

TALKING POINTS/INFO SUPPORTING BYLAW AMENDMENT

HISTORY:

The desire to provide equitable representation for the entire AANA membership on the Board of Trustees (now Board of Directors) led to an exploration of new nominating procedures. In 1947, the newly formed Planning Committee began examining a proposal to establish a House of Delegates to more effectively represent the membership. After lengthy study, the committee proposed a resolution at the 1951 Business Meeting that called for "indefinite postponement" of implementation of the House of Delegates....

The resolution passed unanimously.

At the 1953 Business Meeting, the membership approved bylaws revisions that established the basic regional structure for electing trustees (directors). There have been some revisions through the years.

In 1986 Business Meeting that required the Board of Directors to study the allocation of states into Regions. In response to this directive, the Ad Hoc Committee on Re-Allocation of Regions was created. At the 1987 Business Meeting, the committee recommended no change to the regional structure as analysis showed little member benefit would be gained through the effort.

In 2004, the Board of Directors reappointed the Special Committee on Regional Alignment with the following charge:

- Develop one recommendation to either make no change to the current regional directors' structure, or otherwise –
- Recommend the most effective regional directors' structure to enhance member representation on the AANA Board of Directors.

In 2006, the members voted not to make ANY changes to the state/region or the Regional Director structure. However, one of the needs identified by that committee was: the need for *Regional parity and geographic proximity*.

After the 2019 Business Meeting, a little-understood Bylaw Amendment to get rid of Region Directors in favor of At-large Directors was passed by the members.

The system of securing AANA Region Directors, over the course of history, has been a highly effective, regionally-invested system; focused on enhanced communication and by strengthening relationships between membership, State Presidents, and Region Directors. Regional representation ensures members that problems and issues unique to their specific region (and states) are understood - and also affect the director from that region.

The premise that AANA needs to elect 'at-large' directors in order have more qualified candidates is based on a flawed premise. The Nominating Committee may, on occasion, need to actively seek out director candidates for a region. However, that pursuit does not equate to the need to *change the entire structure of the board of directors*. To not have a director from a specific geographic region could disenfranchise members and leaders from that region which may lead to unintended consequences.

Ex: As evidenced with the current situation regarding the Region 1 Director living in Region 7, there has been a

complete disconnect between their national and state leadership; this has had a negative impact on our overall organization. The current state of dissatisfaction clearly demonstrates that state associations' leadership and members want a highly qualified, regionally-experienced, responsive director.

Further, any past difficulty that the Nominating Committee may have had in securing candidates is strong evidence that the AANA and state associations must continue developing a culture of strong leadership development through formal education, programs, and mentoring.

Lastly, all qualified Individuals are currently able to self-nominate for Region Director positions, so no qualified individual is prevented from running for an open Region Director position if they so choose.

Associations that use the Region Director Structure on their Boards of Directors:

- American Assn. of Nurse Practitioners
- American College of Nurse Midwives
- American Medical Women's Association
- American Hospital Assn.
- American Heart Assn.
- American Mental Health Counselors Assn.
- Healthcare Leadership Assn.
- National Assn. of Social Workers
- Alzheimer's Assn.
- National Assn. of Power Engineers
- International Assn. of School Librarianship
- National Assn. of Corporate Directors
- Assn. of Collegiate Conferences & Events
- National Assn. of Regional Councils
- National Assn. of State Technology Directors
- Advanced Laboratory Physics Assn.
- Assn. of Public & Land Grant Universities
- National Fire Protection Assn.
- American Medical Student Assn.
- American Assn. for Access, Equality & Diversity
- International Assn. of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators
- National Council State Boards of Nursing

DEFINITIONS:

An organization's executive board of **directors** is tasked with specific governing duties for the organization. Unlike other executive board leadership such as a president or treasurer, a member at **large** doesn't have a specific role. A member at **large** serves as a liaison to the general membership.

Regional Directors are the eyes and ears of the members in the field. They represent regional membership concerns, issues and views. They bring ideas, suggestions and awareness of political and regional problems, as well as opportunities, to the association's board for review and action. They support board decisions to regional members.

(summarized from various sources)

CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSOCIATIONS: generally think of themselves as membership focused-organizations, with the primary focus of providing services and benefits to members of a specific group (e.g., a professional association, trade group, industry-specific association)

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Board members come from the membership and are leaders who win an election cycle:

Because association boards most often are elected by the broader membership, there is less emphasis on building a diverse bench of qualified candidates, and more emphasis on electing leaders who will appropriately represent the interests of the membership.

Generally, Association director seats are competitive (with multiple candidates vying for the same seat). It is extremely rare for an association's board to have open seats for any reason other than an unexpected board member departure. Positions are seen as prestigious, and possibly highly competitive, positions.

<https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/whats-difference-association-nonprofit/>

Although they enjoy non-profit tax status associations are businesses. Similar to the job description of a Region Director of a for-profit business, the AANA Region Directors also has responsibilities to the geographical area and members they represent:

“Regional Directors manage and guide...managers that report to them. They meet with employees to evaluate business progress and create and institute strategies to accomplish the goals of the company.”

<https://www.betterteam.com/regional-director-job-description>

AANA Region Directors are the liaisons to state associations and their elected boards. As with corporations, they can assist our state 'affiliates' with:

- Implementing strategy
 - Controlling costs and generating non-dues revenue
 - Maintaining relationships and creating networking opportunities
 - Reporting on state and member issues to AANA
 - Mentoring, developing local leaders and creating strategic plans and board retreats
 - Assisting with state association problems, addressing them, formulating effective solutions
 - Developing a clear understanding of the difference and similarities of states in their region, and using that knowledge in advocacy and support efforts
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- Geographically, AANA Directors have been part of a highly effective, regionally-invested system; focused on enhanced communication and by strengthening relationships between membership, State Presidents, and Region Directors. Regional representation ensures members that problems and issues unique to their specific region (and states) are understood - and also affect the director from that region.
 - The AANA RD structure fosters a path towards leadership that amplifies the values of *diversity, equity and inclusion*
 - promoting much needed membership engagement
 - promotes collective parity of members' voices with no member(s) left behind (due to cultural, ethnic, racial, gender or geographical minority)

Region Directors are analogous to what we see in the U S Congress; the direct election of members of the House of Representatives. A congressional act dictates that representatives **must** be elected from geographical districts. And Congressional members **must** be elected from their respective states. These representatives vote on national issues that impact everyone nationally, but bring their experiences, knowledge, and issues from their specific regions to the table.

Because there is no specific regional representation in At-Large elections, this system does not ensure geographical representation, even if an elected director is ‘assigned’ to a specific area. As demonstrated with the current situation regarding the AANA Region 1 Director living in Region 7, there is a disconnect between national and state leadership, which has had a negative impact on our Region 1 states, and our overall organizational strength. Having an at-large director in South Florida, while the CRNAs in NY & MA were heavily impacted during the COVID pandemic illustrates the disengagement from someone who is not vested in the area for which they supposedly serve. This current state demonstrates that state associations’ leadership and members need and want a highly qualified, *regionally-experienced*, responsive director.

The argument that many highly qualified individuals are prevented from running for office because of the Regional Director system is an empty one, based on a flawed premise. Individuals are currently able to self-nominate for Region Director positions, so no qualified individual is prevented from running for an open Region Director position if they so choose. (although they may have to wait 2 years until a seat becomes open).

The financial impact of changing to At-large Directors versus Region Directors is difficult to pinpoint. However, it is easy to grasp the potentially negative financial consequences:

Ex: An at-large director elected from Hawaii is ‘assigned’ to Region 1, the New England states. Region Directors almost always attend state meetings and give updates, have Q & As, sometimes do strategic planning or have leadership retreats.

So each of the Region1’s 7 states, & PR, (most of which are considered “small” with very limited budgets) asks their At-Large Director to come to their fall meetings. Rather than driving from a state in that region, they must fly almost 5,000 miles and get a hotel room. They state will pay for that ‘visit’ from their RD, directly impacting their financial health.

Even a large Region, 5, with 13 states (including AL & HI) would feel the financial impact of having to fly in an At-Large Director from Maine, or Florida.

With so many local practice, legislative and regulatory issues facing ALL states, large and small, their money would be spent more wisely on those issues, rather than flying in an At-Large Director, potentially from far away at great cost, with no geographic ties, and no alliance to the region.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE:

At-large Director elections have the potential to ‘stack the deck’. Multiple individuals with possibly a group ‘agenda’, possibly from the same 1-2 state(s), decide to run for all open positions on the AANA Board. They campaign together, strategize together, and combine financial resources.

Directors-at-large is the best way to ensure exclusion of the geographical needs, equity, inclusions and diversity of our membership, thereby losing the member-centric voice on the AANA board.

“Fifty percent of the voters can, if they mostly support the same candidates, win all the seats. In fact, the majority block doesn’t even have to compose 50 percent of the electorate. All that’s needed is for one large (state) or voting block to vote cohesively enough to build up an insurmountable lead over the rest of the field. Their favored candidates will pick up plenty of other votes as a secondary choice of voters who’d really prefer other candidates. As a result, the majority of voters can see all their favored candidates lose election after election.”

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/bias-large-elections-works/>

“The Bias of At-Large Elections: “The Oldest Trick in the Book”

If you want to rig a local election, there’s an easier way than stuffing a ballot box, gerrymandering a district, or amassing a campaign war chest to scare off challengers...adopt winner-take-all ‘At-Large’ voting, where, instead of using districts, all or most....candidates must run ‘at large...’

At-Large block voting—also known as the ‘plurality-At-Large voting method’—has been called the oldest trick in the book. Supreme Court Justice Ginsberg cited this method, along racial gerrymandering, as a preeminent second-generation way to deny equal opportunity for minority voters and candidates.

Congress has banned At-Large voting for all federal elections. It’s been discarded by most states. No voting method has been subject to more litigation for its discriminatory impact on local elections.”

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/bias-large-elections-works/>

At-large methods of election are often discriminatory because they, in combination with racially polarized voting, prevent voters of color from electing their candidates of choice where they are not the majority.... Under this system, the votes of voters of color often are drowned out or submerged by the votes of a majority of white voters who often do not support the candidates preferred by Black voters. <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/At-Large-Voting-Frequently-Asked-Questions-1.pdf>

**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM SURVEY OF CURRENT & UMMEDIATE PAST STATE LEADERS
SUPPORTING THIS BYLAW AMENDMENT**

ON ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION

Positive Benefits of RDs:

- fair & equitable representation for all members representing common needs of the region
- working knowledge and understanding of political, local issues and work environment practice issues
- knowledge of the exquisite challenges specific regions face
- vastly recognizable differences regions’ anesthesia practice as governed by state laws, rules & regulations
- regional representation prevents board monopoly by a few large states
- regional directors familiarity with the unique needs of the region where they reside

Negative Consequences of At-large:

- promotes the asinine thought process that those in more populated areas are brighter and more well prepared for regional positions
- no one dominant voice when director has no allegiance to the region and no familiarity with the unique needs of the region
- larger states deciding the outcomes of every election for director-at-large
- small states will never have a chance to be a director
- stacked deck of directors from certain areas of US much more likely
- too cumbersome keeping track of one’s personal region and that of the one they represent if they are not living in that region

ON RELATIONSHIP, TRUST & ENGAGEMENT:

Positive Benefits of RDs:

- personal and vested interest in the region
- regional director facilitates more personal, trusting relationship with the members in their region.
- better connectivity & level of member engagement is maintained from state/region to the nat'l level
- physical proximity and in person interactions
- AANA values of diversity, equity and inclusion

Negative Consequences of At-large:

- breaks down unity;
- promotes isolationism of small less populated regions

ON COST-EFFECTIVENESS:

Positive Benefits of RDs:

- proximity of states within the region
- time element to state meetings
- ability to easily and economically travel to the state meetings within their region (accessibility)
- proximity for travel in order to be more available to attend meetings
- keep travel costs down when attending state meetings to provide AANA updates

Negative Consequences of At-large:

- increase in cost of travel for director-at-large for state meetings