

OVERVIEW

The following discussion should be read in conjunction with Item 1A Risk Factors, Item 6 Selected Financial Data and Item 8 Financial Statements and Supplementary Data of this Form 10-K.

CRITICAL ACCOUNTING ESTIMATES

The preparation of Consolidated Financial Statements in conformity with GAAP requires us to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and the disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the Consolidated Financial Statements and the amount of revenues and expenses reported during the period. Actual results may differ from those estimates.

Our Consolidated Financial Statements and accompanying notes have been prepared in accordance with GAAP applied on a consistent basis. We continually evaluate the accounting policies and estimates used to prepare the Consolidated Financial Statements. In general, our estimates are based on historical experience, evaluation of current trends, information from third-party professionals and various other assumptions that are believed to be reasonable under the known facts and circumstances.

The accounting estimates discussed below are considered by us to be critical to an understanding of our Consolidated Financial Statements as their application places the most significant demands on our judgment. Note A to the Consolidated Financial Statements included under Item 8 should be read in conjunction with this section to assist with obtaining an understanding of the underlying accounting policies related to these estimates. Due to the inherent uncertainties involved with these types of judgments, actual results could differ significantly from our estimates and may have a material adverse impact on our results of operations, equity, business, and insurer financial strength and corporate debt ratings.

Insurance Reserves

Insurance reserves are established for both short and long-duration insurance contracts. Short-duration contracts are primarily related to property and casualty insurance policies where the reserving process is based on actuarial estimates of the amount of loss, including amounts for known and unknown claims. Long-duration contracts are primarily related to long term care policies and are estimated using actuarial estimates about morbidity and persistency as well as assumptions about expected investment returns and future premium rate increases. The reserve for unearned premiums represents the portion of premiums written related to the unexpired terms of coverage. The reserving process is discussed in further detail in the Reserves-Estimates and Uncertainties section below.

Long Term Care Reserves

Future policy benefit reserves for our long term care policies are based on certain assumptions, including morbidity, persistency, inclusive of mortality, discount rates and future premium rate increases. The adequacy of the reserves is contingent upon actual experience and our future expectations related to these key assumptions. If actual or expected future experience differs from these assumptions, the reserves may not be adequate, requiring us to add to reserves.

A prolonged period during which interest rates remain at levels lower than those anticipated in our reserving discount rate assumption could result in shortfalls in investment income on assets supporting our obligations under long term care policies, which may also require an increase to our reserves. In addition, we may not receive regulatory approval for the premium rate increases we request.

These changes to our reserves could materially adversely impact our results of operations and equity. The reserving process is discussed in further detail in the Reserves - Estimates and Uncertainties section below.

Reinsurance and Insurance Receivables

Exposure exists with respect to the collectibility of ceded property and casualty and life reinsurance to the extent that any reinsurer is unable to meet its obligations or disputes the liabilities we have ceded under reinsurance agreements. An allowance for uncollectible reinsurance is recorded on the basis of periodic evaluations of balances due from reinsurers, reinsurer solvency, industry experience and current economic conditions. Further information on our reinsurance receivables is in Note G to the Consolidated Financial Statements included under Item 8.