

How the AAD should meet the challenges of the future: Establish a House of Delegates

The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) and its membership are being challenged not only by expanding scientific knowledge but also by increasing demands in the social, political, and economic arenas of dermatologic practice. How the AAD meets these challenges is of great importance to its members and will determine the future role and function of the Academy. We must then ask ourselves if the AAD, as currently structured, is optimally equipped to handle them.

Drs. Weary and Hurley, in reflecting on the AAD's future role, express eloquently the concerns of many. Their editorial (*J AM ACAD DERMATOL* 1989;20:838-41) stated: "It is now time to move forward with an organizational modification of the AAD to create a more broadly based representational form of governance than currently exists" (page 838). They stated that there is a need for "... extended discussion by a broadly based deliberative body within the development of a majority or consensus decision" (page 838) regarding current issues and that our specialty society must respond promptly to current issues with the "assurance that ... decisions reflect the will of the majority" (page 838). These compelling statements represent great insight into the current climate affecting dermatology.

A reasoned progression is to accept the need for a form of governance in which constituents are represented fairly by a proportionally equal legislative body that openly deliberates important issues and that is embodied with the authority and responsibility to determine policy. A proposed bylaws change has been submitted to accomplish this goal and is scheduled to be voted on in late summer this year (Fig. 1).

The proposed bylaws change would establish a legislative body called the House of Delegates, which initially will consist of approximately 70 members, one for each 100 members in each of the already established Advisory Council districts (Fig. 2). District boundaries will be reviewed every 10

years and can be redrawn respecting state borders. Each district will elect its own representatives who will serve for a term of 4 years. There will be at least one annual meeting of this deliberative body (at the annual meeting); however, other meetings can be scheduled should the need arise. The House of Delegates will elect a Speaker, Vice Speaker, and Secretary/Treasurer from among its membership and then will establish its internal structure. Subsequently, it will meet to discuss thoughtfully and legislate democratically issues raised by individuals, states, or regions.

The Board of Directors would remain intact and continue with their stated charge of managing the "property and affairs" (AAD Bylaws, Article VII, Section 1) of the AAD. The Board would function in much the same way as it does today but with the added assurance that its actions will reflect the desires of the membership expressed through majority rule of duly elected representatives. By this mechanism, the basic tenets of democracy will be reinforced in our Academy.

Problems with current selection of governing body

At present, members of the Board of Directors represent the membership at large and have presumed their mandate to be established by their election. However, this "mandate" may be more apparent than real because it is a consequence of the requirement of how a ballot must be marked. This major flaw requires that a specified number of candidates must be marked in order for a ballot to be valid and counted. It is highly unlikely that any given AAD member has sufficient personal knowledge about the qualification of all the candidates from whom he or she must select directors. Therefore votes are invariably cast "randomly" to fulfill this requirement. Moreover, the entire membership votes on *all* directors, thereby making geographic or even philosophical representation unlikely at best.

Furthermore, the selection of candidates is made by a nominating committee composed of only six AAD members (three chosen by the current Board

**PROPOSED BYLAWS CHANGE
REGARDING AAD GOVERNANCE
Presented at A.A.D. Annual Meeting,
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HOUSE OF DELEGATES**Section 1. General Powers**

The official policies of the Academy shall be determined by the House of Delegates. Policy so determined shall be implemented by the Board of Directors.

Section 2. Number, Tenure and Qualifications

The House of Delegates shall consist of representatives from twelve regions with one delegate for each 100 voting members or major portion thereof (51 or greater). Representatives from each region shall be determined by the existing Advisory Council and shall be proportional based on populations of voting members within each region. Each region shall select its own representatives. The twelve regions shall be reviewed every ten years by the House of Delegates. State borders shall be utilized when establishing or adjusting the regions unless one state has more than one-tenth (1/10) of the voting members of the Academy, in which case that state may be divided to establish separate regions.

The elected delegates shall take office at the next Annual Business Meeting following their election, and shall serve for a term of four (4) years or until their successors shall be duly elected and qualified. Terms of delegates shall be staggered so that one-fourth (1/4) of the delegates in the House of Delegates are elected prior to each Annual Membership Meeting to succeed those delegates whose terms shall expire at that meeting. Only Fellows of the Academy may serve as delegates, and no Fellow shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms as an elected delegate.

Section 3. Meetings

(a) The annual meeting of the House of Delegates shall be held in connection with the Annual Membership Meeting of the Academy, and the specific time and place of the annual meeting shall be determined by the Executive Committee of the House of Delegates.

(b) The House of Delegates may provide, by resolution, the time and place for the holding of additional regular meetings, without other notice than such resolution.

(c) Special meetings of the House of Delegates may be called by the Speaker of the House of Delegates or by any ten (10) delegates and may be held at any place and at any time designated in the call of the meeting.

(d) Written notice of the time, place and purposes of each meeting of the House of Delegates shall be delivered to each delegate not less than fourteen (14) nor more than thirty (30) days prior thereto.

(e) One-half of the delegates plus one (1) delegate then in office shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any duly called meeting of the House of Delegates.

(f) The act of a majority of the delegates present and voting at a duly called meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the House of Delegates, except where otherwise provided by law or by these bylaws.

Section 4. Officers

The House of Delegates shall elect a Speaker, Vice Speaker and Secretary/Treasurer from among its membership by a majority vote of those delegates present and voting.

Additional officers, procedures for nominations, informal actions of the House of Delegates, removal of delegates, filling of vacancies and other policies and bylaws of the House of Delegates shall be determined by the House of Delegates.

Fig. 1. Proposed bylaws change for a house of delegates.

of Directors and three elected by the members of the Advisory Council). Even with the best intentions, and there has never been evidence of malice, this format cannot provide true representation. Although potential candidates can be submitted to this committee, there is no mechanism for "write-ins."

Thus the current "mandate" of a director's election is, in part, a hollow one. It serves neither the Director nor the AAD membership as ideally as it might.

Limited capacity of the Advisory Council

The Advisory Council was originally established to serve as a conduit for two-way communication between the membership and the Board of Directors

and has evolved to function fairly well in its "advisory" capacity. However, as currently structured, it is an inadequate vehicle to change AAD governance because it has no formal voice in determining AAD policy. The major flaw of the Advisory Council is inherent in its function.

The representatives to the Advisory Council come from recognized local, state, and regional groups of AAD members and are elected by the groups that send them. Few, if any, are "self appointed."

The regular members of the Advisory Council presently number 112 to 120. Because one representative is assigned to each local, state, or regional organization with no consideration given to size or duplication of membership, representation is defi-

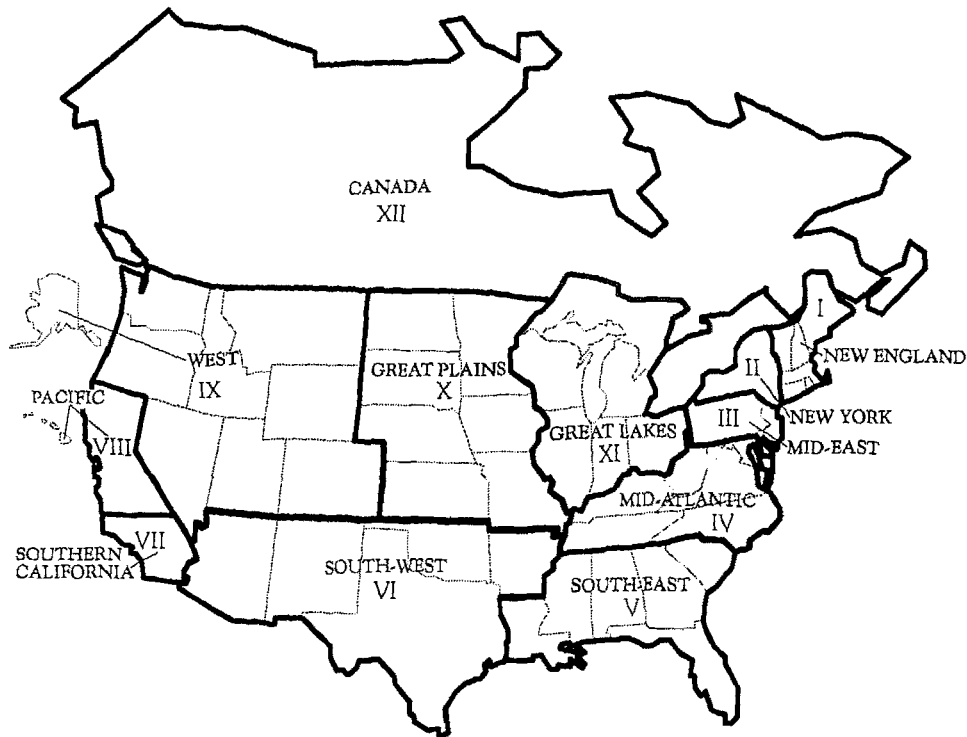


Fig. 2. Advisory Council Executive Committee districts.

nately unbalanced. Small groups have the same representation as large groups. One AAD member can potentially be represented by Advisory Council representatives from several organizations.

With the establishment of 12 districts for the purpose of selecting an Executive Board for the Advisory Council, a format for democratically selecting regional representatives was developed. These districts range in size from 328 (Canada) to 912 (Southeast) with a mean of 562. As currently used, however, these districts produce an uneven representation on the Executive Committee of the Advisory Council (Fig. 3).

Proposed Assembly of State Representatives is seriously flawed

In recognizing the "... need for the organization (the AAD) to be responsive to its members in considering important issues that can profoundly affect the specialty and the membership that organization represents" (J AM ACAD DERMATOL 1989;20:838), Drs. Weary and Hurley have expressed their desire to "supercede" the Advisory Council with an assembly of state representatives (ASR). The expressed motive for this is the need to create a more "truly representative body" to achieve a more pro-

portional representation and thereby correct some of the flaws perceived in the current Advisory Council structure. The proposed ASR, however, would retain the purely advisory capacity of its predecessor and is not "more truly representative."

The proposed distribution of representatives for the ASR establishes a profound inequity in representation many times greater than that which exists currently in the Advisory Council (Fig. 3). The critical flaw is the use of the state/province format for assignment of representatives. The reason that the state/province format is permanently flawed and cannot achieve true proportional representation is that the states and provinces do not have equal or near equal numbers. In a remarkable number of cases they differ dramatically. In addition, this does not address the oft-heard criticism voiced about the Advisory Council, specifically that small societies have the same representation as large societies. Using Weary and Hurley's Table II (page 840), one can readily demonstrate the inherent inequities. The five largest states (provinces) have an average representative/member ratio of 1:93 whereas the five smallest states (provinces) have an average representative/member ratio of 1:3. States like Colorado with 87 AAD members would have one representa-

Region	Number of Members	House of Delegates		Advisory Council		ASR
		Reps	Members per Rep	Reps	Members per Rep	Members /Rep
I	420	4	1:105	7	1:60	1:12 - 1:70
II	660	7	1:94	12	1:55	1:94
III	599	6	1:100	5	1:120	1:15 - 1:87
IV	703	7	1:100	9	1:78	1:23 - 1:95
V	1158	12	1:97	16	1:72	1:55 - 1:91
VI	628	6	1:105	14	1:45	1:43 - 1:94
VII	680	7	1:97	10	1:68	1:41 - 1:96*
VIII	373	4	1:93	5	1:75	
IX	397	4	1:99	9	1:44	1:3 - 1:93
X	353	4	1:88	8	1:44	1:15 - 1:93
XI	925	9	1:103	12	1:77	1:57 - 1:95
XII	352	4	1:88	4	1:88	1:1 - 1:93
Range			1:88 - 1:105		1:44 - 1:120	1:1 - 1:96

* California has been divided into Regions VII (Southern California) and VIII (Pacific), and so these regions must be considered together when evaluating the ASR.

Fig. 3. Representation to the proposed House of Delegates and to the current Advisory Council with members represented per delegate for the House of Delegates, Advisory Council, and the proposed Assembly of State Representatives (ASR). (Based on Advisory Council Statistics, June 1989.)

tive, which is equal to that of Prince Edward Island where the sole dermatologist would represent himself. Fifty-one percent of the representatives (a potential voting majority) represents merely 33% of the AAD membership.

The members of the AAD Board of Directors would be encouraged to attend ASR meetings or review its transcripts but would not be required to do so. "It is perceived that the ASR . . . would serve as a valuable resource to the AAD Board of Directors in its decision-making process" (page 841). One could reasonably argue that AAD members should be considered as more than simply a "valuable resource" in the decision-making process.

Also found in the ASR proposal is the dissolution of the "annual business meeting," which is converted to the summation and/or reading of actions of the Board of Directors. The criticism that only 10% of the membership attends this meeting in no way diminishes the importance of the opinions of those members of the AAD or their right to be heard. Furthermore, attendance at this meeting is a matter of choice and the relative few who attend cannot be accepted as a legitimate reason to silence them by depriving them of this opportunity. Many agree that

more would attend this meeting if it had more impact on determining AAD policy.

House of Delegates is a sound and pivotal solution

The proposed bylaws change that establishes the House of Delegates represents a carefully reasoned execution of the call for meaningful change in AAD governance.

The grouping of contiguous or neighboring states and provinces to achieve a designated number of "districts" is the only format through which an acceptable and truly proportional representation can be achieved. A version of this is currently used to establish the 12 Advisory Council districts from which its Executive Committee is drawn. This format is highly adaptable and sufficiently flexible to maintain representative equity (Fig. 3).

Although some maintain that dividing a large and populous state would increase its influence, it actually serves to diffuse that state's power by dividing its voting block while maintaining essentially the same number of representatives.

Some have expressed concern that the educational program of the AAD would be changed. This

criticism is groundless. The committees responsible for maintaining the high quality of the educational program of the AAD are well refined and self-sustaining and would not be affected by the establishment of the House of Delegates. In addition, other societies governed by a House of Delegates have not experienced this problem.

The proposed House of Delegates would provide balance to the nationally elected Board of Directors. Whereas the Directors are elected as a national slate and an effort is made to ensure that they do not represent the concerns or feelings of any one group or region, the House of Delegates would provide an open forum for the introduction, discussion, and resolution of issues of individual, group, or regional importance and concern. Having the opportunity to address issues before they reach national significance would give the AAD a chance to deal with these as a protagonist rather than merely reacting to the consequences.

Concern has been voiced that proportional representation and policy-making would politicize the AAD and thereby damage its ability to function. We disagree. In fact, there is evidence to the contrary. One national specialty society that is governed by a House of Delegates is the American Society of Anesthesiologists. Their House of Delegates has been in existence for more than 18 years, it meets annually, each delegate represents 100 members, and delegates are elected from districts drawn along state lines with groupings of states to achieve a minimum number of members per district. Nearly all policy-making decisions of the American Society of Anesthesiologists are made by the House of Delegates

with an Administrative Council to handle urgent problems. The anesthesiologists are dealing with problems similar to ours; for example, their House of Delegates formulated and approved standards of practice similar to our practice guidelines.

Conclusion

Mindful of the significance of the tumultuous times in which we now find ourselves, Weary and Hurley have called for a change: "It is now time to move forward with an organizational modification of the AAD to create a more broadly based representational form of governance than currently exists" (page 838). Members everywhere agree. The increasing sophistication of the AAD membership and the membership's desire to participate directly and decisively serve as the primary catalysts for this change in AAD governance.

The proposed bylaws change to establish a House of Delegates offers the membership of the AAD an outstanding opportunity to take another step in the direction of more direct involvement in their Academy. The number of significant issues to which the membership must respond is increasing exponentially and the members as well as the structure of the AAD have matured sufficiently to make this change possible. It is indeed time for this change.

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