

A Primer on APA Council of Representatives (COR)
Lawrence Perlman
March 15, 2016

I am now halfway through my first term on COR, having attended three meetings. It's been a steep learning curve. Unfortunately, there was no prior Council rep from MPA to orient me. Thus, I'm writing this primer for the use of my successors.

Council is a legislative body composed of 173 members representing all of the states, provinces, and territories (as far away as Guam) and the 54 APA divisions. Each entity has at least one representative, but some have as many as six, depending on the results of the annual apportionment balloting. Three states have two representatives each--NY, PA, and CA. Interestingly, there are four other reps from Michigan who represent divisions—Norm Abeles (39, Psychoanalysis), Ken Adams (40, Neuropsychology), Don Moss (30, Hypnosis), and Georgia Chao (14, I/O). Also, Bob Woody from Nebraska (42, Independent Practice) has long-standing ties to MI.

Council is democracy in action. That is, its deliberations are often painfully slow and messy. As in any legislative body, a minority who find an unused microphone irresistible often dominates meetings. COR adheres closely to parliamentary procedure, so the discussions are quite orderly. However, intense expression of emotions is not unusual.

APA governance was recently restructured so that COR will determine broad policy, while a Council Leadership Team (CLT) will hash out the specifics. One would think that might streamline decision-making. However, the meetings I attended were often devoted to a good deal of wordsmithing of motions, as if an obsessional process were operative. Consequently, I took on the role of making motions to close debate on several occasions. This gave me a certain reputation for being the person who moves the process along.

As in any legislative body, much work goes on behind the scenes and is facilitated by personal relationships. Apprehending this early on, I cultivated friendships with many other state reps and key players. This has proven useful both in terms of gaining an understanding of the challenges faced by other states and in furthering the interests of Michigan.

To this end, caucuses are important. I have become a member of two and attended the meetings of a few others. This requires some extra effort, since these meetings

are in the evening or early morning. I believe that it is in the interest of MPA to pay the dues for Council reps to belong to the Caucus of State, Provincial and Territorial Reps (CSPTR, \$25) and the Association of Practicing Psychologists (APP, \$50), as well as Div. 31 (State Associations, \$43).

Council meetings are intense; there is little down time. We often meet morning to night for almost three days, and are provided with most meals on site. I only had the opportunity to have one dinner outside of the hotel and was able to organize a group of colleagues from other states to join me. Coincidentally, four of them had ties to Michigan. This was not only enjoyable but also productive in terms of cementing relationships.

APA staff is extraordinarily efficient and helpful. The meetings are well resourced and well organized. APA is going through a period of turmoil due to the fallout from the Independent Review (Hoffman Report) and the subsequent departure of high-ranking staff. Nevertheless, the remaining leaders are doing an admirable job of double duty to keep the organization running.

I was fortunate to get to know several key staff members in the leadership, most notably Katherine Nordal, CEO of APAPO, Nathalie Gilfoyle, APA's chief counsel, and Ian King, director of membership. I also networked with the current and past presidents, the president-elect, several of the five former presidents who are on COR, and members of the Board of Directors.

I have met many intelligent, talented, and accomplished psychologists during my tenure on Council. One can only be impressed by the dedication and creativity in COR. It is truly been a privilege to serve.