Weinreb Group

JULY 2026

THE 2026 CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER REPORT

Rooted in Business

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Introduction

Since our last report 18 months ago, sustainability professionals have encountered turbulent times.

However, chief sustainability officers (CSOs) at U.S. publicly held companies are taking the long view: While sustainability is facing headwinds, the field has built a powerful foundation, with a proven track record of impact, and established governance structures in place to maintain momentum. Today, sustainability is firmly embedded within companies, and a growing number of people inside and outside of the sustainability function are responsible for driving social and environmental progress.

In 2026—on the 15th anniversary of the Weinreb Group's first CSO report—I'm proud to share that all signals point in one direction: Sustainability is deeply rooted in business, and it's delivering value.

The top three findings from our 2026 report illustrate just this:

1 The number of CSOs declined, yet sustainability has become increasingly more integrated inside companies.

The number of CSOs declined by 10% in 2026, from 216 to 193. This is the first time the number has declined since we started tracking it 16 years ago. At the same time, budgets mostly held steady, as did the head count of people working on sustainability teams. Moreover, since January 2025, both the remit and the number of sustainability people embedded in the business (not in the core sustainability function) has increased by 42%.

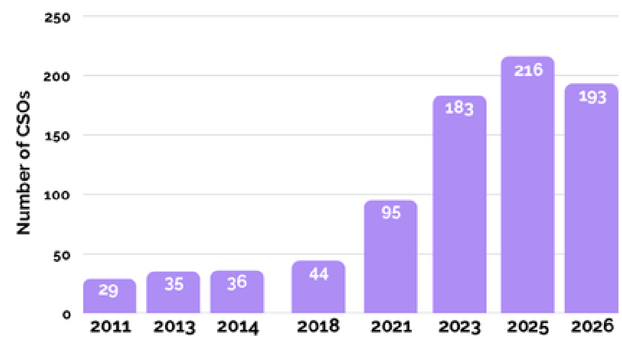
2 Fewer CSOs are reporting to the CEO, while board engagement, robust governance, and strong drivers sustain the momentum of this work.

Since January of 2025, the number of CSOs reporting to the CEO declined from 33% to 14%. Meanwhile, sustainability is championed by the board (88% of CSOs said board engagement with sustainability has increased or stayed the same), and sustainability governance across organizations is strong (87% report that governance structures are firmly in place). Moreover, key drivers like customer and regulatory demand, as well as value-creation factors like risk mitigation and cost savings, have firmly anchored sustainability within business.

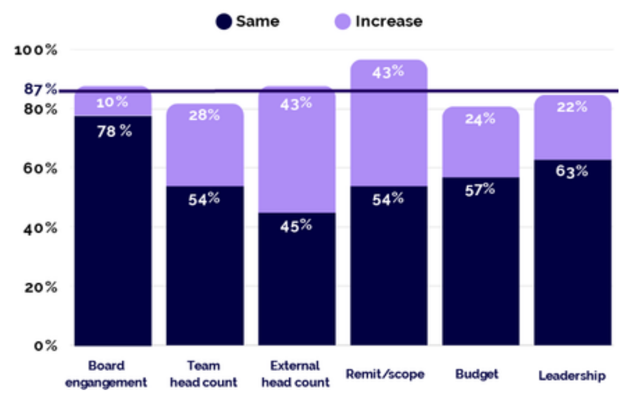
3 CSOs feel the pressure from economic disruption and geopolitical volatility. And they remain resilient and resolved to make an impact.

Like every C-suite leader, CSOs feel the weight of the ever-changing external environment. CSOs pointed to market and economic uncertainty (62%), regulatory requirements (57%), and geopolitical volatility (55%) as their top challenges. Nonetheless, they still feel a sense of reward. They have a sense of clarity, purpose, and urgency that drives their work.

CSOs AT U.S. PUBLIC COMPANIES



87% OF CSOs FIND THEIR PROGRAMS HOLDING STEADY



In addition to the geopolitical headwinds, there are other factors that set the context for this period. Given that many companies have built their sustainability programs over the last 10 or 20 years, many of these programs are well-established. I have long been asked, "To whom should a CSO report?" The answer is that it belongs where it makes the most sense. For most of these CSOs, the position sits where it adds the most value, or, if regulatory pressure is stronger, compliance makes the most sense.

It's also worth noting that this year's decline in CSO numbers is a single data point, not a trend. The role grew substantially at a particular cultural and political moment in the early 2020s. The recent decline may simply be a course correction, as companies committed to sustainability for the long term keep the role, while other companies change tack. In addition to these findings, our 2026 report explores what CSOs need to succeed, it tracks the evolution of the role over 16 years, and it features the latest Weinreb Group CSO List. I hope you'll read on.

With gratitude,

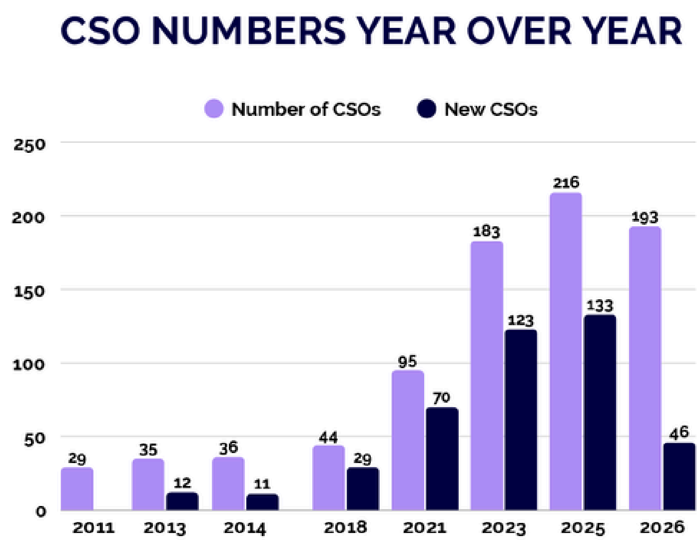
Ellen Weinreb

Ellen Weinreb is the founder of boutique corporate sustainability executive search firm **Weinreb Group**, placing CSOs and building out their teams.

Key Findings

1 The number of CSOs declined, yet sustainability has become increasingly more integrated inside companies.

For the first time since we launched this report in 2011, the number of CSOs at American publicly traded companies decreased. Following a period of substantial growth between 2021 and 2025, the number of CSOs declined 10% in 2026, from 216 to 193. Over the full 15-year period, however, the number has increased sixfold. What hasn't changed is the rate of departures, which has remained steady at roughly 36%. Rather, the share of newly appointed CSOs has dropped sharply, from a norm of around 62% to just 24% today. It seems companies aren't backfilling vacant positions, and fewer companies are creating new ones. Over the years, we have tracked the demographic makeup of CSOs, and it's notable that the percentage of women increased from 28% in 2011 to 66% today, a notch higher than our 2025 report.



The total number of leaders with the title "chief sustainability officer" at publicly held U.S. companies peaked in 2025 and declined 10% in July 2026.

Despite the decline in CSO numbers, budgets have largely held, as have head counts within and outside of the core sustainability teams. Eighty percent of CSOs said their budgets have increased or remained flat since January 2025, and 20% said their budget has decreased. On average, sustainability teams have a head count of 20. Since January 2025, most CSOs said head count has stayed the same or grown: 55% said it stayed the same, 28% said it has increased, and 17% said it has decreased.

Perhaps most telling, 42% of CSOs report an increase in sustainability head count outside their function relative to the 28% who reported an increase inside their function, suggesting the work is dispersing across the organization rather than disappearing from it. Forty-two percent of CSOs said it stayed the same, and 13% reported a decrease.

Alongside these changes, the scope of the work is expanding. In 2026, 42% of CSOs reported that their responsibilities have broadened, and 55% said they have stayed the same.

For the CSOs who have experienced an increase in scope and a reduction in resources, this has created tension. One CSO reported feeling frustrated by the "lack of resources and head count when balanced against a growing set of [responsibilities] and expectations that are increasingly not siloed and very strategic that require cross-functional buy-in and action."

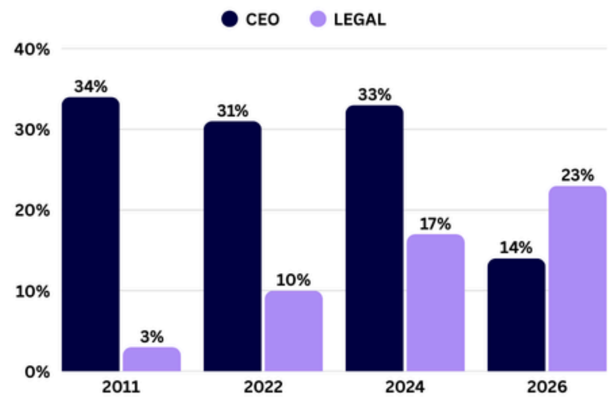
Many CSOs saw a silver lining in the shift toward cross-functional work: They viewed the changes as a deliberate pivot away from standalone sustainability programs and toward integration with core business strategy. When asked what they are most excited about when it comes to the future of sustainability, one leader said: "True integration of sustainability across functions, operationalizing sustainability so that it does not sit within a central function but how work gets done." Another CSO said that they have been shifting their team's focus on being better business partners by collaborating on value creation, long-term growth, and resilience: "This positions our work as a strategic imperative."

2 Fewer CSOs are reporting to the CEO, while board engagement, robust governance, and strong drivers sustain the momentum of this work.

Historically, about a third of CSOs reported directly to the CEO; today, that figure has dropped to 14%. A quarter of CSOs said the sustainability function has moved within their organization since January 2025, with a growing share now reporting into the legal department. This reflects the deepening connection between sustainability, corporate governance, and risk management.

The decline in CSOs reporting to the CEO could be attributed to the maturity curve of sustainability within a company. This suggests the CEO was more involved in establishing the function and setting up governance structures, with key leaders owning workstreams. As sustainability has matured for a company, the next resting place for that function is often where it can add the most value, or, in cases with a heavy regulatory compliance component, within the legal function.

CSOs REPORTING TO CEO AND LEGAL, YEAR OVER YEAR



CSOs reporting to the CEO has declined, while reporting to legal has increased.

At the same time, board engagement and governance are strong. In 2026, 88% of CSOs said board engagement with sustainability has increased or stayed the same, and 87% reported that governance structures are firmly in place.

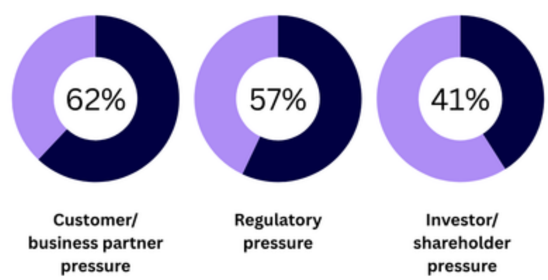
External forces also are driving sustainability deeper into business. Customer pressure is the top driver (62%), followed closely by regulatory pressure (57%), with investor pressure and alignment with company values tied at 41%. Profit came in at 30%.

When it comes to how sustainability is creating value inside companies, CSOs pointed most often to risk mitigation (62%), cost savings (52%), and brand reputation (38%).

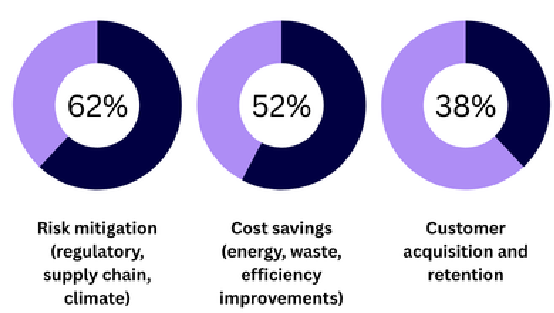
Today, many CSOs describe sustainability as mainstream or table stakes for companies. One CSO wrote that CSOs are moving from “lofty ambitions to real actions.” “While regulatory pressure is easing, customer value chain pressure continues to increase,” that CSO wrote.

Ultimately, expectations of key stakeholders like customers, regulators, investors, and the board are proving to be powerful anchors, keeping sustainability embedded in corporate strategy.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABILITY AT YOUR COMPANY?



WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE WAYS SUSTAINABILITY IS CREATING BUSINESS VALUE AT YOUR COMPANY?



3 CSOs feel the pressure from economic disruption and geopolitical volatility. And they remain resilient and resolved to make an impact.

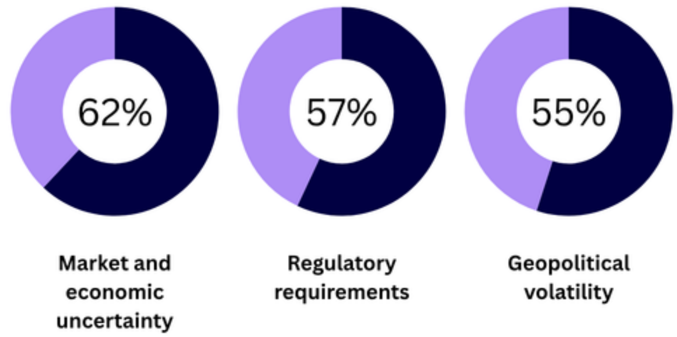
CSOs are not immune to the pressures of being in the corporate American C-suite today. When asked about their biggest challenges, CSOs named market and economic uncertainty (62%), regulatory requirements (57%), and geopolitical volatility (55%) as their top concerns.

AI has been another disruption: Nearly three quarters of CSOs reported that AI is having a moderate impact on their work, supporting efficiency, and 18% said AI was having a significant effect, supporting efficiency and helping the team focus on more strategic work. Less than 7% said AI was having a minimal effect.

To operate in this environment, CSOs identified the top three attributes that are essential to their success: the ability to influence without authority (55%), the ability to operate as a corporate chameleon (49%), and the capacity to work at both the big-picture and granular levels (41%).

While external pressure is taking a toll, CSOs are meeting the moment. CSOs reported feelings across the emotional spectrum, from hope to discouragement, overwhelm to a clear sense of purpose. One captured the whiplash of emotions: "My feelings vacillate from having hope and seeing momentum, to being demoralized from the current state and ever-evolving nature of the work due to internal and external challenges."

WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE CHALLENGES IN YOUR CSO ROLE?



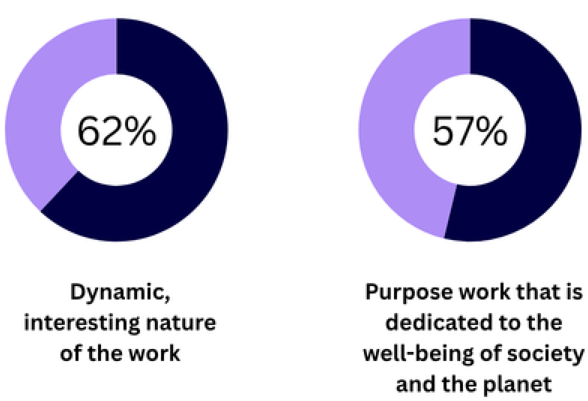
WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL CSO?

55% Influencing without authority

49% Corporate chameleon, ability to attune to diverse stakeholders

41% Ability to operate at both a big-picture and granular level

WHAT ARE THE MOST REWARDING ASPECTS OF YOUR JOB?



Despite the challenges, CSOs are feeling a sense of satisfaction in their work. When asked about the most rewarding aspect of their job, they pointed to work that's dedicated to the well-being of society and the planet (33%) and the dynamic, interesting nature of the work (35%).

One CSO summed up the feeling that their work matters: "My sense of purpose and urgency has deepened, as sustainability has become increasingly central to business resilience, innovation, and long-term value creation."

Looking Forward: What I've Learned From 16 Years of Tracking CSOs

When I began working in corporate sustainability, CSOs were pioneering an emerging field. The creation of the position was a CEO remit, and the CEO wanted someone they entrusted with this nascent function. Often, they equated sustainability with other work already in progress, such as public affairs or environment, health, and safety. At the same time, civil society was beginning to gain and use a stronger voice when it came to business, something CEOs had not yet experienced. As a result, the early work of sustainability teams focused on mission, vision, and values.

"CSOs are the futurists of the corporate context. My mandate is to see around corners, build resilience into our business model, and create value that will help my company not just navigate but thrive when facing emerging risks and opportunities."

Sophie Beckham
CSO
International Paper

What this year's survey makes clear is that the field has fundamentally shifted from purpose to real results, from a siloed home to a deeply embedded network of experts and practitioners working across the business. The question is no longer *why* sustainability matters, but *how* it creates value: through cost savings, risk mitigation, customer loyalty, and long-term growth.

If I were to define how the CSO role has evolved since we started this reporting more than a decade and a half ago, I would say the CSO has a core responsibility to future-proof their business. These are the people who scan horizons for risks and opportunities. They lead, they galvanize, and they inspire. CSOs make business sustainable in the traditional sense of the word: They help make their companies durable against the ever-changing forces of geopolitics and culture.

CSOs make business sustainable in the traditional sense of the word: They help make their companies durable against the ever-changing forces of geopolitics and culture.

Clearly, there have been challenges in the past few years, and I have no doubt CSOs will face more challenges in the future. But if we look through a longer lens—as the Weinreb Group has done via this survey over the past 16 years—it's possible to see a lot of progress.

One former CSO of a Fortune 50 company reflected that, done right, sustainability is adding value to the business. "I do wonder if this is the time in our evolution that the work begins to take on a life of its own outside a CSO structure—embedded in the relevant workflows throughout a company," this former CSO told me. "I've always believed that is a sign of a truly sustainable company."

"We are focused on value-creating sustainability, with an eye on long-term growth and resilience. By building a healthy business that seeks to meet the needs of our stakeholders, we will continue working to achieve our targets, helping the planet win through our reduced environmental impact."

Ann Tracy
CSO
Colgate-Palmolive

In our survey, we asked CSOs to share their perspectives on what they are most excited about when it comes to the future of sustainability.

One CSO reported seeing "a shift from rhetoric to action, with much more focus on value creation." Another described the maturation of the field: "I feel that we have graduated college and now have the ability to influence and adapt. I am very positive on the future of corporate sustainability. We needed this reset."

One CSO's reflection underscores this year's report theme. "I think we are beginning to see a corporate mindset shift where sustainable business principles can help lower costs, create value, and win customers," they wrote. "I'm hopeful that this will create durable change."

That framing is important. The goal was never to build a sustainability department. It was to help companies see around corners, anticipate and mitigate emerging risks, and uncover new opportunities that enable the business to endure and prosper.

After tracking the CSO role for so many years, what heartens me the most is the resilience of the people who hold this title. CSOs are constantly evolving and moving forward, tuning in to the geopolitical, economic, technological, cultural, and environmental landscape, and translating what it means for their business. There's rarely a playbook for what they do, and yet they negotiate every new challenge with grace and determination. To me, there's no better model for modern business leadership than the CSO.

As one CSO put it, "We are reaching a tipping point where 'sustainable business' is simply 'smart business.'"

Methodology

Our July 2026 Weinreb Group CSO List was compiled using information from our network, previous CSO lists, and LinkedIn research. All CSOs were verified using web-based sources, including consultation of corporate websites and LinkedIn. The executives on our list must have a title that officially includes the words "chief sustainability officer" and their company must be publicly traded on the NYSE or NASDAQ. The survey was completed by 69 CSOs, supporting a 36% participation rate. The CSO List is current as of July 1, 2026, one and a half years after the previous CSO report.

Acknowledgments

A sincere thank you to the chief sustainability officers who have participated in the survey year over year to enable Weinreb Group to chart the evolution of the CSO. I also want to thank Eva Dienel and the Weinreb Group team for their hard work bringing this report to you.

2026 Weinreb Group Chief Sustainability Officer List

CSO	COMPANY
Amanda Yates	3M
Jennifer Waldner Grant	AIG
Jennifer Hunter	Altria Group Inc
Ivan Frishberg	Amalgamated Bank
David Clark	Amcor
Justin Murrill	AMD
Gwen Mizell	Ameren
Mneesha Ohri Nahata	American Tower Corporation
Jaycee Pribulsky	Apollo Global Management, Inc
Beth Holland	Aptar
Katherine Pickus	Archer Daniel Midlands
Gretchen Zech	Arrow Electronics Inc.
Pam Cheng	Astrazeneca PLC
Jessica Hyman	Atlassian
Joe Speicher	Autodesk Inc.
Allyson Anderson Book	Baker Hughes
Ramon Arratia	Ball Corporation
Renae Kezar	Baxter International
Maureen Mazurek	BD
Chris Bradshaw	Bentley Systems
Shane Bohnen	Bio-Techne Corporation
Katie Fleming	Black Hills Energy
Meaghan Muldoon	BNY Mellon

CSO	COMPANY
Dana Beckman	Bread Financial
Jennifer Koenig	Brunswick Corporation
Christos Dimopoulos	Bunge
Jennifer Chittick	Cabot Corporation
Helene Gagnon	CAE Inc
Shannon Dean	California Water Service Group
Martha Galley	Calix
Hakan Yilmaz	Carrier Global Corp
Ebban Clause	Caterpillar Inc.
Robert Bernard	CBRE
Mattie Yeta	CGI
Megan Brumagim	Choice Hotels International
Megan Rock	CHS Inc.
Colin Seward	Cisco
Valerie Smith	Citi
Ann Tracy	Colgate-Palmolive
Shimei Fan, Ph. D	Coty
Eunice Heath	CRH plc
Deanna Bratter	Crocs
Stephanie Greene	Cushman & Wakefield
Jenny McColloch	CVS Health
Scott Tuten	DaniMer Scientific
Amelia DeLuca	Delta Air Lines

CSO	COMPANY
Jennifer Silberman	Dollar Tree
Andre Argenton	Dow
Renae Black	Duke Energy Corporation
Scott Collick	DuPont
Steve Crawford	Eastman
Harold Jones	Eaton
J Renee Morin	eBay Inc.
Emilio Tenuta	Ecolab
Hakon Mattson	Elevance Health
J. Monique Parker, CSP	Elevra Lithium
Michael Train	Emerson
Pete Sheffield	Enbridge
Chris Crockett	Essential Utilities
Jim Hunt	Eversource Energy
Sunny Elebua	Exelon
Katy Motiey	Extreme Networks Inc.
Karen Blanks Ellis	FedEx
Pratik Raval	Fifth Third Bancorp
Thaisa Hugenneyer	FMC Corporation
Bob Holycross	Ford Motor Company
Sandy Kennedy	Fortrea
William Cobb	Freeport-Mcmoran Inc
Hans Sauter	Fresh Del Monte Produce

CSO	COMPANY
Betsy Schaefer	FuelCell Energy
Jeffrey Hogue	Gap Inc.
Roger Martella	GE Vernova
Michael Hourihan	General Mills
Cassandra Garber	General Motors
Toni Ness	Genworth
Nancy Young	Gevo Inc
Kate Brandt	Google
Michelle Fitzpatrick, PhD	Graphic Packaging International, LLC
Jennifer Kim Field	Henry Schein, Inc.
Monica Batchelder	Hewlett Packard Enterprise
Gail Lehman	Hexcel Corporation
Paul Harris	HII
Jen Huffstetler	HP
Christina Shim	IBM
Abigail Roche	IDEX Corporation
Renee Henze	IFF
Michael Tschantz	Ingevity
Larry Fernandes	Ingredion Incorporated
Jason Niswonger	Installed Building Products
Lisa Brady	Insulet Corporation
Sophie Beckham	International Paper
William Nugent	International Seaways Inc.

CSO	COMPANY
Jason Weller	JBS
Erin Meezan	JLL
Paulette Frank	Johnson & Johnson
Katie McGinty	Johnson Controls
Monique Oxender	Keurig Dr Pepper
Lisa Morden	Kimberly- Clark Corporation
Leslie Hyde	Koppers
Janelle Aydin	Kraft Heinz Co
Tracy Strong	Labcorp
Karen Deal	Lakeside Industries
Freya Burton	Lanzatech Global Inc
Katarina Tesarova	Las Vegas Sands Corp.
Dawn Emling	Lincoln Financial
Ruth Harper	ManpowerGroup
Brian Kernohan	Manulife Investment Management
Ellen Jackowski	Mastercard
Kathy Rostkowski	McCormick & Company
Suheily Natal Davis	McDonald's
Melanie Nakagawa	Microsoft
Malisa Maynard	Mohawk Industries
Christine Montenegro McGrath	Mondelez International
Jessica Alsford	Morgan Stanley
Sarah Watson	Natural Resource Partners L.P.

CSO	COMPANY
Nicola Acutt	NetApp
Cimarron Nix	Nike
Josh Raglin	Norfolk Southern
Jamie Ezefili	Northern Trust Corporation
Brenda Yurick	Northwest Bank
Kathryn Williams	Northwest Natural Holding Co
Lynda Clemmons	NRG Energy Inc.
Jennifer Wuamett	NXP Semiconductors
Randolph Burns	O-I Glass, Inc.
Karen van Bergen	Omnicom
Steve Piette	Oshkosh Corporation
David Rabuano	Owens Corning
Jim Andrew	PepsiCo
Aaron Johnson	PG&E
Jessica Roman	Phillips 66
Jennifer Motles	PMI
Maureen Gannon	PNM
Charles D. Fogg	Primo Brands
Michele Baeten	Procter & Gamble
Susan Uthayakumar	Prologis
Catherine Kniker	PTC
Tamsin Ettefagh	Purecycle Technologies Inc
Rick Relinger	PVH Corp.

CSO	COMPANY
Randal King	Qnity
Angela Baker	Qualcomm, Inc
David Murgio	Ranpak
Anna Torma	Rayonier
Tequila Smith	Reworld
Anisa Kamadoli Costa	Rivian
Sophia Lenora Mendolsohn	SAP
Richard Medway	Savers
Melanie Miller	Seabridge Gold Inc.
Torsten Sauer-Petersen	Seadrill
David Barrett	Sempra Energy
Kellie Ballew	Shaw Industries
Aleksandra Dobkowski-Joy	Solventum
Brandon Lombardi	Sprouts Farmers Market
Kelly Goodejohn	Starbucks
Gregg Meyer	Steve Madden Ltd.
Alanna Boyd	Sun Life
James McDonald	Sylvamo
Amy Chan	Synaptics Incorporated
Andy Anderson	Tango Therapeutics
Leslie Shoemaker	Tetra Tech
Stewart Lindsay	The Campbell's Company
Kathleen O'Keefe	The Chemours Company

CSO	COMPANY
Niki King	The Clorox Company
Beatriz Perez	The Coca-Cola Company
Nancy Mahon	The Estée Lauder Companies
Darcy Robison	The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company
Terence Shields	The Hartford
Erica Ocampo	The Metals Company
Yafit Cohn	The Travelers Companies, Inc.
Liliana Esposito	The Wendy's Co
Mauro J Atalla	Trane Technologies
Amy Fernandez	Trex Company
Matthew Pittman	Trinity Industries, Inc.
Jennifer Guenther	Tronox
Lauren Riley	United Airlines
Joli Gross	United Rentals Inc
Scott Childress	UPS
James Gowen	Verizon
Nate Hurst	Visa
Stacey Doré	Vistra Corp.
Dirk Voeste	Volkswagen Group
Lauren Moss	Vornado Realty Trust
Kathleen McLaughlin	Walmart
Kenneth Lepage	Watts Water Technologies Inc
Jackie Jung	Western Digital

CSO	COMPANY
Lilian Leroux	Westinghouse Air Brake Technologies Corp
Sarah Ludmer	WK Kellogg Co
Erik Hansen	Workday
Mandi McReynolds	Workiva
Erik Hansen	Wynn Resorts
Jeff Lyng	Xcel Energy
Claudia Toussaint	Xylem Inc
Jon Hixson	Yum! Brands
Jeannette Astorga	Zoetis Inc

Weinreb Group

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www.weinrebgroup.com

San Francisco, CA

inquiry@weinrebgroup.com

+1 510 859 7887

@EllenWeinreb
@WeinrebGroup