



Some “skin in the game” makes good business sense

Effective January 1, 2018, membership dues are no longer tiered

Member dues represent 0.5 percent of ASWB revenue, according to Membership Task Force member and ASWB treasurer Mel Harrington of South Dakota. At 80 percent of revenue, ASWB exam fees dwarf the annual contribution of ASWB’s 64 member boards. But looking at the big picture does not tell the story of the individual board, which may not have funds because the state is sweeping revenues or may feel that it is already contributing significantly to ASWB’s exam revenue based on the number of licensees on its rolls. Members will be pleased to know that beginning with the 2018 dues assessment, the annual amount collected per member will be a flat \$250. For all but two member jurisdictions, this represents a decrease in annual dues.

“Moving to a flat fee structure is a big change in philosophy,” said ASWB CEO Mary Jo Monahan. “The task force’s generative discussions allowed them to think ‘out of the box’ to arrive at a dues model that is applied equally, reflecting inclusiveness that all members are committed to regulating the profession.”

The question of dues was raised in 2016, when a member board requested a review of ASWB dues policy in light of these concerns. The question worked its way

through the Finance Committee and to the Board, which voted to reduce fees for all members by 50 percent beginning January 2017, as recommended by the Finance Committee. In the same motion, however, the Board voted to appoint a task force to look at ASWB’s membership structure, including dues. In trying to be responsive, the Board had inadvertently put the “cart” before the “horse.”

President M. Jenise Comer announced the oversight during the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. This year, the Membership Task Force was appointed and charged with reviewing current ASWB membership structure, including dues/fees, levels of membership, benefits to members, and any other memberships issues. Task force members include current Board members Richard Silver of Québec and Robert Payne of Idaho, President-elect Tim Brown of Texas, Treasurer Mel Harrington; former president Janice James of Kentucky; and ASWB CEO Mary Jo Monahan and COO Dwight Hymans.

The task force met in May via video conference and in person in June in Herndon, Virginia, to dig deep into staff-provided research and hold frank discussions about

sensitive topics. Some topics, such as membership categories and dues, had been raised in 1999 and in 2009, without resulting in changes to policy. In fact, membership dues have not changed since 1998.

This year, however, in a progress report to the Board of Directors in August, the Membership Task Force recommended the change to member dues for immediate consideration. The Board voted to approve the task force recommendation at its August 5 Board meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota, paving the way for the policy to be updated to take effect with the 2018 dues assessment.

Before arriving at the recommendation to change the dues structure, the task force looked at other membership organizations that assess dues. Other models that the task force considered: collecting no dues from members, since the amount collected is less than 1 percent of revenue; lowering dues to 50 percent of current fees, which the Finance Committee had originally proposed in 2016; and going to a flat fee, where all members pay the same amount.

After much deliberation, the task force decided that some “skin in the game” was important for showing commitment to the association and wanted to propose a less complicated model than a 50 percent reduction in dues for all members. All agreed that it was appropriate not to tie dues to exam revenues or to the number of licensees.

In making its recommendation, the task force recognizes that the recommended \$250 is an increase for two members (Virgin Islands and Northern Mariana Islands) and that it could present a particular hardship for Northern Mariana Islands. A range of rates was discussed; the task force chose \$250 as the midpoint in the range.

Richard Silver, task force chair, reported that the task force had engaged in robust generative discussions around all topics, noting “Janice James’s participation was particularly important in her role as a former ASWB president. Robust discussion was encouraged. It was a fruitful day, and good to have met in person.”