

To all ASCLS-Montana members,

You have probably been hearing and reading items regarding a proposed change to the structure of the ASCLS Board of Directors. I don't know all of the facts behind the proposal but I will share what I do know to bring you up to date.

Beginning with a bit of background for our newer members. ASCLS is divided into 10 regions. This came about in the 1950's to help support constituent societies (state societies). The regional structure is noted in the ASCLS bylaws and defined in the accompanying SOPs. Montana is in Region VIII along with Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. Region VIII is a strong region in the way we network across our region, largely due to the formation of the Intermountain States Seminar in 1963. Our Region VIII Council consists of the Presidents and President-elects from each of the 5 states, plus a Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair, Leadership Chair, Government Affairs Chair, Political Action Committee representative, Ascending Professional Chair, Developing Professional Chair, and the Region VIII Director. The Council meets 3 times per year and serves as a source of communication among the states in our regions while also getting information from national committees and the national Board of Directors. Not all ASCLS Regions function in the way that Region VIII does, nor do they have the close-knit friendships across the region. All regions have Councils and guidelines but do not meet regularly nor communicate across the states in their region. Region VIII is more active as a region by way of hosting IMSS for 58 years and the development of our Region VIII Leadership Academy in 2014.

At the 2021 Interim ASCLS Board of Director's meeting, a proposal was made to look at restructuring the Board of Directors by dropping the regional designation for the 10 Regional directors. This was then presented by the Region VIII Director, Stephanie Mihane, at our ASCLS-MT annual business meeting in April. The BOD provided an opportunity at the June 30, ASCLS House of Delegates in Louisville for an informal discussion of the proposed change.

Reasons for the change as stated by ASCLS BOD (the following excerpts are taken from talking points given to us by EVP Jim Flanigan):

- Membership is more concentrated in the eastern regions so those members have fewer opportunities to serve on the Board of Directors.
 - The current structure does not allow for diversity across the Board; basing Board representation only on a geographical basis restricts the opportunity for diversity of talent. Using regions as the primary criterion for board membership produces boards that are less diverse than the membership and the profession. In the proposed model, diversity of experiences, skills and expertise allows board members to bring a collectively broader set of perspectives to decision-making. For instance, the Nominations Committee would consider a broader range of criteria when vetting nominees for the board including what kinds of communities they serve (e.g. rural, urban, suburban), in what settings they work (e.g hospital, POL, university), certifications, and other demographic factors.
- Current implementation of "regions" has not evolved.
 - When formed in the 1950s, regions served a purpose for coordinating the activities of a wide-ranging national organization. The structures were necessary for information to be effectively shared. Since that time, the need for communication has been eliminated by

contemporary communications networks. Systems for coordinating activities have evolved and improved dramatically.

- With the use of electronic communications, the structure for a regional director (and subsequently, a region) is no longer necessary for communication between the national BOD and the members of ASCLS
- Maintenance of a failing systems prevents the devotion of resources to better models
 - It's challenging for leaders to think beyond strongly held paradigms. If solutions all arise from within a 1950-60's paradigm, obvious opportunities will be missed. For example: smaller collaborative relationships between states within a "region" or across regional lines.)
 - Human resources are required to maintain the structure instead of devoting those committed volunteers to more productive work at the national or constituent society level.
 - A lack of clear purpose tied to mission for regions leads to a lack of engagement, recycling of leaders and burnout.

Comments that were made at the House of Delegates ranged from strongly in favor of this proposed change to strongly opposed. A sampling of those comments include:

- ASCLS-Alaska President discussed the unique challenges in Alaska and the importance of having a Regional Director who understands those challenges
- ASCLS Ascending Professional Director spoke to the need for ASCLS to modernize our structure to allow more Ascending Professional and Developing Professional members the opportunity to serve in national positions
- Several members spoke to the current system serving as an effective tool for mentoring potential leaders from state to regional to national roles. Also, the need for one-on-one communication is still as important as ever, the idea that contemporary electronic forms of communication have eliminated the need for personal communication at the regional level was strongly disputed.
- 2 ASCLS Past Presidents agreed that change is always a good thing – when there is a reason to change, not just change for the purpose of change. Both past presidents brought these issues forward:
 - What is the current situation, pros and cons and what are the current issues that need to be resolved? We heard much about how the developing and ascending membership groups are restructuring to meet their needs. What can we learn from them?
 - What are the goals of any reorganization? What does it need to look like? What outcomes are we expecting? I heard many - flow of funds, improving diversity to reflect the diversity of our profession, but absent in our current leadership
 - An important step in the process is to develop a set of criteria that will be used for future member representation on the board? How will the nominations committee, recently expanded, use those criteria to select candidate to lead our organization?
 - How will we ultimately measure that we have achieved our goals? **We need data to support the criteria and the goals we set.**

What's next? It appears the process was not handled according to the current ASCLS bylaws which is why it has been moved ahead to vote at the mid-term House of Delegates. However, the bylaws state

that any amendment must be voted on at the ANNUAL House of Delegates so that might delay this until next June. We were told there will be many 'town halls' this fall to discuss this potential restructuring. Some members who spoke at the House of Delegates raised potential modifications to the proposed plan. Those ideas were:

- Maintain the regional designation as is and add 2 at-large Directors to satisfy the need for more opportunities in more populous regions and to add more diversity to the BOD
- Maintain the regional designation but reduce the number of regions to 7-8 and add 2-3 at-large Directors which would keep the BOD at the current number but add more diversity

This appears to be the first step in a larger restructuring of ASCLS. The BOD appears to be poised to first, remove "Regional" from Regional Directors; then to remove regions entirely. That is another discussion and largely depends on what happens with the first item. As a member of ASCLS every one of you has a say in what you wish to see happen in your organization. We are a grass-roots organization and it exists for its members. Please don't hesitate to speak up and make your feelings known, be they positive or negative. A consistent thread in the discussions in Louisville was that we, as a membership, do not oppose change. We do oppose change for the purpose of change; we wish to see more data behind the change, more specifics as to next steps (just removing a word leaves many unanswered questions), and how do we determine the effectiveness of the change.

Holly Weinberg, 2021-2022 ASCLS-MT President