

ASCE Board Moves Ahead on New Governance Model

by Blaine Leonard, Chair, Governance Restructuring Implementation Committee

At the November Board meeting, the ASCE Board of Direction passed, by the required two-thirds vote, a proposed amendment to the ASCE Constitution which would modify the way the Society is governed and better position ASCE to lead the profession into the future. The amendment will go to the members of ASCE this June for a ratifying vote.

The proposed restructuring focuses on three things: 1) a smaller Board of Direction, 2) alternate paths to service on the Board, and 3) the creation of Regional Boards to bring more of the Society's governance closer to the members. These changes are being proposed after more than four years of study by the Board, and after considerable discussion with the Society's leaders at all levels. A new committee has been constituted, the Governance Restructuring Implementation Committee, whose charge is to communicate the details of the proposed change to the members and to complete the detailed development and implementation of the proposed structure.

The Society's current Board of Direction is made up of 28 members, including 20 Directors who are elected from the 15 Districts, an International Director, four Vice Presidents, and three Presidential Officers. The proposed Board would consist of 17 members, including 9 Directors from the domestic geographic Regions, an International Director, two Directors representing the technical Institutes, two At-Large Directors, and three Presidential Officers. This smaller Board will be able to work more efficiently and more quickly, and will be more conducive to policy discussions. The addition of technical and at-large representation on the Board will give the Board a broader perspective and a better base from which to make policy decisions. The At-Large Directors will be Society members representing some of our diverse activities, and could include younger members, corporate executives, prominent educators, or others who may not have opportunities for service through the usual geographic channels.

Nine Regional Boards will be established in the United States under this proposal. These Boards will be comprised of five or more Regional Governors and will be led by the national Director representing the Region. These Boards will allow for more service opportunities for ASCE members, and will provide leadership and support to the local Sections and Branches. Regional Boards will take on some of the duties and functions currently conducted at the national level and will increase the opportunities for communication at the local level.

The financial savings which will result from reducing the size of the Board will be used to fund the Regional Boards. The governance proposal is, therefore, essentially a cost neutral issue.

If the Constitutional Amendment is approved by the membership, elections for the newly created Board positions would be held beginning in 2005, and full transition to the new governance model would take four to six years.

While most of the detail of the proposed restructuring has been defined, some of the details, including how the Regional Governors are elected, operational differences to meet the needs of different Regions, and the geographical boundaries of the Regions, are still being considered. The Implementation Committee welcomes insights and comments about these, and other, issues. You can e-mail your input to governance@asce.org or go to www.asce.org/governance to review the detailed information and provide comments directly from that screen.

Check out future issues of *ASCE News* for more details on the proposed restructuring.