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Los Angeles Section

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John Morris, P.E.
Section President



Engineers: Public vs. Private?

The Merriam-Webster's American English Dictionary defines civil engineer as an engineer that deals with the designing and construction of public works and various private works. This definition is general and does little to distinguish from the myriad of disciplines within the field. There is one distinction however, that is not related to the type of field that each engineer works within but who may employ that engineer.

Many inside and outside our profession would define the civil engineer by the nature of its employer: public or private. Having worked for both such employers, I've observed that the civil engineer responsibility, independent of employer is to Society, not the "S" in ASCE but Society as a whole....worldwide.

Complement Not Competition

To fully understand the difference between the two sectors, it's important to examine the early history of civil engineering in the United States. Most public works projects or agencies are descendants of the military's need to provide facilities for the movement and support of the army and navy. The modern US Army Corps of Engineers is a reflection of this early mission and many of the Nation's early civilian/military leaders were its first public works directors.

Public works agencies are typically staffed and directed by a cadre of dedicated civil engineers often with a vast span of responsibility. Their mission is often defined by their local governing body (city council, county board of supervisors, state legislature or special district) but their mission is always to serve the greater public good.

The private or consulting engineer has an equally important lineage. From the designers of signature bridges, to the conceivers of dams and waterways, the private sector engineers' expertise is a critical component to the World's inventory of indispensable professions. Clearly the technology to desalt seawater or better reinforce concrete is as important as technology to build a faster fighter plane or quicker microchip. The private engineer plays a different engineering role than his public sector brother but their missions are very much similar. A private or consulting engineering typically works for an engineering firm with all aimed at protecting and providing services to the public.

For many in our profession, there's a distinction between private and public sector engineers and the roles they play. While no one would argue with the difference in the mission between a huge multi-national engineering/consulting firm and a local public agency, it's the role of its engineers that are similar in nature.

Consulting Engineering Firms: Designing the world's great projects

Many of the great public works projects here in the United States and throughout the World, have been conceived, designed and constructed by teams of private sector engineers. The expertise demonstrated by this sector of engineer allows for damming of great rivers, bridging of great chasms, and providing lifeline services to the great cities of the World.

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Reminder:

Copy deadline for the June, 2007 issue is May 1, 2007; copy deadline for July-August, 2007 issue is June 1, 2007.



Are We Ready?

The first four months of the year just passed us by. How fast time flew. There has been much discussion lately about environmental and infrastructure issues. We as civil engineers have a lot to contribute in this process. As our Section President indicated, our responsibility is to society as a whole. How true is that. Regardless of the project to address the environmental and infrastructure issues of our time, the engineer's skills are needed. We are called to serve, are you ready?

We also include in this issue another article on financial management. Ruben Trigueros, P.E., who is also now a financial consultant, has been providing very useful insights on how to manage our money. Retirement is looming for a number of us, are we ready?

We also introduce this month the endorsement of the Section's Nominating Committee for Section positions that have opened up. I am one of the three who will begin a new Section Board of Director position. I ask myself, do I have enough to do at work and as Editor of this newsletter that I am taking on this new responsibility? I really do. As I see it though, with a combined newsletter and student liaison responsibility, I can better effectively build a stronger relational bridge between our future civil engineers and our professionals. I am ready, are you?

Finally, we are including in this issue a copy of the Section roster. This document is designed to stand alone and can be pulled out for separate use. It lists all of the Section's officers from our Student Chapters, Younger Member Forums, Standing Committees, Branch and Section Officers, and Board of Directors.

Enjoy this issue of your newsletter.

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

The Los Angeles Section Nominating Committee Nominations

The Los Angeles Section Nominating Committee, comprised of Shahn Ahmad, Carl Blum, Rich Haller, John Hogan and John Morris, propose the following new Section officers to be effective October 1, 2007:

- President-Elect - Don Sepulveda, P.E., M.ASCE (3 year term consisting of President-Elect, President, Past-President);
- Vice President, Student Activities - Cris B. Liban, D.Env., P.E., M.ASCE; and
- Treasurer - Jalal Vahabnezhad, P.E., M.ASCE.

Note that the term of office for the following individuals/positions continue in 2007/2008:

- Mark Norton, P.E., F.ASCE, President;
- John Morris, P.E., F.ASCE, Past-President;
- Sonia Nasser, P.E., M.ASCE, Vice President, Professional;
- Jay Higgins, P.E., M.ASCE, Secretary;
- Mike Thornton, P.E., M.ASCE, Region 9 Governor;
- YMF Past President;
- LMF President; and
- Seven Branch Presidents.

The Role of Rollovers



In 2003, 43 percent of workers who took a lump-sum distribution from their employer's retirement plan rolled the entire sum into another tax-qualified account, up from 19 percent in 1993.¹ The traditional IRA was by far the most popular destination for rollover money, accounting for more than 70 percent of recent lump-sum rollovers.²

When leaving their jobs, most employees are faced with the choice of leaving money in their employer-sponsored retirement plans, withdrawing the money (and possibly incurring tax penalties), or rolling the money into other retirement plans.

Traditional IRAs also tend to offer greater flexibility than employer plans, whether your employer plan is a 401(k), 403(b), 457, or other tax deferred plan. You can change investments as your preferences change, rather than having to work with a slow-moving bureaucracy to change your retirement plan profile. Also, you don't have to worry about your investment options changing, as they sometimes do in employer plans, and still continue a tax deferral status.

Remember that distributions from traditional IRAs and most employer-sponsored retirement plans are taxed as ordinary income and may be subject to an additional 10 percent federal income tax penalty if taken prior to reaching age 59_½.

Just as retirement offers you more choices for how to spend your time, an IRA rollover can offer you more ways to invest your money.

Ruben Trigueros is with Trilogy Financial Services, in West Covina.

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.

- 1) Journal of Financial Planning, June 2006
- 2) Employee Benefit Research Institute, January 2006

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

continued

Southern California has served as an incubator for many of the World's premiere consulting engineering firms. Many of these staff engineers were either raised, educated, or trained right here in southern California. The projects they design end up in locations all over the World.

Public and Private Sector Engineers: A partnership

The one common thread that binds all civil engineers is a commitment to public service and improving the quality of life for peoples of the World. The great civil engineering projects are often the product of a partnership between both public and private concerns. The expertise to design a bridge or wastewater treatment plant may not be a capability that most public agencies want to keep "in house". Public works agencies must rely on engineers to provide ongoing engineering judgment to those projects they know better than anyone else. These two skill sets provide the public with a valuable capability without costly or duplicitous jobs.

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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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greg@structuralconsulting.com

27200 Tourney Road
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Direct: 213-426-3840
Fax: 213-896-5680
Murthy@pbworld.com

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NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

Publisher

ASCE LA Section
Brooke Hickson
1405 Warner Ave.
Tustin, CA 92780
Phone (714) 258-8306
Fax (714) 258-8391
E-mail: brookeh@associationplanet.com

Editor

Dr. Cris B. Liban, P.E.
LACMTA
One Gateway Plaza
Mail Stop 99-17-2
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone (213) 922-2471
FAX (213) 922-6875
E-mail: cliban@UCLAalumni.net
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