

Proposed Changes to the IMLA Bylaws – What Do You Think?

by Susan C. Rocha, IMLA President



You should have already received an email in mid-July from Chuck Thompson, outlining proposed changes to the IMLA Bylaws. The changes are based on the recommendations of the IMLA Board Restructure Committee. This group of dedicated IMLA members met by telephone conference five times since November 2008, and in Washington, D.C., at IMLA's Mid-Year Seminar. The Committee presented their recommendations to the IMLA Board at our business meeting in Washington, D.C. in April. The Board unanimously approved the recommendations and authorized sending it forward to the membership for a vote.

I would appreciate it if you would take the time to review the proposal and the Q&A that accompanies it. (The proposed changes, together with the Q & A document, are posted on the IMLA website – see the *Quick Links* on the right-hand side of the homepage.) This recommendation represents a major shift in how we elect our IMLA Board members and officers, how long they serve on the Board, and how early we provide notice of Board positions that are open. Let me give you a little background on how we got here. In April 2008, Chuck sent out a survey to the membership asking some basic questions about IMLA, the services we provide, and the Board structure. While the survey was generally favorable about IMLA, it did become obvious that the survey respondents did not know how large the Board is; how Board members are selected; how long Board members serve; or how one applied for a Board position.

Although mid-sized and small cities are the lifeblood of this organization, without the active participation of larger metropolitan areas, we would not be able to stay afloat or have the impact, nationally and internationally, as the premier local government attorney association that we know we are.

As you well know from your daily city attorney practice, perception is everything. IMLA Past President Bob White, First Vice President Mac McCarley, and I realized that, if we wanted to retain our current members, and increase and encourage new member participation, we needed to change some of the mechanics of the Board. The Board Restructure Committee has done that and has prepared a proposal for a change to the Bylaws. The recommendations are as follows:

Number of Board Members: IMLA Board membership will increase to up to 25 members. Currently six members of the 21-member Board are officers (President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Third Vice President, Treasurer, and Executive Director).

Term Limits: The terms of office for Board members will be three years. A member is eligible to serve for an additional three-year term, for a total of six years, and afterwards, must sit out at least one year before being eligible to be considered for a Board position again.

Staggered Terms: Board positions shall be staggered, with approximately four positions open each year. The President, Vice President, Past President, Treasurer, and Executive Director are not included in the staggered terms rotation. Therefore, each year, a minimum of four Board positions will be open. Officers will be selected from the pool of individuals who have previously served at least two years on the IMLA Board. We will no longer have the automatic "moving up" of Board members to officer positions.

Officers: There will be a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Executive Director. These individuals shall serve as the officers of IMLA. We are eliminating the remaining two Vice President positions.

The Nomination Committee: This is increased from three to five people, to be selected by the President, Vice President, Immediate Past President, State League Counsel, and the Past, Past President.

State League Board Position: We will continue to have a Board position for our State League Counsels, who will continue to serve for two years, but now, they will be eligible to serve as President.

Notice of Board Positions Open: Notice will be sent to the membership and will be posted on the IMLA website well in advance of the Annual Conference. The notice will include the members of the Nominating Committee, along with a short application form that we are encouraging members to fill out in being considered for the Board. The nomination and election

process will be fully explained. There will be repeated notification by email encouraging members to consider applying for and serving on the Board.

And Now for Something Completely Different (With a Nod to Monty Python)

Chuck Thompson asked that the Board Restructure Committee consider adding up to five new Board positions that would be recommended for appointment to the Board by the Executive Director, with the advice and consent of the President, Vice President, and Immediate Past President.

While this might sound unusual to some folks, there is some rhyme to this reason. Although mid-sized and small cities are the lifeblood of this organization, without the active participation of larger metropolitan areas, we would not be able to stay afloat or have the impact, nationally and internationally, as the premier local government attorney association that we know we are. The Executive Director will be charged with making recommendations to fill these five positions, and will use the following as his criteria: regional representation, city size, diversity, and membership recruitment.

THE IMLA BOARD RESTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

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These new Board positions will draw for a one, two, or three-year term.

These are the recommended changes to the Bylaws. It's nothing really radical, but it is a different way to select our Board, and one that I believe encourages more members to join and participate in the leadership of IMLA. The members of the Board Restructure Committee would appreciate hearing your comments about these recommendations. These proposed Bylaws will be voted on by the members attending the Business Meeting at the IMLA Annual Conference in October in Miami. The Board Restructure Committee members' names and emails can be found listed above. I encourage you to review these recommended Bylaw changes, discuss them with your colleagues, and let the Board Restructure Committee members know how you feel. I also encourage you to attend the Miami conference and vote. **ML**

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