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September 18, 2013

DARDEN SHAREHOLDERS CALL FOR CHANGE AT ANNUAL MEETING

*Proxy Access Proposal Filed by the Nathan Cummings Foundation
Receives Majority Support Despite Board's Opposition*

NEW YORK – Darden Restaurants, Inc., one of America's largest restaurant conglomerates and the owner of Olive Garden, Red Lobster and many other well-known brands, faced an unprecedented shareholder revolt led in part by a proposal from the Nathan Cummings Foundation at its annual meeting in Orlando this morning.

Proposals calling for governance enhancements and increased transparency at Darden received a strong showing of support from Darden investors. Support was particularly high for proposals focusing on the nomination and election of directors. A [proposal](#) calling on the company to grant shareholders access to the proxy for the purpose of nominating directors, filed by the [Nathan Cummings Foundation](#), received more than 50% support of shares voted.

"Such strong investor sentiment in favor of proxy access should prompt Darden to act," said Laura Campos, director of shareholder activities at the Nathan Cummings Foundation. "We will be watching to see how they respond to their shareowners' call for this key governance reform. We believe proxy access will help make Darden Directors more responsive to their shareholders, enhancing shareholder value over the longer-term."

Currently, Darden shareholders may nominate directors, but they do not have the right to have their nominees placed on the company's ballot. Instead, shareholders wishing to have their nominees considered by others must mount a prohibitively expensive proxy contest.

Votes in favor of each of the five proposals considered at the meeting were bolstered by support from Institutional Shareholder Services, a leading proxy voting advisory firm, which recommended that their clients vote for each of the proposals under consideration.

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About the Nathan Cummings Foundation

The Nathan Cummings Foundation is a private foundation and an institutional shareholder of Darden and many other companies, and submits shareholder resolutions on issues that lie at the intersection of its programmatic interests and long-term shareholder value. More information can be found at <http://www.nathancummings.org>.

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