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First American Financial Corp
Form 10-K
February 23, 2015

UNITED STATES

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934
For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2014

OR

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the transition period from _____ to _____

Commission file number 001-34580

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Incorporated in Delaware 26-1911571
(State or other jurisdiction of (I.R.S. Employer

incorporation or organization) Identification No.)

1 First American Way, Santa Ana, California 92707-5913

(Address of principal executive offices) (Zip Code)

(714) 250-3000

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Registrant's telephone number, including area code

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Common New York Stock Exchange
(Title of each class) (Name of each exchange on which registered)

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:

None

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether registrant: (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§ 232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files). Yes No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (§ 229.405) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer" and "smaller reporting company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer

Non-accelerated
filer (Do not check if
a smaller reporting
company) Smaller reporting company

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes No

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The aggregate market value of voting and non-voting common equity held by non-affiliates of the registrant as of June 30, 2014 was \$2,921,903,015.

On February 18, 2015, there were 107,781,233 shares of common stock outstanding.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Portions of the registrant's definitive proxy statement with respect to the 2015 annual meeting of the stockholders are incorporated by reference in Part III of this report. The definitive proxy statement or an amendment to this Form 10-K will be filed no later than 120 days after the close of registrant's fiscal year.

FIRST AMERICAN FINANCIAL CORPORATION

AND SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES

INFORMATION INCLUDED IN REPORT

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CERTAIN STATEMENTS IN THIS ANNUAL REPORT ON FORM 10-K, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THOSE RELATING TO:

- THE COMPANY'S PURSUIT OF GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES IN ITS CORE BUSINESS AND THE BUILDING, EXPANSION AND MANAGEMENT OF ITS RELATED BUSINESSES, INCLUDING THROUGH ACQUISITIONS;
- THE MAKING OF INVESTMENTS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE;
- THE EFFECT OF A DECREASE IN PRODUCTS OR SERVICES PURCHASED BY OR FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMPANY'S MOST SIGNIFICANT CUSTOMERS;
- FUTURE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN IN CONNECTION WITH THE COMPANY'S REVIEW OF ITS AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS;
- THE COMPANY'S CONTINUED PRACTICE OF ASSUMING AND CEDING LARGE TITLE INSURANCE RISKS THROUGH REINSURANCE;
- CONTINUED PRICE AND AGENCY SPLIT ADJUSTMENTS;
- THE EFFECTS OF THE CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU'S INTEGRATED DISCLOSURE RULES;
- THE LIKELIHOOD OF CHANGES IN EXPECTED ULTIMATE LOSSES AND CORRESPONDING LOSS RATES AND RELATED ASSUMPTIONS;
- ANTICIPATED RECOVERIES IN CONNECTION WITH LARGE COMMERCIAL CLAIMS;
- THE LIKELIHOOD AND EFFECTS OF CYBER ATTACKS AND SIMILAR INCIDENTS;
- THE EFFECT OF LAWSUITS, REGULATORY AUDITS AND INVESTIGATIONS AND OTHER LEGAL PROCEEDINGS ON THE COMPANY'S FINANCIAL CONDITION, RESULTS OF OPERATIONS OR CASH FLOWS;
- FUTURE PAYMENT OF DIVIDENDS;
- THE HOLDING OF AND EXPECTED CASH FLOW FROM DEBT SECURITIES AND ASSUMPTIONS RELATING THERETO;
- POTENTIAL FUTURE IMPAIRMENT CHARGES AND RELATED ASSUMPTIONS;
- THE EFFECT OF PENDING ACCOUNTING PRONOUNCEMENTS ON THE COMPANY'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS;
- AN IMPROVING ECONOMY AND STRONGER HOUSING MARKET, INCLUDING MODEST GROWTH IN THE HOME PURCHASE MARKET WITH SOME IMPROVEMENT IN TRANSACTION LEVELS AND PRICES, BUT AN UNCERTAIN REFINANCE MARKET;
- CONTINUED STRENGTH IN THE COMMERCIAL MARKET, BUT WITH DECLINING GROWTH RATES;
- EXPENSE MANAGEMENT EFFORTS, INCLUDING THE COMPANY'S CONTINUED MONITORING OF ORDER VOLUMES AND RELATED STAFFING LEVELS, AND ADJUSTMENTS TO STAFFING LEVELS AS NECESSARY;
- EXPECTED FORECLOSURES AND FORECLOSURE PROCESSING ACTIVITY;
- UNCERTAINTY AND VOLATILITY IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AND ITS EFFECT ON TITLE CLAIMS;
- THE VARIANCE BETWEEN ACTUAL CLAIMS EXPERIENCE AND PROJECTIONS AND FUTURE RESERVE ADJUSTMENTS BASED ON UPDATED ESTIMATES OF FUTURE CLAIMS;
- IMPROVEMENT OF SPECIALTY INSURANCE PROFIT MARGINS AS REVENUES INCREASE;
- PROJECTED INTEREST AND BENEFIT PLAN EXPENSES;
- THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE COMPANY'S RESOURCES TO SATISFY OPERATIONAL CASH REQUIREMENTS;

- THE INTENDED USE OF PROCEEDS FROM THE COMPANY'S ISSUANCE OF SENIOR SECURED NOTES;
 - THE TIMING OF CLAIM, PENSION AND SUPPLEMENTAL BENEFIT PLAN PAYMENTS;
 - ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING THE LEVEL OF THE COMPANY'S INTEREST RATE RISK, EQUITY PRICE RISK, FOREIGN CURRENCY RISK AND CREDIT RISK;
 - THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO ENSURING THAT FANNIE MAE AND FREDDIE MAC HAVE SUFFICIENT CAPITAL TO PERFORM UNDER GUARANTEES ISSUED AND TO MEET THEIR DEBT OBLIGATIONS;
 - ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING GOODWILL VALUATIONS;
 - THE REALIZATION OF TAX BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN LOSSES, TAX PROVISIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE EARNINGS OF FOREIGN SUBSIDIARIES AND THE ADEQUACY OF TAX AND RELATED INTEREST ESTIMATES IN CONNECTION WITH EXAMINATIONS BY TAX AUTHORITIES;
 - CANADIAN EXCISE TAXES FOR SERVICES PROVIDED TO LENDERS;
 - NET ACTUARIAL LOSS AND PRIOR SERVICE CREDIT RELATING TO PENSION PLANS;
 - EXPECTED BENEFIT AND PENSION PLAN CONTRIBUTIONS, PAYMENTS AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND ASSET AND LIABILITY ASSUMPTIONS;
 - COMPENSATION COST RECOGNITION ASSOCIATED WITH UNVESTED RESTRICTED STOCK UNITS AND STOCK OPTIONS; AND
 - EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE FORUM SELECTION BYLAW AMENDMENT,
- ARE FORWARD LOOKING STATEMENTS WITHIN THE MEANING OF SECTION 27A OF THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933, AS AMENDED, AND SECTION 21E OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934, AS AMENDED. THESE FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS MAY CONTAIN THE WORDS "BELIEVE," "ANTICIPATE," "EXPECT," "PLAN," "PREDICT," "ESTIMATE," "PROJECT," "WILL BE," "WILL CONTAIN," "WILL LIKELY RESULT," OR OTHER SIMILAR WORDS AND PHRASES.

RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES EXIST THAT MAY CAUSE RESULTS TO DIFFER MATERIALLY FROM THOSE SET FORTH IN THESE FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS. FACTORS THAT COULD CAUSE THE ANTICIPATED RESULTS TO DIFFER FROM THOSE DESCRIBED IN THE FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS INCLUDE:

- INTEREST RATE FLUCTUATIONS;
- CHANGES IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE REAL ESTATE MARKETS;
- VOLATILITY IN THE CAPITAL MARKETS;
- UNFAVORABLE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS;
- IMPAIRMENTS IN THE COMPANY'S GOODWILL OR OTHER INTANGIBLE ASSETS;
- FAILURES AT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS WHERE THE COMPANY DEPOSITS FUNDS;
- CHANGES IN APPLICABLE GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS;
- HEIGHTENED SCRUTINY BY LEGISLATORS AND REGULATORS OF THE COMPANY'S TITLE INSURANCE AND SERVICES SEGMENT AND CERTAIN OTHER OF THE COMPANY'S BUSINESSES;
- THE CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU'S EXERCISE OF ITS BROAD RULEMAKING AND SUPERVISORY POWERS;
- COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU'S INTEGRATED DISCLOSURE RULES;
- REGULATION OF TITLE INSURANCE RATES;
- REFORM OF GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED MORTGAGE ENTERPRISES;
- LIMITATIONS ON ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS AND OTHER DATA;

- CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH LARGE MORTGAGE LENDERS AND GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED ENTERPRISES;
- CHANGES IN MEASURES OF THE STRENGTH OF THE COMPANY'S TITLE INSURANCE UNDERWRITERS, INCLUDING RATINGS AND STATUTORY CAPITAL AND SURPLUS;
- LOSSES IN THE COMPANY'S INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO;
- EXPENSES OF AND FUNDING OBLIGATIONS TO THE PENSION PLAN;
- MATERIAL VARIANCE BETWEEN ACTUAL AND EXPECTED CLAIMS EXPERIENCE;
- DEFALCATIONS, INCREASED CLAIMS OR OTHER COSTS AND EXPENSES ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE COMPANY'S USE OF TITLE AGENTS;
- ANY INADEQUACY IN THE COMPANY'S RISK MITIGATION EFFORTS;
- SYSTEMS DAMAGE, FAILURES, INTERRUPTIONS AND INTRUSIONS, WIRE TRANSFER ERRORS OR UNAUTHORIZED DATA DISCLOSURES;
- INABILITY TO REALIZE THE BENEFITS OF THE COMPANY'S OFFSHORE STRATEGY;
- INABILITY OF THE COMPANY'S SUBSIDIARIES TO PAY DIVIDENDS OR REPAY FUNDS;
- INABILITY TO REALIZE THE BENEFITS OF, AND CHALLENGES ARISING FROM, THE COMPANY'S ACQUISITION STRATEGY; AND
- OTHER FACTORS DESCRIBED IN THIS ANNUAL REPORT ON FORM 10-K.

THE FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS SPEAK ONLY AS OF THE DATE THEY ARE MADE. THE COMPANY DOES NOT UNDERTAKE TO UPDATE FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS TO REFLECT CIRCUMSTANCES OR EVENTS THAT OCCUR AFTER THE DATE THE FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS ARE MADE.

PART I

Item 1. Business

The Company

First American Financial Corporation (the “Company”) was incorporated in the state of Delaware in January 2008 to serve as the holding company of The First American Corporation’s (“TFAC’s”) financial services businesses following the spin-off of those businesses from TFAC (the “Separation”). The Separation was consummated on June 1, 2010, at which time the Company’s common stock was listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol “FAF.” The businesses operated by the Company’s subsidiaries have, in some instances, been in existence since the late 1800s.

The Company has its executive offices at 1 First American Way, Santa Ana, California 92707-5913. The Company’s telephone number is (714) 250-3000.

General

The Company, through its subsidiaries, is engaged in the business of providing financial services through its title insurance and services segment and its specialty insurance segment. The title insurance and services segment provides title insurance, closing and/or escrow services and similar or related services domestically and internationally in connection with residential and commercial real estate transactions. It also provides products, services and solutions involving the use of real property related data, including data derived from its proprietary database, which are designed to mitigate risk or otherwise facilitate real estate transactions. It maintains, manages and provides access to title plant records and images and, in addition, provides banking, trust and investment advisory services. The specialty insurance segment issues property and casualty insurance policies and sells home warranty products. In addition, our corporate function consists of certain financing facilities as well as the corporate services that support our business operations. Financial information regarding these business segments and the corporate function is included in “Item 7. Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations” and “Item 8. Financial Statements and Supplementary Data” of Part II of this report.

The substantial majority of our business is dependent upon activity in the real estate and mortgage markets, which are cyclical and seasonal. In the current market environment, we are focused on growing our core title insurance and closing services business, building and expanding our data assets to strengthen our core business and offer additional solutions for our customers, and managing complementary businesses in ways that support our core business. We are also focused on continued improvement of our customers’ experiences with our products, services and solutions, and we remain committed to efficiently managing our business to market conditions throughout business cycles.

Title Insurance and Services Segment

Our title insurance and services segment issues title insurance policies on residential and commercial property in the United States and offers similar or related products and services internationally. This segment also provides closing and/or escrow services; accommodates tax-deferred exchanges of real estate; provides products, services and solutions involving the use of real property related data designed to mitigate risk or otherwise facilitate real estate transactions; maintains, manages and provides access to title plant records and images; and provides banking, trust and investment advisory services. In 2014, 2013, and 2012 the Company derived 92.0%, 92.9% and 92.5% of its consolidated revenues, respectively, from this segment.

Overview of Title Insurance Industry

In most instances mortgage lenders and purchasers of real estate desire to be protected from loss or damage in the event of defects in the title they acquire. Title insurance is a means of providing such protection.

Title Policies. Title insurance policies insure the interests of owners or lenders against defects in the title to real property. These defects include adverse ownership claims, liens, encumbrances or other matters affecting title. Title insurance policies generally are issued on the basis of a title report, which is typically prepared after a search of one or more of public records, maps, documents and prior title policies to ascertain the existence of easements, restrictions, rights of way, conditions, encumbrances or other matters affecting the title to, or use of, real property. In certain limited instances, a visual inspection of the property is also made. To facilitate the preparation of title reports, copies and/or abstracts of public records, maps, documents and prior title policies may be compiled and indexed to specific properties in an area. This compilation is known as a "title plant."

The beneficiaries of title insurance policies usually are real estate buyers and mortgage lenders. A title insurance policy indemnifies the named insured and certain successors in interest against title defects, liens and encumbrances existing as of the date of the policy and not specifically excepted from its provisions. The policy typically provides coverage for the real property mortgage lender in the amount of its outstanding mortgage loan balance and for the buyer in the amount of the purchase price of the property. In some cases the policy might provide insurance in a greater amount, such as where the buyer anticipates constructing improvements on the property. The potential for claims under a title insurance policy issued to a mortgage lender generally ceases upon repayment of the mortgage loan. The potential for claims under a title insurance policy issued to a buyer generally ceases upon the sale or transfer of the insured property.

Before issuing title policies, title insurers typically seek to limit their risk of loss by accurately performing title searches and examinations. The majority of the expenses of a title company typically relate to such searches and examinations, the curing of title defects identified by such searches and examinations, the preparation of preliminary reports or commitments and the maintenance of title plants, as well as related sales and administrative expenses, and not from claim losses as in the case of property and casualty insurers.

The Closing Process. Title insurance is essential to the real estate closing process in most transactions involving real property mortgage lenders. In a typical residential real estate sale transaction where title insurance is issued, a real estate broker, lawyer, developer, lender, closer or other participant involved in the transaction orders the title insurance on behalf of an insured. Once the order has been placed, a title insurance company or an agent typically conducts a title search to determine the current status of the title to the property. When the search is complete, the title insurer or agent prepares, issues and circulates a commitment or preliminary report to the parties to the transaction. The commitment or preliminary report identifies the conditions, exceptions and/or limitations that the title insurer intends to attach to the policy and identifies items appearing on the title that must be eliminated prior to closing.

The closing or settlement function, sometimes called an escrow in the western United States, is, depending on the local custom in the region, performed by a lawyer, an escrow company or a title insurance company or agent, generally referred to as a "closer." Once documentation has been prepared and signed, and any required mortgage lender payoff demands are obtained, the transaction closes. The closer typically records the appropriate title documents and arranges the transfer of funds to pay off prior loans and extinguish the liens securing such loans. Title policies are then issued, typically insuring the priority of the mortgage of the real property mortgage lender in the amount of its mortgage loan and the buyer in the amount of the purchase price. The time between the opening of the title order and the issuance of the title policy is usually between 30 and 90 days. Before a closing takes place, however, the closer typically requests that the title insurer or agent provide an update to the commitment to discover any adverse matters affecting title and, if any are found, works with the seller to eliminate them so that the title insurer or agent issues the title policy subject only to those exceptions to coverage which are acceptable to the title insurer, the buyer and the buyer's lender.

Issuing the Policy: Direct vs. Agency. A title insurance policy can be issued directly by a title insurer or indirectly on behalf of a title insurer through agents, which usually operate independently of the title insurer and often issue policies for more than one insurer. Where the policy is issued by a title insurer, the search is performed by or on behalf of the title insurer, and the premium is collected and retained by the title insurer. Where the policy is issued by an agent, the agent typically performs the search, examines the title, collects the premium and retains a portion of the premium. The agent remits the remainder of the premium to the title insurer as compensation for the insurer bearing the risk of loss in the event a claim is made under the policy and for other services the insurer may provide. The percentage of the premium retained by an agent varies from region to region. A title insurer is obligated to pay title claims in accordance with the terms of its policies, regardless of whether it issues its policy directly or indirectly through an agent. In addition, as part of the policy, a title insurer may issue a closing protection letter that protects a lender from certain misuse of funds by the title insurer's agent. When a loss to the title insurer occurs under a policy issued through an

agent or a closing protection letter, under certain circumstances the title insurer may seek recovery of all or a portion of the loss from the agent or the agent's insurance carrier.

Premiums. The premium for title insurance is typically due and earned in full when the real estate transaction is closed. Premiums generally are calculated with reference to the policy amount. The premium charged by a title insurer or an agent is subject to regulation in most areas. Such regulations vary from state to state.

Our Title Insurance Operations

Overview. We conduct our title insurance and closing business through a network of direct operations and agents. Through this network, we issue policies in the 49 states that permit the issuance of title insurance policies and the District of Columbia. We also offer title insurance, closing services and similar or related products and services, either directly or through third parties in foreign countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and various other established and emerging markets as described in the “International Operations” section below.

Customers, Sales and Marketing. The mortgage markets in the United States and Canada are concentrated. We believe that two institutions, Wells Fargo & Company and JPMorgan Chase & Co., together with their affiliates, originate or are involved in approximately 25% of the mortgages in the United States. Each of these institutions purchases title insurance policies and other products and services from us. These institutions also benefit from products and services which are purchased for their benefit by others, such as title insurance policies purchased by borrowers as a condition to the making of a loan. The refusal of one or more of these or other significant lending institutions to purchase products and services from us or to accept our products and services that are to be purchased for their benefit could have a material adverse effect on the title insurance and services segment.

We distribute our title insurance policies and related products and services through our direct and agent channels. In our direct channel, the distribution of our policies and related products and services occurs through sales representatives located at numerous offices throughout the United States where real estate transactions are handled. Title insurance policies issued and other products and services delivered through this channel are primarily delivered in connection with sales and refinances of residential and commercial real property.

Within the direct channel, our sales and marketing efforts are focused on the primary sources of business referrals. For residential business referred by local or decentralized customers, we market to real estate agents and brokers, mortgage brokers, real estate attorneys, mortgage originators, homebuilders and escrow service providers. For refinance and default related business referred by customers with centrally managed platforms, we market to mortgage originators, servicers, and governmental sponsored enterprises. For the commercial business we market primarily to investors, including real estate investment trusts, insurance companies and asset managers, as well as to law firms, commercial banks, investment banks, mortgage brokers and the owners of commercial real estate. We also market directly to national homebuilders focused on newly constructed residential property. In some instances we may supplement the efforts of our sales force with general marketing. Our marketing efforts emphasize the quality and timeliness of our services, our financial strength, process innovation and our national presence.

Underwriting. Before a title insurance policy is issued, a number of underwriting decisions are made. For example, matters of record revealed during the title search may require a determination as to whether an exception should be taken in the policy. We believe that it is important for the underwriting function to operate efficiently and effectively at all decision-making levels so that transactions may proceed in a timely manner. To perform this function, we have underwriters at the regional, divisional and corporate levels with varying levels of underwriting authority.

Agency Operations. As described above, we also issue title insurance policies through a network of agents. Our agreements with our agents state the conditions under which the agent is authorized to issue title insurance policies on our behalf. The agency agreement also prescribes the circumstances under which the agent may be liable to us if a policy loss occurs. Such agency agreements typically are terminable without cause after a specified notice period has been met and are terminable immediately for cause. As is standard in our industry, our agents typically operate with a substantial degree of independence from us and frequently act as agents for other title insurers. We evaluate the profitability of our agency relationships on an ongoing basis, including a review of premium splits, deductibles and claims. As a result, from time to time we may terminate or renegotiate the terms of some of our agency relationships.

In determining whether to engage an independent agent, we often obtain information about the agent, including the agent's experience and background. We maintain loss experience records for each agent and also maintain agent representatives and agent auditors. Our agents typically are subject to audit or examination. In addition to routine examinations, other examinations may be triggered if certain "warning signs" are evident. Adverse findings in an agency audit may result in various actions, including, if warranted, termination of the agency relationship.

International Operations. We provide products and services in numerous countries outside of the United States, and our international operations accounted for approximately 7.6% of our title insurance and services segment revenues in 2014. Today we have direct operations and a physical presence in several countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Additionally, through local companies we have provided products and services in many other countries. While reliable data are not available, we believe that we have the largest market share for title insurance outside of the United States. The Company's revenues from external customers and long-lived assets are broken down between domestic and foreign operations in Note 22 Segment Financial Information to the consolidated financial statements included in "Item 8. Financial Statements and Supplementary Data" of Part II of this report.

Our range of international products and services is designed to lower our clients' risk profiles and reduce their operating costs through enhanced operational efficiencies. In established markets, primarily British Commonwealth countries, we have combined title insurance with customized processing offerings to enhance the speed and efficiency of the mortgage and conveyancing processes. In these markets we also offer products designed to mitigate risk and otherwise facilitate real estate transactions.

Our international operations present risks that may not exist to the same extent in our domestic operations, including those associated with differences in the nature of the products provided, the scope of coverage provided by those products and the manner in which risk is underwritten. Limited claims experience in foreign jurisdictions makes it more difficult to set prices and reserve rates. There may also be risks associated with differences in legal systems and/or unforeseen regulatory changes.

Title Plants. Our collection of title plants constitutes one of our principal assets. A title search is typically conducted by searching the abstracted information from public records or utilizing a title plant holding information abstracted from public records. While public title records generally are indexed by reference to the names of the parties to a given recorded document, our title plants primarily arrange their records on a geographic basis. Because of this difference, title plant records generally may be searched more efficiently, which we believe reduces the risk of errors associated with the search. Many of our title plants also index prior policies, adding to searching efficiency. Certain locations utilize jointly owned plants or utilize a plant under a joint user agreement with other title companies. In addition to these ownership interests, we are in the business of maintaining, managing and providing access to title plant records and images that may be owned by us or other parties. We believe that our title plants, whether wholly or partially owned or utilized under a joint user agreement, are among the most comprehensive in the industry.

Reserves for Claims and Losses. We provide for losses associated with title insurance policies, closing protection letters and other risk based products based upon our historical experience and other factors by a charge to expense when the related premium revenue is recognized. The resulting reserve for incurred but not reported claims, together with the reserve for known claims, reflects management's best estimate of the total costs required to settle all claims reported to us and claims incurred but not reported, and are considered to be adequate for such purpose. Each period the reasonableness of the estimated reserves is assessed; if the estimate requires adjustment, such an adjustment is recorded.

Reinsurance and Coinsurance. We plan to continue our practice of assuming and ceding large title insurance risks through reinsurance. In reinsurance arrangements, the primary insurer retains a certain amount of risk under a policy and cedes the remainder of the risk under the policy to the reinsurer. The primary insurer pays the reinsurer a premium in exchange for accepting this risk of loss. The primary insurer generally remains liable to its insured for the total risk, but is reinsured under the terms of the reinsurance agreement. Prior to 2010, our title insurance arrangements primarily involved other industry participants. Beginning in January of 2010, we established a global reinsurance program involving treaty reinsurance provided by a global syndicate of highly rated non-industry reinsurers. Subject to certain limitations, the program generally covers claims made while the program is in effect.

We also serve as a coinsurer in connection with certain commercial transactions. In a coinsurance scenario, two or more insurers are selected by the insured and typically issue separate policies with respect to the subject property, with each coinsurer liable to the extent provided in the policy that it issues.

Competition. The business of providing title insurance and related products and services is highly competitive. The number of competing companies and the size of such companies vary in the different areas in which we conduct business. Generally, in areas of major real estate activity, such as metropolitan and suburban localities, we compete with many other title insurers and agents. Our major nationwide competitors in our principal markets include Fidelity National Financial, Inc., Stewart Title Guaranty Company, Old Republic International Corporation and their affiliates. In addition to these national competitors, small nationwide, regional and local competitors, as well as numerous agency operations throughout the

country, provide aggressive competition on the local level. We are currently the second largest provider of title insurance in the United States, based on the most recent American Land Title Association market share data.

We believe that competition for title insurance, closing services and related products and services is based primarily on the quality, price and timeliness of the preparation and issuance of the insurance policy and the provision of the related products and services. Customer service is an important competitive factor because parties to real estate trans