Collaboration, feedback, listening, revision lead to positive outcome

“I believe that when it is time to vote on a plan, this delegate assembly will speak with one voice, and all the commonalities that we share will be the basis for moving forward.”

– Florence Huffman, Executive Director, Kentucky Board of Social Work, ASWB Director at Large, and ASWB Mobility Task Force member

What took more than two years to craft took less than a minute to pass: ASWB membership voted resoundingly to adopt Resolution 2017-1, Member Boards’ Contributions to Mobility Strategy and the Mobility Strategy itself. Forty-seven of 51 jurisdictions present at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly voted Yes. Only 26 affirmative votes were required to pass the resolution.

Delegates voiced strong support for the resolution and the Mobility Strategy before the vote. Robert Payne, ASWB Board member and chair of the Idaho board, said:

All regulatory boards in Idaho are under an executive order to look at our rules and regs. …Some of the language in the resolution is the exact language that we are being asked to provide to the government. When we met with a group of legislators, the first question was: “What are you doing about mobility?” The second point made was that all of this is a workforce issue. There are two well-funded organizations that I know of that are pushing the anti-regulatory movement in the United States. It is well-funded. If it hasn’t come to your state, it will be coming.

Kate Zacher-Pate, executive director of the Minnesota board, offered the following support:

In my mind, this particular resolution demonstrates an incremental getting ready to really shape the plan so it will work for individual jurisdictions. This is an opportunity to foster even more collaboration within jurisdictions and between jurisdictions and the association. I appreciate that we are not jumping to a preconceived solution and that everyone is going to take the time to make an assessment of what is needed.

Many members of the Mobility Task Force shared their perspectives, which had been guided by their participation on the task force but influenced significantly by their experience serving on their jurisdictional boards. “I really can’t imagine a better time to think about looking at our laws within our state to improve portability,” said Kim Madsen, executive director of the California board. “Mobility is here. …It wasn’t that hard to
Iowa board member Mark Hillenbrand concurred. “In Iowa, 33 percent of the workforce requires a license, which makes us the most regulated state in the U.S. Over the past year or so, the environment has been such that professions are being questioned. … I look forward to continuing to communicate with our legislators about the importance of regulation. … I also look forward to noting that social work as a profession actively engages in addressing emerging challenges, and workforce mobility is one of those challenges. Telehealth and the reality that we can practice without a physical presence is not only emerging but happening now.”

Florence Huffman, executive director of the Kentucky board, ASWB Board member, and Mobility Task Force member, spoke in favor of resolution and the strategy, noting: “This strategy asks for each jurisdiction to review and consider their regulations, policies, statutes. We honor one another when we embrace that every jurisdiction has done a considerate vetting of the professionals that they license in their jurisdiction and there is nothing diminished by us proceeding forward with the strategy.”

When ASWB President M. Jenise Comer announced the resolution had passed, the room erupted with shouts and applause. The path had been paved for starting the next phase of the strategy: Implementation.

Next steps

In the coming months, ASWB staff will reach out to individual jurisdictions to help each U.S. member board complete the four steps of the resolution:

- Review applicable statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting the Standards outlined in the attached Mobility Strategy
- Review applicable statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting the primary source data verified by ASWB staff and maintained in the secure centralized databank
- Identify any barriers or restrictions in the jurisdiction’s statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting and participating in the ASWB Mobility Strategy
- Identify the benefits to accepting and participating in the ASWB Mobility strategy

To assist with these steps, staff has already prepared and provided to each delegate a Mobility book titled ASWB Member Readiness for Mobility. In addition to the text of the resolution and the Mobility strategy, the book includes, among other sections:

- comparisons of licensure provisions across jurisdictions
- regulatory provisions by jurisdiction that facilitate mobility
- lists of license titles and which licensure category “bucket” the titles fall into based on the Model Social Work Practice Act (model law)
- licensing requirements compared to the Standards outlined in the Mobility strategy

In short, the Mobility book does much of the “heavy lifting” that member boards have agreed to undertake by adopting the resolution. The book, however, is only a starting point.

“...The research that is in the Mobility book should be used as a starting point for discussion. It has been compiled and summarized by ASWB staff, and therefore it is open to each board’s individual interpretation,” said Director of Member Services Jennifer Henkel. “Members still need to review their statutes, rules, regs, and policies. We need you to show us where your jurisdiction is different if you are claiming that your standards do not fit the standards and essential criteria of the Mobility strategy. Provide ASWB staff the facts and references in your regulation.
“Staff are ready to help with this process so that by the time we get to the Education Conference on Developing Tools for Social Work Mobility in May, members will be ready to collaborate on finding the commonalities and overcoming barriers to implementation of the Mobility strategy.”

Two copies of the Mobility book are being sent to each jurisdiction with their dues statements.

Pictures worth more than a thousand words

Key to reaching adoption of the Mobility Strategy was the work of the Mobility Task Force. Since 2015, this group of 12 individuals representing regulators, practitioners, and educators from 11 jurisdictions has worked together tirelessly to brainstorm, propose, seek feedback, revise, and finally present ASWB’s Mobility strategy.

Who knew that the foundation of the task force’s deliberations harkened back to the 18th century and the U.S. Bill of Rights? Anyone who has listened to ASWB legal counsel Dale Atkinson would know that professional regulation is a states’ rights issue protected by the Constitution. But in case you didn’t have this knowledge, ASWB’s Mobility Task Force report presented at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly explains all in a six-minute video.

The story begins at Culpeper’s Burgandine House, one of the town’s oldest properties that dates to 1749. The house is curated by Susan Williams and other volunteers. Williams also leads a group of reenactors called Out of Time Teachers whose presence during the video added authenticity and ambience.

Mobility Task Force member Fran Franklin traveled to Culpeper from Delaware to narrate the regulatory journey across three centuries. In addition to Franklin, task force member Harold Dean of Arkansas provided a remote cameo performance, and ASWB President and Mobility Task Force Co-chair M. Jenise Comer lent her distinctive voice to the project.

All ASWB departments were involved in the process. “If some departments weren’t represented on camera, they were working behind the scenes,” said Bobbie Hartman, marketing and publications manager in the Communications and Marketing department. Hartman wrote the script and directed the video. “Office Operations and Volunteer Engagement and Outreach staff made sure the rooms were available when we needed them and that food was provided for the video crew, staff, and volunteers.

“It was great to work with staff in a different way,” said Hartman. “It was a lot of fun to see people step up and show talents we otherwise might not have seen.”
Festivals at the Forum

“We had slides of festivals in every jurisdiction,” writes JENNIFER HENKEL, ASWB director of member services, about the Administrators Forum. “There seemed to be a lot of interest and discussion around the Texas state fair.”

In other news, Administrators Forum chair KIM FRAKES of Nevada (in photo) stepped down because she will be retiring in 2018. Administrators Forum attendees elected JIM MARKS of Oklahoma as the new chair.

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Interested?

Committee chairs hosted the Welcome Reception at the annual meeting. BRIAN CARNAHAN of Ohio talked to ROBIN JENKINS of Washington, D.C., about filling out the Committee Interest Form.

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Meet the 2018 Board

The 2018 Board of Directors takes the oath of office at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. From left: Florence Huffman (KY), Joyce Bell (MD), Robert Payne (ID), Patricia O’reilly (WV), Mel Harrington (SD), Ken Middlebrooks (MN), Beatrice Traub-Werner (ON), M. Jenise Comer (MO), Tim Brown (TX), Lisa Crockwell (NL), and Harold Dean (AR). Dale Atkinson (at podium) administered the oath.
Exchange-ing ideas

JAN FITTS, ASWB senior manager of education and training services, writes: “Board Member Exchange [BMX] attendees seemed to really like this year’s session. This was the highest attended BMX we’ve had. … They see this as a valuable time for support between regulators as well as a time to get new ideas on common problems.” Facilitators were SUSAN FEYEN-REAY of Nebraska and CLAUDE SAVOIE of New Brunswick (in photo). The next BMX will be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at the 2018 Education Conference.

Election excitement

Election tellers VELVA SPRIGGS of Washington, D.C., CHELSEA CHILDRESS of Alaska, and THOMAS BROOKS of Minnesota confer with ASWB legal counsel DALE ATKINSON during the run-off election for treasurer. Two revotes were required before MEL HARRINGTON of South Dakota was announced the winner.

Exchange-ing ideas

Celebrating adoption of the Mobility resolution are Mobility Task Force members Mark Hillenbrand (IA), Carmen Collado (NY), Kim Madsen (CA), co-chairs Dorinda Noble (TX) and President M. Jenise Comer (MO), Florence Huffman (KY), Lisa Crockwell (NL), and Harold Dean (AR). Not shown: Jim Akin (FL), Ellen Burkemper (MO), Joan Cloonan (ID), and Fran Franklin (DE).

Whoo-hoo!

ENDSLEY REAL of Georgia (center in top photo) volunteered her square dance group, Hotlanta, to entertain members at the Welcome dinner. Later, the group got members up and dancing. PATRICIA O’REILLY promenades with one of the Hotlanta dancers.

Modeling gig

KATE ZACHER-PATE of Minnesota, chair of the Regulatory Education and Leadership (REAL) Committee, stopped to show off the construction apron that committee members wore to promote the 2018 Education Conference, Developing Tools for Social Work Mobility.
Sunny Andrews, Glenda McDonald
Awards recognize outstanding service

Three leaders win annual awards

“Judy is who I think of when I think of the term ‘grace under fire,’” said Emily DeAngelo, administrator of the Louisiana State Board of Social Work Examiners. She was speaking of Judy Haspel, one of two recipients of the Sunny Andrews Award for Outstanding Commitment to Social Work Regulatory Board Service at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. As she introduced Haspel and presented the award, DeAngelo praised Haspel for her leadership, calling her a “role model for other board members,” and noted the way board meetings under Haspel’s leadership as chair remained efficient while still respecting board members’ perspectives. During the time she served as chair, Haspel instituted weekly meetings with DeAngelo, where the two could discuss pending issues and take pride in accomplishments.

“I truly felt appreciated,” said DeAngelo, “and I felt my staff was appreciated and understood.”

As she accepted the award, Haspel reminded the audience of an earlier message from ASWB legal counsel Dale Atkinson about expressing appreciation for the work regulators do. “Looking around at so many committed, caring, competent people,” she said, “and to think that I would get an award from amongst us all is really humbling . . . . It feels wonderful to be thanked, and I would like to accept this award symbolically, as representative of all the work that all of us do.”

Beatrice Traub-Werner also received the Sunny Andrews Award, which was presented to her by Ontario Registrar Lise Betteridge. “When I think about the descriptor for the Sunny Andrews Award—outstanding commitment to board service—I really feel that I could open the book to that page and see Beatrice’s picture there,” said Betteridge. Traub-Werner recently completed ten

Judy Haspel (LA) receives the Sunny Andrews Awards from her board’s executive director, Emily DeAngelo (right).
years of service on the council of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, during which time she served as president of the council for three years. Betteridge pointed out in her presentation that Traub-Werner served as president during a difficult transition when founding registrar and CEO of the college, Glenda McDonald, passed away.

Betteridge cited Traub-Werner’s relationship-building skills as a key to her effective leadership, highlighting her work with stakeholders such as regulators, educators, and associations.

“Those of us who spend a great part of our lives doing for others,” Traub-Werner said, “rarely even think of being meritorious of awards and even more rarely think of receiving them.” Like Haspel, she said she was humbled by the honor and described her ten years on the council as “interesting, usually fun, and always challenging.”

The Glenda McDonald Board Administrator Award for Outstanding Commitment to Social Work Regulatory Board Service was named for the late Ontario registrar who served with Traub-Werner and worked with Betteridge. This year, the award was presented by Vikki Erickson, president of the Nevada Board of Examiners for Social Workers to recipient Kim Frakes, its director of social work practice.

“When I read about the award, I thought of Kim,” said Erickson, “and there was no option except to nominate her.” Frakes, she said, “exhibits a great amount of kindness to the public and the licensed professionals she serves.” Like an experienced social worker, Erickson knew that the best way to get to the heart of Frakes’s commitment was to take a social history.

She discovered that, despite years in Nevada, Kim Frakes still identifies as a surfer girl and plans to return to playing music with her band when she retires in the coming year.

“I’ve been attending ASWB meetings since 2009,” said Frakes. “It’s been very inspirational—especially the Administrators Forum and bolstering each other—it’s kind of like the saying that ‘a rising tide lifts all ships.’ I knew Glenda McDonald, and she was a fabulous administrator. I hope I can continue to live up to her example as I fulfill my time as administrator for the Nevada board.”
Your Board in action

A summary of the work of ASWB’s Board of Directors at its meetings in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 16 and November 18, 2017

The ASWB Board of Directors met in person on Thursday, November 16, and Saturday, November 18, at the Westin Peachtree Plaza in Atlanta, Georgia, in sessions before and after the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. Here is a recap of the activities of the Board at those meetings.

From the November 16 meeting

Treasurer’s report: Board members reviewed financial statements through September 30, 2017, and received an update on investments. ASWB’s COO notified the Board of a recent change in investments due to the sale of underperforming funds. As a result, the fourth quarter balance sheet will reflect a realized loss but there will also be an overall gain due to dividends received.

The Board reviewed and approved a new auditor to perform ASWB’s annual audit based on the recommendation of the Finance Committee following its review of responses to a request for proposals.

Board members and the CEO thanked the treasurer for his service in recognition of the ending of his term.

Strategic discussions. Board members participated in strategic discussions about the following subjects.

Exam rescoring/Associate’s exam. The Board received a report from ASWB’s COO about the current use of the Bachelors exam with validated cut score for Associate exam and whether a separate practice analysis is warranted for the Associate exam. A separate blueprint for the Associate exam would expand the possible use of this exam and enhance its defensibility for members who use it. A substantial increase in the use of the Associate exam has been seen in the last two years primarily because of laws changing in Massachusetts with respect to licensing child welfare workers. Staff will conduct more research with the intent to bring a recommendation to the January 2018 Board meeting.

ASWB nominations process. The Board reviewed current bylaws and the nominations process with ASWB’s legal counsel. Areas discussed included potential conflict if a Board member sits on the Nominating Committee, the process of slating/not slating an incumbent, how to make inquiries about the nomination process, and qualifications for serving on the Nominating Committee.

CSWE Workforce Study Bridge Funding Proposal. The Board received a strategy paper about the work of the George Washington Health Workforce Institute
GW-HWI) and approved a recommendation from ASWB’s CEO to provide matching funds of $15,000 along with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to enable GW-HWI to continue its data collection and analysis activities in Q1 2018 and to allow time for GW-HWI to identify other funding sources for continued work in this area.

Review and adjustment of strategy:

Review of 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. The Board evaluated progress toward strategic objectives as part of a year-end review and preparation for entering strategic planning in 2018.

Board governance evaluation/ August meeting survey results. The Board reviewed the first annual Board governance evaluation and noted the subjectivity of some of the measurement terms. Discussion at a later time was recommended to review those items identified as needing improvement. The president reported the results of the August Board meeting survey.

Review of delegate assembly agenda/script. Board members received copies of the agenda and script but did not review due to timing.

Security report. The Board received a report from staff outlining security measures in place at ASWB, particularly those taken to protect the exams. Staff reported that 31 exam forms had been registered at the U.S. Copyright Office, providing copyright protection of all exam items.

Executive session: The Board entered executive session to discuss exam matters.

Policy—Public and operational:

CEO succession planning policy. The CEO Succession Planning Task Force presented policy revisions to Policy 7.3, Leadership Coverage and Emergency Communications Plan in the Absence of the Chief Executive Officer, and introduced a new policy covering a planned departure. The Board made suggested edits and tabled further review until revisions are presented at the January Board meeting.

Group practice exam. The Board received a report from staff about changes that will be made in 2018 to the Group Practice Exam due to the launching of new exams and software updates. Changes are also being considered in response to requests to use the product in asynchronous learning situations, which is currently not supported due to concerns about the potential for harvesting of items and copyright violation.

Building project update. The Board received the good news that the land has been paid off and ASWB will sign a letter of credit for construction to begin. The Board requested ongoing updates about building expenses; staff will provide monthly reports as work gets under way.

Ongoing Board business:

Approval of minutes and ratification of email motions. The Board approved with minor editorial adjustments the minutes from the in-person August 5, 2017, Board meeting and approved minutes from virtual Board meetings held in August, September, and October. The Board ratified decisions made in email meetings conducted in August, September, and October.

2018 meetings calendar. The Board reviewed the 2018 meetings calendar. Staff encouraged Board members to suggest conferences that would support their governance responsibilities on ASWB’s Board.

Committee/Task Force/Meetings reports: The Board received a report from staff about the preparation for launching the new exam blueprints on January 2, 2018, and communications outreach notifying exam candidates. The Board heard reports from Board members attending the Federation of Associations of Regulatory Boards (FARB) Regulatory Law Seminar and reports from the Mobility Task Force regarding listening sessions prior to the delegate assembly and an update from chair of the Foundation Task Force.

Consent agenda: Reports approved via consent agenda included: Leadership reports from the CEO and the Board president, the Chief Operating Officer’s report, and New Board Member Training evaluations.

Board meeting evaluation: The Board president solicited feedback about the Board meeting. The president and the CEO thanked the Board for their dedication and work over the last year and acknowledged the service of Board members whose terms were ending.
From the November 18 meeting

**Introductions of Board members:** Board members introduced themselves and shared how they hoped to contribute to the Board.

**Teamwork and leadership:** The Board president and the CEO reviewed ASWB’s mission and values with the members of the Board and discussed the partnership between Board members and staff in carrying out the leadership duties of governance and operations.

**General legal information.** Board members received information about fiduciary responsibilities and their duties as Board members from ASWB’s legal counsel.

**Board meetings.** The Board received operational information from staff about how Board meetings are conducted, accessing materials, participation on the email list serve, and email voting procedures.

**Homework:** New Board members were given information about materials that they will receive in preparation for the January 2018 Board meeting and their governance responsibilities. Two virtual orientation sessions are planned prior to the in-person meeting in January.

**Review of Exam Committee appointments:** The Board approved appointments of the 2018 Examination Committee members.
For the first time in many years the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee lived up to both parts of its name and ongoing charge: presenting bylaws amendments and a resolution about ASWB’s Mobility strategy to the delegates at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia. Committee chair Brian Carnahan of Ohio presented the report on Friday, reading the resolution into the record and explaining the rationales for the bylaws amendments. Although opposition to some of the bylaws amendments was anticipated regarding eligibility for serving on the Board of Directors and Nominating Committee, no discussion was forthcoming when it came time for delegates to vote.

On Saturday, 51 delegates voted on the three bylaws amendment proposals. In order to pass, an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the quorum (34) was required. The results:

**Proposal #1**
Wordsmithing changes (Articles III and IX) to clarify that the word “member” means an individual and not the jurisdictional board.

**Vote:** passed unanimously

**Proposal #2**
Changes to eligibility for the Nominating Committee (Article IX) to align with eligibility for the Board of Directors by deleting association committee chairs, who do not have to be Member Board members or staff.

**Vote:** passed unanimously

**Proposal #3**
Changes to definition of Member Board Staff (Articles III, VII, and IX) to create a new definition of Member Board Administrator so that eligibility to serve on the Nominating Committee and the Board of Directors is reserved for the person at the Member Board serving in a leadership position while preserving flexibility to allow jurisdictional boards to select Member Board staff members or the Member Board Administrator as the delegate or alternate delegate.

**Vote:** passed 46 to 5

Resolution 2017-1, Member Boards Contribution to ASWB Mobility Strategy also was presented for a vote on Saturday. It required a simple
majority, or 51 percent of the quorum, to pass. Many members spoke in support of the resolution during the discussion period prior to the vote. The result: 92.2 percent (47 out of 51 delegates) voted in favor of adoption. (See related story.)

As per ASWB bylaws, membership was notified of the proposed bylaws amendments and the Mobility resolution 60 days in advance of the annual meeting. In the months preceding the meeting, the Mobility Task Force hosted two listening sessions about the resolution and the Bylaws Committee hosted one listening session about the proposed bylaws changes. Sessions were recorded and posted on the meeting webpage. With so much information available ahead of the annual meeting, perhaps it is not surprising that the bylaws amendments and resolution sailed through with no surprises.
As you may recall, my theme for 2017 was “Be Ready … Be Ready for Anything!” At the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, I spoke about ASWB focusing on developing the ability to adapt to rapid change and surprising events and building capacity for resilience. I stated that ASWB had evolved into a complex, mature, and influential organization, qualities that would position us to “Be Ready!”

Well, I must say that those words were prophetic because 2017 definitely proved to be a year that challenged us all. I would like to reflect with you on the events of the past 12 months and the effect of these events on our collective organizations.

You may recognize these words from Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*:

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. … In short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, …, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (1859)

I submit that 158 years later, this aptly describes the year we have been living. This year was challenging, sad, and somewhat shocking on many levels. We have witnessed current events, many of which can be described as disasters—natural disasters, human disasters, and policy challenges. These current events touched us as regulators in ways that we did not anticipate.

The powerful floods in Texas, Louisiana, Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico; the raging fires in the Northwest, California, Alberta, and British Columbia; all of these natural disasters brought devastating human and economic losses to people—many who are social workers or regulators.

The human disasters include the devastating riots in Charlottesville, Virginia; mass shootings in Las Vegas, Nevada; and so many babies killed at the First Baptist Church in Texas. This violence against people and communities was committed by angry individuals, or individuals suffering with mental illness, or—more frightening—organized hate groups. We are hearing stories of increasing numbers of refugees fleeing to safety from Syria and entering Canada. As more victims find their voices and come forward, we are hearing stories of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace.

We can look to the public policies related to these natural and human disasters—policies that were in place and those that were not in place. 
place. To bring it closer to home, I ask you as regulators to reflect on the policies and procedures related to your current regulations and how your organizations were impacted by these disasters, as well as the threats to social work regulation that have been emerging at a much higher intensity than before.

Recently, the Massachusetts and Florida administrators reached out to ASWB to help them deal with the influx into their jurisdictions of displaced social workers from Puerto Rico. These licensed social workers landed gratefully and safely in their new communities with their families, but they also brought their sincere desire to continue practicing their beloved profession. However, the social workers had no verified paperwork; the boards had no objective information regarding the licensing requirements in Puerto Rico; and neither could get any information from the island.

ASWB obtained regulatory information that supported the administrators to help them determine acceptable, workable processes to accommodate their new citizens.

The Texas, Louisiana, Oregon, and California boards worked closely with ASWB Exam Administration and Pearson VUE to reschedule multiple exams for social workers whose homes or workplaces were swept away, burned, or severely damaged during the floods and wildfires. Licensed social workers who are first responders traveled across jurisdictional lines to Las Vegas and Texas and were able to assist rescue efforts and provide crisis services to victims because of regulatory provisions of the licensing boards.

Here are examples of recent social work regulatory threats that exemplify the worst of times:

1. Forced consolidation of social work boards with allied professions under the guise of increased efficiency and effectiveness (e.g., Kentucky, Kansas, Arkansas, Ohio)
2. Elimination of or strict limitations on occupational licensing and licensing boards (e.g., Arizona, Wisconsin, Idaho)
3. Sunset review threats for social work, psychology, and human medicine in Texas

In balance, though, here are examples of social work regulatory advances that exemplify the best of times:

1. Actively reviewing and updating social work legislation and regulation in Missouri, Georgia, Virginia
2. Delaware successfully advocating for additional license categories and Pennsylvania enacting multiple license categories
3. North Dakota advocating laws and regulations that more closely mirror the ASWB Model Social Work Practice Act

Throughout 2017, as regulators, we have had to defend and promote our beliefs about regulation, protection of the public, and the importance regulating social work practice. Many of you, particularly, new board members, became involved in legislative advocacy for the first time because of these threats.

Now, let’s look at two national policy threats: occupational licensing reform and anti-trust issues.

Most of you know that ASWB’s investment in the Federation of Associations of Regulatory Boards (FARB) has been long-standing, and FARB’s recent advocacy initiatives benefit the regulation of social work and our ASWB members.

ASWB submitted written comments and attended the two Economic Liberty Task Force roundtable meetings on occupational licensing reform hosted by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in Washington, D.C. The FTC is taking the perspective that occupational licensing creates unnecessary barriers to access to jobs and, as of now, does not share our contention that social work regulation is a public protection issue. ASWB wrote, “Regulation can seem onerous for some occupations; however, for health care-related professions—including social work— it is a necessity.” We also informed the task force of social work’s Mobility Strategy and stated that “one solution will not fit all professions.”

With anti-trust issues, there has been a major concern that “regular folks” will be frightened away from serving on regulatory boards due to the possibility of being personally sued. ASWB and FARB have been active partners with other regulated professions, such as medicine, nursing, and psychology, to sponsor and support a soon-to-be-proposed local government anti-trust act legislation that will extend immunity to members of licensing boards and prohibit monetary damages against state boards or agencies.
So, my generative question to all of us is: How do we lead during these unusual, confounding, and challenging times?

We cannot be beaten down, become discouraged or complacent, and check out. Neither can we become so aggressive/angry that we contribute to the divisiveness, hatred, and shutting out of others that might prevent us from solving the problems facing us.

Here is what I think.

I think an important answer is unlocking the full potential in all our organizations by practicing values-driven leadership and solution-focused thinking. We do this by understanding our common goals and living our shared sense of purpose as regulators. Using the resources of ASWB, FARB, and other like-minded regulatory organizations, we tell our story of protection of the public, common sense regulation, and an informed public.

We also insist on civility and solution-focused thinking in our organizations and in other organizations that we collaborate with, such as the social work professional associations and the social work education organizations in Canada and the United States. This will free us from succumbing to the divisiveness and resentful negativity that is prominent today.

We know that any crisis or disaster can also present the best opportunity for transformative change. At ASWB, we will engage the right people, encourage each other to stay at the table long enough to figure it out, and then issue a call to action to implement agreed-upon solutions.

In 2018, I am anticipating another active year as we begin the strategic planning process that will culminate in presenting a vibrant three-year plan at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. I urge us all to stay engaged, keep informed, be ready for anything, and ANTICIPATE!
Resolution promotes dialogue and action

By Dale Atkinson, Partner, Atkinson & Atkinson

Dale Atkinson is a partner with the Illinois law firm that is counsel to ASWB. He is also executive director of the Federation of Associations of Regulatory Boards (FARB).

The 2017 Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia, was a shining example of positive and constructive dialogue among ASWB member boards. In particular, the delegates were presented with, discussed, and voted on a resolution addressing the association’s Mobility strategy. This resolution was carefully drafted and distributed to the member boards well in advance of the annual meeting and involved a call to action on the part of the membership. Premeeting distribution allowed for member boards to ask questions of ASWB and have discussions at the jurisdictional level to identify specific concerns before arriving in Atlanta and participating in the discussion and vote.

Once at the annual meeting, the membership was presented with the report of the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee, and the resolution was read into the record. By design, and as is customary with other ASWB-like organizations, the vote on the resolution occurred the following day. This process allows for member boards and delegates to engage in conversations about the resolution and the effects on each jurisdiction and the membership. On day two of the annual meeting, delegates engaged in discussion on the floor prior to the vote.

While perhaps underused, the resolution process provides ASWB member boards with opportunities for direct input into significant policy decisions. Such policy decisions might include matters related to the ASWB Model Social Work Practice Act, the Public Protection Database (PPD), the sharing of relevant information among member boards, convening a task force for a specific project, the undertaking of data gathering and sharing with membership, encouraging a call to action among the member boards to address significant multistate issues, and more. Boards are encouraged to refer to ASWB policy 4.2, Resolutions for information about how and when to introduce resolutions.

To clarify, resolutions are distinguishable from bylaws amendments. Amendments to bylaws generally address issues related to governance, authority of the Delegate Assembly, the Board of Directors and elections, committees, high-level financial and other authorities, and indemnification. They are adopted by the delegates at an annual meeting and upon due notice to the membership. Proposed amendments to the bylaws must be submitted at least 120 days in advance of the annual meeting and with notice to the membership no less than 60 days before the Annual Meeting.
As noted in the current ASWB policy manual, resolutions from member boards also must be submitted at least 120 days prior to the annual meeting. This time frame provides adequate time for the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee and staff to ensure that the submission is within the scope of the ASWB mission and to provide necessary edits. The submitter of a resolution will always be consulted about editorial changes to ensure the substance of the resolution is maintained. The staff will also research submitted resolutions to ensure that they are not redundant with past resolutions.

Once staff has completed its review, the submitted resolution will be forwarded for committee consideration. The Bylaws and Resolutions Committee will provide a “Do Pass,” “Do Not Pass,” or “No Recommendation” position. The rationale for the committee position will be incorporated into a report and distributed to membership. As was done at the 2017 Annual Meeting, the resolution will be read into the record before discussion and voting take place. All eligible delegates may vote to pass or not pass each duly submitted resolution. It takes an affirmative vote of a majority of the delegates (assuming a quorum is present) for a resolution to pass.

Resolutions may be introduced by any member board of ASWB, and the resolution process is an appropriate way for member boards to be involved in big-picture policy decisions. Resolutions can stimulate thought-provoking discussions and action on the part of the membership and—if a resolution passes—action on the part of the association. Don’t forget about the resolution process. Use it.
Ready to lead

New Board of Directors and Nominating Committee members bring a breadth of experience to leadership

At the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, ASWB delegates reelected Treasurer Mel Harrington of South Dakota following his nomination from the floor and elected Joyce Bell of Maryland, Patricia O’Reilly of West Virginia, and Beatrice Traub-Werner of Ontario to serve as directors at large. Bell fills the director at large, open seat; O’Reilly was elected to a public member seat; and Traub-Werner was elected as a director at large, licensed social worker. Carla Moore of Louisiana and Ann-Marie Buchanan of Tennessee were elected to serve on the Nominating Committee. All election winners have served on committees with ASWB and all have a history of leadership outside the association, both in their professional lives and as volunteers. Each will serve a two-year term.

ASWB Board of Directors

Mel Harrington was first elected treasurer of ASWB in 2015 and said in his campaign remarks that he is “committed to provid[ing] strong governance oversight of all our financial affairs, which include the existing and future operating budgets, the headquarters construction, and our financial reserves.” He completed his term on the South Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners in 2014. According to the bylaws, however, Harrington was eligible to run for election as a seated member on the ASWB Board of Directors.

Joyce Bell has served on the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners since 2010 and currently serves as chair of its Statute and Regulations Committee. Bell pointed out that her work on that committee and her involvement with ASWB have helped her focus on the importance of creating

Incoming president Timothy Martel Brown (TX) accepts the gavel from President M. Jenise Comer (MO) at the end of the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in Atlanta.
“a clear and attainable picture through our laws, regulations, and policies of who we are and what our roles are in protecting our most vulnerable.”

Patricia O’Reilly returns to the ASWB Board of Directors, having completed her most recent term in 2015. She serves as the consumer representative on the West Virginia Board of Social Work. For her, that designation rings true, as she has been a consumer of social work services in the past. As one of two public members on the Board of Directors, O’Reilly said that this service allows her “to bring back to [social workers] and bring back to the table [my perspective] on these issues” in regulation and public protection.

Beatrice Traub-Werner completed ten years of service on the council of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers in September, most recently serving as president for three years. In her campaign remarks, Traub-Werner highlighted new issues faced by ASWB members in professional regulation. “I am very interested in the challenges our professions face as issues of technology intersect with mobility and the legislation that regulates our practice is tested in ways we have not ever had to consider up until now,” she said.

Nominating Committee

Ann-Marie Buchanan of the Tennessee Board of Social Worker Licensure and Certification was elected to serve on the Nominating Committee. In her campaign remarks, Buchanan emphasized her commitment to listening to ASWB members and finding the right individuals to serve as leaders. “I like to talk,” she admitted, “but most importantly, I like to listen. And when I listen, I learn. What I like to listen to is what you all can do.”

Carla Moore of the Louisiana State Board of Social Work Examiners was also elected to serve on the Nominating Committee. She cited her extensive committee work for ASWB as an asset for Nominating Committee service. “My committee work has helped me to understand the needs of ASWB,” she said, “which puts me in a position to match persons to the various positions.”

Buchanan and Moore will be joining the three current members of the Nominating Committee, who were elected in 2016: Jennifer Fulcher of Mississippi, Karine Levesque of New Brunswick, and Greg Winkler of Wisconsin.

The gavel passes to Timothy Martel Brown

At the conclusion of the annual meeting, President M. Jenise Comer of Missouri passed the gavel to incoming president Timothy Martel Brown of Texas. Brown served as president-elect in 2017 and will serve two years as president, followed by a fourth year as past president.

The new Board of Directors met briefly after the annual meeting was adjourned. They will have their first full meeting in January. In addition to those elected in Atlanta, the Board includes President Tim Brown, Past President Jenise Comer, Secretary Lisa Crockwell of Newfoundland and Labrador, and directors at large Harold Dean of Arkansas, Florence Huffman of Kentucky, Ken Middlebrooks of Minnesota, and Robert Payne of Idaho.
A busy year for exam development staff and volunteers

1,200 scored questions and 500 pretest questions were approved for use on the two new exams that will be released January 2, 2018, in four exam categories: Bachelors, Masters, Advanced Generalist, and Clinical

The Exam Committee usually meets four times a year to review and approve examination questions (called items) to be pretested on the licensing examinations. This year was very different, however, due to final preparations for the release of new exams based on the most recent practice analysis, which was conducted in 2015–2016. At this year’s Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, the exam program report included an overview of the practice analysis process as well as the Exam Committee’s year-end recap of its two meetings, including performance statistics.

Minor changes to the exams

Lavina Harless, director of examination development, reviewed the last two and a half years of the practice analysis process, including infrastructure preparation that occurred in 2017. She spent time comparing graphs of the 2018 blueprints to the 2011 blueprints, noting the content is “not changing all that much. Social work practice remained relatively consistent in the United States and Canada.” The graphs and new content blueprints are on ASWB’s website.

In addition to noting the minor structural and editorial modifications to content, Harless pointed out that minor changes were made to language to provide consistency across the blueprints in each exam category. For the Advanced Generalist exam, she explained, that meant condensing five content areas into four. “The KSAs [Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities] are still very similar,” she said. “All changes were based on research done by SMEs [subject matter experts] we worked with to help us develop these outlines.”

Infrastructure and people power

This year exam development staff focused on infrastructure and harnessing people power to ensure that the new exams would launch on time. The new infrastructure is a highly secure, proprietary database for exam item development that has been three years in the making. Item writers are able to create their items in the system, and item development consultants and exam development staff can then review the items and provide feedback or process as needed. When the Exam Committee is ready to review the item, it is displayed on-screen still within the secure platform.

The database “allows so much more security and efficiency in our processes to create items,” said Harless. “It was important for us to get the system in place for the new exams to come online.”
Building new exam blueprints

To be sure that the ASWB social work examinations reflect current practice and measure the minimal knowledge and skills needed to practice safely, competently, and ethically at entry level, ASWB conducts a practice analysis survey every five to seven years. From 2015 to 2016, ASWB conducted its sixth analysis of the practice of social work to update the content and weighting of the blueprints for the social work licensure exams. In 2017, post-analysis activities involved preparing the new exams based on the results of the practice analysis. The new exams will be released January 2, 2018.

**2015-2016**

- **NOVEMBER 2015 - FEBRUARY 2016**
  Convened the Practice Analysis Task Force and developed the survey questions and the sampling plan

- **MARCH 2016**
  Piloted the survey

- **APRIL 5 - MAY 16, 2016**
  Administered the survey to U.S. and Canadian licensed/registered social workers

- **AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2016**
  Conducted a linkage survey (see sidebar, p. 2); finalized content outlines (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities [KSA] statements)

**2016-2017**

- **DECEMBER 2016 - FEBRUARY 2017**
  Reclassified item bank; transferred items

- **MARCH - MAY 2017**
  Approved the anchor forms; confirmed final item approval; released the new content outlines and revised KSAs; completed the passing score study; and released the practice analysis technical report

- **SEPTEMBER 2017**
  Approved second forms to be released with the anchor forms in January 2018

- **DECEMBER 2017**
  Released revised versions of the online practice tests (available only for Bachelors, Masters, and Clinical exam candidates) reflecting new content outlines
Maintaining the current exams

ASWB continued to maintain the current examinations: writing and reviewing test items, reviewing examination forms, and conducting item review, among other activities. Bora Sunseri of Louisiana, Clinical exam committee chair, and Stephanie Washington of Texas, Masters exam committee chair, closed out the exam program report with an explanation of what the 18-member committee does and how the work is done. They also shared statistics about the number of items the committee worked on and the disposition of the items. Bachelors exam committee chair Mary Stebbins of Virginia was not able to attend this year’s meeting.

Sunseri reviewed the Exam Committee’s charge and the importance of the committee process to ensuring that the exams reflect, in Harless’s words, “a balance of science and social work practice expertise.” Sunseri noted that each exam subcommittee is balanced for demographics and practice diversity, which can lead to “passionate discussions” about how an item is written when a correct answer may depend, for example, on jurisdictional factors.

The main task of the Exam Committee is to review items to be pretested on the exams. Pretest items are not included in a test-taker’s score, but psychometric statistics about the item are gathered to determine how the item performs. If the item performs well according to these measurements, it will at some future time be added to the bank of operational, or scored, items.

The committee process includes evaluating items for content and quality as well as for editorial structure. Sunseri shared examples of some of the things the committee looks for, including: whether the item is focused, whether it has more than one correct answer, and whether it is appropriate for use in Canada. Stylistic elements that the committee looks for include grammar, readability for candidates for whom English is a second language—including candidates who use sign language—and cultural bias. Saving an item by rewriting it is preferable to deleting it, she noted, and “there is always someone who is willing to take it.”

Washington echoed Sunseri’s comments about the value of saving items when she reviewed the committee’s performance for the year. Washington reported that in 2017 the committees deleted only nine items out of a total of 558 new items reviewed. “We try to hold on to them,” she said, “because so much time and money goes into creating them. We are ‘true social workers’—we stay with the items until the end.”

In addition to the nine deletions, the committee approved 409 items for pretest, returned 21 to the writer with feedback for suggested improvements, moved three items to another exam, and reviewed 116 in pairs only, which the committee will review on-screen in 2018.

The Exam Committee also reviewed 607 “problem items” that were flagged for statistical concerns or for content reasons by the form reviewers. Form reviewers are emeritus Exam Committee members who are responsible for reviewing the final version of an entire test (form) before it goes online. As part of this process, the committee reviewed the statistics and content of each item on-screen and made real-time changes in the test administrator’s item bank. Committee members revised 345 problem items and approved them to be pretested again, approved 98 items without changes, and archived 164 items.

The committee spent many hours working in darkened rooms reviewing items on-screen in the new system. “We got the job done,” Washington said. “We have a good time in the darkened room. … After we take off our ‘reviewing hat,’ we have a good time afterwards, too.”

For more information about Exam Committee members, their diversity, and the variety of support roles and capacities they fill, Harless referred members to the 2017 Exam Committee Yearbook. For more information about the practice analysis, a summary or the full report of the 2017 Analysis of the Practice of Social Work is available for download.