

Panel on Public Affairs Meeting
October 4, 2013
APS Washington Office of Public Affairs
529 14th Street, NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC

Members present:

R. Rosner (Chair), R. Jaffe (Chair Elect), A. Bienenstock, P. Coyle, A. Garcia (via phone), W. Goldstein (via phone), M. Goodman, M. Gunner, J. Phillips, M. Rosenthal, R. Schwitters, S. Seestrom, P. Taylor, T. Theis, J. Trebes (via phone)

Guests:

T. Hodapp

Advisors/Staff present:

M. Beasley, K. Cole, K. Kirby, J. Russo, F. Slakey, M. Turner

Members Absent:

S. Aronson, J. Dahlburg (Past Chair), A. Falk, S. Kemp, S. Koonin (Vice Chair), T. Meyer

Call to Order

R. Rosner called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM.

Welcome, Introductions, & Approval of Minutes
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R. Rosner welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves. He asked for comments regarding the June 2013 minutes. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve.

Action: A. Bienenstock moved to approve the minutes of the June 2013 POPA meeting, as presented; J. Phillips seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

POPA Strategic Plan

M. Beasley addressed the group in S. Koonin's absence (S. Koonin is the chair of the committee that generated the draft). There wasn't a particular agenda in developing this strategic plan. It just seemed like a good thing to do periodically – to examine the path POPA is on. There have been two conference calls – the first for brainstorming and the second to discuss the draft document before POPA today. The idea was to create a list of items the Panel should continue thinking about – a sense of what we should consider for the future. Some of these ideas include:

- We've been largely focused on advocacy in Washington, DC; we should begin working with a wider audience of experts in industry, applied science, foundations, and possibly even other sectors of the government (state vs. federal), etc.
- Consider the international nature of our Society; there may be ways we can serve our entire membership more effectively.

- Many of the big issues we are facing today are not so strongly based in physics that you can deal with one aspect, alone; we should explore how to handle these topics more effectively within the Society (call on APS Outreach, International Affairs, Education, etc.) to determine how to successfully reach the general public.

Commentary: F. Slakey said the Strategic Planning Committee had strong views on current challenges within the federal government: If our plan was to rely on advocating at the federal level, we'd fail. It can't be the only avenue we pursue. Discussion about support for basic science research ensued. M. Beasley said that while funding does come from the federal level, it also comes from foundations that support basic science (Kavli Foundation, Moore Foundation). Many of today's very successful industries owe their existence to basic science. We should be getting to know these foundation and industry people because they are in a position to give back. We should determine what their problems are and if there is something APS can do to help. F. Slakey said the types of issues POPA advocates for tend to find their way into authorization bills (like a defense bill). If an authorization bill is the only avenue through which we can advocate, we will be frustrated. That is what prompted the Strategic Planning Committee's suggestion that POPA pursue other avenues for advocacy. R. Jaffe asked about the recommendation for POPA to expand its issues beyond energy, national security, and the environment. M. Beasley said APS is actively trying to bring the applied physics community back into focus. What are their needs? Are there issues of professional physicists that are in industry or non-academic arenas? Once we've discovered what they are, we can try to articulate them and analyze them for what APS might do to help. P. Coyle said we could add "health" to the list of issues POPA considers (biophysics). M. Beasley said we should also use a wider range of vehicles to address the general public. There is a whole set of communication vehicles that POPA hasn't really considered using in reaching out to membership & the general public. In this modern era of communication we need to think of new ways to engage, especially with the younger generation. A. Bienenstock asked how we would implement advocacy outside of the federal government. F. Slakey provided an example of advocacy happening at the state level. K. Kirby said we have to engage our membership throughout the country. F. Slakey mentioned the APS District Advocate program, work on local op-eds, radio interviews, etc. M. Gunner said if the states are the incubators, we might as well work with them now and get some grassroots initiatives organized at that level. M. Rosenthal said we should consider "global health." R. Jaffe cautioned the group not to get out of its depth. There was discussion regarding the concept of a "boot camp" for new POPA members to engage them early on and bring them up to speed on current issues the Panel is working on. There was also talk of extending the POPA member term from 3 to 4 years (or a variation of such in 3+1, 1+3, 2+2).

Actions: S. Seestrom moved to establish an ad hoc subcommittee chaired by M. Gunner and including M. Beasley, P. Coyle, and M. Goodman as members, to work through the POPA Strategic Plan; A. Bienenstock seconded the motion.

The motion to establish a subcommittee to work on the POPA Strategic Plan passed unanimously.

A motion to invite the APS Industrial Fellow to attend all POPA meetings as a non-voting participant/observer was also presented.

The motion to invite the APS Industrial Fellow to attend future POPA meetings passed unanimously.

S. Seestrom moved to structure a “boot camp” for new POPA members, to be held the day before the first POPA meeting of the year, providing an initiation and overview of the issues and projects in progress; A. Bienenstock seconded the motion.

The motion to conduct a “boot camp” for new POPA members passed unanimously.

Note: The concept of revising a POPA member’s obligation to a “3+1” structure has been sent to the POPA Steering Committee for further study.

POPA Guidelines

R. Rosner reminded the group that as a result of discussions regarding report procedure, T. Meyer drafted an outline formalizing the process, which was discussed and considered at the last meeting. T. Meyer, J. Dahlburg, and R. Schwitters have since worked to refine that document, which was then sent around to POPA members for their input. The results are what we are reviewing today.

Commentary: M. Turner said he thought the document was very thoughtful and achieved our objective. We don’t want to be overly prescriptive, and this struck the right balance. There was discussion regarding the role of APS Staff. M. Turner said that APS Staff should not be listed as members of the Study Committee. Staff should be looking out for APS interests. It was suggested that we create a position titled “Study Director,” to be held by the lead APS Staff member working on any project. M. Beasley agreed. M. Goodman mentioned white papers as another type of POPA product and wondered if we should list this within the Guidelines. F. Slakey explained that POPA would provide no advocacy on white papers, which were solely based on the opinion(s) and research of individual POPA members. They do not have to be included in the Guidelines because they don’t require a procedure for review and approval. M. Turner said the report review committee isn’t in charge of editing. Discussion on the proper way to edit a report ensued. POPA should get to see the report when it goes out for external review. But once it goes through the process, it will come back to POPA for an up or down vote. M. Gunner said POPA should see the comments made by the external reviewers at some point. The question of how conflict of interest (COI) should be handled came up. Should we have every member of the Study Committee fill out a COI form? It was noted that COI could be different at the beginning of a study than at the point when the report is finally released. R. Schwitters suggested that it be the responsibility of the Study Director and the Study Committee Chair to monitor COI. M. Turner supported this suggestion. R. Jaffe suggested we should put a review of POPA Guidelines on the

agenda for some future meeting. M. Beasley said we should revisit the topic every two years.

Actions: A. Bienenstock moved to accept the new wording of #10 (...Draft study publication will be sent to all of POPA for comment, not just Initiating POPA Subcommittee...) under “General Study Procedure and Approval Process” of the draft Guidelines for POPA Studies, keeping the current order of the list; S. Seestrom seconded the motion.

The motion carried (5 for, 4 against, 2 abstentions.)

M. Rosenthal moved to amend #11 under “General Study Procedure and Approval Process” of the draft Guidelines for POPA Studies, to indicate that the report will be sent to POPA, for informational purposes only, at the same time it is sent out for external review; A. Bienenstock seconded the motion.

The motion to send the report to POPA (for informational purposes only) at the same time it is sent out for external review, passed unanimously.

Energy & Environment Subcommittee

Nuclear Plant License Renewal Report – Discussion & Vote

R. Jaffe introduced R. Schwitters, Chair of the Study Committee, and the “up or down” vote at hand. R. Schwitters provided background and thanked POPA for the very helpful commentary provided at the June POPA meeting. Suggested revisions were integrated into the final report, presented today.

Commentary: A. Bienenstock asked R. Schwitters to explain the planned activity following the release of the report. He wondered whether we would have the support of industry and/or EPRI. F. Slakey said the Washington Office has crafted follow-up strategy that is consistent with the strategic plan. F. Slakey reviewed the edits that were made, at M. Goodman’s request. P. Taylor indicated that he was the one “no” vote when initially polled. The charge to the Study Committee was to find “technical challenges” and to determine whether the R&D program was sufficient and, in his opinion, the original version of the report was very slanted as an advocacy document. He is much happier with the revised version of the report.

Action: M. Goodman moved to approve “Renewing Licenses for the Nation’s Nuclear Power Plants” – a report by the APS Panel on Public Affairs; J. Phillips seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the report passed unanimously.

Climate Change Statement Review Subcommittee

P. Coyle led the discussion. He indicated that several teleconferences have been conducted by the Subcommittee, led by S. Koonin. There is an enormous amount of information to cull through. The Subcommittee plans to meet in Chicago on October 29th for a strategy & planning session focused on the workshop that will be held in early 2014. The Subcommittee will spend time identifying the expert briefers to invite to the workshop. At the February 2014 POPA meeting, the intent is for the Subcommittee to present the Panel with a recommendation on how to proceed (and possibly a re-write of the current statement).

Commentary: R. Rosner reminded everyone that the process will not be without controversy. F. Slakey told the group that S. Koonin is still looking to hire a project assistant. He may end up hiring several individuals to handle specific scientific issue research projects. He also mentioned a recent conversation he had with the Chair of the APS Topical Group on the Physics of Climate (GPC). While there has been a lack of controversy regarding the review so far, as soon as decisions are made regarding the experts invited to the workshop, etc., the criticism will begin and we should be prepared. P. Taylor said that “physicist language” is different and we should have a discussion on the use of words and how best to write a statement for all audiences. P. Coyle said his own view is that any statement should be written in plain English, if a re-write is the eventual recommendation.

Old Business

Helium Update

M. Lubell provided a brief background summary. This issue goes back to 1925 when the concern was providing helium for dirigibles in military use. The federal government has been involved with this for decades. In the 1960s, Congress passed legislation to begin filling the strategic helium reserve because there was a realization that the U.S. may need helium for different purposes in the future. They decided not to pay for the helium (at least on paper) which amounted to a \$20M loan the government provided itself. By 1996, as a result of interest, the loan was worth \$1.4B. Congress then passed an act to sell down the helium reserve. APS got involved at the time and issued a statement (National Policy, 95.3 – Conservation of Helium) advocating that the helium reserve shouldn’t be sold off. The legislation passed and it said nothing about what action would be taken when the Bureau of Land Management had recouped its money. It didn’t dictate what would happen to the reserve (and infrastructure) after the debt was paid up. Since 1996, the need for helium has expanded drastically (semiconductors, MRI machines, etc.). Last April, the U.S. House of Representatives started movement on a bill that would continue the BLM activity (continued operation of the reserve and the pipelines). Helium would now be auctioned off at a regulated rate (as opposed to selling it at the rate set in 1996, which was devalued as the need for helium increased). This bill passed unanimously in the House. There was trouble in the Senate. M. Turner helped with an APS Alert and calls to several Senate offices. J. Lieberman suggested getting university presidents involved with the action. The semi-conductor industry contributed to the effort as well. Finally a deal was struck and the bill came up for a vote; the Senate passed its version of the House bill. This forced the House to conference the bill because of disagreements on included spending. It was reworked and passed in the House; it then went back to the Senate at the end of the session and had to be

approved by unanimous consent because there was no floor time left. It passed and the President signed the bill into law just the other day.

F. Slakey mentioned R. Jaffe's involvement with the development of the bill. It was a decision made by POPA to push for an R&D provision to be included in the bill; the provision was included. It was agreed that APS leadership, grassroots efforts, staff, and R. Jaffe all had a profound effect on this positive outcome.

Physics & the Public Subcommittee

2008 APS Statement Review

S. Seestrom indicated that the P&P Subcommittee agreed there wasn't a need to change or archive either of the statements, but there was a dissenting opinion on whether edits should be made to the APS Statement 08.1 - Civic Engagement of Scientists. M. Rosenthal addressed the group. The original statement suffers from a number of flaws; he advocated for making the effort to clean it up and make it more consistent. He offered a draft alternative to the current statement.

Commentary: Discussion ensued. M. Beasley said he likes the new version. M. Lubell and others suggested the 3rd paragraph should be the 1st paragraph and the middle paragraph should be tightened up.

Action: R. Schwitters moved to redraft the APS Statement 08.1 (Civic Engagement of Scientists) as proposed by M. Rosenthal; A. Bienenstock seconded the motion.

The motion to redraft the statement passed unanimously

Action will begin as soon as possible in an attempt to conduct an electronic vote prior to the end of the year. The P&P Subcommittee will review the redraft prior to sending it out to the whole of POPA.

S. Seestrom said the second statement up for review, APS Statement 08.2 – Joint Diversity, was still considered relevant by the Subcommittee and they had voted to recommend maintaining it “as is.”

Commentary: A. Bienenstock asked if APS had a separate statement specific to gender equality. S. Seestrom referenced APS Statement 94.3 - Policy on Equal Professional Opportunity, which hits on certain gender equality points. She suggested either modifying the current statement (08.2) or proposing an entirely new statement focused on gender diversity. R. Rosner suggested changing the phrase “underrepresented minorities.” P. Coyle said the statement should be as inclusive as possible and the current version requires tweaking. T. Hodapp said he will be speaking with the Committee on the Status of Women in Physics in the next week. He suggests taking this issue to them to get their reaction and their suggestions for how to address next steps. He will bring their response back to POPA. He has a sense that they may want to draft an

entirely different statement because of the complexities involved in obtaining agreement on a modified/updated statement.

Update on Proposed Statements (K-12, Undergraduate Research)

T. Hodapp discussed the K-12 statement, which was brought forth by the APS Committee on Education, approved by POPA, and recently reviewed by the APS Executive Board. Minor edits were suggested by the E. Board (grammar, punctuation) and there was discussion as to whether the term “education research” should be used. The Committee on Education has agreed to the edited version in front of POPA today.

Action: S. Seestrom moved to accept the modified statement; A. Bienenstock seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

S. Seestrom reminded POPA that the proposed Undergraduate Research Statement, which was approved at our last meeting, is out to Council for comment. The E. Board will review the statement and Council comments at their November meeting. If approved, it will be sent out to APS membership for comment.

National Security Subcommittee

Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons Treaty International Workshop

J. Trebes joined via teleconference and led the discussion. Back in February POPA, along with CSIS and the U.S. State Department, ran a workshop on tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Verification technology issues weren't fully explored at that workshop, so the German and European physics societies have proposed a follow-on meeting that would include (1) policy issues related to nuclear disarmament in Europe, (2) European research that's directly relevant for verification to dismantlement, and (3) the exploration of the role of the European physics community in disarmament issues. J. Trebes said we should take a hard look at whether we should get involved with this, making sure the meeting is worth our while to participate.

Commentary: J. Phillips said she will take on the role of leading the National Security Subcommittee when J. Trebes steps down. J. Trebes said he'd assist with the NSNW International Workshop, even after he steps down from POPA. The question on the table is whether POPA wants to explore what a real proposal would look like. M. Goodman said it would look different if this were a true joint project, as opposed to the Europeans just wanting our take on their endeavor. R. Rosner said the proposal in front of us now doesn't seem fully vetted. We should identify who will negotiate with our European counterparts on an agreed upon proposal.

Action: R. Schwitters moved to charge J. Phillips, with the assistance of S. Kemp and P. Coyle, to develop with our European counterparts a fully vetted proposal for a joint, international workshop on non-strategic nuclear weapons; P. Coyle seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

R. Rosner opened the floor for new business. None was reported.

Intersessional Minutes

- As of October 14th, 2013, the APS Executive Board unanimously approved the public release of *Renewing Licenses for the Nation's Nuclear Power Plants* – a report by the APS Panel on Public Affairs.
- The proposed Undergraduate Research Statement was approved by the Executive Board at their November 2013 meeting and posted on the APS website for membership comment (comment period ends 1/31/2014). An article was released in APS News in early January 2014 regarding the proposed statement and comment period.

Next Meeting

The date for the next POPA meeting will be February 7th, 2014.

Adjournment

Action: *R. Rosner adjourned the meeting at 2:16 PM.*