

Dec. 09

Happy Holidays to All!!!

# Los Angeles Section

*Monthly: Est. 1913*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jay Higgins, P.E., M.ASCE  
Section President



## Legislative Activities—Why are we getting involved?

We're Civil Engineers. We have technical roots. We design and build the infrastructure of this nation. Why would we get involved in legislative activity? If we are a non-profit organization, how can we spend money on activities that try to influence politicians? Can we hire lobbyists? Don't our bylaws prohibit us from getting involved in this kind of activity? In this month's article, I will address some lingering questions related to ASCE's involvement in legislative activities at the Section, Regional and Society level.

In the October 2009 newsletter President's Message, I outlined my goals for the Section for the year. One of those goals was to expand our Section's legislative activities primarily through increased contact with your federal and state legislators by meeting with them on a regular basis at their local district office. But given all the questions asked above, how can we do this and be within the legal structure of our organization? Let's start with why we want to do this and then go on to answer the other questions raised above.

Our Society's Past President Wayne Klotz, at the start of this term, talked about a three-pronged approach for his initiatives for the year, the ABCs. The "A" initiative stands for advocacy. President Klotz states, "It is time for civil engineers to stand up taller and impress upon the local, state, and federal governments the value of what we do." In a nutshell, we need to be advocates for our profession. The Society is focusing its legislative activities on Congress and various bills that fund infrastructure because we need to provide input to the elected officials that are passing laws and making funding decisions that impact our profession. We can either become advocates for civil engineering and infrastructure improvements, or we can sit on the sidelines and live with the consequences.

The Society and Region are moving forward as advocates and the Section is following their lead so that we can be part of the process and steer it toward the most beneficial outcome to improve our nation's infrastructure. The Region and Section created legislative and other policy committees. These committees look at pending legislation and compile information concerning the Section's position on State issues in the same way that the Society does for the federal issues before Congress. We then bring these messages to the federal and state legislators. At some point, we hope to establish a relationship where legislators consider us a resource and will come to us for advice on issues such as infrastructures or environment.

Let's talk about our Section Constitution and what it allows us to legally do under our organizational structure. The Section Constitution, Article 7, paragraph 7.1, Limitations on Political Activities, states:

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## Reminder:

Copy deadline for the Jan. 2010 issue is Dec. 1, 2009; copy deadline for Feb. 2010 issue is Jan. 1, 2010.



www.ascelasection.org

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## Who And What Are We Really Concerned With?

This month we say goodbye to 2009. This year has been full of challenges that range from politics, to budget, to employment, to our profession, and finally personal issues. But hopefully unscathed and unfazed, we rise to confront these challenges.

Our Section President Jay Higgins, P.E. challenges us to be more politically active in our roles as engineers. For a few of us, politics and engineering cannot even be seen as logically mixing together. But Mr. Higgins assures us that it does. As long as we as a Society act within the bounds of our organizational classification [i.e., 501(c)(3)], we will be ok.

In this issue, we also highlight a workshop that just recently concluded. The "Engineers and Politics: Workshops Empowering Engineering Advocates" event expands on exactly what Mr. Higgins is advocating. The Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch's Government Affairs Committee organized the event last August to empower our civil engineers to be more vocal about the political issues that affect our profession and our built environment. We should ask ourselves often, "who and what are we really concerned with?" We cannot be more direct in saying that if we do not get involved in resolving issues concerning us engineers; we suffer through the consequences of our inaction. I am sure no one would willingly want that to happen.

We also received an article from USC student Kristen Scudder regarding their very exciting participation at the 139th ASCE National Engineering Conference. With support from the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch's Younger Member Forum, these fine USC students were able to go to St. Louis, MO for the event. It is indeed sweet to participate after a six year hiatus.

On another note, Mr. Mark Norton, P.E., LEED AP talks about the value of continuing education in sustainability principles through Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional (LEED AP) certification. There are various schools of thought that are pro or con to Mr. Norton's idea. However, one thing is certain, there is an underlying value to committing to the application of sustainability principles in our civil engineering projects. What a convenient way to do so through the LEED process.

Finally, "What's New at ASCE in 2010?" Have you renewed your membership yet? Not only is it so convenient to do so, there's incentive for us to do so NOW? What would your Section do with \$1,250? We can only begin to imagine.

Enjoy this issue of your newsletter. We hope to see you at our next ASCE event.

Have a safe and wonderful holiday season!

- Dr. Cris B. Liban. P.E.

## Leading through "LEED" Accreditation

By Mark Norton, P.E., LEED AP



One of the characteristics of a successful and effective civil engineer is the practice of continuing education. Some management leaders have described this characteristic as "sharpening the saw". Unless we take the time to improve our skills through further education and possible certification, when needed, our effectiveness as civil engineers generally diminishes.

The form of continuing education varies depending upon the civil engineer's chosen path of expertise within civil engineering. ASCE provides many opportunities where one can enhance their education and training through workshops, seminars, Web learning classes and certifications. However, as one reviews the ASCE "Vision for Civil Engineering in 2025", one area which seems to cover all specialties of civil engineers and where we can all enhance our skills is that of "sustainability". As indicated in the Vision, all civil engineers are now encouraged to become "stewards of the natural environment and its resources" necessary to "create a sustainable world". One effective path to helping understand how civil engineering practices can be applied in helping to achieve sustainability is to become a "LEED" accredited professional.

What is LEED? Under the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a certification process has been developed to recognize "green" building construction called LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). To achieve LEED certification for a building or development, a LEED Accredited Professional (AP) must be involved working closely with the architect, engineer, owner, contractor and others in helping the project team meet the LEED requirements. Using a point system awarded by the USGBC for each green standard implemented, a building or development can then be recognized for its leadership in energy and environmental design. The standards impact not just the building's energy use but also many areas in which civil engineers can apply their skills including site selection and design, water efficiency, stormwater drainage, wastewater treatment, recycling, materials selection and resource management.



As a civil engineer, it is clear to me that our environment is changing around us and we need to adapt as well and educate ourselves in skills and practices that are necessary for the future. Studies have shown that buildings nationwide account for 70% of electricity consumption, 65% of the waste output, 30% of the greenhouse gases, and 12% of water use.

For those who think that it is too late to have much impact, think again. Consider this statistic: over 50 % of the building and development around us that we can expect to see by the year 2030 has not been built yet or will be rebuilt. We can thus still make a huge difference in moving towards an environmentally responsible, healthy and prosperous environment. I am also aware that there will be some that say "LEED" does not necessarily equate to sustainability and that it is only one of many processes that recognize "green" practices in construction. Still, it is widely recognized as an effective credential and knowledge base that I would encourage all civil engineers to attain.

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# Engineers and Politics?

## Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch (MLAB)

*By Jeff Girard and Serge Haddad, P.E.*

MLAB is starting its new year with great momentum. Two recent events, Engineers and Politics workshop and the Installation and Awards Dinner in City Hall have set the stage for leadership and vision for the coming months. It is important that we answer the call to action as outlined by ASCE's Vision 2025 booklet. We hope to serve our membership by developing programs that follow the path of developing leaders in our profession and in our community.

Should engineers be involved in politics? What role should engineers have in politics? What message should engineers advocate to legislators? These were the questions the Government Affairs Committee (GAC) of MLAB and MLAB YMF worked to answer. After months of planning and meetings by the GAC, the August 29th "Engineers and Politics: Workshops



Empowering Engineering Advocates" event proved to be a huge success. This event was funded through the SPAG program which allows Branches and Sections to receive funding to further their Public or Government Relations programs. This grant was awarded due to the merits and vision of the GAC; in order to secure this grant we created a detailed plan of the event. We listed specific line items such as costs, timelines, content and goals.

Engineers and Politics was designed to motivate engineers to become more active political advocates, leaders and work to influence elected officials. It opened a window of opportunity into a world of authoring and guiding policy. Currently, our political leaders all too often lack a scientific or engineering background, and yet they are asked to make decisions on sustainability and infrastructure. It is time that engineers tap into their potential and work to be involved at all levels of government.

The message of urgency to become more involved was delivered through five key workshops; Noelle Mattock (lobbyist with CH2MHill) engaged the audience with a very interactive discussion about the legislative process. Noelle worked with Richard Markuson, ASCE Region 9 Lobbyist, to inform the attendees on how to meet with elected officials and deliver a lasting message. Mike Thornton, ASCE Region 9 Government Affairs Chair, finished the first session with a historical outline on infrastructure. Mike made his point very clear: our nation's infrastructure is failing because there is a lack of funding! The exact dollar amount we lack is detailed in the 2009 ASCE Report Card.



The second session was a presentation and roundtable discussion on ASCE's Vision 2025. Mr. Julian Garcia, MLAB Secretary, led attendees through the Vision 2025 and directed their conversation toward Government Affairs and Advocacy issues. Each table discussed how we as Los Angeles ASCE Members can strive toward these strategic goals set forth in Vision 2025. One example discussion topic (Outcome 5.1) explored whether or not Civil Engineers are adequately prepared to be proactively and effectively engaged in broad-based policy discussions.

The third session, "How Can a Non-Profit Organization Advocate?" was lively as an attorney presented several differences between the ASCE tax classifications of 501(c)3 and a 501(c)6.

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## National Conference Report from USC

By Kristen Scudder

This year's 139th ASCE National Civil Engineering Conference was held in the heart of America- Kansas City, Missouri. With a conference theme of "From Builders to Integrators—Civil Engineers Leading the Way," USC and MLAB ASCE members participated in discussions with engineers from all around the country about the vision for the role that civil engineers will play in the economic growth and infrastructure development of the country. The conference offered a variety of panel sessions on updating America's critical infrastructure, new technologies in the industry, management for future projects, and other industry related issues.

The most emphasized of all the discussed topics was America's Critical Infrastructure and its need for improvement. After receiving a D on our Infrastructure Report Card rating, the United States is starting to fall behind, and our neglect is causing the restoration costs of our transportation ways, public works, and other critical civil structures to increase. Amidst this dismal rating though, many of the panelists had great hopes for improvement, and attendees left forum sessions with a feeling of security in their jobs and the vast amount of opportunities to come. America is calling, and the civil engineering community is ready to respond.

With support from the Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch Younger Member Forum, the USC ASCE Student Chapter was excited to send its first group of students in over 6 years to a national conference, and all of our expectations were exceeded. We met a lot of students from around the country and made connections with professionals in the industry who were willing to help on our projects, give us advice as aspiring engineers, and inspire us to reach the same professional level. It was also a great opportunity to discuss the upcoming year and events with the Los Angeles Branch ASCE members as we prepare for our competitions in April at the regional conference. We look forward to sending USC ASCE members to these conferences in years to come!

## A Great Idea From the Life Members

The ASCE Life Members' Public Image Committee request that members take their (to be discarded) Civil Engineering magazines to their doctor's office or barber shop and merge them with the stack of magazines. We feel that this will be an effective way to make the general public more aware of what civil engineers do.

## ASCE's 2009 Member-Get-A-Member Drive Depends on You!

## Engineers and Politics? Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch

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Mr. Cary Davidson compared ASCE to industry organizations such as AIA, AGC, ACEC as well as other professional organizations such as the American Medical Association and American Bar Association. He identified that these are all 501(c)6 organizations and therefore are not limited to fund advocacy efforts or campaign endorsements. As a 501(c)3 organization, similar to Universities and Religious organizations, ASCE is limited by the IRS to spend an insignificant amount of funding toward advocating efforts. This tax classification makes us unable to endorse or support candidates as well. The majority of the attendees were trying to understand why we are not a 501(c)6 organization. This topic must and will be investigated further by the GAC. It is important for our membership to gain a better understanding between the benefits and limitations of a 501(c)3 versus a 501(c)6 organization.

The afternoon sessions focused on two main areas, "Legislation" and "What can we do now?" These two workshops were aimed to build a more proactive Society in the political arena. Danielle Elkins, CH2M Hill, presented on behalf of the Society advocacy program. Ms. Elkins touched on issues important to the Government Affairs staff in Washington D.C., namely Transportation, Aviation and Dam Legislation. She also encouraged the attendees to join the ASCE Click to Connect Program which will send alerts to those who sign up. She asked members to contact their legislators regarding specific legislation to let them know they are a resource. Over 50 pieces of legislation were identified to have an impact on our profession for this event.

Mr. Richard Markuson, ASCE Region 9 Lobbyist, concluded the day's event with "What can I, an Engineer, do now?" Mr. Markuson directed attendees to take action, meet elected officials, participate in their events, and unite with other organizations to combine efforts. He reminded us that we are the most knowledgeable profession on infrastructure. We do not have to have all the answers, but we can be the lightning rod that connects them to the appropriate ASCE leadership. Bottomline, ASCE is the central hub for answers related to infrastructure.

The event was very well attended with over 50 LA Section members. All were interested in learning more about advocating and ways to be more involved. Throughout the day, the speakers reinforced the importance of active involvement, legislation awareness and their potential as a group devoted to advocacy. It is time for ASCE to take a more pro-active approach to advocacy. This event was a call to action, one we promise to repeat annually.

Please contact the GAC and help our profession succeed. We invite you to attend our monthly meetings. We want to hear your ideas. We want to gain your support and expertise to increase the awareness of critical infrastructure needs. Look for events in 2010 including: educational workshops, LA City and County Legislative Day, Sacramento Fly-in and the Washington DC Fly-in. Do not wait for these events to meet your elected officials. We encourage you to contact them today!

# Air Transport Technical Group

## American Society of Civil Engineers Los Angeles Section

### Metropolitan Los Angeles Branch

The Air Transport Technical Group serves the American Society of Civil Engineers, its members and supporters by conducting periodic meetings for the benefit of engineers and architects having an interest in the aviation industry. The meetings focus on various aspects of air transport, including airport improvements, airline affairs, air traffic control, and the aircraft manufacturing industry. The goal of the Air Transport Technical Group in conducting periodic meetings is to provide informative presentations to its members and guests, and to provide them with an opportunity to exchange information and ideas for the benefit of all participants.

Meetings of the Air Transport Technical Group are planned for January, March, May, September, and November of each year. Arrangements will be made for presentations on terminal and airfield airport improvements for passenger and cargo transport, airline tenant improvements, Federal Aviation Administration developments in air and ground traffic control, airport security, and developments in aircraft manufacturing.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Air Transport Group contact Chairperson Charles Adams.

The Air Transport Technical Group Board of Directors for 2009-2010 is as follows:

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## What's New at ASCE in 2010?

Why should you renew your 2010 ASCE membership now? Beyond helping your Section inch closer to crossing the finish line first and earning \$1,250, you guarantee your exclusive member only access to these new and updated ASCE programs in 2009-2010, in addition to the resources you enjoy every year with ASCE:

- New** - ASCE eLearning Workshops – Use free member-only access to live Web learning programs designed to help you hone critical career skills.
- New** - Expanded eMentoring Programs – Mentors and protégés benefit from an extended personal online network to exchange ideas, learn new skills, and share experiences.
- Growing** - Participate in EWB-USA – Help bring sustainable engineering projects to developing communities worldwide by joining or renewing with EWB-USA at an exclusive ASCE member discount.

ASCE gives you three easy ways to renew:

1. **Mail** in your 2010 renewal form, which was mailed on Sept. 8, 2009.
2. **Renew** online at [www.asce.org/renewal](http://www.asce.org/renewal) and help ASCE “go green” by conserving the paper used in mailing your renewal back and also saving on printing costs for future renewal notices.
3. **Call** ASCE Customer Service at (800) 548-ASCE (2723) or (703) 295-6300 between 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET, Monday-Friday.

Help your Section by renewing by Dec. 1 and make sure you don't miss out on any of these new benefits or the value you receive from ASCE each year.

"No substantial part of the activities of the Section shall be carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Section shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office."

What is clear from the above statement is what we cannot do; support a candidate for public office. What takes a little more explaining is what we can do concerning "attempting to influence legislation". The Section, as part of the Society, qualifies as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. The Society and the Section qualify because we are organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, literary, and scientific purposes. In addition to exemption from most federal income and some state and local taxes, as a 501(c)(3) we receive additional benefits, including privileged postal rates and the ability for donors to deduct contributions as a charitable donation. However, it comes with limitations. What we can do is influence legislation, as long as it does not become a "substantial part" of our activities. What does that mean? As engineers we like to see defined concrete limits, but apparently that does not exist in the tax code. That is why we have corporate counsel in Reston, Virginia to help us understand this and ensure that we don't stray beyond this limitation.

The simple way I chose to view this is to look at the other things we do. The Society, Region, and Section spend the majority of their time and efforts on educational and scientific activities through its technical groups, seminars, luncheon and dinner presentations, leadership and management workshops, and student and community outreach activities. If you read the objective of the Society we are clearly an organization whose objective is the advancement of the science and profession of engineering to enhance the welfare of humanity. The key phrase in that objective to me is "the welfare of humanity." We have to work within the system to ensure the best decisions are made and that adequate funding is provided to maintain and improve our infrastructure for the welfare of the public. One very practical way to do this is involve ourselves in the legislative process.

There is another tax-exempt organizational structure referred to as 501(c)(6) which has fewer tax benefits than the 501(c)(3) but also has no limit on lobbying activities and allows political action committees (PACs) and donations to support a candidate for office. The Society has had vigorous healthy debate about the advantages and disadvantages of the Society, or some subsidiary organization of the Society, becoming a 501(c)(6). This proposition was voted down by a narrow margin last time and could be coming before the Society Board of Direction for consideration in the future. If you feel strongly about this issue you should contact your Branch President and let them know your point of view. Don't sit on the sidelines, unless you are willing to live with the consequences.

I hope that I have eased any concerns you may have had about the Section involvement in the legislative process. I also hope you see why it is important to "stand up taller" and impress upon the local, state, and federal governments the value of what we do." How can you participate in legislative activities? It is simple, by signing up to be part of the "Key Contact" program. You will receive informational e-mails about the key issues affecting civil engineering at the federal and state level.

A tool that is available through the program is the "Six Clicks" advocacy website which will allow you to communicate with your legislators easily through the internet. The system provides you with the resources including draft letters that can be used as is or modified into a personal meaningful message. The letter is instantly delivered to your legislator by e-mail. If you are interested in this program go to [www.asce.org/govrel](http://www.asce.org/govrel) and click on "Key Contact Program". Also contact your Branch President to find out more about your Branch Legislative Activities committee and the Region's Infrastructure Symposium and "Legislative Day in Sacramento" activities to be held this coming February 9th and 10th 2010. In the near future, the Section will have a program in place where Key Contacts will be visiting the legislators in their local district offices on a regular basis.

If you have any questions and comments please feel free to send me an e-mail at [jay\\_higgins@urscorp.com](mailto:jay_higgins@urscorp.com) or talk with your Branch Legislative Committee Chair. Let's inform our legislators about the importance of what we do.

As always, if you would like to submit an article for the Newsletter, please contact your Newsletter Editor, Cris Liban. Enjoy your newsletter and have a happy holiday season!

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**[www.ascelasection.org](http://www.ascelasection.org)**

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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

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## **DISASTER TRAINING**

Classes are being organized for volunteers to help in the event of a major disasters under the auspices of the State of California, Office of Emergency Services (OES). Classes will be held in alternate ASCE Branch areas when there are sufficient requests. Qualified individuals are California Registered Civil, Structural, Geotechnical, Certified engineering Geologists, or Architects. If you are interested in attending a class, or are interested in arranging a class, please contact the ASCE Disaster Preparedness Committee Chairman. There is a charge of \$15 for the class.

The class begins at 9 or 10 and lasts 5 or 6 hours.

Classes will be given for Volunteers to assess damage and /or Coordinators from City or County to direct Volunteers for their area of damage.

To register for the class submit your name along with your Telephone number, Fax number, Zip code, and Email address. You will be contacted when 10 or more requests a class. The maximum number in the class should not exceed 20.

If your Branch, or Firm would like to offer the use of its facilities for a class, please register and provide the contact person, phone, Fax, and E-mail. You will be contacted to make arrangements.

Thank you for your support of the A S C E

Jack W. Rolston, Chair

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## Leading through "LEED" Accreditation

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As one considers whether LEED accreditation is appropriate for them, keep in mind that more and more cities, counties and States across the country are enacting ordinances and regulations either encouraging or requiring "LEED" certified buildings and sustainable practices. It is a wave that is impacting our professional practices.

As a civil engineer, being fully aware of what all is involved in "green" design may prove to be an important asset and skill set for one's firm and career. Even if we don't envision ourselves as being directly involved as a LEED AP for a building or development, the training and education one gains from becoming a LEED AP is invaluable. Furthermore, in recognition of the desire for many to understand the "green practices" of LEED without necessarily becoming a practicing LEED AP, the USGBC has developed a new testing system with an entry level credential of LEED Green Associate. With this change, all civil engineers can more easily attain a practical understanding of how their profession relates to this "green" movement.

It is my hope that we each continue to ask ourselves: are we doing our best to educate ourselves and effectively deal with a changing environment? Are we moving forward in getting the training necessary to create a sustainable future for ourselves and future generations?

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