If delegates attending the 2015 annual meeting in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, went home feeling like they had just helped set the course of history, there is good reason. Their deliberations at this meeting resulted in significant changes to two of the association’s foundation documents: the bylaws, which provide guidance into the governance of the association, and the Model Social Work Practice Act (or model law), which is a resource available to jurisdictional legislatures and boards to offer guidance in addressing social work regulation. Following two days of discussion and debate by the membership, the amendments proposed by the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee and the Regulation and Standards (RAS) Committee were considered, voted on, and overwhelmingly accepted. Only one proposed amendment to the bylaws, the elimination of nominations from the floor, was not adopted.

Voting on the proposed amendments to the bylaws and model law was done electronically by keypad. Voting proceeded smoothly and efficiently, with only one re-vote required on a bylaws amendment, following notification that one of the devices did not appear to record a delegate’s vote. In their evaluations, members expressed satisfaction with the voting process and appreciation for the speed of receiving the results.

The voting itself took less than an hour, but the preparation for the votes has been under way for the last three years. During that time, the Board of Directors charged both the RAS and Bylaws committees with completing a thorough review of the document for which they are the custodian. Although these committees review the association bylaws and the model law annually, best practices recommend that a deep dive into the content be undertaken every so often to ensure that these living documents remain current. This practice is very much like the process that the association follows with respect to its exam program: every six to eight years, ASWB conducts a practice analysis of the profession of social work to ensure that the exams are testing what is current practice. (See related story.)

Model Law

The RAS Committee began a review of the model law in 2013, breaking the document into sections and surveying membership each year about current practice in their jurisdictions related to the sections then under review. The committee met in person once each year to discuss the survey results...
and develop the recommended changes. In 2015, the third and final year, the committee also considered how to integrate the content from the Model Regulatory Standards for Technology and Social Work Practice, which were developed in 2014 by the ASWB International Technology Task Force and published in 2015. All proposed amendments were held and presented to the delegates for consideration this year. The Board of Directors supported the changes proposed by the RAS Committee.

The committee report, including the proposed amendments indicated using strikeout for deletions and bold text for added language, was posted on ASWB’s website for review 60 days prior to the annual meeting, as provided by association policy. The October issue of the association newsletter also noticed membership about the report.

On Friday, November 6, Chair Lisa Crockwell of Newfoundland and Labrador presented the committee report to the assembly. As she reviewed the proposed changes and the rationales, membership was able to follow along using a copy of the report provided to each attendee. Because of the integrated nature of the proposed changes, all amendments were presented together for a single vote on Saturday.

**Bylaws**

The Bylaws Committee began its review of ASWB’s bylaws in 2014, as part of a governance review being conducted by the Board of Directors. The committee worked in collaboration with the Governance Task Force, which was also appointed in 2014. Committee members accepted a two-year appointment in order to ensure consistency in the process. Over the course of the two years, the committee met in person or virtually by conference call 13 times, including two meetings with the Governance Task Force.

In year one, the committee completed a high level review of the bylaws, creating a working document that included comments and questions for further discussion. This document was shared with the Governance Task Force, and no recommendations were brought to the delegate assembly.

In year two, the committee divided into three working groups to develop recommendations for assigned sections of the bylaws. The groups met individually and reconvened as a whole to come to consensus. Rationales were developed and a table format was adopted to present the changes in a uniform manner. These tables became the supporting documentation for discussion of the bylaws with membership.

Because the proposed changes were so extensive, the committee separated related amendments into groups and recommended that the groups be voted on separately. Wordsmithing changes were presented together for a single vote. Substantive changes were presented in seven voting groups. The committee’s report included the tables with the rationales, separated into the voting groups, as well as a copy of the bylaws with the revisions indicated in strikeout for deletion and bold text for added language. The Board of Directors supported all the proposed amendments to the bylaws.

As per association policy, the committee report was posted on ASWB’s website for review 60 days prior to the annual meeting. The October issue of the association newsletter also noticed membership about the report. In addition, the Board approved the committee’s request to hold two information sessions via conference
call prior to the annual meeting to help membership understand the proposed amendments, be able to discuss them in their jurisdictions, and allow delegates to vote knowledgeably at the meeting.

Members were invited to register for the sessions to bring questions and to get more information about the proposed changes and rationales. The sessions, hosted by Kristi Plotner of Mississippi, Bylaws Committee chair, and Richard Silver of Quebec, Board liaison, were recorded. The recordings were posted on the ASWB website in addition to the committee report and the revised bylaws text. Fifteen member board members and staff participated in the sessions.

At the annual meeting, Plotner gave the committee report on Friday and responded to questions raised by members on Saturday as part of the voting process. As bylaws amendment voting groups were voted on, delegates were able to follow this complex process using a Bylaws Voting Summary document that presented the amendments by group with strikeouts indicating deletions, bold text indicating added language, and color blocks highlighting specific wording included in the voting group that was contained in a section with multiple changes.

**Next steps**

Following the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, the bylaws were updated and published on ASWB’s website. Revisions to the model law are under way. When that process is finished, the updated document will be published on the website and printed.

**Voting and results**

According to the bylaws, proposed amendments require a two-thirds majority vote to pass. The daily roll call established that there were 48 delegates present on both days of the annual meeting, which set the majority at 32 votes needed for amendments to pass.

**Model Law amendments**

- Vote: 45/3; all proposed changes passed

**Bylaws amendments**

The results of the eight bylaws votes are as follows:

- Wordsmithing changes: 48/0; passed
- Voting Group 1, Association Purpose: 35/13; passed
- Voting Group 2, Association Meetings: 47/0; passed
- Voting Group 3, Expanding the Board of Directors by three members; establishing the election cycle and qualifications for nomination and appointment of the added members; providing the Board with responsibility for removal of Board of Directors members: 46/2; passed
- Voting Group 4, Defining eligibility of seated Board members for nomination to other seats; and filling of vacancies: 41/7; passed
- Voting Group 5, Increasing the number of terms seated Board members may serve: 35/13; passed
- Voting Group 6, Eliminating nominations from the floor: 8/40; did not pass
- Voting Group 7, Increasing number of members on Nominating Committee by two: 48/0; passed

Kristi Plotner (MS), chair of the Bylaws Committee answers questions during voting.

As a result of the delegates’ positive response to the bylaws amendments to increase the size of the Board of Directors to 11 and the Nominating Committee to five members, there will be more opportunity for membership to become involved in leadership of the organization. The Nominating Committee has a particularly daunting task in this first year of implementation: They will need to slate candidates for nine positions on the Board of Directors and four positions on the Nominating Committee. Some of these positions will be for one-year terms to bridge the election cycles.

If you are interested in running for election, applications will be available in January.