

ONE MEMBER, ONE VOTE IS ONE IMPORTANT DECISION

By Rick Haycock, CFE

In the interest of full disclosure, let me begin by telling you a bit about myself. I've been a member of IAVM for about 28 years, the first 24 years as a Professional Member; the last four as an Honorary Member. As an Honorary Member, I currently am not entitled to vote. If all measures of the current initiative are approved by the membership I – along with approximately 99 other Retired and Honorary Members – will have our voting privileges restored.

So ... there you have it. I have “skin” in the game: the privilege of voting on matters of importance to the members of IAVM, as related to our Association. And I truly believe it is a privilege and that it is important, not something that should be granted frivolously. The use of this privilege is safeguarded within our bylaws, currently granted only to the Professional Members within our ranks.

We last visited the question of voting privileges in 2014, following VenueConnect in Portland. The ballot, if you will, was to consider three separate but related concerns, revising the bylaws to: a) reflect changes to our governance model; b) extend the vote privilege to Allied Members; and c) make qualifying Allied Members eligible to serve as Senior Officers. As you know, the two measures related to our Allied Members did not pass.

The Board of Directors, after much consultation and reflection, has deemed it appropriate and necessary to revisit this matter again. Some members disagree, believing the matter was addressed and decided in 2014. On this issue, I believe it's beneficial to look at the entire context of the situation.

In 2017, we are being asked to consider extending the vote not just to Allied Members, but to ALL members: One Member, One Vote. It's not just a cute marketing slogan. In my opinion, it speaks to the very core of our IAVM Value Statements. How can we honor our best intentions while denying a voice to each and every one of our

members?

The other key question concerns eligibility for senior leadership positions. The proposed bylaw changes would entrench more stringent qualifications for leadership nominees, including a minimum of ten (10) years experience in a senior venue position and the requirement to have already achieved the CFE designation at the time of nomination. IAVM volunteer leadership will continue to come solely from the ranks of our Professional Members. This is a significant diversion from the 2014 ballot.

And I sense that this has been an important distinction for many of our members: protecting our status as a professional association. I have to admit that this issue caught me completely off-guard, because I have never thought of IAVM as anything but a professional association (versus a trade association), and there was nothing in the proposed changes that seemed likely to change my mind. So ... I did what any reasonable person would do. I Googled it.

There is not an abundance of relevant information online regarding the distinctions between a professional association and a trade association and, not surprisingly, there are different opinions on what makes each organization what it is purported to be. It seems there are no hard and fast rules. A key distinction seems to be who or what holds the membership: an individual, as in a professional association, or a company, as with a trade association. The key deliverables of IAVM Membership are totally consistent with Wikipedia and other online resources:

- Career advancement
- Certification
- Education and Professional Development
- Job Boards
- Professional standards and ethics
- Industry research
- Advocacy

I would suggest there is nothing in the proposed bylaw changes that would materially change those characteristics. IAVM is and will continue to be a professional association, mandated “to educate, advocate for, and inspire public assembly venue professionals, worldwide.”

For some, this potential shift in voting dynamics is an uncomfortable proposition. But change – constructive change - has always been a determining feature of IAVM. One of the biggest and most conspicuous changes was our name change ... over a long time, after much discussion and angst ... from auditorium to assembly to venue ... all the while, in search of the name that most accurately reflected who we were and finally, to be as inclusive as possible, to reflect the diversity of venue types within our association. I doubt anyone would argue the strength we derive from that diversity within our membership.

Similarly, the voting membership is about to consider another profound change, one that once again will reflect our diversity and seek to achieve the inclusiveness that we so readily embrace in our venues every day. Venue managers, service providers, suppliers and local agencies routinely work hand-in-hand to operate effectively and efficiently in meeting the needs and expectations of constituents. I have never understood why we don't conduct ourselves in the same manner within our association. Allied Membership came to fruition in 1983. Why on earth has it taken us over 30 years to consider them full voting partners with a meaningful voice in the well-being of our association? There is nothing to fear. IAVM has continued to grow and evolve throughout its history. We have an obligation to honor all of the great work and vision that has preceded us and to take that next step by giving a voice to all those within our membership ranks.

As with my post on this subject on VenueNet (11-03-2016), I'll leave you with this last thought: just VOTE!

When this subject was before the voting membership in 2014, there were 2,526 members eligible to vote. Only 623 eligible members voted. That means just over 75% of eligible members didn't even bother to vote! Bylaw changes require a 2/3 majority of active voters to pass. In 2014, the measure to extend the vote to Allied Members achieved only 66.2% support ... meaning it failed by less than 3 votes. Never doubt the ability of one person to make a difference.

Many years ago, while serving on the Industry Affairs Council (I think it was) I had occasion to thank the Council Chair, Frank Roach, for his leadership and inspiration. Those of you who know Frank might agree that he was very passionate about this business and he didn't keep his tongue in his pocket. I'll never forget his simple reply: “I'm inspired by people who give a damn.”

I've always been proud of IAVM, proud of the work we do, proud of our history and immensely appreciative of the tremendous work done by the pioneers of our association and the volunteer leaders with whom I've been privileged to serve. It isn't perfect by any means, but it isn't broken either, and it doesn't need fixing per se. But we can make it even better. Stronger. And I happen to think we do that better together, with our collective voices.

I hope you will be inspired enough to get up and vote on this very important initiative. **FM**

Rick Haycock, CFE, is an IAVM Retired Member who formerly served as general manager of Lansdowne Park in Ottawa, Canada.



Pictured: Rick Haycock, CFE. Photo from VenueConnect 2015

FAQs

See more FAQs at iavm.org.

What is the “ONE MEMBER, ONE VOTE” initiative?

IAVM values diversity. ONE MEMBER, ONE VOTE is proposed to incorporate the perspective of all our Members. Currently, Honorary, Retired, Allied and Associate Members are denied the right to vote in the future of IAVM. This initiative will strongly position IAVM well into the future and make our Association more diverse and inclusive. By providing the opportunity for all Members to have a voice, we draw on the entire strength and experience in our industry. This initiative will not change our professional association status, our name, our mission or the Brand Promise to our Members.

Why are we voting on this again?

This is not the same initiative that was brought forward in 2014. We've listened to Members' feedback and understand that you want our organization to benefit from the diverse perspectives of all its Members. While Allied Members would earn the right to vote if this initiative passes, they would still not be eligible to serve in the Association's senior leadership roles. After research and input from the Membership Committee, the Membership Task Force and the Governance Committee, the Board of Directors agreed to put the proposal before the Members because there was consensus that diversity is essential for good decision making. Members of the Board of Directors and IAVM staff are now actively seeking feedback about the proposal from Members to ensure an inclusive process.

How do we provide feedback?

There will be a live Q&A session at Sector Meetings and at the conclusion of the webinars. Participants in all sessions will be sent a link to a survey with an option to provide feedback, including an open write-in section. That feedback will be passed on to the Governance Committee, who will evaluate it in context with the language approved by the Board and determine if there is support for the initiative, and/or if the language needs to be revisited. This would then come back to the Board in the late spring before a potential ballot is created.

Will these revisions turn us into a trade association?

No. We are and will remain a professional association. A trade association is an organization founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry. Its members are most often the businesses themselves, not individuals. That does not describe IAVM. Furthermore, this initiative will maintain the distinction of Professional Members and Allied Members. We define ourselves by our mission statement and our actions, and our actions demonstrate we are a professional association with a primary focus on public assembly venue professionals.