

WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION
 Form 424B5
 October 30, 2015
Table of Contents

Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(5)

Registration Statement No. 333-203959

CALCULATION OF REGISTRATION FEE

Title of each class of securities to be registered	Proposed maximum aggregate offering price ⁽¹⁾	Amount of registration fee ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾
Common Stock, \$0.0001 par value per share	\$85,768,896.63	

- (1) We have previously registered shares of common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$100,000,000, offered by means of a prospectus supplement dated June 4, 2014 and an accompanying prospectus dated May 14, 2012 and pursuant to Registration Statement on Form S-3 (Registration No. 333-181128) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on May 3, 2012 (the Prior Registration Statement). Of those shares of common stock, shares of common stock having an aggregate offering price of \$14,231,103.37 have been sold. As such, as of the date of this prospectus supplement, shares of common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$85,768,896.63 remain available for offer and sale pursuant to this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.
- (2) Calculated in accordance with Rule 457(o) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the Securities Act), based on the proposed maximum aggregate offering price, and Rule 457(r) under the Securities Act. The entire amount of the registration fee of \$11,460 for shares of common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$100,000,000 was paid to the SEC on May 3, 2012. Pursuant to Rule 457(p), the total registration fee for the securities to be registered hereunder of \$8,636.93 has been fully offset against the \$9,829.11 registration fee associated with the unsold securities previously registered on the Prior Registration Statement, for which the filing fee was previously paid to the SEC on May 3, 2012.
- (3) This Calculation of Registration Fee table shall be deemed to update the Calculation of Registration Fee table in the Registration Statement on Form S-3 (File No. 333-203959) filed with the SEC on May 7, 2015, in accordance with Rules 456(b) and 457(r) under the Securities Act.

Table of Contents

Prospectus Supplement to Prospectus dated May 7, 2015

\$85,768,896.63

Western Alliance Bancorporation

Common Stock

This prospectus supplement relates to the issuance and sale from time to time of our common stock, par value \$0.0001 per share, through Credit Suisse Securities (USA) LLC (Credit Suisse), which we refer to as our sales agent. These sales, if any, will be made pursuant to the amended and restated distribution agency agreement dated October 30, 2014, as amended on the date of this prospectus supplement, which we refer to as the distribution agency agreement. This prospectus supplement relates to our common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$100,000,000 offered pursuant to the previous prospectus supplement dated June 4, 2014, which remain unsold under the distribution agency agreement as of the date of this prospectus supplement in the amount of \$85,768,896.63. As of the date of this prospectus supplement, shares of our common stock having an aggregate offering price of \$14,231,103.37 have been sold pursuant to the previous prospectus supplement.

Sales of shares of our common stock, if any, may be made by means of ordinary brokers' transactions on the New York Stock Exchange, or the NYSE, or otherwise at market prices prevailing at the time of sale or at negotiated prices, or as otherwise agreed with the sales agent.

We will pay the sales agent a commission that will not exceed 2% of the gross sales price per share sold through it as sales agent under the distribution agency agreement.

Under the terms of the distribution agency agreement, we may also sell shares of our common stock to the sales agent as principal for its own account at a price agreed upon at the time of sale. If we sell shares of common stock to the sales agent as principal, we will enter into a separate agreement setting forth the terms of such transaction, and we will describe this agreement in a separate prospectus supplement or pricing supplement.

The sales agent is not required to sell any specific number or dollar amount of our common stock but will use its reasonable efforts, subject to the terms of the distribution agency agreement, to sell the shares of common stock offered, as instructed by us. The offering of our common stock pursuant to the distribution agency agreement will terminate upon the earlier of (i) the sale of all shares subject to the distribution agency agreement and (ii) the termination of the distribution agency agreement by the sales agent or us.

Our common stock is listed on the NYSE under the symbol WAL. The last reported sale price of our common stock on the NYSE on October 29, 2015 was \$36.58 per share.

The shares of common stock are not savings or deposit accounts or other obligations of any of our bank or non-bank subsidiaries and are not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other

governmental agency.

Investing in our common stock involves risks. See Risk Factors beginning on page S-2 of this prospectus supplement and in the documents we incorporate by reference into this prospectus supplement to read about important facts you should consider before buying our common stock.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission (the SEC) nor any other regulatory body has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the accuracy or adequacy of this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

Credit Suisse

Prospectus Supplement dated October 30, 2015

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prospectus Supplement

	Page
<u>About This Prospectus Supplement</u>	S-ii
<u>Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements</u>	S-ii
<u>Prospectus Supplement Summary</u>	S-1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	S-2
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	S-4
<u>Price Range of Common Stock and Dividend Policy</u>	S-5
<u>Description of Common Stock</u>	S-5
<u>U.S. Federal Income Tax Consequences to Non-U.S. Holders</u>	S-9
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	S-12
<u>Legal Matters</u>	S-13
<u>Experts</u>	S-14
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	S-14
<u>Incorporation by Reference</u>	S-14

Prospectus

<u>About This Prospectus</u>	1
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	1
<u>Incorporation of Certain Documents By Reference</u>	2
<u>Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements</u>	2
<u>About Western Alliance Bancorporation</u>	4
<u>Risk Factors</u>	4
<u>Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges</u>	4
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	5
<u>The Securities We May Offer</u>	5
<u>Description of Debt Securities</u>	6
<u>Description of Common Stock</u>	19
<u>Description of Preferred Stock</u>	22
<u>Description of Depositary Shares</u>	26
<u>Description of Warrants</u>	29
<u>Description of Purchase Contracts</u>	30
<u>Description of Units</u>	31
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	32
<u>Legal Matters</u>	34
<u>Experts</u>	34

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

This document is in two parts. The first part is the prospectus supplement, which describes the specific terms of this offering and also adds to and updates information contained in the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference. The second part is the accompanying prospectus, which provides more general information. To the extent there is a conflict between the information contained in this prospectus supplement, on the one hand, and the information contained in the accompanying prospectus, on the other hand, you should rely on the information contained in this prospectus supplement. Before you invest in shares of our common stock, you should carefully read this prospectus supplement, along with the accompanying prospectus, in addition to the information contained in the documents we refer to under the heading **Where You Can Find More Information**.

You should rely only on the information contained in or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. We have not authorized any other person to provide you with different information. If anyone provides you with different or inconsistent information, you should not rely on it. We are not making an offer to sell these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted. You should assume that the information appearing in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or in any documents incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement or accompanying prospectus is accurate only as of the date of the applicable document. Our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects may have changed since that date.

Unless otherwise indicated or unless the context requires otherwise, all references in this prospectus supplement to **Western Alliance**, **we**, **us**, **our**, **the Company** or similar references mean Western Alliance Bancorporation and its subsidiaries.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

Certain statements contained in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the information included or incorporated by reference in them are **forward-looking statements** within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, and within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the **Securities Act**), and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the **Exchange Act**). All statements other than statements of historical fact are **forward-looking statements** for purposes of federal and state securities laws, including statements that are related to or are dependent on estimates or assumptions relating to expectations, beliefs, projections, future plans and strategies, anticipated events or trends and similar expressions concerning matters that are not historical facts.

These forward-looking statements reflect our current views about future events and financial performance and involve certain risks, uncertainties, assumptions and changes in circumstances that may cause our actual results to differ significantly from historical results and those expressed in any forward-looking statement. Factors that may cause actual results to differ materially from those contemplated by such forward-looking statements include, among others: 1) financial market and economic conditions adversely effecting financial performance; 2) dependency on real estate and events that negatively impact real estate; 3) high concentration of commercial real estate, construction and land development, and commercial and industrial loans; 4) actual credit losses may exceed expected losses in the loan portfolio; 5) the geographic concentrations of our assets increase the risks related to local economic conditions; 6) sovereign credit rating downgrades; 7) exposure of financial instruments to certain market risks may cause volatility in earnings; 8) dependence on low-cost deposits; 9) ability to borrow from the Federal Home Loan Bank or the Federal Reserve Bank; 10) perpetration of Internet fraud; 11) information security breaches; 12) reliance on other companies' infrastructure; 13) a change in our creditworthiness; 14) expansion strategies may not be successful; 15) risk associated with the prior consolidation of our bank subsidiaries; 16) our ability to compete in a highly competitive

market; 17) our ability to recruit and retain qualified employees, especially seasoned relationship bankers and senior management; 18) the effects of

S-ii

Table of Contents

terrorist attacks or threats of war; 19) ineffective risk management policies and procedures; 20) risks associated with new lines of businesses; 21) risk of operating in a highly regulated industry and our ability to remain in compliance; 22) failure to comply with state and federal banking agency laws and regulations; 23) changes in interest rates and increased rate competition; 24) exposure to environmental liabilities related to the properties to which we acquire title; 25) risks related to ownership and price of our common stock; 26) other factors described in (a) this prospectus supplement and accompanying prospectus, (b) our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K, (c) subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, (d) amendments or updates thereto in other reports we file from time to time with the SEC, and (e) other announcements we may make from time to time; and 27) our success at managing the risks involved in the foregoing items.

Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made and we undertake no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements included or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement or accompanying prospectus or to update the reasons why actual results could differ from those contained in such statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, except to the extent required by federal securities laws. In light of these risks, uncertainties and assumptions, the forward-looking events discussed in this prospectus supplement, accompanying prospectus or in the incorporated documents might not occur, and you should not put undue reliance on any forward-looking statements.

S-iii

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT SUMMARY

*This summary highlights selected information contained elsewhere or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement. This summary is not complete and does not contain all of the information that you should consider before deciding whether to invest in our common stock. For a more complete understanding of our company and this offering, we encourage you to read and consider carefully the more detailed information in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, including the information incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, such as the information under the heading *Risk Factors* of this prospectus supplement on page S-2.*

Our Company

We are a bank holding company headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona. We provide a full spectrum of deposit, lending, treasury management, and online banking products and services through our wholly-owned subsidiary bank, Western Alliance Bank. Western Alliance Bank operates the following full-service banking divisions: Alliance Bank of Arizona in Arizona, First Independent Bank in Northern Nevada, Bank of Nevada in Southern Nevada, Bridge Bank in Northern California and Torrey Pines Bank in Southern California. We also serve business customers through a national platform of specialized financial services. In addition, we have one non-bank subsidiary, Las Vegas Sunset Properties, which holds and manages certain non-performing loans and other real estate owned, or OREO.

Our common stock is traded on the NYSE under the ticker symbol **WAL**. Our principal executive offices are located at One E. Washington Street, Suite 1400, Phoenix, Arizona 85004. Our telephone number is (602) 389-3500.

The Offering

For a more complete description of the terms of the common stock being offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, see *Description of Common Stock* in the accompanying prospectus.

Issuer	Western Alliance Bancorporation
Common Stock Offered	Shares having an aggregate offering price of up to \$85,768,896.63.
NYSE Listing	WAL
Use of Proceeds	We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for general corporate purposes, which may include, among other things, making capital injections into our bank subsidiary. Our management will have broad discretion in the application of the proceeds. We reserve the right to use the proceeds for different purposes or uses which we have not listed above. Pending use of the net proceeds of the offering, we may invest the net proceeds in short term investments. See <i>Use of Proceeds</i> on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement.

Risk Factors

An investment in our common stock involves substantial risk. See the information contained in, or incorporated by reference under, the heading **Risk Factors** on page S-2 of this prospectus supplement, in the accompanying prospectus and in the documents incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement.

S-1

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

*Before you decide whether to purchase any shares of our common stock, in addition to the other information in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, you should carefully consider the risk factors set forth below and under the heading *Risk Factors* beginning on page 15 of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, which is incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, as the same may be updated from time to time by our future filings under the Exchange Act. For more information, see the section entitled *Incorporation by Reference*. Our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks. The market value of our common stock could decline due to any of these risks, and you may lose all or part of your investment.*

Risks Related to this Offering and Ownership of Our Common Stock

Historically, the price of our common stock has fluctuated significantly, which may make it difficult for you to resell shares of common stock at prices you find attractive.

Historically, the price of our common stock on the NYSE has fluctuated significantly. We expect that the market price of our common stock will continue to fluctuate and there can be no assurances about the market prices for our common stock, which may make it difficult for you to resell shares of common stock at prices you find attractive.

Our stock price may fluctuate as a result of a variety of factors, many of which are beyond our control. These factors include:

sales of our equity securities;

our financial condition, performance, creditworthiness and prospects;

quarterly variations in our operating results or the quality of our assets;

operating results that vary from the expectations of management, securities analysts and investors;

changes in expectations as to our future financial performance;

announcements of strategic developments, acquisitions and other material events by us or our competitors;

the operating and securities price performance of other companies that investors believe are comparable to us;

the real estate, credit and other market conditions generally;

changes in global financial markets and global economies and general market conditions, such as interest or foreign exchange rates, stock, commodity or real estate valuations or volatility and other geopolitical, regulatory or judicial events; and

our past and future dividend practices.

Future sales or other dilution of our equity may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

We are not restricted from issuing additional common stock, including any securities that are convertible into or exchangeable for, or that represent the right to receive, common stock. We cannot predict the timing, size or method of future issuances of our common stock, including those made pursuant to the distribution agency agreement with the sales agent, to employees and directors pursuant to our incentive plans, or in connection with future acquisitions or for capital raising activities, or the effect, if any, that such issuances or sales may have on the market price of our common stock. The issuance of any additional shares of our common stock or preferred stock or securities convertible into, exchangeable for or that represent the right to receive common stock or the

S-2

Table of Contents

exercise of such securities could be substantially dilutive to stockholders of our common stock. Holders of our common stock have no preemptive rights that entitle such holders to purchase their pro rata share of any offering of shares of any class or series.

You will incur immediate dilution in the net tangible book value of your common stock.

If you purchase common stock in this offering, the value of your common stock based on our actual book value will immediately be less than the price you paid.

Offerings of debt, which would be senior to our common stock upon liquidation, and/or preferred equity securities which may be senior to our common stock for purposes of dividend distributions or upon liquidation, may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

We may from time to time issue debt securities, borrow money through other means, or issue preferred stock. In 2011, we issued preferred stock to the federal government under the Small Business Lending Fund, or SBLF, program, and from time to time we have borrowed money from the Federal Reserve Bank, the Federal Home Loan Bank, other financial institutions and other lenders. On June 29, 2015, our wholly-owned subsidiary bank, Western Alliance Bank, issued \$150,000,000 aggregate principal amount of 5.00% Fixed-to-Floating Rate Subordinated Notes due July 15, 2025. All of these securities or borrowings have priority over the common stock in a liquidation, which could affect the market price of our stock. The SBLF preferred stock also may restrict our ability to pay dividends on our common stock under certain circumstances.

Our board of directors is authorized to issue one or more classes or series of preferred stock from time to time without any action on the part of the stockholders. Our board of directors also has the power, without stockholder approval, to set the terms of any such classes or series of preferred stock that may be issued, including voting rights, dividend rights, and preferences over our common stock with respect to dividends or upon our dissolution, winding-up and liquidation and other terms. If we issue preferred stock in the future that has a preference over our common stock with respect to the payment of dividends or upon our liquidation, dissolution, or winding up, or if we issue preferred stock with voting rights that dilute the voting power of our common stock, the rights of holders of our common stock or the market price of our common stock could be adversely affected.

Because we have not paid dividends on our common stock and do not anticipate paying dividends on our common stock in the foreseeable future, you should not expect to receive dividends on shares of our common stock.

Western Alliance Bancorporation, or WAL, is a legal entity separate and distinct from Western Alliance Bank and its non-bank subsidiary. As a holding company with limited significant assets other than the capital stock of its subsidiaries, WAL's ability to pay dividends depends primarily upon the receipt of dividends or other capital distributions from its subsidiaries. Such subsidiaries' ability to pay dividends to WAL is subject to, among other things, their individual earnings, financial condition and need for funds, as well as federal and state governmental policies and regulations applicable to WAL and each of those subsidiaries, which limit the amount that may be paid as dividends without prior approval. See "Supervision and Regulation" in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014 for information regarding restrictions on our ability to pay cash dividends. In addition, the terms and conditions of other securities we issue may restrict our ability to pay dividends to holders of our common stock. For example, if any required payments on outstanding trust preferred securities or our SBLF preferred stock are not made, WAL would be prohibited from paying cash dividends on our common stock. WAL has never paid a cash dividend on its common stock and does not anticipate paying any cash dividends in the foreseeable future.

An investment in our common stock is not an insured deposit.

Our common stock is not a bank deposit and, therefore, is not insured against loss by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other public or private entity. Investment in our common stock is inherently risky

S-3

Table of Contents

for the reasons described in this Risk Factors section, elsewhere in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, and the additional documents and information incorporated by reference, and is subject to the same market forces that affect the common stock in any company. As a result, if you acquire our common stock, you may lose some or all of your investment.

The sale of our common stock in this offering may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

Our common stock generally will be offered and sold through our sales agent over a period of time and from time to time in transactions at market prices prevailing at the time, at prices related to the prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices, pursuant to a distribution agency agreement. We cannot predict the size of future issuances or sales of our common stock, including those pursuant to the distribution agency agreement, or the effect, if any, that such issuances or sales may have on the trading price of our common stock. The sale of a large number of shares, including pursuant to the distribution agency agreement or the perception that such sales may occur, could be adversely disruptive to the trading price of our common stock. In addition, the sales agent, under the distribution agency agreement, will not engage in any transactions that stabilize the price of our common stock.

Anti-takeover provisions could negatively impact our stockholders.

Provisions of Delaware law and provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws could make it more difficult for a third party to acquire control of us or have the effect of discouraging a third party from attempting to acquire control of us. Additionally, our certificate of incorporation authorizes our board of directors to issue additional series of preferred stock and such preferred stock could be issued as a defensive measure in response to a takeover proposal. These provisions could make it more difficult for a third party to acquire us even if an acquisition might be in the best interest of our stockholders.

Risks Relating to Our Business

For risks associated with our business and industry, see the section entitled Risk Factors in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, which is incorporated in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus by reference, as the same may be updated from time to time by our future filings under the Exchange Act.

USE OF PROCEEDS

The amount of proceeds from this offering will depend on the number of shares sold and the price at which they are sold.

We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for general corporate purposes, which may include, among other things, making capital injections into our bank subsidiary. As of the date of this prospectus supplement, we cannot specify with certainty all of the particular uses for the net proceeds to us from this offering. Accordingly, our management will have broad discretion in the application of these proceeds. We reserve the right to use the proceeds for different purposes or uses which we have not listed above. Pending use of the net proceeds of this offering, we may invest the net proceeds in short term investments.

Table of Contents**PRICE RANGE OF COMMON STOCK AND DIVIDEND POLICY**

Our common stock is listed on the NYSE under the symbol WAL. As of October 29, 2015, the last reported sale price of our common stock on the NYSE was \$36.58. The following table presents the high and low sales price per share of our common stock during certain periods, as reported on the NYSE.

	High	Low
2015		
First Quarter	\$ 30.41	\$ 24.52
Second Quarter	34.95	28.91
Third Quarter	35.17	28.42
Fourth Quarter (through October 29, 2015)	37.10	29.12
2014		
First Quarter	\$ 25.72	\$ 20.56
Second Quarter	25.75	20.76
Third Quarter	25.21	22.01
Fourth Quarter	28.31	21.43
2013		
First Quarter	\$ 14.51	\$ 10.77
Second Quarter	16.26	13.32
Third Quarter	19.01	15.95
Fourth Quarter	24.74	18.64

WAL, the issuer in this offering, is a legal entity separate and distinct from Western Alliance Bank and its non-bank subsidiary. As a holding company with limited significant assets other than the capital stock of its subsidiaries, WAL's ability to pay dividends depends primarily upon the receipt of dividends or other capital distributions from its subsidiaries. The ability of WAL's subsidiaries to pay dividends to WAL is subject to, among other things, such subsidiaries' individual earnings, financial condition and need for funds, as well as federal and state governmental policies and regulations applicable to WAL and each of those subsidiaries, which limit the amount that may be paid as dividends without prior approval. See "Supervision and Regulation" in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014 for information regarding restrictions on our ability to pay cash dividends. In addition, the terms and conditions of other securities we issue may restrict our ability to pay dividends to holders of our common stock. For example, if any required payments on outstanding trust preferred securities or our SBLF preferred stock are not made, WAL would be prohibited from paying cash dividends on our common stock. WAL has never paid a cash dividend on our common stock and does not anticipate paying any cash dividends in the foreseeable future.

DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK

The following description is a general summary of the terms of our common stock. The description below does not purport to be complete and is subject to and qualified in its entirety by reference to our certificate of incorporation and bylaws. The description herein does not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws because they, and not the summary, define the rights of holders of shares of our common stock. You can obtain copies of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws by following the directions under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information."

General

Our certificate of incorporation provides the authority to issue 200,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.0001 per share. At October 26, 2015, there were 102,307,277 shares of common stock issued and outstanding and we had outstanding stock options granted to directors, officers and other employees for 234,429 shares of our common stock.

S-5

Table of Contents

Each share of our common stock has the same relative rights and is identical in all respects to each other share of our common stock. Our common stock is non-withdrawable capital, is not of an insurable type and is not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other governmental entity.

Voting Rights

Holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote per share on each matter properly submitted to stockholders for their vote, including the election of directors. Holders of our common stock do not have the right to cumulate their votes for the election of directors, which means that the holders of more than 50% of the shares of common stock voting for the election of directors can elect 100% of the directors standing for election at any meeting if they choose to do so. In that event, the holders of the remaining shares voting for the election of directors will not be able to elect any person or persons to our board of directors at that meeting. Generally, in matters other than the election of directors and business combinations and other extraordinary transactions, the affirmative vote of the majority of shares present and entitled to vote on the subject matter constitutes the act of the stockholders. A nominee to our board of directors will be elected, in uncontested elections (as defined in our bylaws), if the votes cast for such nominee's election exceed the votes cast against such nominee's election. In all director elections other than uncontested elections, the vote standard will continue to be a plurality of votes cast, and stockholders shall not be permitted to vote against any nominee for director.

Liquidation Rights

The holders of our common stock and the holders of any class or series of stock entitled to participate with the holders of our common stock as to the distribution of assets in the event of any liquidation, dissolution or winding-up of us, whether voluntary or involuntary, will become entitled to participate equally in the distribution of any of our assets remaining after we have paid, or provided for the payment of, all of our debts and liabilities and after we have paid, or set aside for payment, to the holders of any class of stock having preference over the common stock in the event of liquidation, dissolution or winding-up, the full preferential amounts, if any, to which they are entitled.

Dividends

Although we do not anticipate that we will pay any dividends on our common stock, the holders of our common stock and any class or series of stock entitled to participate with the holders of our common stock are entitled to receive dividends declared by our board of directors out of any assets legally available for distribution. The board may declare dividends out of surplus, or if no surplus exists, out of net profits for the fiscal year in which the dividend is declared and/or the preceding fiscal year, only if the amount of capital is greater than or equal to the aggregate amount of the capital represented by the issued and outstanding stock of all classes having a preference upon the distribution of assets. The terms and conditions of other securities we issue may restrict our ability to pay dividends to holders of our common stock. In addition, as a holding company, our main source of funds to pay dividends is distributions from our subsidiaries and, therefore, our ability to pay distributions is affected by the ability of our subsidiaries to pay dividends. The ability of our bank subsidiary, and our ability, to pay dividends in the future is, and could in the future be further, influenced by bank regulatory requirements and capital guidelines. See "Supervision and Regulation" in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014 for information regarding restrictions on our ability to pay cash dividends.

Miscellaneous

The holders of our common stock have no preemptive or conversion rights for any shares that may be issued. Our common stock is not subject to additional calls or assessments, and all shares of our common stock currently

outstanding are fully paid and non-assessable.

S-6

Table of Contents

Anti-Takeover Effects of Provisions of our Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws and Delaware Law

Some provisions of Delaware law and our certificate of incorporation and bylaws contain provisions that could make it more difficult to (1) acquire us by means of a tender offer, proxy contest or otherwise or (2) remove our incumbent officers and directors. These provisions, summarized below, are intended to encourage persons seeking to acquire control of us to first negotiate with our board of directors. These provisions also serve to discourage hostile takeover practices and inadequate takeover bids.

Undesignated Preferred Stock

Our board of directors has the ability to authorize undesignated preferred stock, which allows the board of directors to issue preferred stock with voting or other rights or preferences that could impede the success of any unsolicited attempt to change control of our company. This ability may have the effect of deferring hostile takeovers or delaying changes in control or management of our company.

Special Stockholders Meetings and Advanced Notice Requirements for Stockholder Proposals

Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws provide that a special meeting of stockholders may be called only by our board of directors, the chairman of the board, by our chief executive officer or president, or by our board of directors upon the written request of our stockholders holding no less than forty percent (40%) of the issued and outstanding shares our common stock, subject to and in compliance with the procedures and other requirements set forth in our certificate of incorporation and bylaws. In addition, our bylaws require advance notice procedures for stockholder proposals to be brought before an annual meeting of the stockholders, including the nomination of directors. Stockholders at an annual meeting may only consider the proposals specified in the notice of meeting or brought before the meeting by or at the direction of the board, or by a stockholder of record on the record date for the meeting who (1) is entitled to vote at the meeting, (2) has delivered a timely written notice in proper form to our secretary of the stockholder's intention to bring such business before the meeting, (3) attends (or has a qualified representative attend) the stockholder meeting and (4) has otherwise complied with the provisions of our bylaws and applicable law. These provisions could have the effect of delaying any stockholder actions until the next stockholder meeting, even if they are favored by the holders of a majority of our outstanding voting stock.

No Action by Written Consent

Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws do not permit stockholders to act by written consent in lieu of a meeting.

Election and Removal of Directors

At our 2015 annual meeting of stockholders, our stockholders approved an amendment to our certificate of incorporation to phase out over a two-year period the classification of our board of directors and provide instead for the annual election of directors. Previously, other than directors elected by any series of preferred stock, our board of directors was divided into three classes of directors, with each class of directors elected for a three-year term. Following our stockholders' approval of the amendment to our certificate of incorporation, our board of directors approved certain related amendments to our bylaws. For more information regarding the foregoing amendments, see Item 5.03 of our Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on May 22, 2015, which we incorporate into this prospectus by reference.

As a result of the foregoing amendments, our certificate of incorporation and bylaws provide that, other than directors elected by any series of preferred stock, beginning with the 2015 annual meeting of stockholders, directors will be

elected annually to one-year terms. Directors previously elected at the 2013 and 2014 annual meetings of stockholders will continue to serve the remainder of their three-year terms. At our 2017 annual meeting of stockholders, the declassification of our board of directors will be complete.

S-7

Table of Contents

Until our 2017 annual meeting of stockholders, our board of directors will consequently have more than one class of directors, which may have the effect of deterring or delaying any attempt by any group to obtain control of us. Specifically, these provisions could prevent a stockholder or a group of stockholders having majority voting power from obtaining control of our board of directors until our 2016 annual meeting of stockholders, at which time they could elect a majority of the directors appointed to our board of directors.

In addition, our certificate of incorporation and bylaws provide that any vacancies on our board of directors may be filled only by a majority of the remaining directors, though less than a quorum, or by the sole remaining director. This system of electing and removing directors and filling vacancies may tend to discourage a third party from making a tender offer or otherwise attempting to obtain control of us because it generally makes it more difficult for stockholders to replace a majority of the directors.

Amendment of Certain Provisions of our Organizational Documents

Any amendment to our certificate of incorporation must be approved by our board of directors and a majority of the outstanding shares of each class of shares entitled to vote thereon at a duly called annual or special meeting; provided, that in addition to any vote of any class of shares required by law or the certificate of incorporation, the affirmative vote of holders of at least a majority of the voting power of all of the then outstanding shares of our capital stock entitled to vote generally in the election of directors, voting together as a single class, is required to amend certain of the provisions contained in the certificate of incorporation regarding stockholder actions, classification of directors, removal of directors, filling of director vacancies, bylaw amendments, limitation of liability of directors, the exclusive forum for certain litigation, and amendments to the certificate of incorporation. Our bylaws may be amended by the affirmative vote of a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present or by the affirmative vote of the holders of at least 66-2/3% of the voting power of all of the shares of capital stock issued and outstanding and entitled to vote in any election of directors, voting as a single class.

Business Combinations

We have not opted out of Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporation Law, an anti-takeover law, and are therefore subject to its provisions. In general, Section 203 prohibits a publicly held Delaware corporation from engaging in a business combination, such as a merger, with a person or group owning 15% or more of the corporation's outstanding voting stock, referred to as an interested stockholder under Section 203, for a period of three years following the date the person became an interested stockholder, unless (with certain exceptions) the business combination or the transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder is approved in a prescribed manner.

These and other provisions of Delaware law and our certificate of incorporation and bylaws could have the effect of discouraging others from attempting hostile takeovers and, as a consequence, they may also inhibit temporary fluctuations in the market price of our common stock that often result from actual or rumored hostile takeover attempts. Such provisions may also have the effect of preventing changes in our management. It is possible that these provisions could make it more difficult to accomplish transactions which stockholders may otherwise deem to be in their best interests.

Since the terms of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws may differ from the general information we are providing, you should only rely on the actual provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws. If you would like to read our certificate of incorporation and bylaws, you may request a copy from us by following the directions under the heading [Where You Can Find More Information](#).

NYSE Listing

Our common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol WAL.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is American Stock Transfer & Trust Company.

S-8

Table of Contents

U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSEQUENCES TO NON-U.S. HOLDERS

The following is a general discussion of U.S. federal income tax considerations generally applicable with respect to the ownership and disposition of our common stock applicable to non-U.S. Holders. For the purposes of this discussion, the term **Non-U.S. Holder** means a beneficial owner of our common stock that is, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, an individual, corporation, estate or trust, other than:

an individual who is a citizen or resident of the United States;

a corporation, or other entity taxable as a corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes, created or organized in the United States or under the laws of the United States, any state thereof or the District of Columbia;

an estate, the income of which is includible in gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes regardless of its source; or

a trust if (1) a court within the United States is able to exercise primary supervision over the administration of the trust and one or more U.S. persons (as defined in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or the Code) have the authority to control all substantial decisions of the trust, or (2) it has a valid election in effect under applicable U.S. Treasury regulations to be treated as a domestic trust.

If an entity or arrangement treated as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes holds shares of our common stock, the tax treatment of a person treated as a partner generally will depend on the status of the partner and the activities of the partnership. Persons that, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, are treated as a partner in a partnership holding shares of our common stock should consult their own tax advisors.

This discussion is based on current provisions of the Code, existing and proposed U.S. Treasury regulations promulgated thereunder, and administrative rulings and court decisions in effect as of the date hereof, all of which are subject to change at any time, possibly with retroactive effect. No opinion of counsel has been obtained, and we do not intend to seek a ruling from the Internal Revenue Service (the **IRS**) as to any of the tax considerations described below. There can be no assurance that the IRS will not challenge one or more of the tax considerations described below.

This discussion only addresses beneficial owners of our common stock, and it is assumed for purposes of this discussion that Non-U.S. Holders hold shares of our common stock as capital assets within the meaning of Section 1221 of the Code (generally, property held for investment). This discussion does not address all aspects of U.S. federal income taxation that may be important to a Non-U.S. Holder in light of such Non-U.S. Holder's particular circumstances or that may be applicable to Non-U.S. Holders subject to special treatment under U.S. federal income tax law (including, for example, entities or arrangements treated as partnerships for U.S. federal income tax purposes (and investors therein), controlled foreign corporations, passive foreign investment companies, and former citizens or former long-term residents of the United States). In addition, this discussion does not address U.S. federal tax laws other than those pertaining to the U.S. federal income tax (such as U.S. federal estate tax or the Medicare contribution tax on certain net investment income), nor does it address any aspects of U.S. state, local or non-U.S. taxes. Non-U.S. Holder should consult with their own tax advisors regarding the possible application of these taxes.

This summary is for general information only and is not intended to constitute a complete description of all tax consequences relating to the ownership and disposition of our common stock. Holders of our common stock should consult with their own tax advisors regarding the tax consequences to them (including the application and effect of other U.S. federal tax laws and any state, local, non-U.S. income and other tax laws) of the ownership and disposition of our common stock.

S-9

Table of Contents

Dividends

If dividends are paid to Non-U.S. Holders, such dividends, to the extent paid out of our current or accumulated earnings and profits (as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles) will be subject to U.S. federal income tax withholding at a rate of 30% (or lower rate provided by an applicable income tax treaty). To obtain a reduced rate of withholding under an applicable income tax treaty, a Non-U.S. Holder generally will be required to provide us or our paying agent with a properly completed IRS Form W-8BEN-E (or other applicable form) or IRS Form W-8BEN (or other applicable form) certifying the Non-U.S. Holder's entitlement to benefits under that treaty. In certain cases, additional requirements may need to be satisfied to avoid the imposition of U.S. withholding tax. See **FATCA** below for further details.

Because it will generally not be known, at the time a Non-U.S. Holder receives any distribution, whether the distribution will be paid out of our current or accumulated earnings and profits, we expect that a withholding agent will deduct and withhold U.S. tax at the applicable rate on all distributions that you receive on our common stock. If it is later determined that a distribution was not a dividend in whole or in part, you may be entitled to claim a refund of the U.S. federal income tax withheld with respect to that portion of the distribution, provided that the required information is timely furnished to the IRS. To the extent distributions exceed our current and accumulated earnings and profits, the distribution will be treated as a non-taxable return of capital to the extent of the Non-U.S. Holder's tax basis in our common stock and thereafter as capital gain from the sale or exchange of such common stock. See **Gain on Disposition of our Common Stock** below.

If the dividends are effectively connected with the Non-U.S. Holder's conduct of a trade or business within the United States, withholding should not apply, so long as the appropriate certifications are made by such Non-U.S. Holder. See **Effectively Connected Income** below for additional information on the U.S. federal income tax considerations applicable with respect to such effectively connected dividends.

Gain on Disposition of our Common Stock

Subject to the discussion below under **Information Reporting and Backup Withholding** and **FATCA**, a Non-U.S. Holder generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income tax or withholding tax on any gain realized upon the sale or other taxable disposition of our common stock unless:

the gain is effectively connected with the conduct, by such Non-U.S. Holder, of a trade or business in the United States (and, if required by an applicable income tax treaty, is attributable to such Non-U.S. Holder's permanent establishment), in which case the gain will be subject to tax in the manner described below under **Effectively Connected Income**;

the Non-U.S. Holder is an individual who is present in the United States for a period or periods aggregating 183 days or more during the calendar year in which the sale or disposition occurs and certain other conditions are met, in which case the gain (generally reduced by any U.S.-source capital losses) will be subject to 30% (or a lower rate provided by an applicable income tax treaty) tax; or

we are, or have been, a United States real property holding corporation, or USRPHC, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, at any time during the shorter of the five-year period preceding such disposition and the Non-

U.S. Holder's holding period in our common stock; provided, that so long as our common stock is regularly traded on an established securities market, a Non-U.S. Holder generally will not be subject to taxation with respect to a taxable disposition of our common stock, if at any time during that five- year or shorter period it did not own more than 5%, directly or by attribution, of our common stock.

We believe that we are not currently and will not become a USRPHC during the relevant period described in the third bullet point above. However, because the determination of whether we are a USRPHC depends on the fair market value of our U.S. real property relative to the fair market value of our other business assets, there can be no assurance that we are not, or will not become, a USRPHC in the future. If we were treated as a USRPHC during the relevant period described in the third bullet point above, any taxable gains recognized by a Non-U.S.

Table of Contents

Holder on the sale or other taxable disposition of our common stock will be subject to tax as if the gain were effectively connected with the conduct of the Non-U.S. Holder's trade or business in the United States (unless our common stock is regularly traded on an established securities market and the Non-U.S. Holder did not own more than 5% of our common stock as described in the third bullet point above) except the branch profits tax would not apply. See Effectively Connected Income. In addition, if our common stock ceases to be traded on an established securities market, the transferee of our common stock would generally be required to withhold tax, under U.S. federal income tax laws, in an amount equal to 10% of the amount realized by the Non-U.S. Holder on the sale or other taxable disposition of our common stock. The rules regarding U.S. real property interests are complex, and Non-U.S. Holders are urged to consult with their own tax advisors on the application of these rules based on their particular circumstances.

Effectively Connected Income

If a dividend received on our common stock, or gain from a sale or other taxable disposition of our common stock, is treated as effectively connected with a Non-U.S. Holder's conduct of a trade or business in the United States, such Non-U.S. Holder will generally be exempt from withholding tax on any such dividend and any gain realized on such a disposition, provided such Non-U.S. Holder complies with certain certification requirements (generally on IRS Form W-8ECI). Instead, such Non-U.S. Holder will generally be subject to U.S. federal income tax on a net income basis on any such gains or dividends in the same manner as if such holder were a U.S. person (as defined in the Code) unless an applicable income tax treaty provides otherwise. In addition, a Non-U.S. Holder that is a foreign corporation may be subject to a branch profits tax at a rate of 30% (or a lower rate provided by an applicable income tax treaty) on such holder's earnings and profits for the taxable year that are effectively connected with such holder's conduct of a trade or business in the United States (and, if required by an applicable income tax treaty, are attributable to such holder's U.S. permanent establishment), subject to adjustments.

Information Reporting and Backup Withholding

Generally, we must report to our Non-U.S. Holders and the IRS the amount of dividends paid during each calendar year, if any, and the amount of any tax withheld. These information reporting requirements apply even if no withholding is required (e.g., because the distributions are effectively connected with the Non-U.S. Holder's conduct of a United States trade or business, or withholding is eliminated by an applicable income tax treaty). This information also may be made available under a specific treaty or agreement with the tax authorities in the country in which the Non-U.S. Holder resides or is established.

Backup withholding generally will not apply to distributions payable to a Non-U.S. Holder of shares of our common stock provided the Non-U.S. Holder furnishes to us or our paying agent the required certification as to its non-U.S. status, such as by providing a valid IRS Form W-8BEN, IRS Form W-8BEN-E, or IRS Form W-8ECI, or certain other requirements are met. Notwithstanding the foregoing, backup withholding may apply if either we or our paying agent has actual knowledge, or reason to know, that the Non-U.S. Holder is a U.S. person (as defined in the Code) that is not an exempt recipient.

Payments on the sale or other taxable disposition of our common stock made to or through a foreign office of a foreign broker generally will not be subject to backup withholding or information reporting. However, if such broker is for U.S. federal income tax purposes: a U.S. person, a controlled foreign corporation, a foreign person 50% or more of whose gross income is effectively connected with a U.S. trade or business for a specified three-year period, or a foreign partnership with certain connections to the United States, then information reporting will be required unless the broker has in its records documentary evidence that the Non-U.S. Holder is not a U.S. person (as defined in the Code) and certain other conditions are met or the Non-U.S. Holder otherwise establishes an exemption. Backup

withholding may apply to any payment that such broker is required to report if the broker has actual knowledge or reason to know that the payee is a U.S. person. Payments to or through the U.S. office of a broker will be subject to backup withholding and information reporting unless the Non-U.S. Holder certifies, under penalties of perjury, that it is not a U.S. person, or otherwise establishes an exemption.

S-11

Table of Contents

Backup withholding is not an additional tax but merely an advance payment, which may be refunded to the extent it results in an overpayment of tax and the appropriate information is timely supplied by the Non-U.S. Holder to the IRS.

FATCA

Pursuant to the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, or FATCA, foreign financial institutions (which include most foreign hedge funds, private equity funds, mutual funds, securitization vehicles and any other investment vehicles) and certain other foreign entities must comply with new information reporting rules with respect to their U.S. account holders and investors or confront a new withholding tax on U.S. source payments made to them (whether received as a beneficial owner or as an intermediary for another party). More specifically, a foreign financial institution or other foreign entity that does not comply with the FATCA reporting requirements will generally be subject to a new 30% withholding tax with respect to any withholdable payments. For this purpose, withholdable payments generally include U.S.-source payments otherwise subject to nonresident withholding tax (e.g., U.S.-source dividends) and also include the entire gross proceeds from the sale or other disposition of any stock of U.S. issuers. The FATCA withholding tax will apply even if the payment would otherwise not be subject to U.S. nonresident withholding tax (e.g., because it is capital gain). An inter-governmental agreement between the United States and an applicable foreign country, or future regulations or other guidance, may modify these requirements. Withholding under FATCA generally applies to payments of dividends on our common stock, and will apply to payments of gross proceeds from the sale or other disposition of our common stock on or after January 1, 2019. Non-U.S. Holders are urged to consult with their own tax advisors regarding the effect, if any, of the FATCA provisions to them based on their particular circumstances.

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

On June 4, 2014, we entered into a distribution agency agreement with Credit Suisse, which we refer to as the sales agent, under which we may offer and sell shares of our common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$100,000,000 from time to time through the sales agent. On October 30, 2014, we entered into an amended and restated distribution agency agreement with the sales agent, as amended on the date of this prospectus supplement (as amended, the distribution agency agreement), under which we may offer and sell shares of our common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$97,168,693.51 from time to time through the sales agent. As of the date of this prospectus supplement, we have offered and sold under the distribution agency agreement shares of our common stock having an aggregate offering price of \$14,231,103.37. This prospectus supplement replaces the prospectus supplement filed on June 4, 2014 and only includes shares of common stock having an aggregate offering price of up to \$85,768,896.63 that remain unsold under the distribution agency agreement.

Sales of shares of our common stock, if any, may be made by means of ordinary brokers' transactions on the NYSE, or otherwise at market prices prevailing at the time of sale or at negotiated prices, or as otherwise agreed with the sales agent. The sales agent will not engage in any transactions that stabilize the price of our common stock.

The sales agent will use its reasonable efforts to sell on our behalf, as our agent, the shares of common stock offered hereby as agreed upon by us and the sales agent. We will designate the maximum amount of shares of common stock to be sold through the sales agent, on a daily basis or otherwise as we and the sales agent agree. Subject to the terms and conditions of the distribution agency agreement, the sales agent will use its reasonable efforts to sell, as our agent and on our behalf, all of the designated shares of common stock. We may instruct the sales agent not to sell shares of common stock if the sales cannot be effected at or above the price designated by us in any such instruction. We may suspend the offering of shares of common stock under the distribution agency agreement by notifying the sales agent. Likewise, the sales agent may suspend the offering of shares of common stock under the distribution agency

agreement by notifying us of such suspension.

S-12

Table of Contents

The sales agent will provide written confirmation to us following the close of trading on the NYSE each day on which shares of our common stock are sold under the distribution agency agreement. Each confirmation will include the number of shares of common stock sold on that day, the gross sales price per share and the compensation payable by us to the sales agent in connection with the sales. We will report at least quarterly the number of shares of common stock sold through the sales agent under the distribution agency agreement, the proceeds to us (before expenses) and the compensation paid by us to the sales agent in connection with the sales of the common stock.

We will pay the sales agent a commission that will not exceed, but may be lower than, 2% of the gross offering proceeds from shares sold through it as the sales agent under the distribution agency agreement. Our net proceeds from the offering of shares hereunder will equal the gross proceeds, less the sales agent's commission less any expenses payable by us and any transaction fees imposed by any governmental or self-regulatory organization in connection with the sales.

Settlement for sales of common stock will occur on the third trading day following the date on which any sales were made in return for payment of the net proceeds to us. There is no arrangement for funds to be received in an escrow, trust or similar arrangement.

Under the terms of the distribution agency agreement, we also may sell shares to Credit Suisse as principal for its own account at a price agreed upon at the time of sale. If we sell shares to Credit Suisse as principal, we will enter into a separate agreement setting forth the terms of such transaction, and we will describe this agreement in a separate prospectus supplement or pricing supplement.

In connection with the sale of the common stock on our behalf, Credit Suisse may be deemed to be an underwriter within the meaning of the Securities Act, and the compensation paid to it may be deemed to be underwriting commissions or discounts. We have agreed to provide indemnification and contribution to Credit Suisse against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act.

The offering of common stock pursuant to the distribution agency agreement will terminate upon the earlier of (1) the sale of all shares of common stock subject to the distribution agency agreement and (2) the termination of the distribution agency agreement by us or by Credit Suisse.

Credit Suisse has from time to time provided, and in the future may provide, certain commercial banking, investment banking and financial advisory services to us and our affiliates, for which they have received, and in the future will receive, customary fees.

If the sales agent or we have reason to believe that our common stock do not satisfy the exemptive provisions set forth in Rule 101(c)(1) of Regulation M under the Exchange Act for an actively-traded security, that party will promptly notify the other and sales of common stock under the distribution agency agreement will be suspended until that or other exemptive provisions have been satisfied in the judgment of the sales agent and us.

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the common stock offered hereby will be passed upon for us by DLA Piper LLP (US), Phoenix, Arizona. Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, Los Angeles, California will pass upon legal matters for the sales agent.

Table of Contents

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements incorporated herein by reference from Western Alliance Bancorporation's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, and the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting, have been audited by RSM US LLP (formerly McGladrey LLP), an independent registered public accounting firm, as stated in their reports, which are incorporated herein by reference. Such financial statements have been so incorporated in reliance upon the report of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy any document we file at the SEC's public reference room at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the public reference room. In addition, our SEC filings are available to the public at the SEC's Internet site at <http://www.sec.gov> and on our website at <http://www.westernalliancebancorp.com>. Information contained on our website or any other website is not incorporated by reference into and does not constitute part of this prospectus.

We have filed with the SEC a registration statement under the Securities Act with respect to the shares of our common stock offered by this prospectus supplement. This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, which are part of the registration statement, do not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement or the exhibits and schedules thereto as permitted by the rules and regulations of the SEC. For further information about us and our common stock, you should refer to the registration statement.

We have not authorized anyone to give you any information or to make any representations about us or the transactions we discuss in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus other than those contained in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. If you are given any information or representations about these matters that is not discussed in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, you must not rely on that information. This prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus is not an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy securities anywhere or to anyone where or to whom we are not permitted to offer or sell securities under applicable law.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

In this prospectus supplement, as permitted by law, we incorporate by reference information from other documents that we file with the SEC. This means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference is considered to be a part of this prospectus supplement and should be read with the same care. When we update the information contained in documents that have been incorporated by reference by making future filings with the SEC, the information incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement is considered to be automatically updated and superseded. In other words, in case of a conflict or inconsistency between information contained in this prospectus supplement and information incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement, you should rely on the information contained in the document that was filed later.

Table of Contents

We incorporate by reference the documents listed below and any documents we file with the SEC in the future (other than any portion of such filings that are furnished under applicable SEC rules rather than filed) under Section 13(a), 13(c), 14, or 15(d) of the Exchange Act until the later of (1) the completion of the offering of the securities described in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and (2) the termination of the offering of securities pursuant to this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014 filed on February 17, 2015 (including information incorporated by reference in the Form 10-K from our definitive proxy statement for the 2015 annual meeting of stockholders, which was filed on April 6, 2015);

our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the three months ended March 31, 2015 filed on May 8, 2015, for the three months ended June 30, 2015 filed on August 7, 2015 and for the three months ended September 30, 2015 filed on October 30, 2015;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on March 9, 2015, March 13, 2015, May 11, 2015, May 22, 2015, June 22, 2015, and July 2, 2015; and

the description of our common stock contained in our registration statement on Form 8-A, filed on June 27, 2005, as amended by Form 8-A/A, Amendment No. 1, filed on June 3, 2014, including any amendment or report filed for the purpose of updating such description.

You may request a copy of any of these filings, other than an exhibit to a filing unless that exhibit is specifically incorporated by reference into that filing, at no cost, by writing to or telephoning us at the following address:

Western Alliance Bancorporation
One E. Washington Street, Suite 1400
Phoenix, Arizona 85004
(602) 389-3500

Attn: Dale Gibbons, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

You should not assume that the information in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or any documents incorporated by reference is accurate as of any date other than the date of the applicable document. Any statement contained in a document incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus will be deemed to be modified or superseded for purposes of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus to the extent that a statement contained in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus or any other subsequently filed document that is deemed to be incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus modifies or supersedes the statement. Any statement so modified or superseded will not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to constitute a part of this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus.

S-15

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS

WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION

Debt Securities, Common Stock, Preferred Stock, Depositary Shares,

Purchase Contracts, Units and Warrants

By this prospectus, we or one or more selling securityholders to be identified in the future may offer from time to time:

debt securities;

common stock;

preferred stock;

depositary shares;

purchase contracts;

units; and

warrants exercisable for debt securities, common stock or preferred stock.

When we or any selling securityholder offers securities, we or they will provide you with a prospectus supplement describing the specific terms of the securities, including the price. You should read this prospectus and any prospectus supplement carefully before you decide to invest. This prospectus may not be used to sell securities unless it is accompanied by a prospectus supplement that further describes the securities being delivered to you.

We or any selling securityholder may offer and sell these securities to or through one or more underwriters, dealers and agents, or directly to purchasers, on a continuous or delayed basis.

Our common stock is listed for trading on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol WAL. We have not yet determined whether any of the securities that may be offered by this prospectus will be listed on any exchange, or included in any inter-dealer quotation system or over-the-counter market. If we decide to seek the listing or inclusion of any such securities upon issuance, the prospectus supplement relating to those securities will disclose the exchange,

quotation system or market on or in which the securities will be listed or included.

Investing in our securities involves risks. See Risk Factors in our most recent annual report on Form 10-K, which is incorporated herein by reference, and in any of our subsequently filed quarterly and current reports that are incorporated herein by reference. We may include specific risk factors in an applicable prospectus supplement under the heading Risk Factors.

The offered securities are not deposits or obligations of a bank or savings associations and are not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other governmental agency.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is May 7, 2015.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS</u>	1
<u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u>	1
<u>INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN DOCUMENTS BY REFERENCE</u>	2
<u>SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u>	2
<u>ABOUT WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION</u>	4
<u>RISK FACTORS</u>	4
<u>RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS</u>	4
<u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u>	5
<u>THE SECURITIES WE MAY OFFER</u>	5
<u>DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES</u>	6
<u>DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK</u>	19
<u>DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK</u>	22
<u>DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITARY SHARES</u>	26
<u>DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS</u>	29
<u>DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASE CONTRACTS</u>	30
<u>DESCRIPTION OF UNITS</u>	31
<u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u>	32
<u>LEGAL MATTERS</u>	34
<u>EXPERTS</u>	34

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the SEC) using a shelf registration process. Under this shelf registration statement, we may sell, either separately or together, common stock, preferred stock, debt securities, depository shares, purchase contracts, units and warrants.

Each time we or a selling securityholder sells securities, we or they will provide a prospectus supplement containing specific information about the terms of the securities being offered. The prospectus supplement may include a discussion of any risk factors or other special considerations that apply to those securities. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change the information in this prospectus. If there is any inconsistency between the information in this prospectus (including the information incorporated by reference herein) and any prospectus supplement, you should rely on the information in the applicable prospectus supplement. You should read both this prospectus and any prospectus supplement together with additional information described under the heading **Where You Can Find More Information**.

We have not authorized anyone to provide you with different information. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus, or any supplement to this prospectus, is accurate at any date other than the date indicated on the cover page of these documents.

References in this prospectus to Western Alliance, we, us and our are to Western Alliance Bancorporation. In this prospectus, we sometimes refer to the debt securities, common stock, preferred stock, depository shares, purchase contracts, units, warrants and trust preferred securities collectively as offered securities.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. Because our common stock trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol WAL, those materials can also be inspected and copied at the offices of that organization. Here are ways you can review and obtain copies of this information:

What is Available

Paper copies of information

Where to Get it

SEC's Public Reference Room
100 F Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20549

The New York Stock Exchange
20 Broad Street
New York, New York 10005

On-line information, free of charge

SEC's Internet website at www.sec.gov

Information about the SEC's Public Reference Room

Call the SEC at (800) SEC-0330

We have filed with the SEC a registration statement on Form S-3 under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the Securities Act), relating to the securities covered by this prospectus. The registration statement, including the attached exhibits and schedules, contains additional relevant information about us and the securities. This prospectus does not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement. Whenever a reference is made in this prospectus to a contract or other document, the reference is only a summary and you should refer to the exhibits that form a part of the registration statement for a copy of the contract or other document. You can get a copy of the registration

statement, at prescribed rates, from the sources listed

Table of Contents

above. You can also obtain these documents from us, without charge (other than exhibits, unless the exhibits are specifically incorporated by reference), by requesting them in writing or by telephone at the following address:

Western Alliance Bancorporation
One E. Washington Street, Suite 1400
Phoenix, Arizona 85004
(602) 389-3500

Attn: Dale Gibbons, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

Internet website: www.westernalliancebancorp.com

**THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON OUR WEBSITE DOES NOT
CONSTITUTE A PART OF THIS PROSPECTUS.**

INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN DOCUMENTS BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference information into this prospectus. This means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to another document filed separately with the SEC. The information incorporated by reference is considered to be a part of this prospectus, except for any information that is superseded by other information that is included in or incorporated by reference into this document.

This prospectus incorporates by reference the documents listed below that we have previously filed with the SEC. These documents contain important information about us:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, filed with the SEC on February 17, 2015 (including information incorporated by reference in the Form 10-K from our definitive proxy statement for the 2015 annual meeting of stockholders, which was filed on April 6, 2015);

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on March 9, 2015 and March 13, 2015; and

the description of our common stock contained in our registration statement on Form 8-A, filed with the SEC on June 3, 2014, including any amendment or report filed for the purpose of updating such description. We incorporate by reference any additional documents that we may file with the SEC under Section 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act (other than those furnished pursuant to Item 2.02 or Item 7.01 of Form 8-K or other information furnished to the SEC), from the date of the registration statement of which this prospectus is part until the termination of the offering of the offered securities. These documents may include annual, quarterly and current reports, as well as proxy statements. Any material that we later file with the SEC will automatically update and replace the information previously filed with the SEC. These documents are available to you without charge. See **Where You Can Find More Information.**

For purposes of this prospectus, any statement contained in a document incorporated or deemed to be incorporated herein by reference shall be deemed to be modified or superseded to the extent that a statement contained herein or in any other subsequently filed document which also is or is deemed to be incorporated herein by reference modifies or supersedes such statement in such document.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

Certain statements contained in this prospectus and the information included or incorporated by reference in it are forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, and within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and Section 21E of the

Table of Contents

Exchange Act. We intend such forward-looking statements be covered by the safe harbor provisions for forward-looking statements. All statements other than statements of historical fact are forward-looking statements for purposes of Federal and State securities laws, including statements that relate to or are dependent on estimates or assumptions relating to expectations, beliefs, projections, future plans and strategies, anticipated events or trends and similar expressions concerning matters that are not historical facts.

These forward-looking statements reflect our current views about future events and financial performance and involve certain risks, uncertainties, assumptions and changes in circumstances that may cause our actual results to differ significantly from historical results and those expressed in any forward-looking statement. Factors that may cause actual results to differ materially from those contemplated by such forward-looking statements include, among others:

financial market and economic conditions adversely effecting financial performance;

dependency on real estate and events that negatively impact real estate;

high concentration of commercial real estate, construction and development and commercial and industrial loans;

actual credit losses may exceed expected losses in the loan portfolio;

the geographic concentrations of our assets increase the risks related to local economic conditions;

sovereign credit rating downgrades;

exposure of financial instruments to certain market risks may cause volatility in earnings;

dependence on low-cost deposits;

ability to borrow from the Federal Home Loan Bank or Federal Reserve Bank;

events that further impair goodwill;

a change in the our creditworthiness;

expansion strategies may not be successful;

risk associated with the recent consolidation of our bank subsidiaries;

our ability to compete in a highly competitive market;

our ability to recruit and retain qualified employees, especially seasoned relationship bankers and senior management;

the effects of terrorist attacks or threats of war;

perpetration of internet fraud;

information security breaches;

reliance on other companies' infrastructure;

risk management policies not fully effective;

risks associated with new lines of businesses;

risk of operating in a highly regulated industry and our ability to remain in compliance;

failure to comply with state and federal banking agency laws and regulations;

changes in interest rates and increased rate competition;

exposure to environmental liabilities related to the properties to which we acquire title;

risks related to ownership and price of our common stock; and

Table of Contents

our success at managing the risks involved in the foregoing items.

Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made and we undertake no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements included or incorporated by reference in this prospectus or to update the reasons why actual results could differ from those contained in such statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, except to the extent required by federal securities laws. In light of these risks, uncertainties and assumptions, the forward-looking events discussed in this prospectus or in the incorporated documents might not occur, and you should not put undue reliance on any forward-looking statements.

ABOUT WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION

We are a bank holding company incorporated in Delaware and headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, that provides a full spectrum of deposit, lending, treasury management, and online banking products and services through our wholly owned banking subsidiary, Western Alliance Bank (WAB). WAB operates the following full-service banking divisions: Alliance Bank of Arizona in Arizona, First Independent Bank in Northern Nevada, Bank of Nevada in Southern Nevada, and Torrey Pines Bank in California. Western Alliance also serves business customers through a robust centrally managed platform of specialized financial services.

Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol WAL. Our principal executive offices are located One E. Washington Street, Suite 1400, Phoenix, Arizona 85004. Our telephone number is (602) 389-3500. Our website is www.westernalliancebancorp.com. References to our website and those of our subsidiaries are not intended to be active links and the information on such websites is not, and you must not consider the information to be, a part of this prospectus.

RISK FACTORS

We have included discussions of cautionary factors describing risks relating to our business and an investment in our securities in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, as well as the risks, uncertainties and additional information set forth in the other documents incorporated by reference in this prospectus. For a description of these reports and documents, and information about where you can find them, see Where You Can Find More Information and Incorporation of Certain Documents By Reference. Additional risks related to our securities may also be described in a prospectus supplement. Before purchasing our securities, you should carefully consider the risk factors we describe in any prospectus supplement or in any report incorporated by reference into this prospectus or such prospectus supplement. Although we discuss key risks in those risk factor descriptions, additional risks not currently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial also may impair our business. Our subsequent filings with the SEC may contain amended and updated discussions of significant risks. We cannot predict future risks or estimate the extent to which they may affect our financial performance.

RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS

Our historical ratios of earnings to fixed charges and preferred stock dividends for the periods indicated are set forth in the table below. As of December 31, 2014, we had 70,500 shares of preferred stock outstanding, all of which were issued on September 27, 2011.

The ratio of earnings to fixed charges and preferred stock dividends is computed by dividing (1) income from continuing operations before income taxes and fixed charges by (2) total fixed charges and pre-tax earnings required for preferred stock dividends. For purposes of computing these ratios:

earnings consist of income from continuing operations before income taxes, including goodwill impairment charges, securities mark-to-market gains and losses and securities impairment charges;

Table of Contents

fixed charges, excluding interest on deposits, include interest expense (other than on deposits) and the estimated portion of rental expense attributable to interest, net of income from subleases;

fixed charges, including interest on deposits, include all interest expense and the estimated portion of rental expense attributable to interest, net of income from subleases; and

pre-tax earnings required for preferred stock dividends were computed using tax rates for the applicable year.

	Year Ended December 31,				
	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010⁽¹⁾
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges					
Including interest on deposits	7.27	5.89	4.61	2.29	
Excluding interest on deposits	18.21	11.85	9.99	5.60	
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends					
Including interest on deposits	6.97	5.63	4.06	1.62	
Excluding interest on deposits	16.25	10.72	7.47	2.26	

- (1) For the year ended December 31, 2010, earnings were insufficient to cover fixed charges by a \$49.3 million deficiency including interest on deposits and by a \$7.9 million deficiency excluding interest on deposits. Including preferred stock dividend requirements, earnings were insufficient by a \$59.1 million deficiency including interest on deposits and by a \$17.8 million deficiency excluding interest on deposits.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we expect to use the net proceeds from the sale of offered securities for general corporate purposes, including:

refinancing, reduction or repayment of debt;

redeeming outstanding securities;

funding investments in, or extensions of credit to, our banking subsidiary and our other subsidiaries as regulatory capital;

financing of possible acquisitions;

expansion of the business;

investments at the holding company level; and

working capital.

The prospectus supplement with respect to an offering of offered securities may identify different or additional uses for the proceeds of that offering.

Pending the application of the net proceeds, we expect to temporarily invest the proceeds from the sale of offered securities in short-term, highly liquid obligations.

THE SECURITIES WE MAY OFFER

The descriptions of the securities contained in this prospectus, together with the applicable prospectus supplements, summarize certain material terms and provisions of the various types of securities that we may offer. The particular material terms of the securities offered by a prospectus supplement will be described in that prospectus supplement. If indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, the terms of the offered securities

Table of Contents

may differ from the terms summarized below. The prospectus supplement will also contain information, where applicable, about material U.S. federal income tax considerations relating to the offered securities, and the securities exchange, if any, on which the offered securities will be listed. The descriptions herein and in the applicable prospectus supplement do not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of the actual documents whose terms are summarized herein and in the applicable prospectus supplement, because those documents, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of the relevant securities. For more information, please review the forms of these documents, which are or will be filed with the SEC and will be available as described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information" above.

We may offer and sell from time to time, in one or more offerings, the following:

debt securities;

common stock;

preferred stock;

depository shares;

purchase contracts;

units; and/or

warrants exercisable for debt securities, common stock or preferred stock.

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

General

We may issue senior debt securities and/or subordinated debt securities, which in each case will be unsecured, direct, general obligations of Western Alliance.

The senior debt securities will rank equally with all our other unsecured and unsubordinated debt. The subordinated debt securities will be subordinate and junior in priority of payment to our senior debt securities, as described below under "Ranking Subordination of Subordinated Debt Securities" and in the prospectus supplement applicable to any subordinated debt securities that we may offer. For purposes of the descriptions in this section, we may refer to the senior debt securities and the subordinated debt securities collectively as the "debt securities." The debt securities will be effectively subordinated to the creditors and preferred equity holders of our subsidiaries.

We will issue senior debt securities under a senior debt indenture and subordinated debt securities under a separate subordinated debt indenture. Provisions relating to the issuance of debt securities may also be set forth in a

supplemental indenture to either of the indentures. For purposes of the descriptions in this section, we may refer to the senior debt indenture and the subordinated debt indenture and any related supplemental indentures, as an indenture or, collectively, as the indentures. The indentures will be qualified under and governed by the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended (the Trust Indenture Act).

Each indenture will be between us and a trustee that meets the requirements of the Trust Indenture Act. We expect that each indenture will provide that there may be more than one trustee under that indenture, each with respect to one or more series of debt securities. Any trustee under an indenture may resign or be removed with respect to one or more series of debt securities and, in that event, we may appoint a successor trustee. Except as otherwise provided in the indenture or supplemental indenture, any action permitted to be taken by a trustee may be taken by that trustee only with respect to the one or more series of debt securities for which it is trustee under the applicable indenture.

Table of Contents

The descriptions in this section relating to the debt securities and the indentures are summaries of their provisions. The summaries are not complete and are qualified in their entirety by reference to the actual indentures and debt securities and the further descriptions in the applicable prospectus supplement. A form of the senior debt indenture and a form of the subordinated debt indenture under which we may issue our senior debt securities and subordinated debt securities, respectively, and the forms of the debt securities, have been filed with the SEC as exhibits to the registration statement that includes this prospectus and will be available as described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information" above. Whenever we refer in this prospectus or in any prospectus supplement to particular sections or defined terms of an indenture, those sections or defined terms are incorporated by reference in this prospectus or in the prospectus supplement, as applicable. You should refer to the provisions of the indentures for provisions that may be important to you.

The terms and conditions described in this section are terms and conditions that apply generally to the debt securities. The particular terms of any series of debt securities will be summarized in the applicable prospectus supplement. Those terms may differ from the terms summarized below.

Except as set forth in the applicable indenture or in a supplemental indenture and described in an applicable prospectus supplement, the indentures do not limit the amount of debt securities we may issue under the indentures. We are not required to issue all of the debt securities of one series at the same time and, unless otherwise provided in the applicable indenture or supplemental indenture and described in the applicable prospectus supplement, we may, from time to time, reopen any series and issue additional debt securities under that series without the consent of the holders of the outstanding debt securities of that series. Additional notes issued in this manner will have the same terms and conditions as the outstanding debt securities of that series, except for their original issue date and issue price, and will be consolidated with, and form a single series with, the previously outstanding debt securities of that series.

Terms of Debt Securities to be Included in the Prospectus Supplement

The prospectus supplement relating to any series of debt securities that we may offer will set forth the price or prices at which the debt securities will be offered, and will contain the specific terms of the debt securities of that series. These terms may include, without limitation, the following:

the title of the debt securities and whether they are senior debt securities or subordinated debt securities;

the amount of debt securities issued and any limit on the amount that may be issued;

the price(s) (expressed as a percentage of the principal amount) at which the debt securities will be issued;

if other than the principal amount of those debt securities, the portion of the principal amount payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity of those debt securities;

the maturity date or dates, or the method for determining the maturity date or dates, on which the principal of the debt securities will be payable and any rights of extension;

the rate or rates, which may be fixed or variable, or the method of determining the rate or rates at which the debt securities will bear interest, if any;

the date or dates from which any interest will accrue and the date or dates on which any interest will be payable, the regular related record dates and whether we may elect to extend or defer such interest payment dates;

the place or places where payments will be payable, where the debt securities may be surrendered for registration of transfer or exchange and where notices or demands to or upon us may be served;

the period or periods within which, the price or prices at which and the other terms and conditions upon which the debt securities may be redeemed, in whole or in part, at our option, if we are to have such an option;

Table of Contents

our obligation, if any, to redeem, repay or purchase the debt securities pursuant to any sinking fund or analogous provision or at the option of a holder of the debt securities, and the period or periods within which, or the date and dates on which, the price or prices at which and the other terms and conditions upon which the debt securities will be redeemed, repaid or purchased, in whole or in part, pursuant to that obligation;

the currency or currencies in which the debt securities may be purchased, are denominated and are payable, which may be a foreign currency or units of two or more foreign currencies or a composite currency or currencies, and the related terms and conditions, including whether we or the holders of any such debt securities may elect to receive payments in respect of such debt securities in a currency or currency unit other than that in which such debt securities are stated to be payable;

whether the amount of payments of principal of and premium, if any, or interest, if any, on the debt securities may be determined with reference to an index, formula or other method, which index, formula or method may, but need not be, based on a currency, currencies, currency unit or units or composite currency or currencies or with reference to changes in prices of particular securities or commodities, and the manner in which the amounts are to be determined;

any additions to, modifications of or deletions from the terms of the debt securities with respect to events of default, amendments, merger, consolidation and sale or covenants set forth in the applicable indenture;

whether the debt securities will be issued in certificated or book-entry form;

whether the debt securities will be in registered or bearer form or both and, if in registered form, their denominations, if other than \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof, and, if in bearer form, their denominations, if other than \$5,000, and the related terms and conditions;

if the debt securities will be issuable only in global form, the depository or its nominee with respect to the debt securities and the circumstances under which the global security may be registered for transfer or exchange in the name of a person other than the depository or its nominee;

the applicability, if any, of the defeasance and covenant defeasance provisions of the indenture and any additional or different terms on which the series of debt securities may be defeased;

whether and the extent to which the debt securities will be guaranteed, any guarantors and the form of any guarantee;

whether the debt securities can be converted into or exchanged for our other securities, and the related terms and conditions;

in the case of subordinated debt securities, provisions relating to any modification of the subordination provisions described elsewhere in this prospectus;

whether the debt securities will be sold as part of units consisting of debt securities and other securities;

if the debt securities are to be issued upon the exercise of warrants, the time, manner and place for the debt securities to be authenticated and delivered;

any trustee, depository, authenticating agent, paying agent, transfer agent, registrar or other agent with respect to the debt securities; and

any other terms of the debt securities.

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities will not be listed on any securities exchange.

We may offer and sell our debt securities at a substantial discount below their stated principal amount. These debt securities may be original issue discount securities, which means that less than the entire principal

Table of Contents

amount of the original issue discount securities will be payable upon declaration of acceleration of their maturity. Special federal income tax, accounting and other considerations applicable to original issue discount securities will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

We may issue debt securities with a fixed interest rate or a floating interest rate. Any material federal income tax considerations applicable to any discounted debt securities or to debt securities issued at par that are treated as having been issued at a discount for federal income tax purposes will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Except as set forth in the applicable indenture or in a supplemental indenture, the debt securities will not contain any provisions that would limit our ability to incur indebtedness or that would afford holders of debt securities protection in the event of a highly leveraged or similar transaction involving us. The debt securities may contain provisions that would afford debt security holders protection in the event of a change of control. You should refer to the applicable prospectus supplement for information with respect to any deletions from, modifications of or additions to the events of default or covenants that are described below, including any addition of a covenant or other provision providing event risk or similar protection.

For purposes of the descriptions in this section:

subsidiary means a corporation or a partnership or a limited liability company a majority of the outstanding voting stock or partnership or membership interests, as the case may be, of which is owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by us or by one or more of our other subsidiaries. For the purposes of this definition, *voting stock* means stock having voting power for the election of directors, or trustees, as the case may be, whether at all times or only so long as no senior class of stock has voting power by reason of any contingency; and

significant subsidiary means any of our subsidiaries that is a *significant subsidiary*, within the meaning of Regulation S-X promulgated by the SEC under the Securities Act.

Ranking

Senior Debt Securities

Payment of the principal of and premium, if any, and interest on debt securities we issue under the senior debt indenture will rank equally with all of our unsecured and unsubordinated debt.

Subordination of Subordinated Debt Securities

To the extent provided in the subordinated debt indenture and any supplemental indenture, and as described in the prospectus supplement describing the applicable series of subordinated debt securities, the payment of the principal of and premium, if any, and interest on any subordinated debt securities, including amounts payable on any redemption or repurchase, will be subordinated in right of payment and junior to senior debt, which is defined below. If there is a distribution to our creditors in a liquidation or dissolution of us, or in a bankruptcy, reorganization, insolvency, receivership or similar proceeding relating to us, the holders of senior debt will first be entitled to receive payment in full of all amounts due on the senior debt (or provision shall be made for such payment in cash) before any payments may be made on the subordinated debt securities. Because of this subordination, our general creditors may recover more, ratably, than holders of subordinated debt securities in the event of a distribution of assets upon insolvency.

The supplemental indenture will set forth the terms and conditions under which, if any, we will not be permitted to pay principal, premium, if any, or interest on the related subordinated debt securities upon the occurrence of an event of default or other circumstances arising under or with respect to senior debt.

Table of Contents

The indentures will place no limitation on the amount of senior debt that we may incur. We expect to incur from time to time additional indebtedness constituting senior debt, which may include indebtedness that is senior to the subordinated debt securities but subordinate to our other obligations.

Senior debt means the principal of, and premium, if any, and interest, including interest accruing after the commencement of any bankruptcy proceeding relating to us, on, or substantially similar payments we will make in respect of the following categories of debt, whether that debt is outstanding at the date of execution of the applicable indenture or thereafter incurred, created or assumed:

our other indebtedness evidenced by notes, debentures, or bonds or other securities issued under the provisions of any indenture, fiscal agency agreement, note purchase agreement or other agreement, including the senior debt securities that may be offered by means of this prospectus and one or more prospectus supplements;

our indebtedness for money borrowed or represented by purchase-money obligations, as defined below;

our obligations as lessee under leases of property either made as part of a sale and leaseback transaction to which we are a party or otherwise;

indebtedness, obligations and liabilities of others in respect of which we are liable contingently or otherwise to pay or advance money or property or as guarantor, endorser or otherwise or which we have agreed to purchase or otherwise acquire and indebtedness of partnerships and joint ventures which is included in our consolidated financial statements;

reimbursement and other obligations relating to letters of credit, bankers' acceptances and similar obligations;

obligations under various hedging arrangements and agreements, including interest rate and currency hedging agreements;

all our obligations issued or assumed as the deferred purchase price of property or services, but excluding trade accounts payable and accrued liabilities arising in the ordinary course of business; and

deferrals, renewals or extensions of any of the indebtedness or obligations described above.

However, senior debt excludes:

any indebtedness, obligation or liability referred to above as to which, in the instrument creating or evidencing that indebtedness, obligation or liability, it is expressly provided that the indebtedness, obligation

or liability is not senior in right of payment to the subordinated debt securities or ranks equally with the subordinated debt securities;

any indebtedness, obligation or liability which is subordinated to our indebtedness to substantially the same extent as or to a greater extent than the subordinated debt securities are subordinated; and

unless expressly provided in the terms thereof, any of our other indebtedness to our subsidiaries.

As used above, the term purchase money obligations means indebtedness, obligations or guarantees evidenced by a note, debenture, bond or other instrument, whether or not secured by a lien or other security interest, and any deferred obligation for the payment of the purchase price of property but excluding indebtedness or obligations for which recourse is limited to the property purchased, issued or assumed as all or a part of the consideration for the acquisition of property or services, whether by purchase, merger, consolidation or otherwise, but does not include any trade accounts payable. There will not be any restrictions in the subordinated indenture relating to subordinated debt securities upon the creation of additional senior debt.

The applicable prospectus supplement may further describe the provisions, if any, applicable to the subordination of the subordinated debt securities of a particular series. The applicable prospectus supplement or

Table of Contents

the information incorporated by reference in the applicable prospectus supplement or in this prospectus will describe as of a recent date the approximate amount of our senior debt outstanding as to which the subordinated debt securities of that series will be subordinated.

Structural Subordination

Because we are a holding company, our cash flows and consequent ability to service our obligations, including our debt securities, are dependent on distributions and other payments of earnings and other funds by our subsidiaries to us. The payment of dividends and other distributions by our subsidiaries is contingent on their earnings and is subject to the requirements of federal banking regulations and other restrictions. In addition, the debt securities will be structurally subordinated to all indebtedness and other liabilities of our subsidiaries, since our right to receive any assets of its subsidiaries upon their liquidation or reorganization, and the consequent right of the holders of the debt securities to participate in those assets, will be effectively subordinated to the claims of that subsidiary's creditors. If we are recognized as a creditor of that subsidiary, our claims would still be subordinate to any security interest in the assets of that subsidiary and any indebtedness of that subsidiary senior to that held by us. Claims from creditors (other than us), on subsidiaries may include long-term and medium-term debt and substantial obligations related to deposit liabilities, federal funds purchased, securities sold under repurchase agreements and other short-term borrowings. Any capital loans that we make to our non-banking subsidiaries would be subordinate in right of payment to deposits and to other indebtedness of WAB or our non-banking subsidiaries.

Conversion or Exchange of Debt Securities

The applicable prospectus supplement will set forth the terms, if any, on which a series of debt securities may be converted into or exchanged for our other securities. These terms will include whether conversion or exchange is mandatory, or is at our option or at the option of the holder. We will also describe in the applicable prospectus supplement how we will calculate the number of securities that holders of debt securities would receive if they were to convert or exchange their debt securities, the conversion price and other terms related to conversion and any anti-dilution protections.

Redemption of Securities

We may redeem the debt securities at any time, in whole or in part, at the prescribed redemption price, at the times and on the terms described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

From and after notice has been given as provided in the indentures, if we have made available funds for the redemption of any debt securities called for redemption on the applicable redemption date, the debt securities will cease to bear interest on the date fixed for the redemption specified in the notice, and the only right of the holders of the debt securities will be to receive payment of the redemption price.

Notice of any optional redemption by us of any debt securities is required to be given to holders at their addresses, as shown in the security register. The notice of redemption will be required to specify, among other items, the redemption price and the principal amount of the debt securities held by the holder to be redeemed.

If we elect to redeem debt securities, we will be required to notify the trustee of the aggregate principal amount of debt securities to be redeemed and the redemption date. If fewer than all the debt securities are to be redeemed, the trustee is required to select the debt securities to be redeemed equally, by lot or in a manner it deems fair and appropriate.

Table of Contents

Denomination, Interest, Registration and Transfer

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will issue the debt securities (i) in denominations of \$1,000 or integral multiples of \$1,000 if the debt securities are in registered form, and (ii) in denominations of \$5,000 if the debt securities are in bearer form.

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will pay the principal of, and applicable premium, if any, and interest on any series of debt securities at the corporate trust office of the trustee, the address of which will be stated in the applicable prospectus supplement. At our option, we may pay interest by check mailed to the address of the person entitled to the interest payment as it appears in the register for the applicable debt securities or by wire transfer of funds to that person at an account maintained within the United States.

Any defaulted interest, which means interest not punctually paid or duly provided for on any interest payment date with respect to a debt security, will immediately cease to be payable to the registered holder on the applicable regular record date by virtue of his having been the registered holder on such date. We may pay defaulted interest either to the person in whose name the debt security is registered at the close of business on a special record date for the payment of the defaulted interest to be fixed by the trustee, notice of which is to be given to the holder of the debt security not less than ten days before the special record date, or at any time in any other lawful manner, all as more completely described in the applicable indenture or supplemental indenture.

Subject to limitations imposed upon debt securities issued in book-entry form, the holder may exchange debt securities of any series for other debt securities of the same series and of a like aggregate principal amount and tenor of different authorized denominations upon surrender of the debt securities at the corporate trust office of the applicable trustee. In addition, subject to limitations imposed upon debt securities issued in book-entry form, the holder may surrender debt securities of any series for registration of transfer or exchange at the corporate trust office of the applicable trustee. Every debt security surrendered for registration of transfer or exchange must be duly endorsed or accompanied by a written instrument of transfer. No service charge will be imposed for any registration of transfer or exchange of any debt securities, but we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge payable in connection with any registration of transfer or exchange of any debt securities. If the applicable prospectus supplement refers to any transfer agent, in addition to the applicable trustee, initially designated by us with respect to any series of debt securities, we may at any time rescind the designation of that transfer agent or approve a change in the location through which any transfer agent acts, except that we will be required to maintain a transfer agent in each place of payment for that series. We may at any time designate additional transfer agents with respect to any series of debt securities.

If we redeem the debt securities of any series, neither we nor any trustee will be required to:

issue, register the transfer of, or exchange debt securities of any series during a period beginning at the opening of business 15 days before any selection of debt securities of that series to be redeemed and ending at the close of business on the day of mailing of the relevant notice of redemption;

register the transfer of, or exchange any debt security, or portion of any debt security, called for redemption, except the unredeemed portion of any debt security being redeemed in part; or

issue, register the transfer of, or exchange any debt security that has been surrendered for repayment at the option of the holder, except the portion, if any, of the debt security not to be repaid.

Global Securities

We may issue the debt securities of a series in whole or in part in the form of one or more global securities to be deposited with, or on behalf of, a depository or with a nominee for a depository identified in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to that series. We may issue global securities in either registered or bearer form and in either temporary or permanent form. The specific terms of the depository arrangement with respect to a series of debt securities will be described in the prospectus supplement relating to that series.

Table of Contents

Our obligations with respect to the debt securities, as well as the obligations of the applicable trustee, run only to persons who are registered holders of debt securities. For example, once we make payment to the registered holder, we have no further responsibility for that payment even if the recipient is legally required to pass the payment along to an individual investor but fails to do so. As an indirect holder, an investor's rights relating to a global security will be governed by the account rules of the investor's financial institution and of the depositary, as well as general laws relating to transfers of debt securities.

An investor should be aware that when debt securities are issued in the form of global securities:

the investor cannot have debt securities registered in his or her own name;

the investor cannot receive physical certificates for his or her debt securities;

the investor must look to his or her bank or brokerage firm for payments on the debt securities and protection of his or her legal rights relating to the debt securities;

the investor may not be able to sell interests in the debt securities to some insurance or other institutions that are required by law to hold the physical certificates of debt that they own;

the depositary's policies will govern payments, transfers, exchanges and other matters relating to the investor's interest in the global security; and

the depositary will usually require that interests in a global security be purchased or sold within its system using same-day funds.

The applicable prospectus supplement for a series of debt securities will list the special situations, if any, in which a global security will terminate and interests in the global security will be exchanged for physical certificates representing debt securities. After that exchange, the investor may choose whether to hold debt securities directly or indirectly through an account at the investor's bank or brokerage firm. In that event, investors must consult their banks or brokers to find out how to have their interests in debt securities transferred to their own names so that they may become direct holders. When a global security terminates, the depositary, and not us or one of the trustees, is responsible for deciding the names of the institutions that will be the initial direct holders.

Merger, Consolidation or Sale of Assets

We will not be permitted to consolidate with or merge into any other entity, or sell, lease, transfer or convey all or substantially all of our properties and assets, either in one transaction or a series of transactions, to any other entity and no other entity will consolidate with or merge into us, or sell, lease, transfer or convey all or substantially all of its properties and assets to us unless:

(1) either:

we are the continuing entity; or

the successor entity, if other than us, formed by or resulting from any consolidation or merger, or which has received the transfer of our assets, expressly assumes payment of the principal of, and premium, if any, and interest on all of the outstanding debt securities and the due and punctual performance and observance of all of the covenants and conditions contained in the indentures; and

(2) immediately after giving effect to the transaction and treating any indebtedness that becomes our obligation or the obligation of any of our subsidiaries as a result of that transaction as having been incurred by us or our subsidiary at the time of the transaction, no event of default under the indentures or supplemental indentures, and no event which, after notice or the lapse of time, or both, would become an event of default, will have occurred and be continuing; *provided*, that the conditions described in (1) and (2) above will not apply to the direct or indirect transfer of the stock, assets or liabilities of any of our subsidiaries to another of our direct or indirect subsidiaries.

Table of Contents

Except as provided in this prospectus or as may otherwise be provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, the indenture and the terms of the debt securities will not contain any event risks or similar covenants that are intended to afford protection to holders of any debt securities in the event of a merger, a highly leveraged transaction or other significant corporate event involving us or our subsidiaries, whether or not resulting in a change of control, which may adversely affect holders of the debt securities.

Additional Covenants and/or Modifications to the Covenant Described Above

Any additional covenants and/or modifications to the covenants described above with respect to any series of debt securities, including any covenants relating to limitations on incurrence of indebtedness or other financial covenants, will be set forth in the applicable indenture or supplemental indenture and described in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to that series of debt securities.

Unless the applicable prospectus supplement indicates otherwise, the subordinated debt indenture does not contain any other provision which restricts us from, among other things:

incurring or becoming liable on any secured or unsecured senior indebtedness or general obligations; or

paying dividends or making other distributions on our capital stock; or

purchasing or redeeming our capital stock; or

creating any liens on our property for any purpose.

Events of Default, Waiver and Notice

Events of Default

The events of default with respect to any series of debt securities issued under it, subject to any modifications or deletions provided in any supplemental indenture with respect to any specific series of debt securities, include the following events:

failure to pay any installment of interest or any additional amounts payable on any debt security of the series for 30 days;

failure to pay principal of, or premium, if any, on, any debt security of the series when due, whether at maturity, upon redemption, by declaration or acceleration of maturity or otherwise;

default in making any sinking fund payment (if any) when due, for any debt security of the series;

default in the performance or breach of any of our other covenants or warranties contained in the applicable indenture, other than a covenant added to the indenture solely for the benefit of any other series of debt securities issued under that indenture, continued for 90 days after written notice as provided in the applicable indenture;

specific events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization, or court appointment of a receiver, liquidator or trustee of us or any significant subsidiary or either of our property; and

any other event of default provided with respect to a particular series of debt securities.

If an event of default under any indenture with respect to debt securities of any series at the time outstanding occurs and is continuing, then in every case other than in the case of specific events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization, or court appointment of a receiver, liquidator or trustee of us or any significant subsidiary or either of our property, in which case acceleration will be automatic, the applicable trustee or the holders of not less than 25% of the principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series will have the right to declare the principal amount, or, if the debt securities of that series are original issue discount securities or indexed securities, the portion of the principal amount as may be specified in the terms of that series, of all the

Table of Contents

debt securities of that series to be due and payable immediately by written notice to us, and to the applicable trustee if given by the holders. At any time after a declaration of acceleration has been made with respect to debt securities of a series, or of all debt securities then outstanding under any indenture, as the case may be, but before a judgment or decree for payment of the money due has been obtained by the applicable trustee, however, the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series, or of all debt securities then outstanding under the applicable indenture, as the case may be, may annul the declaration of acceleration and waive any default in respect of those debt securities if:

we have deposited with the applicable trustee all required payments due otherwise than by acceleration of the principal of, and premium, if any, and interest on the debt securities of that series, or of all debt securities then outstanding under the applicable indenture, as the case may be, plus specified fees, expenses, disbursements and advances of the applicable trustee; and

all events of default, other than the non-payment of all or a specified portion of the accelerated principal, with respect to debt securities of that series, or of all debt securities then outstanding under the applicable indenture, as the case may be, have been cured or waived as provided in the applicable indenture.

Waiver

Each indenture also will provide that the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series, or of all debt securities then outstanding under the applicable indenture, as the case may be, may waive any past default with respect to that series and its consequences, except a default:

in the payment of the principal of, or premium, if any, or interest on any debt security of that series; or

in respect of a covenant or provision contained in the applicable indenture that, by the terms of that indenture, cannot be modified or amended without the consent of each affected holder of an outstanding debt security.

Notice

Each trustee will be required to give notice to the holders of the applicable debt securities within 90 days of a default under the applicable indenture unless the default has been cured or waived; but the trustee may withhold notice of any default, except a default in the payment of the principal of, or premium, if any, or interest on the debt securities or in the payment of any sinking fund installment in respect of the debt securities, if specified responsible officers of the trustee consider the withholding to be in the interest of the holders.

The holders of debt securities of any series may not institute any proceedings, judicial or otherwise, with respect to the indentures or for any remedy under the indentures, except in the case of failure of the applicable trustee, for 60 days, to act after the trustee has received a written request to institute proceedings in respect of an event of default from the holders of not less than 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series, as well as an offer of indemnity reasonably satisfactory to the trustee, and provided that no direction inconsistent with such written request has been given to the trustee during such 60-day period by the holders of a majority of the outstanding debt securities of that series. However, any holder of debt securities is not prohibited from instituting suit for the enforcement of

payment of the principal of, and premium, if any, and interest on the debt securities at their respective due dates.

Subject to the trustee's duties in case of default, no trustee will be under any obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under an indenture at the request or direction of any holders of any series of debt securities then outstanding under that indenture, unless the holders offer to the trustee reasonable security or indemnity. Subject to such provisions for the indemnification of the trustee, the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series, or of all debt securities then outstanding under an indenture, as the case may be, will have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any

Table of Contents

proceeding for any remedy available to the applicable trustee, or of exercising any trust or power conferred upon the trustee. A trustee may refuse, however, to follow any direction that is in conflict with any law or the applicable indenture that may involve the trustee in personal liability or may be unduly prejudicial to the holders of debt securities of that series not joining in the direction.

Within 180 days after the end of each fiscal year, we will be required to deliver to each trustee a certificate, signed by one of several specified officers, stating whether or not that officer has knowledge of any default under the applicable indenture and, if so, specifying each default and the nature and status of the default.

Modification of the Indentures

Except as otherwise specifically provided in the applicable indenture, with the consent of the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of all outstanding debt securities issued under that indenture that are affected by the modification or amendment, we may enter into supplemental indentures with the trustee for the purpose of adding any provisions to or changing in any manner or eliminating any of the provisions of such indenture or of modifying in any manner the rights of the holders under debt securities issued under such indenture. However, no modification or amendment may, without the consent of the holder of each debt security affected by the modification or amendment:

except as described in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to such debt security:

extend the stated maturity of the principal of, or any installment of interest or any additional amounts, or the premium, if any, on, any debt security;

reduce the principal amount of, or the rate or amount of interest on, or change the manner of calculating the rate, or any premium payable on redemption of, any debt security, or reduce the amount of principal of an original issue discount security that would be due and payable upon declaration of acceleration of its maturity or would be provable in bankruptcy, or adversely affect any right of repayment of the holder of any debt security;

extend the time of payment of interest on any debt security or any additional amounts;

change any of the conversion, exchange or redemption provisions of any debt security;

change the place of payment, or the coin or currency for payment, of principal, or premium, if any, including any amount in respect of original issue discount or interest on any debt security;

impair the right to institute suit for the enforcement of any payment on or with respect to any debt security or for the conversion or exchange of any debt security in accordance with its terms;

release any guarantors from their guarantees of the debt securities, or, except as contemplated in any supplemental indenture, make any change in a guarantee of a debt security that would adversely affect the interests of the holders of those debt securities; and

in the case of subordinated debt securities, modify the ranking or priority of the securities;

reduce the percentage of outstanding debt securities of any series necessary to modify or amend the applicable indenture, to waive compliance with specific provisions of or certain defaults and consequences under the applicable indenture, or to reduce the quorum or voting requirements set forth in the applicable indenture; or

modify any of the provisions relating to the waiver of specific past defaults or specific covenants, except to increase the required percentage to effect that action or to provide that specific other provisions may not be modified or waived without the consent of the holder of that debt security.

The holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series affected by the modification or amendment will have the right to waive compliance by us with specific covenants in the indenture.

Table of Contents

We and the respective trustee may modify and amend an indenture without the consent of any holder of debt securities for any of the following purposes:

to evidence the succession of another person to us as obligor under the indenture or to evidence the addition or release of any guarantor in accordance with the indenture or any supplemental indenture;

to add to our covenants for the benefit of the holders of all or any series of debt securities or to surrender any right or power conferred upon us in the indenture;

to add events of default for the benefit of the holders of all or any series of debt securities;

to add or change any provisions of the indenture to facilitate the issuance of, or to liberalize specific terms of, debt securities in bearer form, or to permit or facilitate the issuance of debt securities in uncertificated form, provided that the action will not adversely affect the interests of the holders of the debt securities of any series in any material respect;

to change or eliminate any provisions of an indenture, if the change or elimination becomes effective only when there are no debt securities outstanding of any series created prior to the change or elimination that are entitled to the benefit of the changed or eliminated provision;

to secure or provide for the guarantee of the debt securities;

to establish the form or terms of debt securities of any series and any related coupons;

to provide for the acceptance of appointment by a successor trustee or facilitate the administration of the trusts under an indenture by more than one trustee;

to cure any ambiguity or correct any inconsistency in an indenture provided that the cure or correction does not adversely affect the holders of the debt securities;

to supplement any of the provisions of an indenture to the extent necessary to permit or facilitate defeasance and discharge of any series of debt securities, provided that the supplement does not adversely affect the interests of the holders of the debt securities of any series in any material respect;

to make provisions with respect to the conversion or exchange terms and conditions applicable to the debt securities of any series;

to add to, delete from or revise the conditions, limitations or restrictions on issue, authentication and delivery of debt securities;

to conform any provision in an indenture to the requirements of the Trust Indenture Act; or

to make any change that does not adversely affect the legal rights under an indenture of any holder of debt securities of any series issued under that indenture.

In determining whether the holders of the requisite principal amount of outstanding debt securities of a series have given any request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent or waiver under the indenture or whether a quorum is present at a meeting of holders of debt securities:

the principal amount of an original issue discount security that is deemed to be outstanding will be the amount of the principal of that original issue discount security that would be due and payable as of the date of the determination upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity of that original issue discount security;

the principal amount of any debt security denominated in a foreign currency that is deemed outstanding will be the U.S. dollar equivalent, determined on the issue date for that debt security, of the principal amount, or, in the case of an original issue discount security, the U.S. dollar equivalent on the issue date of that debt security of the amount determined as provided in the immediately preceding bullet point;

Table of Contents

the principal amount of an indexed security that is deemed outstanding will be the principal face amount of the indexed security at original issuance, unless otherwise provided with respect to the indexed security under the applicable indenture; and

debt securities owned by us or any other obligor upon the debt securities or any of our affiliates or of any other obligor are to be disregarded.

Discharge, Defeasance and Covenant Defeasance

Discharge

We may be permitted under the applicable indenture to discharge specific obligations to holders of any series of debt securities (1) that have not already been delivered to the applicable trustee for cancellation and (2) that either have become due and payable or will, within one year, become due and payable or scheduled for redemption, by irrevocably depositing with the applicable trustee, in trust, money or funds certified to be sufficient to pay when due, whether at maturity, upon redemption or otherwise, the principal of, and premium, if any, on and interest on the debt securities.

Defeasance and Covenant Defeasance

If the provisions of the applicable indenture relating to defeasance and covenant defeasance are made applicable to the debt securities of or within any series, we may elect either:

defeasance, which means we elect to defease and be discharged from any and all obligations with respect to the debt securities, except for the obligations to register the transfer or exchange of the debt securities, to replace temporary or mutilated, destroyed, lost or stolen debt securities, to maintain an office or agency in respect of the debt securities and to hold moneys for payment in trust; or

covenant defeasance, which means we elect to be released from our obligations with respect to the debt securities under specified sections of the applicable indenture relating to covenants, as described in the applicable prospectus supplement and any omission to comply with its obligations will not constitute an event of default with respect to the debt securities;

in either case upon the irrevocable deposit by us with the applicable trustee, in trust, of an amount, in currency or currencies or government obligations, or both, sufficient without reinvestment to make scheduled payments of the principal of, and premium, if any, and interest on the debt securities, when due, whether at maturity, upon redemption or otherwise, and any mandatory sinking fund or analogous payments.

A trust will only be permitted to be established if, among other things:

we have delivered to the applicable trustee an opinion of counsel, as specified in the applicable indenture, to the effect that the holders of the debt securities will not recognize income, gain or loss for federal income tax purposes as a result of the defeasance or covenant defeasance and will be subject to federal income tax on the same amounts, in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the defeasance

or covenant defeasance had not occurred, and the opinion of counsel, in the case of defeasance, will be required to refer to and be based upon a ruling of the Internal Revenue Service or a change in applicable U.S. federal income tax law occurring after the date of the indenture;

no event of default or any event which after notice or lapse of time or both would be an event of default has occurred;

the defeasance or covenant defeasance will not result in a breach or violation of, or constitute a default under, the applicable indenture or any other material agreement or instrument to which we are a party or by which we are bound;

certain other provisions set forth in the applicable indenture are met; and

Table of Contents

we will have delivered to the trustee an officers certificate and an opinion of counsel, each stating that all conditions precedent to the defeasance or covenant defeasance have been complied with

In general, if we elect covenant defeasance with respect to any debt securities and payments on those debt securities are declared due and payable because of the occurrence of an event of default, the amount of money and/or government obligations on deposit with the applicable trustee would be sufficient to pay amounts due on those debt securities at the time of their stated maturity, but may not be sufficient to pay amounts due on those debt securities at the time of the acceleration resulting from the event of default. In that case, we would remain liable to make payment of the amounts due on the debt securities at the time of acceleration.

The applicable prospectus supplement may further describe the provisions, if any, permitting defeasance or covenant defeasance, including any modifications to the provisions described above, with respect to the debt securities of or within a particular series

Regarding the Trustees

We will designate the trustee under the senior and subordinated debt indentures in the applicable prospectus supplement. From time to time, we may enter into banking or other relationships with any of such trustees or their affiliates.

There may be more than one trustee under each indenture, each with respect to one or more series of debt securities. Any trustee may resign or be removed with respect to one or more series of debt securities, and a successor trustee may be appointed to act with respect to such series.

If two or more persons are acting as trustee with respect to different series of debt securities, each trustee will be a trustee of a trust under the indenture separate from the trust administered by any other such trustee. Except as otherwise indicated in this prospectus, any action to be taken by the trustee may be taken by each such trustee with respect to, and only with respect to, the one or more series of debt securities for which it is trustee under the indenture.

Governing Law

The senior debt securities, the subordinated debt securities and the related indentures will be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the internal laws of the State of New York.

DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK

The following description is a general summary of the terms of our common stock. The description below does not purport to be complete and is subject to and qualified in its entirety by reference to our certificate of incorporation and bylaws. The description herein does not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws because they, and not the summary, define the rights of holders of shares of our common stock. You can obtain copies of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws by following the directions under the heading **Where You Can Find More Information**.

General

Our certificate of incorporation provides the authority to issue 200,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.0001 per share. At May 1, 2015, there were 89,191,733 shares of common stock issued and outstanding and we had outstanding stock options granted to directors, officers and other employees for 147,455 shares of our common stock.

Table of Contents

Each share of our common stock has the same relative rights and is identical in all respects to each other share of our common stock. Our common stock is non-withdrawable capital, is not of an insurable type and is not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other governmental entity.

Voting Rights

Holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote per share on each matter properly submitted to stockholders for their vote, including the election of directors. Holders of our common stock do not have the right to cumulate their votes for the election of directors, which means that the holders of more than 50% of the shares of common stock voting for the election of directors can elect 100% of the directors standing for election at any meeting if they choose to do so. In that event, the holders of the remaining shares voting for the election of directors will not be able to elect any person or persons to our board of directors at that meeting. Generally, in matters other than the election of directors and business combinations and other extraordinary transactions, the affirmative vote of the majority of shares present and entitled to vote on the subject matter constitutes the act of the stockholders. A nominee to our board of directors will be elected, in uncontested elections (as defined in our bylaws), if the votes cast for such nominee's election exceed the votes cast against such nominee's election. In all director elections other than uncontested elections, the vote standard will continue to be a plurality of votes cast, and stockholders shall not be permitted to vote against any nominee for director.

Liquidation Rights

The holders of our common stock and the holders of any class or series of stock entitled to participate with the holders of our common stock as to the distribution of assets in the event of any liquidation, dissolution or winding-up of us, whether voluntary or involuntary, will become entitled to participate equally in the distribution of any of our assets remaining after we have paid, or provided for the payment of, all of our debts and liabilities and after we have paid, or set aside for payment, to the holders of any class of stock having preference over the common stock in the event of liquidation, dissolution or winding-up, the full preferential amounts, if any, to which they are entitled.

Dividends

The holders of our common stock and any class or series of stock entitled to participate with the holders of our common stock are entitled to receive dividends declared by our board of directors out of any assets legally available for distribution. The board may declare dividends out of surplus, or if no surplus exists, out of net profits for the fiscal year in which the dividend is declared and/or the preceding fiscal year, only if the amount of capital is greater than or equal to the aggregate amount of the capital represented by the issued and outstanding stock of all classes having a preference upon the distribution of assets. The terms and conditions of other securities we issue may restrict our ability to pay dividends to holders of our common stock. In addition, as a holding company, our main source of funds to pay dividends is distributions from our subsidiaries and, therefore, our ability to pay distributions is affected by the ability of our subsidiaries to pay dividends. The ability of our bank subsidiary, and our ability, to pay dividends in the future is, and could in the future be further, influenced by bank regulatory requirements and capital guidelines.

Miscellaneous

The holders of our common stock have no preemptive or conversion rights for any shares that may be issued. Our common stock is not subject to additional calls or assessments, and all shares of our common stock currently outstanding are fully paid and non-assessable.

Table of Contents

Anti-Takeover Effects of Provisions of our Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws and Delaware Law

Some provisions of Delaware law and our certificate of incorporation and bylaws contain provisions that could make it more difficult to (1) acquire us by means of a tender offer, proxy contest or otherwise or (2) remove our incumbent officers and directors. These provisions, summarized below, are intended to encourage persons seeking to acquire control of us to first negotiate with our board of directors. These provisions also serve to discourage hostile takeover practices and inadequate takeover bids.

Undesignated Preferred Stock

Our board of directors has the ability to authorize undesignated preferred stock, which allows the board of directors to issue preferred stock with voting or other rights or preferences that could impede the success of any unsolicited attempt to change control of our company. This ability may have the effect of deferring hostile takeovers or delaying changes in control or management of our company.

Special Stockholders Meetings and Advanced Notice Requirements for Stockholder Proposals

Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws provide that a special meeting of stockholders may be called only by our board of directors, the chairman of the board, or by our chief executive officer or president. In addition, our bylaws require advance notice procedures for stockholder proposals to be brought before an annual meeting of the stockholders, including the nomination of directors. Stockholders at an annual meeting may only consider the proposals specified in the notice of meeting or brought before the meeting by or at the direction of the board, or by a stockholder of record on the record date for the meeting who (1) is entitled to vote at the meeting, (2) has delivered a timely written notice in proper form to our secretary of the stockholder's intention to bring such business before the meeting, (3) attends (or has a qualified representative attend) the stockholder meeting and (4) has otherwise complied with the provisions of our Bylaws and applicable law. These provisions could have the effect of delaying any stockholder actions until the next stockholder meeting, even if they are favored by the holders of a majority of our outstanding voting stock.

No Action by Written Consent

Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws do not permit stockholders to act by written consent in lieu of a meeting.

Election and Removal of Directors

Our certificate of incorporation provides for the division of our board of directors into three classes of directors, each class as nearly as equal as possible, with each serving staggered, three-year terms. Once elected, directors may be removed only for cause by the holders of a majority of shares then entitled to vote in an election of directors. In addition, our certificate of incorporation and bylaws provide that any vacancies on the board of directors may be filled only by a majority of the remaining directors. This system of electing and removing directors and filling vacancies may tend to discourage a third party from making a tender offer or otherwise attempting to obtain control of us because it generally makes it more difficult for stockholders to replace a majority of the directors.

Amendment of Certain Provisions of our Organizational Documents

Any amendment to our certificate of incorporation must be approved by our board of directors and a majority of the outstanding shares of each class of shares entitled to vote thereon at a duly called annual or special meeting; provided, that in addition to any vote of any class of shares required by law or the certificate of incorporation, the affirmative

vote of holders of at least a majority of the voting power of all of the then outstanding shares of our capital stock entitled to vote generally in the election of directors, voting together as a single class, is required to amend certain of the provisions contained in the certificate of incorporation regarding

Table of Contents

stockholder actions, classification of directors, removal of directors, filling of director vacancies, bylaw amendments, limitation of liability of directors, the exclusive forum for certain litigation, and amendments to the certificate of incorporation. Our bylaws may be amended by the affirmative vote of a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present or by the affirmative vote of the holders of at least 66-2/3% of the voting power of all of the shares of capital stock issued and outstanding and entitled to vote in any election of directors, voting as a single class.

Business Combinations

We have not opted out of Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporation Law, an anti-takeover law, and are therefore subject to its provisions. In general, Section 203 prohibits a publicly held Delaware corporation from engaging in a business combination, such as a merger, with a person or group owning 15% or more of the corporation's outstanding voting stock, referred to as an interested stockholder under Section 203, for a period of three years following the date the person became an interested stockholder, unless (with certain exceptions) the business combination or the transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder is approved in a prescribed manner.

These and other provisions of Delaware law and our certificate of incorporation and bylaws could have the effect of discouraging others from attempting hostile takeovers and, as a consequence, they may also inhibit temporary fluctuations in the market price of our common stock that often result from actual or rumored hostile takeover attempts. Such provisions may also have the effect of preventing changes in our management. It is possible that these provisions could make it more difficult to accomplish transactions which shareholders may otherwise deem to be in their best interests.

Since the terms of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws may differ from the general information we are providing, you should only rely on the actual provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws. If you would like to read our certificate of incorporation and bylaws, you may request a copy from us by following the directions under the heading *Where You Can Find More Information*.

NYSE Listing

Our common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol *WAL*.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is American Stock Transfer & Trust Company.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK

The following description is a general summary of the terms of the preferred stock which we may issue. The description below and in any prospectus supplement does not purport to be complete and is subject to and qualified in its entirety by reference to our certificate of incorporation, and the applicable certificate of designation to our certificate of incorporation, determining the terms of the related series of preferred stock and our bylaws, each of which we will make available upon request. The descriptions herein and in the applicable prospectus supplement do not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of our certificate of incorporation, the applicable certificate of designation and our bylaws because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of shares of our preferred stock.

Table of Contents

General

We are authorized to issue 20,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.0001 per share. As of May 1, 2015, 70,500 shares of preferred stock were issued and outstanding, consisting of 70,500 shares of Non-Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series B. Our certificate of incorporation, subject to limitations prescribed in such certificate and subject to limitations prescribed by Delaware law, authorizes the board of directors, from time to time by resolution and without further stockholder action, to provide for the issuance of shares of preferred stock, in one or more series, and to fix the designation, powers, preferences and other rights of the shares and to fix the qualifications, limitations and restrictions thereof. As a result of its broad discretion with respect to the creation and issuance of preferred stock without stockholder approval, the board of directors could adversely affect the voting power of the holders of common stock and, by issuing shares of preferred stock with certain voting, conversion and/or redemption rights, could discourage any attempt to obtain control of us.

Terms of the Preferred Stock That We May Offer and Sell to You

You should refer to the prospectus supplement relating to the class or series of preferred stock for the specific terms of that class or series, including:

the title and stated value of the preferred stock;

the number of shares of preferred stock, their liquidation preference per share and their purchase price;

the dividend rate(s), period(s) and/or payment date(s) or method(s) of calculating the payment date(s) applicable to the preferred stock;

whether dividends will be cumulative or non-cumulative and, if cumulative, the date from which dividends on the preferred stock will accumulate;

the procedures for any auction and remarketing, if any, for the preferred stock;

the provisions for a sinking fund, if any, for the preferred stock;

the provisions for redemption, if applicable, of the preferred stock;

any listing of the preferred stock on any securities exchange or market;

the terms and conditions, if applicable, upon which the preferred stock will be convertible into or exchangeable for other securities or rights, or a combination of the foregoing, including the name of the

issuer of the securities or rights, conversion or exchange price, or the manner of calculating the conversion or exchange price, and the conversion or exchange date(s) or period(s) and whether we will have the option to convert such preferred stock into cash;

voting rights, if any, of the preferred stock;

whether interests in the preferred stock will be represented by depositary shares and, if so, the terms of those shares;

a discussion of any material and/or special United States federal income tax considerations applicable to the preferred stock;

the relative ranking and preferences of the preferred stock as to dividend rights and rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs;

any limitations on the issuance of any class or series of preferred stock ranking senior to or equally with the series of preferred stock as to dividend rights and rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs; and

any other specific terms, preferences, rights, limitations or restrictions of the preferred stock.

Table of Contents

Ranking

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, the preferred stock will, with respect to distribution rights and rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs, rank:

senior to all classes or series of our common stock and to all equity securities the terms of which specifically provide that the equity securities rank junior to the preferred stock;

equally with our Non-Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series B and all equity securities issued by us other than those referred to in the first and last bullet points of this subheading; and

junior to all equity securities issued by us the terms of which specifically provide that the equity securities rank senior to the preferred stock.

For purposes of this subheading, the term equity securities does not include convertible debt securities.

Distributions

Holders of the preferred stock of each series will be entitled to receive, when, as and if declared by our board of directors, out of our assets legally available for payment to stockholders, cash distributions, or distributions in kind or in other property if expressly permitted and described in the applicable prospectus supplement, at the rates and on the dates as we will set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. We will pay each distribution to holders of record as they appear on our stock transfer books on the record dates determined by our board of directors.

Distributions on any class or series of preferred stock, if cumulative, will be cumulative from and after the date set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. If our board of directors fails to declare a distribution payable on a distribution payment date on any class or series of preferred stock for which distributions are non-cumulative, then the holders of that class or series of preferred stock will have no right to receive a distribution in respect of the distribution period ending on that distribution payment date, and we will have no obligation to pay the distribution accumulated for that period, whether or not distributions on that series are declared payable on any future distribution payment date.

If any shares of the preferred stock of any class or series are outstanding, no full dividends will be declared or paid or set apart for payment on our preferred stock of any other class or series ranking, as to dividends, equally with or junior to the preferred stock of the class or series for any period unless all required dividends are paid. The phrase all required dividends are paid when used in this prospectus with respect to class or series of preferred stock means that:

if the class or series of preferred stock has a cumulative dividend, full cumulative dividends on the preferred stock of the class or series have been or contemporaneously are declared and paid or declared and a sum sufficient for the payment is set apart for payment for all past dividend periods and the then current dividend period; or

if the class or series of preferred stock does not have a cumulative dividend, full dividends on the preferred stock of the class or series have been or contemporaneously are declared and paid or declared and a sum sufficient for the payment is set apart for the payment for the then current dividend period.

When dividends are not paid in full, or a sum sufficient for the full payment is not so set apart, upon the shares of preferred stock of any class or series and the shares of any other class or series of preferred stock ranking equally as to dividends with the preferred stock of the class or series, all dividends declared upon shares of preferred stock of the class or series and any other class or series of preferred stock ranking equally as to dividends with the preferred stock will be declared equally so that the amount of dividends declared per share on the preferred stock of the class or series and the other class or series of preferred stock will in all cases bear to each other the same ratio that accrued and unpaid dividends per share on the shares of preferred stock of the class or series, which will not include any accumulation in respect of unpaid dividends for prior dividend periods if the

Table of Contents

preferred stock does not have cumulative dividend, and the other class or series of preferred stock bear to each other. No interest, sum of money in lieu of interest, will be payable in respect of any dividend payment or payments on preferred stock of the class or series which may be in arrears.

Except as provided in the immediately preceding paragraph, unless all required dividends are paid, no dividends, other than in common stock or other stock ranking junior to the preferred stock of the class or series as to dividends and upon liquidation, dissolution or winding-up of us, will be declared or paid or set aside for payment or other distribution will be declared or made upon the common stock or any of our other stock ranking junior or equally with the preferred stock of the class or series as to dividends or upon liquidation, nor will any common stock or any of our other capital stock ranking junior to or equally with preferred stock of the class or series as to dividends or upon liquidation, dissolution or winding-up of us be redeemed, purchased or otherwise acquired for any consideration, or any moneys be paid to or made available for a sinking fund for the redemption of any shares of any stock, by us except by conversion into or exchange for our other stock ranking junior to the preferred stock of the class or series as to dividends and upon liquidation, dissolution or winding-up of us.

Any dividend payment made on shares of a class or series of preferred stock will first be credited against the earliest accrued but unpaid dividend due with respect to shares of the class or series which remains payable.

Redemption

If so provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, the preferred stock will be subject to mandatory redemption or redemption at our option, in whole or in part, in each case upon the terms, at the times and at the redemption prices set forth in such prospectus supplement.

Liquidation Preference

Upon any voluntary or involuntary liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs, then, before any distribution or payment will be made to the holders of any common stock or any other class or series of shares of our capital stock ranking junior to the preferred stock in the distribution of assets upon any liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs, the holders of each series or class of preferred stock will be entitled to receive out of our assets legally available for distribution to stockholders liquidating distributions in the amount of the liquidation preference set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, plus an amount equal to all accumulated and unpaid distributions. If, upon the voluntary or involuntary liquidation, dissolution or winding up, our available assets are insufficient to pay the amount of the liquidating distributions on all outstanding shares of preferred stock and the corresponding amounts payable on all shares of other classes or series of shares of our capital stock ranking equally with the preferred stock in the distribution of assets, then the holders of the preferred stock and all other classes or series of shares of capital stock will share ratably in any distribution of assets in proportion to the full liquidating distributions to which they would otherwise be respectively entitled.

If liquidating distributions will have been made in full to all holders of preferred stock, our remaining assets will be distributed among the holders of any other classes or series of shares of capital stock ranking junior to the preferred stock upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up, according to their respective rights and preferences and in each case according to their respective number of shares.

For those purposes, the consolidation or merger of us with or into any other corporation, trust or entity, or the sale, lease or conveyance of all or substantially all of our property or business, will not be deemed to constitute a liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs.

Voting Rights

Holders of preferred stock will not have any voting rights, except as set forth below or as otherwise from time to time required by law, or as otherwise provided in the certificate of designation or the resolutions establishing such series and as indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

Under the Delaware General Corporation Law, holders of outstanding shares of a series of preferred stock may be entitled to vote as a separate class on a proposed amendment to the terms of that series of preferred stock or our certificate of incorporation, if the amendment would:

- (1) increase or decrease the aggregate number of authorized shares of that series of preferred stock;
- (2) increase or decrease the par value of the shares of that series of preferred stock; or
- (3) alter or change the powers, preferences or special rights of the shares of such class so as to affect them adversely, in which case the approval of the proposed amendment would require the affirmative vote of at least a majority of the outstanding shares of that series of preferred stock.

Conversion Rights

The terms and conditions, if any, upon which any class or series of preferred stock are convertible into or exchangeable for our other securities or rights or those of other issuers, including, without limitation, common stock, debt securities, trust preferred securities or another series of preferred stock, or any combination of the foregoing, will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to the preferred stock. The terms will include the name of the issuer of the other securities or rights and the number or principal amount of the securities or rights into which the shares of preferred stock are convertible or exchangeable, the conversion or exchange price or rate or the manner of calculating the price, the conversion or exchange date(s) or period(s), provisions as to whether conversion or exchange will be at the option of the holders of the preferred stock or at our or other issuer's option, the events requiring an adjustment of the conversion or exchange price or rate and provisions affecting conversion or exchange in the event of the redemption of the series of preferred stock.

DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITARY SHARES

The following description, together with the applicable prospectus supplements, summarizes certain terms and provisions of the depositary shares that we may offer under this prospectus and the related deposit agreements and depositary receipts. The following summary relates to terms and conditions applicable to these types of securities generally. The particular terms of any series of depositary shares will be those set forth in the applicable deposit agreement and summarized in the applicable prospectus supplement. If indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, the terms of any series may differ from the terms summarized below.

Specific deposit agreements and depositary receipts will contain additional important terms and provisions and will be incorporated by reference into the registration statement which includes this prospectus before we issue any depositary shares. The descriptions herein and in the applicable prospectus supplement do not restate those agreements and receipts in their entirety and do not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of the applicable deposit agreement and deposit certificate because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of the depositary shares. For more information, please review the forms of these documents, which will be filed with the SEC will be available as described under the heading **Where You Can Find More Information** above.

General

We may elect to offer fractional shares of preferred stock rather than full shares of preferred stock. If so, we will issue depositary receipts for these depositary shares. Each depositary share will represent a fraction of a share of a particular series of preferred stock. Each holder of a depositary share will be entitled, in proportion to the fraction of preferred stock represented by that depositary share, to the rights and preferences of the preferred stock, including dividend, voting, redemption, conversion and liquidation rights, if any. We will enter into a deposit agreement with a depositary, which will be named in the applicable prospectus supplement.

In order to issue depositary shares, we will issue preferred stock and immediately deposit these shares with the depositary. The depositary will then issue and deliver depositary receipts to the persons who purchase

Table of Contents

depository shares. Each whole depository share issued by the depository may represent a fraction of a share held by the depository. The depository will issue depository receipts in a form that reflects whole depository shares, and each depository receipt may evidence any number of whole depository shares.

Pending the preparation of definitive engraved depository receipts, a depository may, upon our written order, issue temporary depository receipts, which will temporarily entitle the holders to all the rights pertaining to the definitive depository receipts. We will bear the costs and expenses of promptly preparing definitive depository receipts and of exchanging the temporary depository receipts for definitive depository receipts.

Dividends and Other Distributions

The depository will distribute all cash and non-cash dividends and distributions it receives with respect to the underlying preferred stock to the record holders of depository shares in proportion to the number of depository shares they hold. In the case of non-cash distributions, the depository may determine that it is not feasible to make the distribution. If so, the depository may, with our approval, sell the property and distribute the net proceeds from the sale to the holders. The amounts distributed by the depository will be reduced by any amount required to be withheld by us or the depository on account of taxes.

Redemption of Depository Shares

If we redeem the series of preferred stock that underlies the depository shares, the depository will redeem the depository shares from the proceeds it receives from the redemption of the preferred stock it holds. The depository will redeem the number of depository shares that represent the amount of underlying preferred stock that we have redeemed. The redemption price for depository shares will be in proportion to the redemption price per share that we paid for the underlying preferred stock. If we redeem less than all of the depository shares, the depository will select which depository shares to redeem by lot, or some substantially equivalent method.

After a redemption date is fixed, the depository shares to be redeemed no longer will be considered outstanding. The rights of the holders of the depository shares will cease, except for the rights to receive money or other property upon redemption. In order to redeem their depository shares, holders will surrender their depository receipts to the depository.

Voting the Preferred Stock

We will notify the depository about any meeting at which the holders of preferred stock are entitled to vote, and the depository will mail the information to the record holders of depository shares related to that preferred stock. Each record holder of depository shares on the record date will be entitled to instruct the depository on how to vote the shares of preferred stock represented by that holder's depository shares. The depository will vote the preferred stock represented by the depository shares in accordance with these instructions, provided the depository receives these instructions sufficiently in advance of the meeting. If the depository does not receive instructions from the holders of the depository shares, the depository will abstain from voting the preferred stock that underlies those depository shares.

Withdrawal of Preferred Stock

When a holder surrenders depository receipts at the corporate trust office of the depository, and pays any necessary taxes, charges or other fees, the holder will be entitled to receive the number of whole shares of the related series of preferred stock, and any money or other property, if any, represented by the holder's depository shares. Once a holder

exchanges depositary shares for whole shares of preferred stock, that holder cannot re-deposit these shares of preferred stock with the depositary, or exchange them for depositary shares. If a holder delivers depositary receipts that represent a number of depositary shares that exceeds the number of whole shares of related preferred stock the holder seeks to withdraw, the depositary will issue a new depositary receipt to the holder that evidences the excess number of depositary shares.

Table of Contents

Amendment and Termination of the Deposit Agreement

We and the depositary can agree, at any time, to amend the form of depositary receipt and any provisions of the depositary receipt and any provisions of the deposit agreement. However, if an amendment has a material adverse effect on the rights of the holders of related depositary shares, the holders of at least a majority of the depositary shares then outstanding must first approve the amendment. Every holder of a depositary receipt at the time an amendment becomes effective will be bound by the amended deposit agreement. However, subject to any conditions in the deposit agreement or applicable law, no amendment can impair the right of any holder of a depositary share to receive shares of the related preferred stock, or any money or other property represented by the depositary shares, when they surrender their depositary receipts.

We can terminate the deposit agreement at any time, as long as the depositary mails notice of termination to the record holders of depositary shares then outstanding at least 30 days prior to the date fixed for termination. Upon termination, the depositary shall deliver to each holder of depositary receipts, upon surrender of the depositary receipts held by such holder, such number of whole or fractional shares of preferred stock as are represented by the depositary shares evidenced by such depositary receipts, together with any other property held by the depositary with respect to such depositary receipt.

Charges of Depositary

We will pay all transfer and other taxes and the government charges that relate solely to the depositary arrangements. We will also pay the charges of each depositary, including charges in connection with the initial deposit of the related series of preferred stock, the initial issuance of the depositary shares, and all withdrawals of shares of the related series of preferred stock. However, holders of depositary receipts will pay the fees and expenses of the depositary for any duties requested by such holders to be performed which are outside of those expressly provided for in the deposit agreement.

Resignation and Removal of Depositary

The depositary may resign at any time by delivering written notice of its decision to us. We may remove the depositary at any time. Any resignation or removal will take effect when we appoint a successor depositary. We must appoint the successor depositary within a specified time after delivery of the notice of resignation or removal. The successor depositary shall be a bank or trust company that has its principal office in the United States and has a combined capital and surplus of at least \$50,000,000.

Miscellaneous

We will be required to furnish certain information to the holders of the preferred stock underlying any depositary shares. The depositary, as the holder of the underlying preferred stock, will forward any report or information it receives from us to the holders of depositary shares.

Neither we nor the depositary will be liable if its ability to perform its obligations under the deposit agreement is prevented or delayed by law or any circumstance beyond its control. Both we and the depositary will be obligated to use our best judgment and to act in good faith in performing our respective duties under the deposit agreement. We and the depositary will be liable only for gross negligence and willful misconduct in performing our respective duties under the deposit agreement. Neither we nor the depositary will be obligated to appear in, prosecute or defend any legal proceeding with respect to any depositary receipts, depositary shares or preferred stock unless we or the depositary receive what we, in our sole discretion, determine to be a satisfactory indemnity from one or more holders

of the depositary shares. We and the depositary will evaluate any proposed indemnity in order to determine whether the financial protection afforded by the indemnity is sufficient to reduce each party's risk to a satisfactory and customary level. We and the depositary may rely on the advice of legal

Table of Contents

counsel or accountants of the choice of each. We and the depositary may also rely on information provided by persons we and they believe, in good faith, to be competent, and on documents we and they believe, in good faith, to be genuine.

The applicable prospectus supplement will identify the depositary's corporate trust office. Unless the prospectus supplement indicates otherwise, the depositary will act as transfer agent and registrar for depositary receipts, and if we redeem shares of preferred stock, the depositary will act as redemption agent for the corresponding depositary receipts.

Title

We, each depositary and any agent of ours or the applicable depositary may treat the registered owner of any depositary share as the absolute owner of the depositary shares for all purposes, including making payment, regardless of whether any payment in respect of the depositary share is overdue and regardless of any notice to the contrary.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

General

We may issue warrants to purchase our debt securities, common stock or preferred stock or units of two or more of these types of securities, which are collectively referred to in this prospectus as underlying warrant securities. We may issue warrants independently or together with any underlying warrant securities and such warrants may be attached to or separate from those underlying warrant securities. We will issue the warrants under warrant agreements to be entered into between us and a bank or trust company, as warrant agent, as more fully described in the applicable prospectus supplement. The warrant agent will act solely as our agent in connection with the warrants and will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust for or with any holders or beneficial owners of warrants.

The applicable prospectus supplement will contain a description of the following terms:

the title of the warrants;

the designation, amount and terms of the underlying warrant securities for which the warrants are exercisable;

the designation and terms of the underlying warrant securities, if any, and the number of warrants issued with each underlying warrant security;

the price or prices at which the warrants will be issued;

the aggregate number of warrants;

any provisions for adjustment of the number or amount of securities receivable upon exercise of the warrants or the exercise price of the warrants;

the price or prices at which the underlying warrant securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants may be purchased;

if applicable, the date on and after which the warrants and the underlying warrant securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants will be separately transferable;

if applicable, a discussion of the material United States federal income tax considerations applicable to the exercise of the warrants;

the date on which the right to exercise the warrants will commence, and the date on which the right will expire;

Table of Contents

the currency or currencies (including composite currencies), and/or the securities (if any), in which the exercise price of the warrants may be payable; and, if the exercise price is payable in whole or in part with securities, the basis for determining the amount or number of such securities to be provided as such payment;

the maximum or minimum number of warrants which may be exercised at any time;

information with respect to book-entry procedures, if any; and

any other terms, including terms, procedures and limitations relating to the exercise and exchange of the warrants.

Exercise of Warrants

Each warrant will entitle its holder to purchase, for cash and/or securities (as will be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement), the amount or number of debt securities, shares of preferred stock, or shares of common stock, at the exercise price, as will in each case be set forth in, or be determinable as set forth in, the applicable prospectus supplement. Holders may exercise warrants at any time up to the close of business on the expiration date set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to the warrants offered thereby. After the close of business on the expiration date, unexercised warrants will become void.

Holders of warrants may exercise their respective warrants in the manner set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to such warrants. Upon receipt of payment and the warrant certificate properly completed and duly executed at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent or any other office indicated in the prospectus supplement, we will, as soon as practicable, forward the underlying warrant securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants. If a holder exercises less than all of the warrants represented by the warrant certificate, the warrant agent will issue a new warrant certificate for the remaining warrants.

Prior to the exercise of any warrants to purchase debt securities or other securities, including shares of preferred stock or common stock, holders of the warrants will not have any of the rights of holders of the debt securities or other securities, including shares of preferred stock or common stock purchasable upon exercise, including:

in the case of warrants for the purchase of debt securities, the right to receive payments of principal of, or any premium or interest on, the debt securities purchasable upon exercise or to enforce covenants in the applicable indenture; or

in the case of warrants for the purchase of shares of preferred stock or shares of common stock, the right to vote or to receive any payments of dividends on the shares of preferred stock or common stock purchasable upon exercise.

The descriptions of the warrant agreements in this prospectus and in any prospectus supplement are summaries of certain material provisions of the applicable warrant agreements. These descriptions do not restate those agreements in their entirety and do not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of the applicable warrant agreement and warrant certificate relating to the warrants because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of the warrants or any warrant units. For more

information, please review the forms of these documents, which will be filed with the SEC and will be available as described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information" above.

DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASE CONTRACTS

As may be specified in a prospectus supplement, we may issue purchase contracts obligating holders to purchase from us, and obligating us to sell to the holders, a number of debt securities, shares of our common

Table of Contents

stock, preferred stock or depositary shares or warrants, at a future date or dates. The price per purchase contract security may be fixed at the time the purchase contracts are issued or may be determined by reference to a specific formula set forth in the purchase contracts. Under the purchase contracts, we may be required to make periodic payments to the holders of the units or vice versa. These payments may be unsecured or prefunded on some basis to be specified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

The purchase contracts may require holders to secure their obligations under the contracts in a specified manner and, in specified circumstances, we may deliver newly issued prepaid purchase contracts, or prepaid securities, when we transfer to a holder any collateral securing the holder's obligations under the original purchase contract.

The purchase contracts may be issued separately or as part of units consisting of a purchase contract and one or more other securities, which may include our debt securities, depositary shares, preferred securities, common stock, warrants or debt obligations or government securities, and which may secure the holder's obligations to purchase the purchase contract security under the purchase contract.

The applicable prospectus supplement relating to any purchase contracts we are offering will specify the material terms of the purchase contracts, whether they will be issued separately or as part of units, and any applicable pledge or depositary arrangements.

The descriptions of the purchase contracts and any applicable underlying security or pledge or depositary arrangements in this prospectus and in any prospectus supplement are summaries of certain material provisions of the applicable agreements. These descriptions do not restate those agreements in their entirety and do not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of the applicable agreements because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of the purchase contracts. We will make copies of the relevant agreements available as described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information" above.

DESCRIPTION OF UNITS

As specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, we may issue units comprised of one or more of the other securities described in this prospectus in any combination. Each unit may also include debt obligations of third parties, such as U.S. Treasury securities. Each unit will be issued so that the holder of the unit is also the holder of each security included in the unit. Thus, the holder of a unit will have the rights and obligations of a holder of each included security. The prospectus supplement will describe:

the designation and terms of the units and of the securities comprising the units, including whether and under what circumstances the securities comprising the units may be held or transferred separately;

a description of the terms of any unit agreement governing the units;

a description of the provisions for the payment, settlement, transfer or exchange of the units; and

whether the units will be issued in fully registered or global form.

The descriptions of the units and any applicable underlying security or pledge or depository arrangements in this prospectus and in any prospectus supplement are summaries of the material provisions of the applicable agreements. These descriptions do not restate those agreements in their entirety and do not contain all of the information that you may find useful or that may be important to you. You should refer to the provisions of the applicable agreements because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of the units. We will make copies of the relevant agreements available as described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information" above.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We or the selling securityholders may sell the offered securities:

directly to purchasers;

through agents;

through dealers;

through underwriters;

directly to our stockholders; or

through a combination of any of these methods of sale.

The prospectus supplement relating to a series of the offered securities will set forth its offering terms, including the name or names of any underwriters, dealers or agents, the purchase price of the offered securities and the proceeds to us and/or selling securityholders from the sale, any underwriting discounts, commissions and other items constituting underwriters' compensation, any initial public offering price and any underwriting discounts, commissions and other items allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers or agents and any securities exchanges on which the offered securities may be listed.

We or a selling securityholder may use one or more underwriters in the sale of the offered securities, in which case the offered securities will be acquired by the underwriter or underwriters for their own account and may be resold from time to time in one or more transactions either:

at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed;

at market prices prevailing at the time of sale;

at prices related to the prevailing market prices; or

at negotiated prices.

We or a selling securityholder may directly solicit offers to purchase offered securities. Agents designated by us or a selling securityholder from time to time may also solicit offers to purchase offered securities. Any agent designated by us or a selling securityholder, who may be deemed to be an underwriter as that term is defined in the Securities Act,

involved in the offer or sale of the offered securities in respect of which this prospectus is delivered will be named, and any commissions payable by us or a selling securityholder to such agent will be set forth in the prospectus supplement.

If a dealer is utilized in the sale of the offered securities in respect of which this prospectus is delivered, we or the selling securityholder will sell the offered securities to the dealer, as principal. The dealer, who may be deemed to be an underwriter as that term is defined in the Securities Act, may then resell the offered securities to the public at varying prices to be determined by the dealer at the time of resale.

If an underwriter is, or underwriters are, used in the sale, we or a selling securityholder will execute an underwriting agreement with the underwriters at the time of sale to the underwriters. The names of the underwriters will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, which will be used by the underwriter to make resales of the offered securities in respect of which this prospectus is delivered to the public. In connection with the sale of offered securities, the underwriter may be deemed to have received compensation from us or the selling securityholder in the form of underwriting discounts or commissions and may also receive commissions from purchasers of offered securities for whom they may act as agents. Underwriters may also sell offered securities to or through dealers, and the dealers may receive compensation in the form of discounts, concessions or commissions from the underwriters and/or commissions from the purchasers for whom they may act as agents.

Table of Contents

If so indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we or a selling securityholder will authorize underwriters, dealers or other persons to solicit offers by certain institutions to purchase offered securities from us or a selling securityholder at the public offering price set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement pursuant to delayed delivery contracts providing for payment and delivery on a future date or dates. Institutions with which these contracts may be made include commercial and savings banks, insurance companies, pension funds, investment companies, educational and charitable institutions and others. The obligations of any purchasers under any delayed delivery contract will not be subject to any conditions except that:

the purchase of the offered securities shall not at the time of delivery be prohibited under the laws of the jurisdiction to which the purchaser is subject; and

if the offered securities are also being sold to underwriters, we or a selling securityholder will have sold to the underwriters the offered securities not sold for delayed delivery.

The underwriters, dealers and other persons will not have any responsibility in respect of the validity or performance of such purchase contracts. The prospectus supplement relating to the purchase contracts will set forth the price to be paid for offered securities pursuant to the purchase contracts, the commission payable for solicitation of the contracts and the date or dates in the future for delivery of offered securities pursuant to the purchase contracts.

Offered securities may also be offered and sold, if so indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, in connection with a remarketing upon their purchase, in accordance with a redemption or repayment pursuant to their terms, or otherwise, by one or more remarketing firms, acting as principals for their own accounts or as agents for us or a selling securityholder. Any remarketing firm will be identified and the terms of its agreement, if any, with us or a selling securityholder and its compensation will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement. Remarketing firms may be deemed to be underwriters in connection with their remarketing of offered securities.

Unless otherwise set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, the obligations of underwriters to purchase the offered securities will be subject to certain conditions precedent, and such underwriters will be obligated to purchase all such securities, if any are purchased. In connection with the offering of securities, we may grant to the underwriters an option to purchase additional securities to cover over-allotments at the initial public offering price, with an additional underwriting commission, as may be set forth in the accompanying prospectus supplement. If we grant any over-allotment option, the terms of such over-allotment option will be set forth in the prospectus supplement for such securities.

Underwriters, dealers, remarketing firms and agents may be entitled, under agreements that may be entered into with us or a selling securityholder, to indemnification by us or a selling securityholder against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or to contribution with respect to payments which they may be required to make in respect thereof and may engage in transactions with, or perform services for, us or the selling securityholder in the ordinary course of business.

Any underwriter may engage in over-allotment, stabilizing transactions, short-covering transactions and penalty bids in accordance with Regulation M under the Securities Exchange Act. Over-allotment involves sales in excess of the offering size, which create a short position. Stabilizing transactions permit bids to purchase the underlying security so long as the stabilizing bids do not exceed a specified maximum. Short-covering transactions involve purchases of the securities in the open market after the distribution is completed to cover short positions. Penalty bids permit the underwriters to reclaim a selling concession from a dealer when the securities originally sold by the dealer are

purchased in a covering transaction to cover short positions. Those activities may cause the price of the securities to be higher than it would otherwise be. If commenced, the underwriters may discontinue any of the activities at any time.

The anticipated date of delivery of offered securities will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to each offer.

Table of Contents

Sales by Selling Securityholders

Selling securityholders may use this prospectus in connection with the resale of securities. The applicable prospectus supplement will identify the selling securityholders and the terms of the securities. Selling securityholders may be deemed to be underwriters in connection with the securities they resell and any profits on the sales may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions under the Securities Act. The selling securityholders will receive all the proceeds from the sale of securities. We will not receive any proceeds from sales by selling securityholders.

LEGAL MATTERS

In connection with particular offerings of securities in the future, and if stated in the applicable prospectus supplement, the validity of those securities and certain legal matters about us and with respect to the offering may be passed upon for us by Randall S. Theisen, Esq., an attorney on Western Alliance's legal staff, or such other legal officer as we may designate from time to time, or Hogan Lovells US LLP. Mr. Theisen is Executive Vice President and General Counsel of Western Alliance and owns shares of Western Alliance common stock. Certain legal matters with respect to particular offerings of securities in the future may also be passed upon for any underwriters by the counsel to such underwriters specified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

EXPERTS

Our consolidated financial statements appearing in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, have been audited by McGladrey LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, as set forth in their report included therein and incorporated herein by reference. Such consolidated financial statements are incorporated herein by reference in reliance upon such report given on the authority of such firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

Table of Contents

\$85,768,896.63

Western Alliance Bancorporation

Common Stock

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

October 30, 2015

Credit Suisse