capital Partners, LLC, a position he has held since 2011. Prior to joining BDT Capital in 2009, Mr. Orr spent over ten years at Goldman, Sachs & Co. in several positions, including Managing Director, GS Direct, Investment Banking Division, where he advised clients and led transaction teams on mergers and acquisitions, equity, convertible and debt financings. Mr. Orr's background also includes public accounting experience as well as bankruptcy, corporate and securities and finance and tax law. Mr. Orr's investment and transactional experience, as well as his vested interest as a director-nominee and Partner of a substantial Company stockholder, BDT Capital, adds both talent and further stockholder representation to our Board.

A. Clayton Perfall (55) has served as a director of the Company since September 21, 2010. He is currently an Operating Executive of Tailwind Capital, a private equity fund manager focused on growing middle market companies in the healthcare and business & communications services sectors. He previously served as the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Archway Marketing Services, Inc., a provider of marketing logistics and fulfillment services, from 2008 through 2013. From 2001 until 2008 Mr. Perfall served as the Chief Executive Officer and as a member of the Board of Directors of AHL Services, Inc. Mr. Perfall also served as the Chief Executive Officer of Union Street Acquisition Corp. from 2006 until 2008. He served as the Chief Financial Officer of Snyder Communications, Inc. from 1996 until 2000 and was previously a partner with a large international accounting firm. Mr. Perfall currently serves on the Boards of Directors of RT Acquisition Corp. and Comstock Holding Companies, Inc., and previously served on the Boards of Directors of Archway Marketing Services, Inc. from 2008 until 2013 and inVentiv Health, Inc. from 1999 to 2010. He is currently the audit committee chairman for Comstock Homebuilding Companies, Inc. and served as the chair of the audit committee during his time on the board of inVentiv Health. Mr. Perfall's significant financial expertise and experience as an audit committee chairman and public company Chief Financial Officer, combined with his substantial executive leadership background, is an asset both to our Board and to our Audit Committee.

Rajiv Vinnakota (43) has served as a director of the Company since May 13, 2008. He is the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of The SEED Foundation, a non-profit educational organization, at which he has served since 1997. Mr. Vinnakota was the chairman of The SEED Foundation board from 1997 until 2006. Prior to co-founding SEED, Mr. Vinnakota was an associate at Mercer Management Consulting. He was also a trustee of Princeton University from 2004 until 2007 and a member of the Executive Committee of the Princeton University Board of Directors from 2006 to 2007, and he served as the national chairman of Annual Giving at Princeton from 2007 until 2009. Mr. Vinnakota's management experience, combined with his experience in the non-profit sector, brings a valuable perspective to our Board.

The Board unanimously recommends that stockholders vote "FOR" the election of each of the nominees for director listed above.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Director Independence

Our Corporate Governance Guidelines require that a majority of our Board members be "independent" under the NYSE's listing standards. In addition, the respective charters of the Audit Committee, Compensation Committee and Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee require that each member of these committees be "independent" under the NYSE's listing standards and, with respect to the Audit Committee, under the applicable SEC rules. In order for a director to qualify as "independent," our Board must affirmatively determine that the director has no material relationship with the Company that would impair the director's independence. Our Board undertook its annual review of director independence in February 2014. The Board has determined that Mr. Allender, Mr. Gayner, Ms. Jordan, Mr. Perfall, and Mr. Vinnakota each qualify as "independent" under the NYSE's listing standards. In reaching a determination on these directors' independence, the Board considered that neither the directors nor their immediate family members have within the past three years had any direct or indirect business or professional relationships with the Company other than in their capacity as directors.

The independent members of our Board must hold at least two "executive session" meetings each year without the presence of management. If the Chair of the Board is not an independent director, the independent directors select an independent director to serve as Chairperson for each executive session. In general, the meetings of independent directors are intended to be used as a forum to discuss such topics as they deem necessary or appropriate. Mr. Allender serves as the presiding director of the independent director executive sessions and as such leads the independent directors during these sessions.

Board of Directors and its Committees

The Board and its committees meet regularly throughout the year, and may also hold special meetings and act by written consent from time to time. The Board held a total of eight meetings during the year ended December 31, 2013, including five regularly scheduled meetings and three special meetings. During this time each director attended 100% of the aggregate number of regularly scheduled meetings held by the Board and all committees of the Board on which such director served and each director attended 95% of the special meetings held by the Board. During 2013, no director attended fewer than 75% of the total number of meetings of the Board and committees of the Board on which such director served. Our Corporate Governance Guidelines request Board members to make every effort to attend our annual meeting of stockholders. All directors attended our annual meeting of stockholders in 2013.

The Board has a standing Audit Committee, Compensation Committee, and Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. The charters for the Audit Committee, Compensation Committee, and Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee are available on the Company's website at www.colfaxcorp.com on the Investors page under the Corporate Governance tab. These materials also are available in print to any stockholder upon request. The Board committees review their respective charters on an annual basis. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee oversees an annual evaluation of the Board and each committee's operations and performance.

Audit Committee

Our Audit Committee met 10 times during the year ended December 31, 2013. The Audit Committee is responsible, among its other duties and responsibilities, for overseeing our accounting and financial reporting processes, the audits of our financial statements, the qualifications of our independent registered public accounting firm, and the performance of our internal audit function and independent registered public accounting firm. The Audit Committee reviews and assesses the qualitative aspects of our financial reporting, our processes to manage business and financial

risks, and our compliance with significant applicable legal, ethical and regulatory requirements. The Audit Committee is directly responsible for the appointment, compensation, retention and oversight of our independent registered public accounting firm. The members of our Audit Committee are Mr. Perfall, Chair, Mr. Allender and Mr. Gayner. The Board has determined that Mr. Perfall qualifies as an "audit committee financial expert," as that term is defined under the SEC rules. The Board has determined that each member of our Audit Committee is independent and financially literate under the NYSE's listing standards and that each member of our Audit Committee is independent under the standards of Rule 10A-3 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the "Exchange Act").

Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee

Our Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee met five times during the year ended December 31, 2013. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for recommending candidates for election to the Board. The committee is also responsible, among its other duties and responsibilities, for making recommendations to the Board or otherwise acting with respect to corporate governance policies and practices, including Board size and membership qualifications, new

director orientation, committee structure and membership, related person transactions, succession planning for our Chief Executive Officer and other key executive officers, and communications with stockholders and other interested parties. The members of our Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee are Mr. Allender, Chair, Ms. Jordan and Mr. Vinnakota. The Board has determined that each member of our Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is independent under the NYSE's listing standards.

Compensation Committee

Our Compensation Committee met six times during the year ended December 31, 2013. The Compensation Committee is responsible, among its other duties and responsibilities, for determining and approving the compensation and benefits of our Chief Executive Officer and other executive officers, monitoring compensation arrangements applicable to our Chief Executive Officer and other executive officers in light of their performance, effectiveness and other relevant considerations and adopting and administering our equity and incentive plans. The members of our Compensation Committee are Ms. Jordan, Chair, Mr. Gayner and Mr. Vinnakota. The Board has determined that each member of our Compensation Committee is an "outside director" within the meaning of Section 162(m) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, a "non-employee director" within the meaning of SEC Rule 16b-3, and is independent under the NYSE's listing standards for directors and compensation committee members.

The Compensation Committee annually reviews and approves the corporate goals and objectives relevant to the compensation of our Chief Executive Officer, evaluates his performance in light of those goals and objectives, and determines his compensation level based on that analysis. The Compensation Committee also annually reviews and approves all elements of the compensation of our other executive officers. Our Chief Executive Officer plays a significant role in developing and assessing achievement against the goals and objectives for other executive officers and makes compensation recommendations to the Compensation Committee based on these evaluations. The Compensation Committee also administers all of the Company's incentive compensation plans and equity-based compensation plans. The Compensation Committee makes recommendations to the Board regarding compensation of all executive officer hires, all elements of director compensation, and for adoption or certain amendments to incentive or equity-based compensation plans. The Compensation Committee also assists the Board in its oversight of risk related to the Company's compensation policies and practices applicable to all Colfax associates. For further information on our compensation practices, including a description of our processes and procedures for determining compensation, the scope of the Compensation Committee's authority and management's role in compensation determinations, please see the Compensation Discussion and Analysis section of this Proxy Statement, which begins on page 17.

Since April 2009, our Compensation Committee has engaged Frederic W. Cook & Co. ("Cook & Co.") as its independent compensation consultant to, among other things, formulate an appropriate peer group to be used by the Compensation Committee and to provide competitive comparison data and other compensation consulting services as requested by the Compensation Committee. Additional information on the nature of the information and services provided by the independent compensation consultant can be found below in the Compensation Discussion and Analysis.

Compensation Committee Interlocks and Insider Participation

No member of the Compensation Committee is, or during the last fiscal year was, an officer or an employee of the Company or any of its subsidiaries, and no Compensation Committee member has any interlocking or insider relationship with the Company which is required to be reported under the rules of the SEC.

Identification of Director Candidates and Director Nomination Process

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee considers candidates for Board membership suggested by its members and other Board members, as well as by management and stockholders. Further, as discussed above under "Election of Directors," the Company's Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation provides the BDT Investor the right, among other things, to nominate for election to the Board and certain of its committees (subject to applicable law and the listing standards of the NYSE) up to 2 of 11 directors, depending on the beneficial ownership of the BDT Investor (and certain of its permitted transferees) of the Company's securities from time to time. Based on the BDT Investor's beneficial ownership of 13.1% of our outstanding common stock as the Record Date, the BDT Investor has the right to nominate one director for election to the Board. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee evaluates candidates submitted by stockholders, including the BDT Investor, in the same manner as other candidates identified to it. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee may also use outside consultants to assist in identifying candidates. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for assessing whether a candidate may qualify as an independent director. Each possible candidate is discussed and evaluated in detail before being recommended to the Board.

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee recommends, and the Board nominates, candidates to stand for election as directors. Stockholders may nominate persons to be elected as directors and, as noted above, may suggest candidates for consideration by the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. If a stockholder wishes to suggest a person to the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee for consideration as a director candidate, he or she must provide the same information as required of a stockholder who intends to nominate a director pursuant to the procedures contained in Section 3.3 of our Bylaws, in accordance with the same deadlines applicable to director nominations, as described below under "General Matters—Stockholder Proposals and Nominations."

Board Leadership Structure

Our Corporate Governance Guidelines specify that the positions of Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer shall be held by separate persons. We believe that this structure is appropriate given the differences between the two roles in our current management structure. Our Chief Executive Officer, among other duties, is responsible for setting the strategic direction for the Company and the day-to-day leadership and performance of the Company, while the Chairman of our Board, among other responsibilities, provides guidance to the Chief Executive Officer, takes an active role in setting the agenda for Board meetings and presides over meetings of the full Board. Our current Chairman, Mr. Rales, is not an independent director and, as noted above in "Director Independence," Mr. Allender serves as the presiding director for independent director executive sessions and as such leads the independent directors during these sessions.

Board's Role in Risk Oversight

The Board maintains responsibility for oversight of risks that may affect the Company. The Board discharges this duty primarily through its standing committees and also considers risk in its strategic planning for the Company and in its consideration of acquisitions. The Board engages in discussions about risk at each quarterly meeting, where it receives reports from its committees, as applicable, about the risk oversight activities within their respective areas of responsibility. Specifically, the Audit Committee (i) discusses with management, those performing our internal audit function, and our independent registered public accounting firm all major risk exposures (whether financial, operating or otherwise), (ii) reviews the Company's policies with respect to risk assessment and risk management, and (iii) oversees compliance with legal and regulatory requirements and our ethics program, including our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics. In addition, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee oversees the corporate governance principles and governance structures that contribute to successful risk oversight and management. The Compensation Committee oversees certain risks associated with compensation policies and practices, as discussed below.

The Audit, Nominating and Corporate Governance and Compensation Committees each make full reports to the Board of Directors at each quarterly meeting regarding each committee's considerations and actions, and risk considerations are presented to and discussed with the Board by management as part of strategic planning sessions and when considering potential acquisitions.

Risk Assessment of Compensation Practices

Management, with oversight from the Compensation Committee, reviews our compensation policies and practices and the design of our overall compensation program in relation to our risk management practices and any potential risk-taking incentives. This assessment includes a review of the primary elements of our compensation program (base salary, annual incentives and long-term incentives) in light of potential risks. For each of these components, the assessment determined that the design, levels of compensation for and operation of each component are not

reasonably likely to have a material adverse effect on the Company:

- Base Salary — Base salary levels are reviewed annually by the Compensation Committee and are not subject to incentive-based increases for fiscal year performance.
- Annual Incentive Plan — Annual incentive plan targets are linked to stated goals in key areas of operational and financial performance for the Company or, for platform presidents, on a combination of Company and platform performance. These metrics are designed to enhance long-term growth and stockholder value. Hence, no single factor materially affects the total potential amount of bonus awarded. Further, the use of multiple metrics is intended to prevent management from focusing on a single goal to the detriment of other metrics that we consider important to our operating performance and future growth. Our annual incentive plan caps awards payable to a participant under the plan at \$5,000,000.
- Long-Term Incentives — Stock options and performance-based restricted stock unit awards are used to align executive compensation with the interests of stockholders by encouraging long-term improvement in operational and financial performance and as such does not subject the Company to heightened risks.

We believe that our compensation program includes an appropriate mix of short and long-term incentives, which mitigates the risk of undue focus on short-term targets while rewarding performance in areas that are key to our long-term success.

We have controls and other policies in place that serve to limit excessive risk-taking behavior within our compensation program, including but not limited to the following:

- oversight of our compensation process and procedures by the Compensation Committee, each member of which has been determined by the Board to be independent under applicable SEC rules and NYSE listing standards;
- implementation of and training on Company-wide standards of conduct, as described further below under "Standards of Conduct";
- internal controls over our financial reporting, which are maintained and reviewed as a part of our internal audit process and further reviewed and tested by our external auditors, as overseen by the Audit Committee;
- Audit Committee oversight and review of financial results and non-GAAP metrics used in certain components of our annual incentive plan and long-term incentives;
- a stock ownership policy (as described in more detail in the Compensation Discussion and Analysis below) that further aligns the interests of management and stockholders; and
- provisions in the Company's insider trading policy prohibiting hedging transactions that would allow the holder to limit or eliminate the risk of a decrease in the value of the Company's securities.

In addition, in 2014 our Board adopted a clawback policy applicable to all of our executive officers and a policy prohibiting future pledging of Company shares, each as described in more detail in the Compensation Discussion and Analysis below.

The Compensation Committee reviewed with management the results of its assessment at a meeting in March 2014. Based on this review, we concluded that the risks arising from Company compensation policies and practices for our employees are not reasonably likely to have a material adverse effect on the Company.

Standards of Conduct

The Board has adopted Corporate Governance Guidelines, which set forth a framework to assist the Board in the exercise of its responsibilities. The Corporate Governance Guidelines cover, among other things, the composition and certain functions of the Board and its committees, executive sessions, Board responsibilities, expectations for directors, director orientation and continuing education, and our policy prohibiting pledging.

As part of our system of corporate governance, the Board has also adopted a Code of Business Conduct and Ethics (the "Code of Ethics") that is applicable to all directors, officers and employees of the Company. The Code of Ethics sets forth Company policies, expectations and procedures on a number of topics, including but not limited to conflicts of interest, compliance with laws, rules and regulations (including insider trading laws), honesty and ethical conduct, and quality. The Code of Ethics also sets forth procedures for reporting violations of the Code and investigations thereof.

The Corporate Governance Guidelines and Code of Ethics are available on the Company's website at www.colfaxcorp.com on the Investors page under the Corporate Governance tab. These materials also are available in print to any stockholder upon request to: Corporate Secretary, Colfax Corporation, 8170 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Suite 180, Fulton, Maryland 20759.

The Company has a Policy on Insider Trading and Compliance which, in addition to mandating compliance with insider trading laws, prohibits any director, officer or employee of the Company from engaging in short sales, transactions in derivative securities (including put and call options), or other forms of hedging and monetization transactions, such as zero-cost collars, equity swaps, exchange funds and forward sale contracts, that allow the holder

to limit or eliminate the risk of a decrease in the value of the Company's securities. Further, we have stock ownership policies applicable to our directors and executives to promote alignment of interests between our stockholders, directors and management.

Certain Relationships and Related Person Transactions

Policies and Procedures for Related Person Transactions

We have adopted a written Policy Regarding Related Person Transactions pursuant to which our Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee or a majority of the disinterested members of our Board generally must approve related person transactions in advance. The policy applies to any transaction or series of similar transactions involving more than \$120,000 in which the Company is a participant and in which a "related person" has a direct or indirect material interest. "Related persons" include the

Company's directors, nominees for director, executive officers, and greater than 5% stockholders, as well as the immediate family members of the foregoing. In approving or rejecting the proposed transaction, our Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee takes into account, among other factors it deems appropriate, whether the proposed related person transaction is on terms no less favorable than terms generally available to an unaffiliated third party under the same or similar circumstances, the extent of the person's interest in the transaction and, if applicable, the impact on a director's independence. Under the policy, if we discover related person transactions that have not been approved, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is to be notified and will determine the appropriate action, including ratification, rescission or amendment of the transaction.

Related Person Transactions

Set forth below is a summary of certain transactions since January 1, 2013 in which (i) the Company was or is a participant, (ii) any of our directors, executive officers, beneficial owners of more than 5% of our common stock, or the immediate family members of any of the foregoing had or will have a direct or indirect material interest and (iii) the amount involved exceeds or will exceed \$120,000:

Transactions with Mitchell and Steven Rales and Danaher Corporation. On February 18, 2013, the Company entered into an amendment to the registration rights agreement, dated May 30, 2003, by the Company and each of Mr. Mitchell P. Rales, Chairman of our Board of Directors, and Mr. Steven M. Rales, the brother of Mitchell P. Rales and a beneficial owner of more than 5% of our common stock. The amendment extends the duration of the registration rights period for 18,271,832 shares of Colfax common stock subject to the agreement until May 8, 2016. In consideration for entering into the amendment, each of Mr. Mitchell P. Rales and Mr. Steven M. Rales agreed to refrain from exercising their registration rights prior to May 8, 2013, the original expiration date of the registration rights period under the agreement.

During 2013, our management utilized Mr. Mitchell P. Rales' personal plane for Company travel in order to undertake certain time-sensitive Colfax meetings. The business expenses for the associated use of Mr. Mitchell P. Rales' plane for this purpose were reimbursed by us in an amount of approximately \$355,000. The reimbursement expenses associated with the Company's use of this plane were less than a comparable fair-market charter rate for such Company travel.

Certain of our subsidiaries purchase products from and sell products to Danaher Corporation ("Danaher") from time to time in the ordinary course of business and on an arms'-length basis. In 2013, our subsidiaries purchased approximately \$795,000 of products from, and sold approximately \$110,000 of products to, Danaher, which is less than 0.03% of our, and of Danaher's, gross revenues for 2013. Our subsidiaries intend to purchase products from and sell products to Danaher in the future in the ordinary course of their businesses and on an arms'-length basis. Mitchell P. Rales is the Chairman of Danaher's executive committee and Steven M. Rales is the Chairman of Danaher's Board of Directors, and both are the beneficial owners of at least 5% of Danaher's outstanding common stock and our outstanding common stock.

Transactions with BDT Capital. On February 22, 2012, Mr. San W. Orr, III was appointed to our Board. Mr. Orr is a Partner and the Chief Operating Officer of BDT Capital Partners, LLC, the ultimate parent company of the BDT Investor and an affiliate of BDT & Company, LLC. Mr. Orr was nominated for election to the Board pursuant to our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation, which provides the BDT Investor the right, among other things, to exclusively nominate for election to the Board and certain of its committees (subject to applicable law and the listing standards of the NYSE) up to 2 of 11 directors, depending on the beneficial ownership of the BDT Investor (and certain of its permitted transferees) of our securities. Based on the BDT Investor's beneficial ownership of 13.1% of our outstanding common stock as the Record Date, the BDT Investor has the right to nominate one director for election to the Board.

In connection with the Charter Acquisition, on September 12, 2011 we entered into a securities purchase agreement with the BDT Investor, pursuant to which on January 24, 2012 we sold to the BDT Investor (i) 14,756,945 shares of our common stock at a purchase price of \$23.04 per share, and (ii) 13,877,522 shares of newly-created Series A perpetual convertible preferred stock ("Series A preferred stock") at a purchase price of \$24.50 per share, for an aggregate purchase price of \$680 million. As the sole holder of the Series A preferred stock, the BDT Investor was entitled to receive cumulative cash preferred dividends, payable quarterly, at a per annum rate of 6% of the liquidation preference (defined as \$24.50). During 2013, quarterly dividend payments totaling \$20,395,420 were made to the BDT Investor.

On February 12, 2014, we entered into a Conversion Agreement with the BDT Investor pursuant to which the BDT Investor exercised its option to convert its 13,877,552 shares of Series A preferred stock into 12,173,291 shares of the Company's common stock plus cash in lieu of a .2807018 share interest, which conversion occurred on February 12, 2014. As consideration for the BDT Investor's agreement to exercise its optional conversion right, we paid the BDT Investor \$23,418,083.45, which is equivalent to the aggregate amount of dividends that would have been payable on the Series A preferred stock, at an assumed per

annum rate of 6% of its liquidation preference, through the third anniversary of its issuance, at which time the Company would have had the right to convert the Series A preferred stock into common stock at any time at its option subject to certain conditions.

Contacting the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has established a process for stockholders and interested parties to communicate with the Board and to report complaints or concerns relating to our accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters. Stockholders and interested parties wishing to communicate with our Board may do so by writing to any of the members of the Board, the Chairman of the Board, or the non-management members of the Board as a group, at:

Colfax Corporation
8170 Maple Lawn Boulevard, Suite 180
Fulton, Maryland 20759
Attn: Corporate Secretary

Complaints or concerns relating to our accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters will be referred to members of the Audit Committee. Other correspondence will be referred to the relevant director or group of directors. Our Policy on Stockholder and Interested Party Communications with the Board of Directors (the "Board Communications Policy") requires that any stockholder communication to members of the Board must prominently display the legend "Board Communication"