

Inside LRA
December 2009 / January 2010

Dear LRA colleagues,

This is the first installment of a monthly email that I plan to send out to all LRA members and that I've entitled "Inside LRA." The purpose is to:

1. increase members' awareness of important issues, developments, etc. facing LRA and its leadership.
2. provide background for understanding how decisions are made, actions taken (or not taken) and why.
3. enhance communication between the leadership and the membership and to solicit broader input into the leadership's deliberations.
4. address issues that members have raised (e.g., at the town meeting) and to stimulate members to raise topics and issues they would like the LRA leadership to address.

The intent is to supplement and extend existing avenues for communication, because existing avenues are relatively infrequent and one-way (e.g., the newsletter), ad hoc (e.g., occasional eblasts to the membership), or involve a relatively small proportion of the membership (e.g., the LRA listserv, town meeting, and business meeting).

We are an increasingly large, complex, and, I'm pleased to say, gradually more diverse organization. Many newcomers do not have an intimate knowledge of our history, while many long-time members may not know about the contemporary workings of LRA and the challenges faced by its leadership. Thus, I hope these emails will serve all members, new and old.

In this first installment, I thought it might be useful to set the stage for future emails by focusing on two topics: (a) recent changes in the LRA leadership structure, processes, and bylaws; and (b) an invitation to suggest topics or issues I might address in future installments.

Recent Changes in Leadership Structure and Processes

The LRA leadership structure and processes have changed recently based on an analysis of our bylaws by a professional parliamentarian and an attorney. Here is a summary of those changes:

- a) *Who gets to vote on official LRA policies or actions?* Only the elected officers (President, Vice-President, President-Elect, Past President) and elected representatives of the board of directors may vote. In the past, the appointed officers (Secretary, Treasurer, and Parliamentarian) and standing committee chairs (Ethnicity, Race, and Multi-lingual; Field Council; Publications; Policy

and Legislative; Technology) also voted. This change addresses a concern by the professional parliamentarian who reviewed our bylaws that official actions of the organization should be voted on mainly by elected representatives.

- b) *The number of elected board elected board representatives has increased from 6 to 9 and terms from 2 to 3 years.* The purpose is to increase representation and to provide more continuity. The Board has developed a plan for electing 3 additional board members and creating staggered 3-year terms.
- c) *Creation of a Nominations Committee.* In the past the Executive Committee (elected and appointed officers) served as a nominating committee for creating a list of candidates for elected officers and board representatives. Now there is a nominating committee comprised of the President-Elect, Vice President, Past-President and 3 appointed non-board members of LRA.
- d) *Changes to the bylaws.* The previous changes highlighted here required changes to the bylaws, which were proposed and then voted on by voting members of the Board. In the past, some LRA members have been concerned that the Board can change the bylaws without a vote of the membership. However, we are a non-profit organization recognized legally in the state of Illinois, which requires the stipulation that the Board be vested with the power to change the bylaws. As this example illustrates, LRA is bound by several legal requirements to preserve its non-profit status and to conform to relevant laws (e.g., we cannot make political contributions). Our status as a non-profit organization limits what we can do or requires that we take certain actions.

For more details about LRA's governance, download LRA's bylaws and its policy and procedure manual at: <http://www.nrconline.org/information.html>

Future Topics for "Inside LRA"

In addition to highlighting some current activities and initiatives, future topics might include an inside look at how conference sites are selected, how the annual conference program is created, including facts about the review process and how sessions are placed on the conference program; and advice to those who wish to become more active in LRA activities. I invite you to email me your suggestions for future topics: reinkin@clemsion.edu