

WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION

Form S-3

May 03, 2012

[Table of Contents](#)

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on May 3, 2012

Registration No. 333-

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM S-3

REGISTRATION STATEMENT

UNDER

THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933

WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Nevada
(State or other jurisdiction of
incorporation or organization)

88-0365922
(I.R.S. Employer
Identification Number)

One E. Washington Street, Suite 1400

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Telephone: (602)-389-3500

(Address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of registrants principal executive offices)

Robert G. Sarver

President & Chief Executive Officer

Western Alliance Bancorporation

One E. Washington Street, Suite 1400

Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Telephone: (602)-389-3500

(Name, address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of agent for service)

Copies to:

Steven D. Pidgeon, Esq.

DLA Piper LLP (US)

2525 East Camelback Road, Suite 1000

Phoenix, Arizona 85016

Telephone: (480) 606-5100

Approximate date of commencement of proposed sale to the public: From time to time after the effective date of this registration statement.

If the only securities being registered on this form are being offered pursuant to dividend or interest reinvestment plans, please check the following box. "

If any of the securities being registered on this form are to be offered on a delayed or continuous basis pursuant to Rule 415 under the Securities Act of 1933, other than securities offered only in connection with dividend or interest reinvestment plans, check the following box. p

If this form is filed to register additional securities for an offering pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act, please check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering. "

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

If this form is a post-effective amendment filed pursuant to Rule 462(c) under the Securities Act, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering.

If this form is a registration statement pursuant to General Instruction I.D. or a post-effective amendment thereto that shall become effective upon filing with the Commission pursuant to Rule 462(e) under the Securities Act, check the box.

If this form is a post-effective amendment to a registration statement filed pursuant to General Instruction I.D. filed to register additional securities or additional classes of securities pursuant to Rule 413(b) under the Securities Act, check the following box.

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

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

CALCULATION OF REGISTRATION FEE

Title of Each Class of Securities to be Registered	Amount to be Registered (1)	Proposed Maximum Offering Price Per Security (1)	Proposed Maximum Aggregate Offering Price (1) (2)	Amount of Registration Fee (1) (2)
Debt Securities	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Common Stock, par value \$0.0001 per share	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Preferred Stock, par value \$0.0001 per share	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Depository Shares	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Purchase Contracts	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Units	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Warrants	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Total			\$400,000,000	\$45,840 (4)

- (1) There are being registered hereunder such indeterminate number of securities as may be sold by the registrant from time to time, which together shall have an aggregate initial offering price not to exceed \$400,000,000. Any securities registered hereunder may be sold separately or as units with the other securities registered hereunder. The proposed maximum offering price per unit will be determined, from time to time, by the registrant in connection with the issuance by the registrant of the securities registered hereunder. In addition, pursuant to Rule 416 of the rules and regulations under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, the shares being registered hereunder include such indeterminate number of shares of common stock and preferred stock as may be issuable with respect to the shares being registered hereunder as a result of stock splits, stock dividends or similar transactions.
- (2) Estimated solely for the purpose of determining the registration fee in accordance with Rule 457(o) of the rules and regulations under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and based upon the maximum aggregate offering price of all securities being registered.
- (3) Omitted pursuant to General Instruction II.D of Form S-3 under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended.
- (4) The Registrant previously paid a registration fee of \$22,230 pursuant to its previously filed Registration Statement on Form S-3, File No. Registration No. 333-158971 (the "Prior Registration Statement"), originally filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on May 4, 2009 and subsequently declared effective. Of the \$400,000,000 of the Registrant's securities registered pursuant to the Prior Registration Statement, only \$325,956,700 of its securities were sold. Pursuant to Rule 415(a)(6) under the Securities Act, the registrant hereby includes in this registration statement the \$74,043,300 of securities remaining unsold under the Prior Registration Statement. Pursuant to Rule 415(a)(6) and Rule 457(p) under the Securities Act, the Registrant is applying the filing fee of \$4,114.96 associated with the \$74,043,300 of unsold securities under the Prior Registration Statement against the total filing fee of \$45,840 that would otherwise be due in connection with this registration statement. In accordance with Rule 415(a)(6) of the Securities Act, the Prior Registration Statement

will be deemed terminated as of the effective date of this registration statement.

The registrant hereby amends this registration statement on such date or dates as may be necessary to delay its effective date until the registrant shall file a further amendment which specifically states that this registration statement shall thereafter become effective in accordance with Section 8(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 or until the registration statement shall become effective on such date as the Commission, acting pursuant to said Section 8(a), may determine.

Table of Contents

The information in this prospectus is not complete and may be changed. We may not sell these securities until the registration statement filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission is effective. This prospectus is not an offer to sell these securities and it is not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any state where such offer or sale is not permitted.

Subject To Completion, Dated May 3, 2012

PROSPECTUS

WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION

**Debt Securities, Common Stock, Preferred Stock, Depositary Shares,
Purchase Contracts, Units and Warrants**

By this prospectus, we 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 offer securities, we will provide you with a prospectus supplement describing the terms of the specific issue of securities, including the price of the securities. 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 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.

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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. These risks are incorporated by reference as set forth under the heading Risk Factors. We may also include specific risk factors in an applicable prospectus supplement.

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 3, 2012.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<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>	3
<u>ABOUT WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION</u>	3
<u>RISK FACTORS</u>	6
<u>RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES</u>	6
<u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u>	6
<u>THE SECURITIES WE MAY OFFER</u>	6
<u>DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES</u>	7
<u>DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK</u>	17
<u>DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK</u>	18
<u>DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITARY SHARES</u>	21
<u>DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS</u>	23
<u>DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASE CONTRACTS</u>	24
<u>DESCRIPTION OF UNITS</u>	25
<u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u>	25
<u>LEGAL MATTERS</u>	27
<u>EXPERTS</u>	27
<u>EX-4.10</u>	
<u>EX-4.11</u>	
<u>EX-5.1</u>	
<u>EX-5.2</u>	
<u>EX 5.3</u>	
<u>EX-12.1</u>	
<u>EX-23.4</u>	

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

You should rely only on the information provided in this prospectus and in any prospectus supplement, including the information incorporated by reference. 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 Securities and Exchange Commission (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 1-800-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 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:

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.**

Table of Contents

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, 2011 (including information incorporated by reference in the Form 10-K from our definitive proxy statement for the 2012 annual meeting of stockholders, which was filed on March 16, 2012) filed on March 2, 2012;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on April 6, 2012 and April 30, 2012; and

the description of our common stock contained in our registration statement on Form 8-A, filed with the SEC on June 27, 2005, including any amendment or report filed for the purpose of updating such description.

All filings that we may file pursuant to the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act), subsequent to the date hereof and prior to effectiveness of this registration statement shall be deemed to be incorporated in this prospectus and to be a part hereof from the date of filing of such documents or reports. In addition, 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 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.

Table of Contents**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 Exchange Act. The Company intends 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: 1) dependency on real estate and events that negatively impact real estate; 2) high concentration of commercial real estate, construction and development and commercial and industrial loans; 3) actual credit losses may exceed expected losses in the loan portfolio; 4) possible need for a valuation allowance against deferred tax assets; 5) the effects of interest rates and interest rate policy; 6) exposure of financial instruments to certain market risks may cause volatility in earnings; 7) dependence on low-cost deposits; 8) ability to borrow from Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) or Federal Reserve Bank (FRB); 9) events that further impair goodwill; 10) increase in the cost of funding as the result of changes to our credit rating; 11) expansion strategies may not be successful; 12) our ability to control costs; 13) risk associated with changes in internal controls and processes; 14) our ability to compete in a highly competitive market; 15) our ability to recruit and retain qualified employees, especially seasoned relationship bankers; 16) the effects of terrorist attacks or threats of war; 17) risk of audit of U.S. federal tax deductions; 18) perpetration of internal fraud; 19) risk of operating in a highly regulated industry and our ability to remain in compliance; 20) possible need to revalue our deferred tax assets if stock transactions result in limitations on deductibility of net operating losses or loan losses; 21) exposure to environmental liabilities related to the properties we acquire title; 22) recent legislative and regulatory changes including Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, or EESA, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, or ARRA, and the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 and the rules and regulations that might be promulgated thereunder; 23) cyber security risks; and 24) risks related to ownership and price of our common stock.

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 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 or in the incorporated documents might not occur, and you should not put undue reliance on any forward-looking statements.

ABOUT WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION

Western Alliance Bancorporation (the Company), incorporated in the State of Nevada, is a multi-bank holding company headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona that provides full service banking and lending to locally owned businesses, professional firms, real estate developers and investors, local non-profit organizations, high net worth individuals and other consumers through its three wholly-owned subsidiary banks (the Banks): Bank of Nevada (BON), operating in Southern Nevada, Western Alliance Bank (WAB), operating in Arizona and Northern Nevada, and Torrey Pines Bank (TPB), operating in California. On December 31, 2010, the Company merged its former Alta Alliance Bank (AAB) subsidiary into its Torrey Pines Bank subsidiary, and its former First Independent Bank of Nevada subsidiary into its Alliance Bank of Arizona subsidiary. As part of the latter merger, Alliance Bank of Arizona (ABA) was renamed Western Alliance Bank doing business as Alliance Bank of Arizona (in Arizona) and First Independent Bank (FIB) (in Nevada). In addition, the Company's non-bank subsidiaries, Shine Investment Advisory Services, Inc. (Shine) and Western Alliance Equipment Finance (WAEF), offer an array of financial products and services aimed at satisfying the needs of small to mid-sized businesses and their proprietors, including financial planning, custody and investments, and equipment leasing nationwide. These entities are collectively referred to herein as the Company. The Company divested its wholly owned subsidiary Premier Trust, Inc. (Premier Trust) as of September 1, 2010. On a consolidated basis, as of December 31, 2011, we had approximately \$6.84 billion in total assets, \$4.68 billion in total net loans, \$5.66 billion in deposits and \$636.7 million in stockholders' equity. We have focused our lending activities primarily on commercial real estate related loans (including business loans secured by apartment buildings, professional offices, industrial facilities, retail centers and other commercial properties), which comprised 61% of our total loan portfolio at December 31, 2011.

We commenced operations in 1994 in the Las Vegas, Nevada market. We grew to approximately \$5 billion in assets by year end 2007, at which time we had reported 10 consecutive years of profitability. The global and U.S. economies, and the economies of the local communities in which we operate, experienced a rapid decline in 2008. The financial markets and the financial services industry in particular suffered unprecedented disruption, causing many major institutions to fail or require government intervention to avoid failure. These conditions were brought about

largely by the erosion of U.S. and global credit markets, including a significant and rapid

Table of Contents

deterioration of the mortgage lending and related real estate markets. Despite these conditions, in 2011, we continued to grow net interest income to \$257.7 million, up 10.8% from \$232.6 million in 2010. However, as with many financial institutions in our markets, we continued to suffer losses resulting primarily from provisions and charge-offs for credit losses, and net losses on sales/valuations of other repossessed assets, though not at the same levels as 2010, resulting in a lower provision for credit losses in 2011 compared to 2010. As a result our net interest income after provision for credit loss in 2011 was \$211.5 million, up 51.8% from \$139.3 million in 2010.

On April 19, 2012, we announced our unaudited consolidated financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2012. We reported net income of \$11.3 million, or \$0.12 per share, including \$1.3 million after-tax charge from repossessed assets valuations/sales. Total loans increased \$146 million, or 3.1%, to \$4.93 billion at March 31, 2012 from \$4.78 billion on December 31, 2011. This increase was driven by growth in commercial and industrial loans, commercial leases and commercial real estate loans. Loans increased \$648 million from March 31, 2011. Qualifying Small Business Lending Fund loans grew \$82 million during the quarter to \$169 million, or 11.2%, from the baseline at March 31, 2012. Total deposits increased \$241 million, or 4.3%, to \$5.90 billion at March 31, 2012 from \$5.66 billion at December 31, 2011, with growth primarily in non-interest bearing demand, interest bearing demand and money market accounts, partially offset by declines in savings accounts and certificates of deposit. Deposits increased \$402 million from March 31, 2011.

Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010

As a result of the financial crisis, the U.S. Congress passed, and on July 21, 2010 President Obama signed into law, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, or the Dodd-Frank Act. The Dodd-Frank Act has had, and will continue to have, a broad impact on the financial services industry. The Federal regulatory agencies have issued a number of requests for public comment on proposed rules and final regulations to implement the requirements of the Dodd-Frank Act. The following items provide a brief description of the impact of the Dodd-Frank Act on the operations and activities, both currently and prospectively, of the Company and its subsidiaries.

Deposit Insurance. The Dodd-Frank Act and implementing final rules from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) make permanent the \$250,000 deposit insurance limit for insured deposits. The assessment base against which an insured depository institution s deposit insurance premiums paid to the FDIC s Deposit Insurance Fund (or the DIF) has been revised to use the institution s average consolidated total assets less its average equity rather than its deposit base. These provisions could increase the FDIC deposit insurance premiums paid by our insured depository institution subsidiaries. The Dodd-Frank Act also amended the Federal Deposit Insurance Act to provide full deposit insurance coverage for non-interest-bearing transaction accounts beginning on December 31, 2010 through December 31, 2012. As a result, the FDIC discontinued its Transaction Account Guarantee Program, created under the Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program. Unlike the FDIC s programs, no opt outs from participation in the Dodd-Frank Act s insurance protection were allowed and institutions were not required to pay a separate assessment for participation.

Increased Capital Standards and Enhanced Supervision. The federal banking agencies are required to establish minimum leverage and risk-based capital requirements for banks and bank holding companies. These new standards will be no lower than existing regulatory capital and leverage standards applicable to insured depository institutions and may, in fact, be higher when established by the agencies. Compliance with heightened capital standards may reduce our ability to generate or originate revenue-producing assets and thereby restrict revenue generation from banking and non-banking operations as well as diminish our ability to increase our net interest margin. The Dodd-Frank Act also increases regulatory oversight, supervision and examination of banks, bank holding companies and their respective subsidiaries by the appropriate regulatory agency. Compliance with new regulatory requirements and expanded examination processes could increase our cost of operations.

Trust Preferred Securities. Under the increased capital standards established by the Dodd-Frank Act, bank holding companies are prohibited from including in their regulatory Tier 1 capital hybrid debt and equity securities issued on or after May 19, 2010. Among the hybrid debt and equity securities included in this prohibition are trust preferred securities, which the Company has used in the past as a tool for raising additional Tier 1 capital and otherwise improving its regulatory capital ratios. Although the Company may continue to include our existing trust preferred securities as Tier 1 capital, the prohibition on the use of these securities as Tier 1 capital going forward may limit the Company s ability to raise capital in the future.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The Dodd-Frank Act creates a new, independent Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (or the Bureau) within the FRB that is tasked with establishing and implementing rules and regulations under certain federal

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

consumer protection laws. These consumer protection laws govern the manner in which we offer many of our financial products and services. On July 21, 2011, the rulemaking and certain enforcement authority for enumerated federal consumer financial protection laws was transferred to the Bureau. As a result of this transfer, the Bureau now has significant interpretive and enforcement authority with respect to many of the federal laws and regulations under which we operate. In accordance with this authority, the Bureau has officially transferred many of the regulations formerly maintained by the FRB and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, to a new chapter of Title 12 of the Code of Federal Regulations maintained

Table of Contents

by the Bureau, many of which deal with consumer credit, account disclosures and residential mortgage lending. Although the Bureau did not make significant or substantive changes to the rules as part of this transfer, it now has authority to promulgate guidance and interpretations of these rules and regulations in a manner that could differ from prior interpretations from other federal regulatory bodies.

State Enforcement of Consumer Financial Protection Laws. The Dodd-Frank Act permits states to adopt consumer protection laws and regulations that are stricter than those regulations promulgated by the Bureau. State attorneys general are permitted to enforce consumer protection rules adopted by the Bureau against certain state-chartered institutions. Although our subsidiaries do not currently offer many of these consumer products or services, compliance with any such new regulations would increase our cost of operations and, as a result, could limit our ability to expand into these products and services.

Transactions with Affiliates and Insiders. The Dodd-Frank Act enhances the requirements for certain transactions with affiliates under Section 23A and 23B of the Federal Reserve Act, including an expansion of the definition of covered transactions and an increase in the amount of time for which collateral requirements regarding covered transactions must be maintained. Additionally, limitations on transactions with insiders are expanded through the (i) strengthening on loan restrictions to insiders, and (ii) expansion of the types of transactions subject to the various limits, including derivative transactions, repurchase agreements, reverse repurchase agreements and securities lending or borrowing transactions. Restrictions are also placed on certain asset sales to and from an insider to an institution, including requirements that such sales be on market terms and, in certain circumstances, approved by the institution's board of directors.

Corporate Governance. The Dodd-Frank Act addresses many corporate governance and executive compensation matters that will affect most U.S. publicly traded companies, including us. The Dodd-Frank Act (1) grants shareholders of U.S. publicly traded companies an advisory vote on executive compensation; (2) enhances independence requirements for compensation committee members; (3) requires companies listed on national securities exchanges to adopt incentive-based compensation claw-back policies for executive officers; and (4) provides the SEC with authority to adopt proxy access rules that would allow shareholders of publicly traded-companies to nominate candidates for election as a director and have those nominees included in a company's proxy materials. The SEC recently adopted final rules implementing rules for the shareholder advisory vote on executive compensation and golden parachute payments.

Additional regulations called for in the Dodd-Frank Act, including regulations dealing with the risk retention requirements for, and disclosures required from, residential mortgage originators will be implemented over time. Although the Dodd-Frank Act contains some specific timelines for the Federal regulatory agencies to follow, it remains unclear whether the agencies will be able to meet these deadlines and when rules will be proposed and finalized. We continue to monitor the rulemaking process and, while our current assessment is that the Dodd-Frank Act and the implementing regulations will not have a material effect on the Company, given the uncertainty associated with the manner in which the provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act will be implemented, the full extent of the impact such requirements will have on our operations is unclear. The changes resulting from the Dodd-Frank Act may impact the profitability of our business activities, require changes to certain of our business practices, impose upon us more stringent capital, liquidity and leverage requirements or otherwise adversely affect our business. These changes may also require us to invest significant management attention and resources to evaluate and make any changes necessary to comply with new statutory and regulatory requirements. Failure to comply with the new requirements could negatively impact our results of operations and financial condition. While we cannot predict what effect any presently contemplated or future changes in the laws or regulations or their interpretations would have on us, these changes could be materially adverse to our investors.

Participation in Small Business Lending Fund Program

On September 27, 2011, the Company received \$141.0 million from the issuance of 141,000 shares of non-cumulative perpetual preferred stock, Series B, par value of \$0.0001 per share and a liquidation preference of \$1,000 per share, to the U.S. Treasury Department pursuant to participation in the U.S. Department of Treasury's Small Business Lending Fund Program (SBLF). Initially established at 5%, the dividend rate can vary from as low as 1% to as high as 9% in part depending upon the Company's success in qualifying small business lending. On September 27, 2011, the Company fully redeemed the \$140.0 million, or 140,000 shares plus accrued and unpaid dividends, of cumulative Series A preferred stock that was sold to the U.S. Treasury Department in November 2008 as part of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) Capital Purchase Program.

Table of Contents**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, 2011, 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

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, 2011, we had 141,000 shares of preferred stock outstanding, all of which were issued on September 27, 2011.

	Year ended December 31,				
	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges (Including deposit interest)	1.62				1.41
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges (Excluding deposit interest)	2.26				2.84

We computed the ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends by dividing earnings by the sum of our fixed charges and dividends accrued on our preferred stock and related discount accretion. For purposes of computing this ratio, earnings consisted of (i) net income (loss) before income taxes and discontinued operations plus (ii) fixed charges. Fixed charges consisted of interest on deposits plus interest on borrowed funds. Earnings including deposit interest for the years ended December 31, 2010, 2009 and 2008 were insufficient to cover fixed charges and dividends and accretion on preferred stock by \$59.1 million, \$83.5 million and \$101.8 million, respectively.

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 bank subsidiaries and our other subsidiaries, including purchasing nonperforming assets from our bank subsidiaries and making capital injections into our bank subsidiaries;

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 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

Table of Contents

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.

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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

Table of Contents

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;

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,

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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;

Table of Contents

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 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

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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 the Company's 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;

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,

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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 its 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 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

Table of Contents

other short-term borrowings. Any capital loans that we make to Bank of Nevada, Western Alliance Bank and Torrey Pines Bank and our other non-banking subsidiaries would be subordinate in right of payment to deposits and to other indebtedness of the banks or our other 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.

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.

Table of Contents

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.

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

the depository 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 depository, 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

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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 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

Table of Contents

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 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,

Table of Contents

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.

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.

Table of Contents

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;

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:

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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

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.

Table of Contents

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 amended and restated articles of incorporation and amended and restated by-laws, each as amended and restated. 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 amended and restated articles of incorporation and amended and restated by-laws because they, and not the summary, define the rights of holders of shares of our common stock. You can obtain copies of our amended and restated articles of incorporation and amended and restated by-laws by following the directions under the heading [Where You Can Find More Information](#).

General

Our amended and restated articles of incorporation provide the authority to issue 200,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.0001 per share. At April 30, 2012, there were 83,137,711 shares of common stock issued and we had outstanding stock options granted to directors, officers and other employees for approximately 2,018,932 shares of our common stock.

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.

Liquidation Rights

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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.

Table of Contents

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 not declare, and we may not pay, dividends or other distributions, unless we have paid or the board has declared or set aside all accumulated dividends and any sinking fund, retirement fund or other retirement payments on any class of stock having preference as to payments of dividends over our common stock, including our outstanding shares Non-Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series B (described below). This could affect our ability to pay dividends on the 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 subsidiaries, 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. All shares of common stock offered pursuant to a prospectus supplement, or issuable upon conversion, exchange or exercise of preferred stock or other convertible securities, will, when issued, be fully paid and non-assessable, which means that the full purchase price of the shares will have been paid and the holders of the shares will not be assessed any additional monies for the shares.

Some Important Charter Provisions

Our amended and restated articles of incorporation provide 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. Any amendment to our amended and restated articles of incorporation must be approved by 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 approval by the affirmative vote of at least 80% of the outstanding shares of each class entitled to vote is required to amend certain of the provisions contained in the amended and restated articles of incorporation regarding classification of the board of directors, removal of directors and approval of business combinations. Our amended and restated by-laws may be amended by the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the board of directors or by stockholders by the affirmative vote of at least 80% of the total votes eligible to be voted, at a duly constituted meeting called for that purpose. Additionally, our amended and restated articles of incorporation authorize 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. Also, in order to preserve the tax treatment of our net operating losses and built-in losses, our amended and restated articles of incorporation and by-laws restrict the ability of a person, entity or group to accumulate 4.9% or more of our common stock and the ability of persons, entities or groups owning 4.9% or more of common stock from acquiring additional shares of common stock without the approval of the Board of Directors.

The foregoing provisions may have the effect of deterring hostile takeovers or delaying changes in control or management of us.

Since the terms of our amended and restated articles of incorporation and amended and restated by-laws may differ from the general information we are providing, you should only rely on the actual provisions of our amended and restated articles of incorporation and amended and restated by-laws. 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 amended and restated articles of incorporation, and the applicable certificate of designation to our amended and restated articles of incorporation, determining the

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

terms of the related series of preferred stock and our amended and restated by-laws, 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 amended and restated articles of incorporation, the applicable certificate of designation and our amended and restated by-laws because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of shares of our preferred stock.

General

We are authorized to issue 20,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.0001 per share. As of April 30, 2012, 141,000 shares of preferred stock were issued and outstanding, consisting of 141,000 shares of Non-Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series B. Our amended and restated articles of incorporation, subject to limitations prescribed in such articles and subject to limitations prescribed by Nevada 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

Table of Contents

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 applicable 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 depository 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;

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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.

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.

Table of Contents

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 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

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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.

Table of Contents

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.

Under the Nevada Revised Statutes, 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 amended and restated articles of incorporation, if the amendment would:

- (1) increase or decrease the aggregate number of authorized shares of such a series of preferred stock and includes provisions pursuant to which only money will be paid or scrip will be issued to holders who both (i) before the amendment becomes effective, in the aggregate hold 10% or more of the outstanding shares of that series, and (ii) would otherwise be entitled to receive fractions of shares in exchange for the cancellation of all of their outstanding shares, in which case, in addition to any vote otherwise required, 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;
- (2) increase or decrease the aggregate number of authorized shares of such a series of preferred stock and such increase or decrease would alter or change the powers, preferences or special rights of the shares of such class so as to affect them adversely, in which case, in addition to any vote otherwise required, 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;
- (3) decrease the aggregate number of issued and outstanding shares of that series of preferred stock without correspondingly decreasing the number of authorized shares of that series of preferred stock, 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; or
- (4) decrease the aggregate number of issued and outstanding shares of that series of preferred stock and such decrease would alter or change the powers, preferences or special rights of the shares of such class so as to affect them adversely, in which case, in addition to any vote otherwise required, 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

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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.

Table of Contents

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

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

Dividends and Other Distributions

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

Redemption of Depositary Shares

If we redeem the series of preferred stock that underlies the depositary shares, the depositary will redeem the depositary shares from the proceeds it receives from the redemption of the preferred stock it holds. The depositary will redeem the number of depositary shares that represent the amount of underlying preferred stock that we have redeemed. The redemption price for depositary 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 depositary shares, the depositary will select which depositary shares to redeem by lot, or some substantially equivalent method.

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

Voting the Preferred Stock

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

Withdrawal of Preferred Stock

When a holder surrenders depositary receipts at the corporate trust office of the depositary, 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 depositary 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.

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.

Table of Contents

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 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;

Table of Contents

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;

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

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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 stock, preferred stock or depository 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

Table of Contents

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 depository arrangements.

The descriptions of the purchase contracts and any applicable underlying security or pledge or depository 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.

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We 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 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.

Table of Contents

We 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 may directly solicit offers to purchase offered securities. Agents designated by us from time to time may also solicit offers to purchase offered securities. Any agent designated by us, 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 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 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 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 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.

If so indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will authorize underwriters, dealers or other persons to solicit offers by certain institutions to purchase offered securities from us 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 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. Any remarketing firm will be identified and the terms of its agreement, if any, with us and

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

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, to indemnification by us 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 in the ordinary course of business.

Table of Contents

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.

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 of those securities 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, Lionel Sawyer & Collins, or DLA Piper LLP (US). Mr. Theisen is Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Western Alliance and owns shares and holds options to purchase 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, 2011, have been audited by McGladrey LLP (formerly McGladrey & Pullen, 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**PART II****INFORMATION NOT REQUIRED IN PROSPECTUS****Item 14. Other Expenses of Issuance and Distribution.**

Estimated fees and expenses, other than underwriting discounts and commissions, payable by Western Alliance in connection with the issuance and distribution of the offered securities as follows:

Item	Amount
SEC registration fee	\$ 41,725
Legal fees and expenses	35,000
Accounting fees and expenses	10,000
Printing fees	3,000
Miscellaneous	
Total	\$ 89,725

Item 15. Indemnification of Officers and Directors.

Article V of Western Alliance's amended and restated articles of incorporation provides that, to the fullest extent permitted by applicable law as then in effect, no director or officer shall be personally liable to Western Alliance or any stockholder for damages for breach of fiduciary duty as a director or officer, except for (i) acts or omissions which involve intentional misconduct, fraud, or a knowing violation of law, or (ii) the payment of dividends in violation of Nevada Revised Statutes § 78.300.

Article VI of Western Alliance's amended and restated articles of incorporation and Article IV of Western Alliance's amended and restated by-laws provide for indemnification of its directors, officers, employees and other agents and advancement of expenses. As permitted by the Nevada Revised Statutes, Western Alliance's amended and restated by-laws provide that the corporation will indemnify a director or officer if the individual acted in good faith in a manner that he reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of Western Alliance, and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The Nevada Revised Statutes do not permit indemnification as to any claim, issue or matter as to which such person has been adjudged by a court of competent jurisdiction to be liable to Western Alliance, or for amounts paid in settlement to the corporation, unless and only to the extent that the court in which the action or suit was brought determines upon application that in view of all of the circumstances of the case, the person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnity for such expenses as the court deems proper. In addition, Western Alliance's amended and restated by-laws provide that indemnification shall not be made to or on behalf of any director or officer if a final adjudication establishes that his or her acts or omissions involved intentional misconduct, fraud, or a knowing violation of the law and were material to the cause of action.

Western Alliance has entered into indemnification agreements with certain of its directors and executive officers in addition to indemnification provided for in its amended and restated by-laws. Western Alliance maintains, on behalf of its directors and officers, insurance protection against certain liabilities arising out of the discharge of their duties, as well as insurance covering Western Alliance for indemnification payments made to its directors and officers for certain liabilities. The premiums for such insurance are paid by Western Alliance.

Item 16. Exhibits

The Exhibit Index included herewith is incorporated herein by reference.

Item 17. Undertakings.

The undersigned registrant hereby undertakes:

- (1) To file, during any period in which offers or sales are being made, a post-effective amendment to this registration statement:
 - (i) To include any prospectus required by Section 10(a)(3) of the Securities Act of 1933;

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

(ii) To reflect in the prospectus any facts or events arising after the effective date of the registration statement (or the most recent post-effective amendment thereof) which, individually or in the aggregate, represent a fundamental change in the information set forth in the registration statement. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any increase or decrease in volume of securities offered (if the total dollar value of securities offered would not exceed that which was registered) and any deviation from the low or high end of the estimated maximum offering range may be reflected in the form of prospectus filed with the Commission pursuant to Rule 424(b) if, in the aggregate, the changes in volume and price represent no more than 20 percent change in the maximum aggregate offering price set forth in the Calculation of Registration Fee table in the effective registration statement;

(iii) To include any material information with respect to the plan of distribution not previously disclosed in the registration statement or any material change to such information in the registration statement; provided, however, that paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) do not

Table of Contents

apply if the information required to be included in a post-effective amendment by those paragraphs is contained in reports filed with or furnished to the Commission by the registrant pursuant to section 13 or section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 that are incorporated by reference in the registration statement, or is contained in a form of prospectus filed pursuant to Rule 424(b) that is part of the registration statement.

(2) That, for the purpose of determining any liability under the Securities Act of 1933, each such post-effective amendment shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered therein, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial bona fide offering thereof.

(3) To remove from registration by means of a post-effective amendment any of the securities being registered which remain unsold at the termination of the offering.

(4) That, for the purpose of determining liability under the Securities Act of 1933 to any purchaser:

(i) Each prospectus filed by the registrant pursuant to Rule 424(b)(3) shall be deemed to be part of the registration statement as of the date the filed prospectus was deemed part of and included in the registration statement; and

(ii) Each prospectus required to be filed pursuant to Rule 424(b)(2), (b)(5) or (b)(7) as part of a registration statement in reliance on Rule 430B relating to an offering made pursuant to Rule 415(a)(1)(i), (vii) or (x) for the purpose of providing the information required by section 10(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 shall be deemed to be part of and included in the registration statement as of the earlier of the date such form of prospectus is first used after effectiveness or the date of the first contract of sale of securities in the offering described in the prospectus. As provided in Rule 430B, for liability purposes of the issuer and any person that is at that date an underwriter, such date shall be deemed to be a new effective date of the registration statement relating to the securities in the registration statement to which the prospectus relates, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial bona fide offering thereof. Provided, however, that no statement made in a registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement or made in a document incorporated or deemed incorporated by reference into the registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement will, as to a purchaser with a time of contract of sale prior to such effective date, supersede or modify any statement that was made in the registration statement or prospectus that was part of the registration statement or made in any such document immediately prior to such effective date.

(5) That, for the purpose of determining liability of the registrant under the Securities Act of 1933 to any purchaser in the initial distribution of the securities, the undersigned registrant undertakes that in a primary offering of securities of the undersigned registrant pursuant to this registration statement, regardless of the underwriting method used to sell the securities to the purchaser, if the securities are offered or sold to such purchaser by means of any of the following communications, the undersigned registrant will be a seller to the purchaser and will be considered to offer or sell such securities to such purchaser:

(i) Any preliminary prospectus or prospectus of the undersigned registrant relating to the offering required to be filed pursuant to Rule 424;

(ii) Any free writing prospectus relating to the offering prepared by or on behalf of the undersigned registrant or used or referred to by the undersigned registrant;

(iii) The portion of any other free writing prospectus relating to the offering containing material information about the undersigned registrant or its securities provided by or on behalf of the undersigned registrant; and

(iv) Any other communication that is an offer in the offering made by the undersigned registrant to the purchaser.

(6) That, for purposes of determining any liability under the Securities Act of 1933, each filing of the registrant's annual report pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (and, where applicable, each filing of an employee benefit plan's annual report pursuant to Section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934) that is incorporated by reference in the registration statement shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered therein, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial bona fide offering thereof.

(7) Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act of 1933 may be permitted to directors, officers and controlling persons of the registrant pursuant to the foregoing provisions, or otherwise, the registrant has been advised that in the opinion of the Securities and Exchange Commission such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act of 1933 and is, therefore, unenforceable. In the event that a claim for indemnification against such liabilities (other than the payment by the registrant of expenses incurred or paid by a director, officer or controlling person of the registrant in the successful defense of any action, suit or proceeding) is asserted by such

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

director, officer or controlling person in connection with the securities being registered, the registrant will, unless in the opinion of its counsel the has been settled by controlling precedent, submit to a court of appropriate jurisdiction the question whether such indemnification by it is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act of 1933 and will be governed by the final adjudication of such issue.

(8) To file an application for the purpose of determining the eligibility of the trustee to act under subsection (a) of Section 310 of the Trust Indenture Act in accordance with the rules and regulations prescribed by the Commission under Section 305(b)(2) of the Trust Indenture Act.

Table of Contents**SIGNATURES**

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, the registrant certifies that it has reasonable grounds to believe that it meets all of the requirements for filing on Form S-3 and has duly caused this registration statement to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized, in the City of Las Vegas, State of Nevada, on May 3, 2012.

WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION

By: */s/* ROBERT G. SARVER
Robert G. Sarver
Chairman, President and
Chief Executive Officer

POWER OF ATTORNEY

Each person whose signature appears below constitutes and appoints Robert G. Sarver and Dale Gibbons, and each and any of them, his or her true and lawful attorney-in-fact and agent, each acting alone, with full and several power of substitution, for him or her and his or her name, place and stead, in any and all capacities, to sign any and all amendments to this registration statement, and to file the same, with all exhibits thereto, and all documents in connection therewith, with the Securities and Exchange Commission, granting unto said attorneys-in-fact and agents, and each of them full power and authority to do and perform each and every act and thing requisite and necessary to be done in and about the premises, as fully to all intents and purposes as he or she might or could do in person, hereby ratifying and confirming all that said attorney-in-fact and agents or any of them, or their substitutes, may lawfully do or cause to be done.

Pursuant to the requirement of the Securities Act of 1933, this registration statement has been signed below by the following persons in the capacities indicated as of May 3, 2012:

Signature	Title
<i>/s/</i> ROBERT G. SARVER Robert G. Sarver	Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer (Principal Executive Officer)
<i>/s/</i> DALE GIBBONS Dale Gibbons	Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (Principal Financial Officer)
<i>/s/</i> J. KELLY ARDREY JR. J. Kelly Ardrey Jr.	Senior Vice President and Chief Accounting Officer (Principal Accounting Officer)
<i>/s/</i> KENNETH A. VECCHIONE Kenneth A. Vecchione	President and Chief Operating Officer
<i>/s/</i> BRUCE D. BEACH Bruce D. Beach	Director
<i>/s/</i> WILLIAM S. BOYD William S. Boyd	Director

Edgar Filing: WESTERN ALLIANCE BANCORPORATION - Form S-3

/s/ STEVEN J. HILTON Director

Steven J. Hilton

/s/ MARIANNE BOYD JOHNSON Director

Marianne Boyd Johnson

/s/ CARY MACK Director

Cary Mack

/s/ TODD MARSHALL Director

Todd Marshall

Table of Contents

Signature	Title
/s/ M. NAFEEES NAGY, M.D. M. Nafees Nagy, M.D.	Director
/s/ JAMES NAVE, D.V.M. James Nave, D.V.M.	Director
/s/ JOHN P. SANDE III John P. Sande III	Director
/s/ DONALD D. SNYDER Donald D. Snyder	Director
/s/ SUNG WON SOHN, PH.D. Sung Won Sohn, Ph.D.	Director

Table of Contents

INDEX TO EXHIBITS

- * 1.1 Form of Underwriting Agreement.
- 4.1 Specimen common stock certificate of Western Alliance Bancorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.1 of Western Alliance Bancorporation's Registration Statement on Form S-1, File No. 333-124406, filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on June 27, 2005, as amended).
- 4.2 Form of Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A, stock certificate (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.1 to Western Alliance Bancorporation's Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on November 25, 2008).
- 4.3 Form of Warrant to purchase shares of Western Alliance Bancorporation common stock, dated December 12, 2003, together with a schedule of warrant holders (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.9 to Western Alliance Bancorporation's Registration Statement on Form S-1 filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 28, 2005).
- 4.4 Warrant, dated November 21, 2008, between Western Alliance Bancorporation and the United States Department of the Treasury (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.2 to Western Alliance's Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on November 25, 2008).
- 4.5 Senior Debt Indenture, dated August 25, 2010, between Western Alliance Bancorporation and Wells Fargo Bank, National Association, as trustee (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.1 to Western Alliance's Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on August 25, 2010).
- 4.6 First Supplemental Indenture, dated August 25, 2010, between Western Alliance Bancorporation and Wells Fargo Bank, National Association, as trustee (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.2 to Western Alliance's Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on August 25, 2010).

Table of Contents

4.7	Form of 10.00% Senior Notes due 2015 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.3 to Western Alliance's Form 8-K filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on August 25, 2010).
4.8	Form of Non-Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series B, stock certificate (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.8 to Western Alliance's Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 2, 2012).
* 4.9	Form of Certificate of Designations.
4.10	Form of Senior Debt Indenture.
4.11	Form of Subordinated Debt Indenture.
* 4.12	Form of Deposit Agreement for Depositary Shares.
* 4.13	Form of Warrant Agreement.
* 4.14	Form of Guarantee Agreement.
* 4.15	Form of Purchase Contract Agreement (including form of related security certificate).
* 4.16	Form of Unit Agreement.
* 4.17	Form of Preferred Stock Certificate.
* 4.18	Form of Senior Debt Security.
* 4.19	Form of Subordinated Debt Security.
* 4.20	Form of Depositary Receipt.
* 4.21	Form of Warrant Certificate.
* 4.22	Form of Unit Certificate.
5.1	Opinion of Randall S. Theisen, Esq.
5.2	Opinion of Lionel Sawyer & Collins.
5.3	Opinion of DLA Piper LLP (US)
12.1	Statement of Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges.
23.1	Consent of Randall S. Theisen, Esq. (included as part of Exhibit 5.1).
23.2	Consent of Lionel Sawyer & Collins (included as part of Exhibit 5.2).
23.3	Consent of DLA Piper (US) LLP (included as part of Exhibit 5.3).
23.4	Consent of McGladrey LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm.
24.1	Power of Attorney (included in the signature page to this Registration Statement).
* 25.1	Form T-1 of Trustee under the Senior Debt Indenture.
* 25.2	Form T-1 of Trustee under the Subordinated Debt Indenture.

* To be filed in connection with the offering of securities registered hereunder.