

# Los Angeles Section

*Monthly: Est. 1913*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John Morris, P.E.  
Section President



## Civil Engineers in Public Policy

Civil engineers are highly prized in an area not commonly considered when one thinks of the profession. As lawmakers and other elected officials look to implement the hundreds of rules and regulations that come out of state capitols, city halls and county boards of supervisors every year, a small group of highly experienced and knowledgeable individuals are often sought to give guidance to officials on a whole host of public policy issues. Your engineering judgment might make you a valuable commodity in evaluating project feasibility, environmental impacts, and community safety, just to name a few. Hundreds of appointed positions are made every year at numerous levels throughout local governments on key policy positions. These positions offer a unique opportunity to serve the community and the civil engineering profession.

At a level just beneath government lawmaking and right above the PTA exists an area of specialized policy makers who fulfill an important role in local government.

ASCE has long identified the need to have more of its members appointed or elected to boards and commissions that might influence public policy. This goal is often regarded a somewhat lofty or unattainable to the engineer with little or no political aspirations. In reality, this goal is more realistic than many might think. In many cases, positions go unfilled due to lack of interest and/or lack of qualified applicants.

A quick look at a municipal website may offer a glimpse into few of some of these advisory/policy committees along with agendas and issues. A prospective member could sit in on a meeting or write to a city council member or mayor about how to get involved with the committees and what positions might be available.

With every new California governor, comes hundreds of appointments to boards and commissions ranging from everything from air and water to transportation and waste. While the subject and goals might differ, the bodies frequently develop, recommend or implement public policies which have impacts on the implementation of many public works projects and programs.

Civil engineering is not only practiced in the halls of consulting engineering firms or the board rooms of public works agencies, but in often obscure local committees or advisory groups that serve at the pleasure of local elected officials. You've no doubt come across an advisory board or community taskforce related to some local engineering project. These positions serve in an advisory role on policy issues ranging from traffic safety to building zoning. The opportunity to serve on a board, commission or taskforce is more than a casual investment of time but a chance to much more broadly influence the quality of life in your community.

The knowledgeable civil engineer is a prime candidate to serve on and be successful in these important and often undervalued policy arenas. It's also an excellent way to gain exposure

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### In This Issue page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	1
EDITORIAL	2
HOW CAN I PLAN FOR RETIREMENT?	2
ANNOUNCEMENTS	3~4
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES	2~7
PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY	8~9

### Reminder:

*Copy deadline for the Sept. 2007 issue is Aug. 1, 2007; copy deadline for Oct. 2007 issue is Sept. 1, 2007.*



## Last Issue

This will be our last issue of Summer 2007. In a few more months we will be seeing brand new National and Section officers willing and ready to serve out the new year. As we close this period of our history, we are reminded of the year that has gone by. A time that has gone so fast that we barely kept up with all that has transpired.

We have completely implemented our newsletter's electronic delivery in the past year. It was somewhat challenging in the beginning, but we were able to do it. As a result of this transition, we were able to save a little bit more in operational costs. We do not yet have the final financial numbers, but we are confident that we once again will not request for subsidy from our Section. The newsletter at one time was about to be cancelled because of financial reasons. We have since turned the situation around.

We have heard your concerns about how our newsletter has been posted in our website. We realize that our members have been receiving their announcement postcards ahead of the newsletter posting. We have since modified which newsletters are now posted in our website. If you now go to [www.ascelasection.org](http://www.ascelasection.org), not only will you see the current newsletter posted, but as soon as next month's issue is completed, we immediately post the same for download. We attempt to print and distribute our newsletters and postcards no later than the middle of the month. Therefore, as soon as that process is completed, the e-version of the following month's newsletter is posted on the same day the announcement postcards are mailed out. We hope this new set-up is working out for you.

We have been adding articles of interest during the past year. We have published articles pertaining to financial planning and related financial issues (as contributed by Ruben Trigueros, a former civil engineer and now a financial consultant). We have also published articles from our Younger Member Forum, tributes to our engineers who have passed on to the next life, announcements for volunteerism, National ASCE events of local importance, transportation, Section events, and other topics of interest to our Section Members. We would like to publish more of these articles. Please keep them coming.

Finally, we would like to apologize to Ms. Sonia Nasser, P.E. whose article entitled "We Are All Engineers at the Core" appeared in the June 2007 issue and was incorrectly attributed to Section President John Morris, P.E. I take full responsibility for the oversight.

Enjoy your summer vacations. See you in September.

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



## How Can I Plan For Retirement If All I Have Is My Business?



Oftentimes a business owner may wonder what his/her business is worth, and how can he/she sell it in order to retire.

The value of the business is based on many factors. The most important is cash flow or Sellers Discretionary Earnings, which is defined as net income. The value is also dependent on the type of business, location, longevity, facilities, workforce, history, and accounts. As one can see there are many factors involved in selling a business.

Sometimes a business owner may need to sell his/her business quickly because of an illness or divorce. If there is not an exit strategy in place, the business owner may consider seller financing through a business note. Business notes can be sold but are often highly discounted.

The proper way to sell a business is to plan for it. In the day to day activity of running a business, many owners overlook the importance of the buy-sell agreement. A well drafted buy-sell agreement can facilitate the transfer of a business ownership as described within its specifically written language.

In other words, a buy-sell agreement plans for the "what ifs," what if my partner(s) dies, what if I want to retire, what if my partner(s) want to purchase the business.

Most pre-business owners place a great deal of time considering the factors to starting or buying a business, but most owners do not consider an exit strategy. That is where a buy-sell agreement becomes important, especially in family owned and operated businesses.

The buy-sell agreement is really the key to the continuation of the business. You can see that the buy-sell agreement, if executed properly, can solve problems surrounding retirement, disability, termination, death, and business disputes.

A buy-sell agreement must be drafted by an attorney, and the attorney often works in conjunction with an accountant, to determine the value of the business and a financial adviser, to provide a funding mechanism for the retirement or transfer. Although a buy-sell agreement may cost time and money, it has the potential to ease the transfer and the continuation of a business, and save the business owner money, especially if the business owner(s) has placed his life into the business and wants to retire.

Ruben Trigueros is with Trilogy Financial Services. Securities are sold through National Planning Corp. (NPC) Member NASD, SIPC, Trilogy Financial Services and NPC are separate entities.

Mutual funds are sold only by prospectus. Please consider the investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses carefully before investing. The prospectus, which contains this and other information about the investment company, can be obtained from your financial professional. Be sure to read the prospectus carefully before deciding whether to invest.

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# ASCE American Society of Civil Engineers Sacramento Section



James E. Roberts, P.E.  
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James E. Roberts / Prof. Ben C. Gerwick, Jr.

Memorial California Bridge Conference

September 17 - 22, 2007

Holiday Inn, 300 "J" Street, Sacramento, California

<http://www.roberts-gerwick-conference.org>



Prof. Ben C. Gerwick, Jr., P.E.  
Honorary ASCE Member

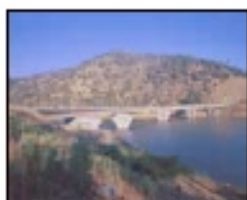
## Two-Day Symposium with Seminars and Tours Sacramento, California, USA • September 17 - 22, 2007

The Sacramento Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers invites you to attend and participate in the James E. Roberts, P.E. and Professor Ben C. Gerwick, Jr., P.E. Memorial California Bridge Conference. This conference will consist of three days of classes, two days of symposiums of two parallel tracks of papers presented on California bridges and foundations, and a boat tour of the San Francisco / Oakland Bay Bridge and Richmond / San Rafael Bridges. The conference will also allow tunnel engineering papers to be presented in the foundation track.

The conference hotel is the Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, 300 "J" Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, USA; phone (916) 446-0100 direct, or 1-800-465-4329; fax (916) 446-0117; [www.holidayinnsacramento.com](http://www.holidayinnsacramento.com). The hotel is a short ride from the Sacramento Airport, and is close to many tourist sites. Ground transportation is available from San Francisco Airport. The conference room rates before taxes are: Single Occupancy - \$84 per night; Double Occupancy - \$119 per night. Please reference Group Code: ACE.



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### Tentative Schedule

*Attendees may register for all events, or events may be selectively attended, including a one-day registration for any day of the 2-day symposium.*

*See [www.roberts-gerwick-conference.org](http://www.roberts-gerwick-conference.org) for more details.*

### Abstract deadline extended to July 30, 2007

- Mon 17 -** One-day class, "Introduction to Bridge Launching" - Mr. Rosignoli, HNTB (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM)
- Tue 18 -** One-day class, "LRFD Bridge Design in California" - Dr. Duan, Ms. Hida, Mr. Ma, Mr. Simmons (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM)
- Wed 19 - Thur 20 -** Two-day Memorial California Bridge Symposium (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM)
- Fri 21 -** One-day class, "Large Bridge Foundations" - Deep Foundations Institute (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM)
- Fri 21 -** One-day class, "Steel Bridge Welding Inspection Workshop" - Mr. Andersen (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM)
- Sat 22 -** Catamaran Boat Tour of Richmond / San Rafael Bridge and San Francisco / Oakland Bay Bridges in the San Francisco Bay Area (10:00 AM to 4:00 PM).

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## 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.

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and sharpen other skill sets not usually associated with civil engineering. Communication is vital to any public policy position and whether it's writing a technical report, chairing a meeting, or articulating a complex policy position, your involvement will certainly sharpen your skills in these and other areas.

## Opportunity

As a civil engineer you might be the perfect candidate for your school board, or that next vacancy on the local planning commission. Your experience in engineering design and construction may position you to be the best-qualified person for a local water board seat. If you have the desire, this avenue can offer you tremendous professional advancement as well as an opportunity to help your community in so many ways.

While many seek these appointments at a midpoint or at the end of their professional careers, younger members and others should seek out these positions at the earliest possible opportunity.

Many of these positions serve at the pleasure of an elected official, usually a mayor or governor, while others are directly elected. With term limits in the State Legislature, the pool of public officials and would-be office holders results in constant turn over. This creates many opportunities at all levels of government.

Several noticeable civil engineers are themselves part of this public policy arena. Many of my colleagues on the Los Angeles Section Board of Directors serve on local planning commissions, school boards, and water boards. They include Rich Haller, Cung Nguyen, and yours truly. Two other prominent local ASCE members are the Honorable Harold C. Williams, Councilmember, City of Carson and the Honorable Larry Forester, City Councilmember, City of Signal Hill. These represent just a few of ASCE's local members who in addition to their normal professional careers, share their professional expertise for the benefit of their communities.

At the State level, there are many high profile boards and commissions that develop and enforce public policy on a whole host of civil engineering related issues. Often there are positions reserved just for professional engineers given their expertise and experience in certain areas.

The civil engineer in public policy or more importantly, the civil engineer as policy maker is more important today than ever before. The role historically reserved for engineers as head of public works and governmental agencies are increasingly winding up in the hands of attorneys and financial managers. This trend will not change until civil engineers are recognized as complete public policy experts.

This "pathway" offers the civic-minded engineer a golden opportunity to share his or her expertise while gaining invaluable experience in the inner workings of government. I challenge all of you to get involved...you will enjoy it.



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