

**AVMA Task Force on Governance and Member Participation  
January 4, 2013**

**Section 1 General Feedback about AVMA Governance and the Task Force's work**

**Section 2 Foundational Statements**

(Vote Number)

6. The most efficient and effective system of governance structure, process and culture will deliver the maximum programs, services, and benefits for members.
7. Eliminating redundancy allows resources to flow to meaningful and impactful work.
8. The AVMA staff has tremendous insight into the profession and its needs, and their scientific and non-scientific expertise should be utilized to the fullest.
9. Face-to-face meetings are important for exchanging ideas, developing leaders, and fostering personal and organizational relationships.
10. The AVMA needs to have effective channels of communication with all segments of organized veterinary medicine and other organizations with intersecting interests.
11. The AVMA has a need to more directly solicit, receive and utilize input from members.
12. The AVMA process for developing knowledge-based policy requires input from stakeholders.
13. The AVMA needs a policy development process that allows the organization to respond in a timely way and take maximal advantage of opportunities.
14. The AVMA must structure itself as a professional membership association, not a federation of associations.
15. The AVMA needs a clearly defined and effective process for leadership identification, recruitment and development.
16. There must be only one entity with fiduciary duty including authority for bylaws, articles of incorporation, and fiscal matters – and the entity with fiduciary authority should also have policy authority.
17. Students should be incorporated into the AVMA membership structure, with voting rights.

**Section 3 Key Element A-Board of Directors**

18. 17 members of the Board of Directors
19. Eliminate the position of Vice President
20. Direct member election of officers and directors
21. Eliminate geographic districts for directors
22. Equal time and opportunity for all candidates to get their message out to the membership
23. AVMA would conduct the election for all officers and directors using an electronic secret ballot process
24. A centrally administered, online campaign will ensure consistency in the process, fair and open access to the ballot for all potential candidates, and election results in which all can have confidence

**Section 4 Key Element B-Advisory Councils**

25. Advisory Councils will be formed around strategic goals / initiatives such as Advocacy, Animal Welfare, Economics, Education, Membership Participation, and Research
26. Councils to be made up of somewhere between 11-13 individuals with skills, backgrounds, and interest in those areas
27. Each Advisory Council would also have a liaison from the Board of Directors and also a liaison from AVMA staff

28. Councils would report back to the Board of Directors
29. Advisory Council members will be selected by the Leadership Nomination Committee
30. Advisory Councils would select members for groups helping them in achieving certain goals
31. Advisory Council work groups would comprise structures such as sub-committees and task forces, and would include inputs from all interested AVMA members and perhaps outside stakeholders
32. Advisory Councils would meet in person together annually to coordinate their work and provide an opportunity to perform certain ceremonial duties that are presently addressed through HOD meetings
33. New system goals are to engage our membership and attract new members, continue to gather environmental scanning inputs on an ongoing basis, groom new future leaders and harness the knowledge and experience of existing ones, help forge alliances with other animal health and welfare groups, and above all, drive forward AVMA's strategic goals

### **Section 5 Key Element C-Leadership Nominating Committee**

34. AVMA will need to have the capacity and leadership to take on the critical role of facilitator and convener of diverse groups to facilitate dialog, resolve conflicts, and address a wide variety of issues.
35. The people nominated for leadership positions must possess the required experience and expertise to meet the needs for the specific positions being filled. The second requirement is Legitimacy. There must be a representative distribution of power among groups.
36. The various AVMA entities are divided into "camps" or "factions," such as public health, animal welfare, research, producer groups, and others, rather than groups with diverse professional perspectives
37. Our new governance model will allow for a variety of professional perspectives to be mingled together in single entities, which will allow for more efficient and effective policy-making and a more nimble responsiveness
38. Appointing committees based on balancing special interests may lead to the protection of those interests and not to the common good of the AVMA, or the profession as a whole
39. The governance process is leading to a significant disconnect between those who serve and those choosing not to get involved in the current organizational hierarchy
40. When filling roles within the AVMA, the LNC should actively consider how to incorporate or engage members who reflect the changing demographics of the profession
41. Composition of the LNC is still to be determined, but at this time, we believe that 11 members plus a non-voting chair is a good place to start
42. The LNC will propose a slate of nominees as positions become available, and it may also be involved in overall leadership development
43. The positions for all advisory bodies will be appointed and the positions for all decision-making bodies will be elected by the general membership
44. LNC will need to move away from the idea of a constituency-based board, and even from a competency-based board, and instead consider the idea of balanced skill sets
45. Each member of a group comes with his or her own skill sets, and these need to balance the other skills already present in the entity.
46. There are certain attributes that the LNC will take into consideration as it considers nominees for various leadership positions. These include:
  - The ability to think strategically and analytically and to effectively communicate thoughts and the reasons for them
  - Possession of earned respect of other key stakeholder group members

- The ability to work well with others as a member of a collaborative group with group decision-making authority
- An earned reputation for emotional maturity, personal integrity, and honesty
- A familiarity with the body of knowledge related to both the process for which the group is responsible as well as the substantive content of the subject area within which decisions and choices will have to be made

## Feedback Through [avmagovernance@avma.org](mailto:avmagovernance@avma.org)

**Feedback on Section 1:** Health insurance through AVMA has been an extremely important service...please does everything possible to continue program!

**Feedback on Section 2:** 6 and 14

**Feedback on Section 3:** great ideas

**Feedback on Section 4:** again good

**Feedback on Section 5:** good

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I was very active in local and state Associations when in practice in Alaska and I have always kept track of what the AVMA is doing re: representing veterinarians. Sometimes, I agreed; sometimes, not. However, not having been active within the AVMA, I felt much of what was presented is esoteric and perhaps not understandable by one not actually within the Organization. As I read the proposal, I sometimes thought, 'well, I thought that was how it was working already...'

Generally, my thoughts are that those of you active within the AVMA might have a better idea of what is presently working and not working, thus you know what needs to be changed. I do have concerns about a couple points.

**Feedback on Section 2:** Most of these points are essential for any group and I thought already happening. I do not agree with giving students voting rights. There might be a vote where a young idealistic, perhaps unrealistic, mind makes a difference over members with the perspective of experience, economics, and knowledge of all the responsibilities of our profession, esp. public health. No criticism meant here, we were all there once.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I'm not keen on the elimination of geographic districts. Would it mean all Directors are elected from urban populations who treat only urban pets? Consideration must be of rural practices, livestock practices, remote areas (e.g. Alaska :) ), government employees, etc. Geographic representation does not always mean fair proportional representation of the total population, but even our Senate has 2 Senators per State. I trust there will be a method to include the diverse needs and opinions. A practical example is the attitude of East Coast people that dogs must not be chained. Yet, in Alaska, and other areas probably, sometimes the most 'valuable' dogs (sled dogs) are chained throughout their lives. These are not pet dogs, but to eliminate chaining for all dogs because it is believed unsafe is wrong.

**Feedback on Section 4:** OK, except the meet in person bit. I'm now working with the Government and we save money and still accomplish much with phone and teleconferences.

Engaging younger veterinarians is certainly an issue because of the changed goals and various demands on younger veterinarians due in part to the changed demographics. It used to be that one graduated and one joined the AVMA. I trust you are asking them.

There should have been a definition for "gather environmental scanning inputs". Huh? Which environment?

**Feedback on Section 5:** This is where one probably has to be involved to understand the recommendations. One thought: eventually, each veterinarian does develop special interests and concerns, based on experience within a particular field. Would recommendations on a topic from a 'diverse' committee be as valid as recommendations on the same topic from a committee of people who share the same experience and concerns?

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**Feedback on Section 1:** We need an evolution of a program that has been working for 150 successful years. The program in Chicago didn't go over well and I suspect the HOD wasn't briefed intently to not create a contentious group. I've looked positively at the many improvements AVMA has made over the past few years. We no longer look to Veterinarians who are "good" at investing, communication, or leadership. We have hired, after an interview process, some of the best authorities in the world. We must not forget however some of the brightest minds are still Veterinarians. Just because most of us don't have large corporate suites doesn't suggest we're not successful in the daily challenges of being a Veterinarian and in life.

I don't want to be a part of an experiment because the good natured Veterinarian has complied with a new idea trying to predict the future. We as a group of Veterinarians already have a good idea of our changing field. Do we need another expert to tell us what we already know?

I'm sorry, however, growing up and still today I'm proud to say everyday I meet and talk to other Veterinarians, it reaffirms my belief we are some of the most intelligent, compassionate and caring individuals in the world. We don't need to be a test case for a specialist in any field. We all know change is necessary however we don't need a revolution.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I support and appreciate the work of the Task Force. This is a forward thinking approach to governance of our association.

**Feedback on Section 2:** No comments on this section. These items are appropriate.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Consider replacing the AVMA "president" title with "chairman of the board of directors." And, charge the BODs with electing the chairman from within the elected board. In addition, require that chairman candidates have a minimum of 2 yrs of experience (or something similar) as a member of the BODs before becoming eligible for election as the chair. And, define the tenure of the chairperson as 2 or 3 years. This ensures the chair is experienced, dedicated, and capable of leading the board and our profession. Consider adding legal counsel to the BOD and a secretary (unless this role is managed by AVMA staff.)

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**Feedback on Section 4:** No comments.

**Feedback on Section 5:** Consider requiring the LNC to submit a slate of recommended advisory committee members to the BOD for approval by vote.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** Thank you for asking for feedback from loyal AVMA members who have felt like outsiders for many years. I realize perceptions of “good old boy politics” may vary depending on geographic area.

**Feedback on Section 2:** Strongly agree with 9, 10, 14. Skype is OK for small groups. Larger groups should meet during other larger meetings. Teleconferencing is difficult for groups larger than 4-5.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Agree with 20, 21. Candidates for positions should not be guaranteed election before one has been held.

**Feedback on Section 4:** Please make the application process less arduous for membership on councils and special committees – and do not choose members before new people have had a chance to apply. You are missing out on new people with energy and good ideas.

**Feedback on Section 5:** Strongly agree with 38 and 40.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** This represents a step backward in representation.

**Feedback on Section 2:** I have never considered the AVMA to be a federation of associations but have thought the AVMA was wise in soliciting the opinions of allied groups whose experience was of great value.

**Feedback on Section 3:**

**Feedback on Section 4:** Advisory groups should include individuals supported by the various interest groups the AVMA says it represents.

**Feedback on Section 5:** There are some very subjective statements made which if implemented would result in limitation of diversity in forming association policy. However, a less diverse leadership would run smoother and at the same time not be diverse enough to adequately support the One Health theory.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** Excellent work indeed. Despite the initial resistance, I think the TF has done an amazing amount of visionary and creative work. I agree with the change to develop a hybrid model from the four most innovative models to suit the needs of AVMA governance in the future. In general, most people are very cautious and even resistant to change and the systems they are most familiar with. It takes courage, persistence, and great communication to initiate significant change, making decisions that are best for the association’s future amid much turmoil. I think the TF has done an outstanding job. Time and familiarity along with continued input from members will eventually produce a new and improved governance system that one day will be just as familiar and accepted as the one we have now that has become a bit antiquated.

**Feedback on Section 2:** I agree wholeheartedly with all of these stated principles. I particularly agree with # 16 as this conflict of having both the EB and HOD responsible for policy has led to severe problems, both with increasing power struggles for policy authority and with redundancy in policy debate (from advisory council or committee to EB to HOD and back again). As to # 17 and the inclusion of students as voting members of the AVMA, I agree. They have a vested interest in the future of veterinary medicine, both financially and professionally. We constantly state they are important, we give them lots of time and attention, include them in a variety of entity meetings, gave them the vote in the HOD, but now reach a precipice of resistance again where we say the proper thing, but don't follow it with action. They need to be included in the vote if we are to start choosing leadership by electronic ballot by members. Give them the vote. The résumés of these people are exceptional.

**Feedback on Section 3:** # 18 – agree. #19 – This is a tough one for me as a past Vice President. On one hand, I recognize the great significance to the students to have a dedicated AVMA officer for their interests and to make personal visits to their schools. OTOH, I spent one day traveling each way for one day of meetings with students, faculty, and administrators. We know face-to-face meetings holds great value, yet, there may be a more effective way to have that engagement. We could have the President or EB Chair or SAVMA President do a video welcome to all SCAVMA meetings across the country, or have new EB members include the schools in their responsibilities, as long as all schools were represented. If students get the vote, they would have increased involvement directly with AVMA. SAVMA has grown and matured tremendously in recent years giving the students an organized and very active voice in AVMA. The Vice President, I believe, may be becoming obsolete in these modern times. #20 – Agree. #21 – Agree, right now the system severely limits the capacity for a truly diverse (gender/ethnic/professional interest) and balanced board as most general members do not understand AVMA governance and most positions are often unopposed and open to those very few familiar with the system. If a LNC identified a roster of candidates, and those candidates were presented to the general membership for a vote, and if any member could self-nominate to have the opportunity so rarely available now in reality, I have no doubt good decisions would be made. That all said, my experiences on the EB have shown the majority of members to be extremely competent and thoughtful in their decisions. It seems most anyone in that position takes their responsibilities extremely seriously. #22 – Agree. #23 – Agree. #24 - Agree

**Feedback on Section 4:** #25 – Excellent. #26 – Agree. # 27 – Agree. #28 – Agree. # 29 – Agree, although I would need to understand that process a little better and will make comments in Section 5. # 30 – Agree. # 31 – Agree. # 32 – Agree, not sure how this would look, but I do believe it would be important for these people to meet face-to-face annually for relationship building and networking. This would be someone equivalent to our current HOD, but more streamlined and productive. This may have been a point that was not as well communicated at the HOD in January. I do think some form of event for international dignitaries is still important as the AVMA is so visible as a world class leadership organization around the world. It would be nice to have some venue where international leadership could see AVMA at work. #33 – Agree.

**Feedback on Section 5:** #34 – Agree, the Vision 2020 Commission report specifically identifies this as a potentially very good role for AVMA in the future, and I agree. #35 – Agree. #36 – I don't quite understand this one. Is this meant to state that the definitions for representation currently in place would be somewhat broadened to larger “categories”, e.g. food animal vs. bovine or porcine or avian, or private practice vs. small animal, mixed, or predominately large animal? I suspect diversity of the various career interests on these advisory groups would have merit if we hope to be inclusive for our diverse

profession as a member association but we could broaden the categories. Not sure how the various allied groups would feel about that change who many times feel they have unique priorities. #37 – I think I agree. # 38 – Maybe, not sure. # 39 – Absolutely agree!! # 40 – Absolutely. We must find a way to diversify our member representation on advisory entities and the BoD to represent society as well as more women to represent our professional gender shift over the past 3 decades. #41 – I agree. I will say, from experience on three Nominating Committees for three recent committees and TFs (Veterinary Economic Strategy Committee, TF on GMP, and TF on FSA) that process was excellent in my opinion – that is, open announcement for candidates, and an objective review and discussion on those most qualified for the task. I believe it was used the first time for the Vision 2020 Commission. If this was an extension of that model, I think it would work well. #42 – I assume this does not replace the open “Volunteer Opportunities” listing on the website for available positions in which to serve. Would the LNC would actively recruit and enlarge the candidate pool for these positions? All I know is, depending on the composition of the LNC, we need to be sure they are not all members of the “old guard” who want a certain traditional quality of candidates as we have seen in other organizations on occasion. How would the members of the LNC be appointed? #43 – I understand who the advisory bodies are (I believe). Who are the “decision-making bodies”? Are we talking about the Board of Directors (which includes the officers)? #44 – Agree. # 45 – Agree. # 46 – Agree, and in fact, if we are talking about a more knowledge and balanced BoD (w/o an HOD), it may be prudent to have interviews (either in JAVMA or through AVMA Now, or avmaTV. After all, many boards do interviews as for a job, including employers and even the Congressional Fellow Selection process. This would all fall into getting as much information out about the candidates as possible to the general membership before a vote. It sounds like all those ballots I get in the mail for organizational board members with brief bios and I select my choices based purely on those brief bios. Who knows who they really are? I appreciate the ability to comment. Great work so far!!! Keep the goal in mind, and change will occur with continued brainstorming and communication. Soon it will all seem as normal has it has been for 150 years.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** As has been stated previously, many times, and more eloquently than I can, the Governance Dialog was seriously flawed by a presentation that was at odds with what had been promoted, and by the presentation of a single governance model accompanied by “leading” rather than open ended questions that would spark constructive dialogue. Many of the attendees were woefully unprepared to be able to participate and make meaningful contributions – lack of real familiarity with how AVMA currently works being the primary obstacle.

**Feedback on Section 2:** I think there was widespread agreement with the foundational statements – they seem inherent for any good or effective organization. There was widespread disagreement that students should have voting privileges in the AVMA membership structure. That is what SAVMA is for. Veterinarians should belong to AVMA.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Consistently the position of Vice President was not adequately explained as to what the purpose or function is. It may not need to be eliminated, it certainly must be renamed. I am no confident that direct member election of officers and directors in fact advances the interests of the organization, as the overwhelming majority of members have no idea who the current officers are, and are unlikely to have a meaningful choice in future elections. This is particularly the case if such elections are routinely non-contested. I am not confident that eliminating geographic districts in fact serves the overall needs of AVMA. There are constant complaints about the states with “too heavy” votes, but at least the smaller states or regions feel that there is at least 1 person at the EB level who is theoretically supposed to be representing them.

**Feedback on Section 4:** The weakness of this section lies in the inordinate power of the Leadership Nominating Committee, and lack of specifics in #33.

**Feedback on Section 5:** The Leadership Nominating Committee model has created much unease about a tremendous amount of power being vested in a very few individuals without ability for feedback, recall, lack of participation by a greater percentage of members. For all of its unwieldiness and expense, the HOD at least presents an opportunity for very diverse voices of the profession to be heard and to participate. There is absolutely a disconnect in that HOD members are representative of diverse organizations who do not themselves belong to AVMA, but to have a small, elite group of 11 – or to be decided – responsible for the nominating, appointing or filling the majority of positions on advisory councils or others does not seem like a step forward in maintain the broadest interests of the membership.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** Given the charge and the consultant’s guidance, the TF did a yeoman’s job in tackling the delegated task. That said, what I have learned is that the alternatives to what we have now, have their own set of shortcomings. Embracing change, simply for its own sake, cannot be wise. Therefore, in order to eventually vote for something new, a very detailed case must be made for why the new proposal is the best of the possibilities, and better than what we have now. If that case cannot be made, then I see no reason to alter a proven process, warts and all. So far, to my assessment, that case has not been made.

**Feedback on Section 2:** Foundational statement 6: Is a straw man. If the ultimate point of a VMA is to protect the professional purview of member veterinarians, then we are acknowledging the supreme importance of politics and the GRD. If true, then efficiency and member programs are both second place to the one thing AVMA must do, prevent Washington and state capitals from taking from us what is ours. What our members most need, and many do not know, and never will know that they do, is protection from external threats. Stand together as a federation for that goal. There are plenty of other organizations able and willing to provide member benefits to ‘area of practice’ segments.

Foundational statement 14: I strongly disagree with this. If we let go of the very close connection with state VMAs we give up the very representation we desire, as well as the proven leadership development process we have. Further, as time goes on, and the average member’s perception of the value of their state VMA diminishes, they will draw further away from the values inherent in VMA membership and involvement generally. That will result in state VMA membership loss and ultimately AVMA membership loss. With the AVMA GHLIT now diminished, another reason to not bother joining grows. In my view, nothing is more important than maintaining the interlink between AVMA and state VMA involvement. We will all sink together if that “federation” is sundered.

Foundational statement 17: I do not agree. Someone who has never worked and lived as a veterinarian is not ready to participate with full voting rights in decisions which affect the profession. Magic occurs when the degree is granted because suddenly the students have their own skin in the game, rather than their parents or the banks. Until then every choice they might make is theoretical and is likely to be idealistic rather than practical. They can and should wait. Click here to enter text.

**Feedback on Section 3:**Key element 20: I disagree. Such a plan would allow factionalism to break out, bypassing any form of leadership development process that includes demonstrating leadership over time

to advance. For example, VIN could be used as a platform to elevate someone with ideals and plans far afield of mainstream veterinary medicine. Numerically, they could not be stopped. I believe we should operate through elected representatives that the state VMA and entity organizations have already “field tested” within their own organizations. No amateurs with axes to grind need apply.

Key Element 21: As stated above in at least two places, I strongly disagree. I think the geographic aspect is essential to maintain some parity between diverse practice sectors.

**Feedback on Section 4:** Key element 29: Here is where the greatest weakness in the new proposal arises, in selection of the Leadership Nominating Committee itself. Instead of leaders trickling up from state VMAs, this one committee will choose from a pool, with fewer members ultimately involved in the elevation of leaders. How will we ensure the least bias in a LNC? I do not see how a potentially biased LNC will make us more representative. More nimble for sure, but more representative, no.

**Feedback on Section 5:** Key element 34: There is a hint of a lack of humility here, for us to believe that activist stakeholder groups, Congress and other diverse non-veterinary stakeholders will simply choose us (AVMA) to arbitrate their philosophical disagreements. They see us now as an equal-status activist stakeholder too, not as an educated superior. How will that perception change with different governance?

Key element 35: We have this now.

Key element 36: This is true, but is integral to the diversity of function in the profession. Breaking down these “camps” electoral power will inevitably weaken them, while strengthening the vast, dominant majority from small animal practice.

Key element 37: Mingle they will, but when it comes time to vote, those perspectives will be diluted far more than they are today. Today they operate as discrete entities and while they have just 1 or 2 votes in the HOD, their credentials and status as representatives of those entities allows a modest disproportionality in their influence. I believe that is as it should be, if we are not to become a small animal practice dominated AVMA.

Key element 38: Some of the pejoratively characterized “special interests” deserve to be protected. Indeed the profession as a whole, and AVMA are strengthened proportionally to the inclusion of some of these special interests, such as public health, biomedical research, food animal etc

Key element 39: While some, perhaps a sizable minority, may not like the way the AVMA has gone on issues of import to them, these same individuals have chosen not to become involved in leadership at the state or national level. When you choose not to get involved, you choose a greater degree of reliance on others. Changes in AVMA governance seems unlikely to lead to numerically greater numbers of involvees. At best the end result seems to be fewer or the same number of involvees.

Key element 40: Demographics are highly likely to take care of themselves. With 80%+ female matriculants in veterinary schools, we will see a highly female HOD within just 10 more years, whether we act or not. Why interfere with a natural process?

Key element 41: I am highly suspicious of the idea that 11 people can fairly and solely choose the bulk of those elevated to governance. As things are now, many, many more are involved, as getting to the

HOD or other entities takes a fair amount of peer review and approval, generally by a group of members far more numerous than 11.

Key element 44: Success in this presumes no bias on the part of LNC members, perpetually and forever.

From Federalist #51: “But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? *If men were angels, no government would be necessary.* If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.”

Key element 46: As in my point for Key Element 44, the success of this endeavor pre-supposes wisdom in the LNC. Always and forever. Unlike the diverse, disseminated way in which low level leaders arise now and develop further or do not, as their colleagues take note. We will be investing in the LNC the whole and complete trust of our large and diverse membership.

So subjective are the “certain attributes that the LNC will take into consideration” that it seems improbable that bias, favoritism, and other modes of discrimination will never creep in over time.

For example, these elements are all subjective in nature:

- The ability to think strategically and analytically and to effectively communicate thoughts and the reasons for them
- Possession of earned respect of other key stakeholder group members
- The ability to work well with others as a member of a collaborative group with group decision-making authority
- An earned reputation for emotional maturity, personal integrity, and honesty
- A familiarity with the body of knowledge related to both the process for which the group is responsible as well as the substantive content of the subject area within which decisions and choices will have to be made

An influential LNC member could sway opinion one way or the other on one or more of these characteristics. We will be investing a very great power over 82,000 people in just 11. I remain skeptical of the wisdom in that.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** When did the TF become the *TF on Governance (and member participation)*? Did the Executive Committee add “member participation” to the name? What was the charge given to the TF? What is its budget? How were members of the TF selected?

**Feedback on Section 2:** No to # 17. 2% won’t ever graduate. They are too busy being students. How much will membership cost them? Students should be free to develop leadership within SCAVMA and SAVMA. # 16 –what does fiduciary authority have to do with by-laws?

**Feedback on Section 3:** Why not 18 ? or 20? Boards should have an EVEN number of voters. The CHAIR should NEVER vote to break a tie. If consensus is not reached, the motion should fail. Every student I’ve ever spoken with likes the VP position. The reason to eliminate it is....?

Geographical representation is needed. Or else the board will be all small animal vets from CA, NY and TX

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:** No. 40: Why is it important to concentrate on demographics (gender, as it were), but not diversity of experience, education or viewpoint?

Sounds nice, but how will the LNC evaluate “skill sets”?

This may be “old-fashioned”, but I think AVMA leaders should have worked in the trenches (and done a good job at it) of their constituent organization (although I know the constituent organizations are going away).

Why is the AVMA throwing out the concept of an organization of constituent organizations? Is it a reaction to one gadfly’s personal agenda?

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I had absolutely no issues with how the workshop was performed.

**Feedback on Section 2:** 6,7,8 – agree. 9 agree but could cut back on many FTF meetings. #10 – I believe we already do. 11 & 12 agree. #13 yes we should but we really don’t. How can we with such a cumbersome leadership model? #15 is critical We DO NOT have ANY type of leadership ID or recruitment except to recommend our friends hence to Old Boys (or girls) Club. In my opinion it is what AVMA does the worst. Agree with 17.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Board of Directors a good idea; I do like the geographic distribution of them, however. I think it is wise to eliminate the position of VP; they do not affect the schools or students like they would like to think they do. A VP visiting every vet school every other year is not affecting change at all. Stronger SCAVMA’s are the way to reach the students. The days of affective Pizza Lunches are WAAAAY over. #22, 23, 24 agree.

**Feedback on Section 4:** Agree with all in this section

**Feedback on Section 5:** I agree with everything in this section; in particular #39.

There is one point I didn’t cover in the attached, and that is the question of student members having a full vote- that is ok by me in the current system. In the proposed governance model without geographic regions and with all 17 seats on the Board of Directors being “At Large”, then no. The reason is that large numbers of students could be easily organized because they are all together in one place, and \$150.00 worth of pizza could get a student elected to the AVMA Board. The Board of Directors could be overwhelmed by student members and then AVMA fiduciary and policy responsibility would be in the hands of pre-professionals without the experience to lead AVMA down a central path. For example, one of the reasons we are on the path we are on with this governance issue is that students made up a large percentage of the original respondents to the survey about where to go with AVMA governance. The general membership is dispersed and much harder to organize, let alone get to vote.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I am strongly opposed to most of the suggested changes in AVMA governance, mainly because I don’t agree with many of the premise statements the changes are based on. For example, I value representativeness and inclusiveness over efficiency and I value the importance of AVMA’s position as the true voice of the profession over delivery of member services. I’ve tried to

express my most pressing concerns in this document. It's easy to write off people who object to change, especially when the change will eliminate them, and there is almost no way to defend oneself against that charge. I don't think that is the case! I honestly think that if these changes in governance are enacted that many veterinarians will no longer feel that they have a voice in what used to be our AVMA.

**Feedback on Section 2:** Number 8 is true because the AVMA staff interacts with hundreds of veterinary member volunteers regularly. Staff may have more difficulty developing "tremendous insight into the profession and its needs" under the new governance system in which they interact closely with only 17 board members and the few members of whatever streamlined committee they are assigned to. Numbers 10, 11 and 12 will be difficult to accomplish without the broad representation found in the HOD that is largely fed by state VMA's and allied organizations. Removing representation categories as requirements for committee service will also negatively affect 10, 11 and 12. Number 11 is a concern for all professional vet med organizations, not just AVMA. Member input is something we struggle to facilitate and encourage, but dramatically reducing the number of members involved in AVMA governance as suggested in the new model will only make things worse. Rather, we should offer MORE opportunities for more members to engage in face-to-face meetings and to supply input online. Engaging many AVMA members in governance as we do now in the HOD and on committees is expensive, it isn't terribly efficient, and it is messy and time consuming. But who said democracy is cheap, efficient, or even relatively effective? What democracy is, is fair; democracy protects the interests of the minority viewpoint, and democracy moves, albeit slowly, towards the common good. This is critical to keeping AVMA strong because veterinarians are such a heterogeneous group. Number 14: I would not describe the AVMA as a "Federation of Associations", however, I do think that various types of veterinarians feel represented and engaged in the AVMA governance structure as it is. That is one thing we do well! I am very much against reducing the number of members involved in the governance structure in the interest of efficiency or effectiveness. Fascism is efficient too. I believe in democracy.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I already said that I don't think it wise to eliminate the HOD and allow 17 vets to make decisions for the entire AVMA membership of 84,000. However, there is another huge problem with this section of the plan that I haven't heard addressed by others. Access to the ballot would be open to all members, so that anyone could run for a Board of Director's position, but I don't think you could win unless you have some way to market yourself to a very large and dispersed membership. I don't agree that you can really campaign effectively online. (I've looked at the UTube AVMA Council Candidate sites- many of them have only 15-30 hits.) With geographic regions eliminated, a candidate would have to get their message to members across the entire country- similar to our US presidential races. It would likely evolve over time so that the veterinarian with the most money and other resources (such as large campaign staffs) would win. Having geographic regions for directors keeps the cost of running for a position down because candidates only have to travel to a few state meetings to talk about their ideas and meet their future constituency face-to-face. This suggested change must have come about due to complaints about the old boys club. The new governance plan would be far worse! Right now, it isn't money that gets you to the top of AVMA, it is years of SERVICE, and that is why AVMA leaders have grey hair along with their experience and wisdom! And the old boys (and girls) have been vetted, too, as they have moved up the ladder. The suggested plan would allow single issue vets with lots of voting AVMA member friends, to take the helm at AVMA. The same heterogeneous membership that is our strength is also our weakness. Geographic regions assure that we know who we are voting for.

**Feedback on Section 4:** I think these ideas are fine. To incorporate them into a governance model that includes the HOD, I'd suggest that 1-2 members from each Advisory Council attend the HOD meetings.

They would be able to inform the Reference Committees about issues relevant to proposed resolutions and report back to their Advisory Committee about what is happening at the HOD. Like I said above, I believe that more, rather than fewer AVMA members should be involved in governance.

**Feedback on Section 5:** This is the worst part of the whole new governance structure, and the least well thought out. How will the Leadership Nominating Committee members be chosen? I notice that the Board of Directors has not been given the responsibility of appointing the LNC members. Good thing too because that would be really incestuous- everyone would know everyone and a diversity of perspectives and ideas would be hard to achieve in the advisory committees. How in the world will the LNC choose committee members fairly from 84,000 AVMA members? The LNC will be very powerful people with the ability to “Stack the Deck” of Advisory Committees with people who conform to their viewpoints. It could happen rather naturally as they suggest their friends and their friend’s friends for AVMA positions. An important function of the HOD that wasn’t discussed when the cost per resolution was brought up, is to nominate and vote on members to serve on AVMA Councils. Council candidates are generally qualified people who come up the ranks from the state VMA’s and are introduced to AVMA service by HOD members. There wouldn’t be a VMA pipeline and such an effective and generally fair process for populating councils without the HOD. There is a reasonable amount of competition for positions and the process seems to be working- Council members tend to be new to AVMA service, dedicated and expert.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I have to admit that I attended and participated in the Governance session that was held at the VLC. I was disappointed that we were not presented any information in advance of the meeting. I spent quite a lot of time reviewing the 8 proposed models and giving feedback on them. I was under the impression that the original 8 models would be boiled down to 3 models that would be discussed at the VLC. When we were presented with only 1 model I felt that our input mattered little. The way that the concepts were surveyed and questions were asked did not feel right. It felt that most of the questions were leading us to some predetermined result. I do agree that the AVMA governance needs to evolve to stay current and nimble but I feel that perhaps the changes being proposed are happening too quickly.

**Feedback on Section 2:** I do not think that your average student has the time or desire to familiarize themselves with the AVMA policies adequately in order to vote in an informed manner.

I do strongly agree with statements 8, 9, 10 and 11. I also agree with statement 12 and 13. Not sure what you mean in statement 14.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I still do not think that the position of vice president should be eliminated. If you want to bring the face of the AVMA to our students then you need an individual to connect with them and draw them in. I am uncomfortable with the concept of direct member election of officers and directors. As much as we don’t want to admit it, the membership may not have a whole lot of knowledge or contact with our potential leaders. I feel like it’s difficult to vote for people whom they are not familiar with. I don’t think that eliminating the geographic districts is such a great idea since I think geographic concerns may be lost in the mix.

**Feedback on Section 4:** I like the concept of advisory councils

**Feedback on Section 5:** I am not real comfortable with concept of the leadership committee since it seems that you are putting all of the power of leadership selection in the hands of only a few individuals.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** There is a big disconnect between what the Task Force said they would do in San Diego and what they actually did in Chicago. Although I know they have put a lot of time into this, the presentations and format in Chicago was terrible.

**Feedback on Section 2:** Statement 6 is fine. Statement 8 I have great respect for AVMA staff- however to say that they are the absolute answer is having the tail wag the dog. Statement 14 also is problematic for me- like it or not AVMA is the national organization and the state and affiliated organizations need the resources and help from the AVMA- so the federation is not a bad thing. Statement 17 was ridiculed by the students at our table who thought this was ludicrous- I think the SCAVMA president doesn't have an idea about what her general SCAVMA membership thinks. It seems to be here agenda.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I think 18-21 are wrong. 23 and 24 are also problematic

**Feedback on Section 4:** 29 is a problem

**Feedback on Section 5:** LNC is a bad idea

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**Feedback on Section 1:** Efforts to engage recent graduates are important for the long-term stability of the profession and growth of AVMA. More effort needs to be done for career development and mentorship from experienced veterinarians to showcase why students and recent graduates should be involved in the AVMA.

**Feedback on Section 2:** Student input and voting rights are very important! Also there should be ways to represent areas of veterinary medicine that have the most # of people involved and / or the greatest impact (using measures of financial impact, etc.) including non-traditional careers.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Electronic ballot is a great idea, especially email or via web access to allow for larger representation.

**Feedback on Section 4:** The more people involved in the council, the harder it will be to come up with a unified strategic plan. What about having smaller councils but with shorter tenure (as a way to get a multitude of strong ideas)?

**Feedback on Section 5:** It's very important to have people who can represent non-traditional careers and support the upcoming generation of veterinarians entering these fields.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** After reading the task force's reports and setting through the workshop in Chicago am left with the question of why running through my mind. The AVMA governance has evolved over the course of 150 years to become an organization that represents all the various branches of veterinary medicine. This is no easy task. The development of an organization that represents a profession that contains a majority of small animal practitioners while at the same time represents the needs of the food animal, equine, public health, and subspecialty veterinarians is no easy task and one that of necessity must be crafted with a through knowledge of the differences that exist between the different branches. To support this belief I will try to reply to the statements below.

**Feedback on Section 2:**

6. This is one of the statements that no one could argue with. This type of question being put to a vote is what made most members present in Chicago feel they were being herded toward a forgone conclusion and that the meeting was a waste of their time.
7. There are times when, in our organization, the same problem when looked at by different branches of the profession can have more than one solution. It does not hurt to look at things from more than one perspective.
8. See answer to 6.
9. See answer to 6.
10. See answer to 6.\_
11. See answer to 6.
12. See answer to 6.
13. See answer to 6.
14. This is a very dangerous way to look at the organization of the AVMA. First of all the AVMA needs the state associations to function well on the local level. The practice of veterinary medicine is controlled on the state level and we have multiple examples where the state associations have led the fight against changes in the law that if not contested would spread to other states and have severe economic impact on the profession. The AVMA supports the state associations in their fights but does not have the resources to maintain a functional presence in all local and state legislative bodies. Also the state and local associations have been the best source of leadership honed with experience to move up to the national level.
15. History has taught us that leaders rise to the moment when leadership is needed. I support having workshops to allow people to develop their skills but organized leadership development programs tend to limit the opportunities for many members and have a tendency to produce clones of the people running the program.
16. I strongly disagree with this statement. The current structure has a BOD that has the legal requirement to see after the fiduciary needs of the association. In an association of our size this is almost a full time job. The members of the HOD are not there to deal with the fiduciary matters. They give of their time and talents to give back and strive to improve the profession that they love and that has given so much to them and their family. The BOD needs to see that things are done right while the HOD needs to make sure we are doing the right things.
17. I support the students in every way possible but I have problems with having them as voting members. First they have a very busy schedule and hardly have time for family much less a professional association. They have major financial obligations now and we do not need to add dues to their load. Studies have shown that giving people membership without requiring dues or some type of buy-in fails to maintain the value of membership. They need to have skin in the game. I am also concerned that a well organized inexperienced group of students could produce a mass vote and move the association in ways that failed to take into account the minority branches of the profession that do so much of the work that keeps us in good favor with the government and industry partners that help support our profession.

### **Feedback on Section 3:**

18. This is far too much power and responsibility in the hands of so few people. Nine votes could pass anything with no checks or balances.
19. I have talked with dozens of students and have not found one that does not support the position of Vice President. The position is the voice of the students on the board and has the time to devote to the issues and visits all schools. I support having a student representative sit in on the board but a vet student just does not have the time needed to be a true representative of all students.\_\_\_\_

20. Direct elections are a tricky thing. Just look at our national government. We now have direct election of senators and for all intense and purposes the president and you see what happens when people vote for their own interest instead of what is best for the organization or the country. Our founding fathers recognized the danger of democracy (mob rule) and opted for a representative republic and the wisdom of that decision has stood for over two hundred years. Be careful what you wish for.

21. If we eliminate district representation the more populated areas of the country will control all elections. This would most likely lead to a lack of food animal and other practitioners that do not practice in urban centers from being elected or having people that have a working knowledge of their field on the board.

22. With the use of the Internet equal time and opportunity is already available.

23. An electronic secret ballot process would be hard to verify. Electronic voting over the Internet is very easy to manipulate by hacking, internal overriding, or organized substitute voting.

24. Voting for someone that you do not know and have not met is frot with danger. We know how easy it is to make anything or anyone look like a wonderful choice on the Internet. Just look at the online dating service if you want an example of how people can make themselves appear better than they are. With the HOD we get to see people express themselves and show their leadership on many issues before we place them in a position to lead this organization.

#### **Feedback on Section 4:**

25,26,27,28, 29,30,32, 33 There is very little difference here than what we currently have. You may alter the names a little but you will wind up with the same councils and subcommittees. As a member of GPRC I have spent five years looking for committees and councils to sunset and have found good reasons to continue almost all of the current committees and councils.

#### **Feedback on Section 5:**

34. See answer to 6.

35. See answer to 6.

36, 37. It is my contention that the “camps” and “faction” will fall back to the basic breakdown that we currently use. There is not a more logical way of proportioning representation on the councils and committees than the one we have tweaked for decades.

38. The AVMA is the umbrella organization and as such we have to represent all veterinarians. I reject the idea that you are a special interest just because you practice food animal medicine or lab animal medicine. The current oversight by the reference committees, the HOD, and the BOD are there to make sure that our final actions are in the best interest of the profession.

39. Getting people to volunteer and serve in an association is not a new problem and not one that will be solved by the Internet. We have had multiple seminars on getting more members to get involved in organized veterinary medicine and nobody has bee able to come up with an answer. My high school Ag teacher used to say, “the cream will always rise to the top”. People with a deep feeling of gratitude will make their time and talents available as a way to give back to the profession that has given so much to them. As for the rest it is hard to talk or even shame someone to get involved if their heart is not in it.

40. See answer to 6.

41, 42, 43. Creating a twelve member LNC to make all nomination is a dangerous president. These twelve members would be the gatekeepers to the association and without their blessing people would be shut out of leadership positions.

44. Balanced skill sets are good but I want competency and integrity to be the cornerstone of our leader’s foundation.

45. See answer to 6.

46. It would seem impossible for twelve members to have the information needed or even have the time to find out all the information you have listed on the hundreds of people needed to fill the councils and committees within the AVMA. It sounds nice but seems impossible to me. If they divided the candidates up each member would have dozens of people to research and then we would only have one person's input. Our current system may be slow and cumbersome but you have to admit that we have managed to amass an amazing, competent, and highly intelligent group of people volunteering their time and talents to the association in order to see the profession continue to grow and progress.

Thank you for your efforts and your kind attention. I applaud your diligence in handling the task given you. As one that has studied the governance of the association for the past five years as a member of the GPRC I understand the magnitude of this undertaking. It is my sincere belief that the current system even with its flaws is superior to the draft presented here.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** There is much to like about the idea of trying to make AVMA a more unified and responsive organization. Efforts to achieve such outcomes are important and should be pursued with a great sense of purpose. The concerns that follow in this Feedback Section and those that follow should not be interpreted as being in disagreement with such laudable aims. There could be a serious error in the assumption that a small group of individuals from a broad array of segments of the profession will have anything resembling the depth of understanding, knowledge, and practical experience that is provided to AVMA from its current committees. The delivery of carefully considered input from more than one "camp" to the parent organization that must then weigh the merits of the concern and the viability of various responses is a necessary endeavor in a profession with the breadth of responsibilities inherent in Veterinary Medicine. This seems like an effort toward "administrative headache reduction" which unfortunately is often just a prelude to a swinging pendulum of subsequent mistakes that then necessary reconstruction of what was largely at hand in the first place. It would be preferable on an annual basis to bring two members from each committee together, either in Schaumburg or at the site of the AVMA Convention (e.g. immediately before the Convention), to interface with one another and the AVMA leadership and there to hash out differences and thus establish timely changes in AVMA policies. Also, the election of the Directors from across the nation without regard for geography or constituencies seems likely to result in a tyranny of the majority, i.e. small animal practitioners from suburban/urban settings. While that may serve the bulk of the membership, should it turn out that way, the AVMA will tend to fail to serve, and therefore to lose other members from food animal, public health, research, industry, academia, zoo and wildlife, and other critically important sectors.

**Feedback on Section 2:** All are agreeable, except for 8, 14, and perhaps 15. 8: Staff expertise will rapidly decline with time if AVMA does away with its expert committees. 14: AVMA is both a professional membership association and a federation of "camps" and associations of experts, and that is as it should be. 15 could be a problem if leaders are selected for their passivity and conformity with the status quo. The AVMA leadership needs to retain the capacity to be invigorated by individuals with new and vital insights into the evolution, responsibilities, and viable pathways forward for members of our profession.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I would tend to favor geographic districts that are adjusted without gerrymandering to sway the outcome but configured so that each one retains an equivalent population of veterinarians.

**Feedback on Section 4:** Advisory councils structured around AVMA's strategic goals may help the organization to address new and emerging concerns, but will tend to fail to serve as an early warning system of needs for the future. The organization will likely become more reactive and less proactive than if it retained its expert committees. There is no reason why AVMA could not assign task force assignments to committees and in some cases to have relevant committees meet together. Forging alliances with outside organizations as stated above is an excellent idea, but it will have great meaning to society only if AVMA retains its diversity. If the tyranny of the majority concern mentioned above becomes a reality within AVMA under a new organizational structure, and if the mindset of serving the membership becomes so dominant that it drowns out the mindset of serving the ability of the membership to meet its extremely important, broad, individual and collective responsibilities to animals and society, then AVMA will become a much weaker and less meaningful organization than it is at present.

**Feedback on Section 5:** The failure to offer a proposed mechanism for how members of the LNC would be chosen is an important shortcoming, especially considering the extraordinary power that such a body would hold. Another problem with the Leadership Nominating Committee (LNC) is that it could perpetuate the classic "good old boys" problem that AVMA governance has had for generations. The concentration of power in this way will likely favor traditional slates of nominees, when what is needed is far more diversity, including veterinarians of many age groups, roles in the profession, and geographical insights. Overall, I think the proposed changes will create more problems than they will solve. I would instead favor doing away with the HOD, minimizing formalities for the sake of formalities, having open elections from various geographies as outlined above, retaining committees but having committee leader meetings and joint committee meetings as outlined above, and going forward with the daunting work at hand on behalf of our members.

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:** Well put

**Feedback on Section 3:** I think that there should be representation from across the states. I don't think we need to divide the state in districts so to speak, but issues in one area of the country may be different from another.

**Feedback on Section 4:** Great!

**Feedback on Section 5:** Excellent

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**Feedback on Section 1:** The work put forth thus far by the Task Force has been tremendous and incredible. Thank you for all your work!

**Feedback on Section 2:** Incorporation of students into the AVMA is a neat idea, but it needs to still be structured. If students have a problem they want addressed, will they be left by themselves to approach the AVMA by themselves? There needs to be a direct voting executive member that represents the students still.

**Feedback on Section 3:** It seems more fair and allows areas that have more people who want to participate more do so.

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:**

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:**

**Feedback on Section 3:** I have grave concerns about equal representation without geographical involvement. I live in a lower populated state and feel that our representation would be adversely affected with this proposal. .

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:**

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:**

**Feedback on Section 3:** Some geographic relevance should be maintained to make sure that demographics of heavily populated urban areas cannot eliminate or minimize input from sparsely populated rural areas where the thrust and requirements of veterinary practice is totally different.

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:**

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**Feedback on Section 1:** My attendance at the AVMA Leadership summit in January was my first hands-on experience of the inner workings of the AVMA leadership. I came away with two distinct thoughts of our AVMA. First, it is without a doubt an honor to see so many people in my profession dedicated to making it better for us and those we serve. Second, there is a huge gap in the functionality of the governance of the AVMA currently and what it appears to have been designed to do. I can easily see the need for refinement and reworking the structure of the governance and applaud the AVMA Governance and Task Force for taking on this matter. At the same time, I feel that there is a very large deviation from what is appropriate in the proposed changes. My concerns will be addressed more specifically in the comments on the following sections, but I will try to summarize them here as well. My brief experience of the governance workings last month revealed a large communication gap between the House of Delegates and the Executive Board. One of the top problems is the differing promptness of action between the daily functions of the Executive board and the biannual meeting of the HOD. It makes sense that the Executive Board feels constrained in its abilities due to the slower pace of the HOD. There also appears to be a lack of information exchange from the advisory committees who and the HOD. Both of these issues can severely interfere with the ability of the two branches to function effectively together for the greater good of the AVMA. Therefore, it makes complete sense to revisit the workings of AVMA governance, but I believe it is being examined from the wrong perspective. In my opinion, the HOD's effectiveness has been limited by the Executive Board and not the other way around.

I would challenge the AVMA as a whole to look again at the original intent of both parts of the governing body and view this opportunity as a chance to rebuild and refine the true function of each. The House of Delegates is to be a representative voice to the AVMA of the diverse members that make it up. This diversity is a combination of professional niche, race, sex, and geographic location and all of these should continue to be a part of the diversity of our leadership. The HOD should continue to set policy and dictate the mandates given to the Executive Board to act within each year. The Executive Board should serve in the capacity to execute the requests of the HOD and should serve as the fiduciary entity, but only in regards to the steps set forth by the HOD. However, the frequency and/or manner with which the HOD meets needs to be assessed. I propose that some of the information sent down from the advisory committees could be distributed in a different manner and some of the decision making could easily be done from all over the country in this age of technology. There is no substitute for the face to face interaction that the HOD and Executive Board has together twice a year and it is entirely possible that a third or fourth meeting annually would be beneficial.

Finally, I am very concerned of the new attention paid to the demographics of the AVMA and veterinary medicine and the desire to make it match the population. While I wholeheartedly agree that we should not discriminate against race, sex, etc, I feel that to focus on this can unintentionally become a form of racism/sexism/etc. I have already been a part of a trend of watching our profession swing to the extreme towards the female population. I have personally been blessed to work with many female veterinarians and was a part of a predominately female veterinary class. In my experience, there is a level of compassion and work ethic that may have been missing for many years in the previously male dominated profession. With that said, it is disturbing that our profession is slowly selecting out the male veterinarians that are also invaluable. My honest belief is that this trend is a result of a combination of factors including overcompensating for the previous male dominance in veterinary medicine and the low income potential. The reality is that many males in this profession are still the primary income providers and a career as a private practitioner is making this more difficult to do, especially in light of the extreme rises in student debt! The majority of the female veterinarians I have worked with were of dual income households and were able to utilize their skills in a part-time setting. This weeding out of male veterinarians will eventually result in a shift of clinic ownership and quite possibly alter the unique profession we have permanently. It is hard to say how it will come, but a lot of the younger female veterinarians who are making up the majority of the professionals entering our ranks are not aspiring owners. Couple that with the increased difficulty of the fewer aspiring owners able to actually fund a practice purchase due to outstanding debt and there will soon be a large oversupply of practices with no demand to purchase them. Many of the older veterinarians will be caught between selling their life's work at too low of a price or a general shift in our profession to corporate medicine. I joined veterinarian medicine because we have the amazingly unique opportunity to practice quality medicine a thousand different ways and we get to wear many hats in any given day. While I do believe that corporate medicine has a role in our profession, I fear that if it does become the dominate portion, we will soon lose our uniqueness and fall in line with human medical trends. I believe that the future of the AVMA needs to be analyzed in light of this coming trend and focus its efforts at redirecting it. Let the demographics of the population dictate where our profession goes as it becomes necessary, but don't force the racial or sex issues and unintentionally select out our future.

The following Sections will have my supporting reasoning for this summary.

**Feedback on Section 2:** #6: The most efficient and effective government does not need to offer the maximum number of programs, services, and benefits, but merely the most beneficial of these with the least amount of resources that benefits the WHOLE of the Veterinary profession. Our profession is extremely diverse with all components being vital to the definition of veterinary medicine, but we are

largely slanted in some areas such as private, small animal practice. Any services that the AVMA does offer needs to address the greater structure of veterinary medicine and should not serve as a democratic representation of the veterinary population only. Credit must be given to areas of our profession that are still vital to our identify, but may be underrepresented in numbers. These underrepresented segments includes such areas as the government sector, large animal practice, specialties, and even some geographic locales.

#7 While eliminated redundancy sounds like a great thing, I would like to point out that our own national government utilizes redundancy (admittedly overuses) to protect itself and the people it serves from unnecessary or even harmful changes. Redundancy can and should be refined to be a tool to protect the veterinary profession from the AVMA from over stepping its mandates. #8 I have no doubt that the AVMA staff has unique and helpful insight into the veterinary profession, but the extreme variety that exists inside of our profession both in different professional focuses and in geographic differences can neither be fully understood nor represented by the small sample of professionals that serve as the AVMA staff. Their input should always be solicited in a balance with complete representation of the whole profession. #9/10/11 I agree with these statements without contestation. #12 I would like to know the true definitions of "stakeholders" and "input" in regards to this statement. I agree that input from those associated with but serve outside the veterinary profession is important. However, their input should merely be considered within the construct of the AVMA's function to serve the veterinary profession. #13 The terminology here again sounds great, but it definitely needs to be clarified. Any emergent situations requiring immediate action or reaction from the AVMA needs to have a channel to be dealt with swiftly if necessary. However, many decisions (especially those that are considered to be permanent policy changes) have no place being taken lightly and should be carefully considered and debated prior to their approval or dismissal. #14 I agree with this statement in general, but would caution everyone to discourage the idea of discounting the organizations that makeup the AVMA. The associated organizations enable better representation of the whole profession and can be very useful in engaging the individual veterinarians that the AVMA is supposed to represent. Personally, it means a lot more to me for the Nebraska VMA to contact me than some unknown person in Washington or Illinois regarding our profession. #15 I agree that the AVMA should be a part of the identification, recruitment, and training of leadership, but I also believe that this burden should rest even more so on the shoulders of the parts that make up the AVMA. State VMAs or other professional organizations should be able to identify, recruit, and train veterinarians that they feel are valid representatives of their make up to help keep the profession fully represented. The AVMA's role in this should be to support the other organizations with materials and means for effective training. #16 I do not fully agree that only one body should have fiduciary responsibility. I realize that we have to meet Illinois state laws in regards to this area, but I believe there are other answers to this dilemma. The fiduciary responsibility for fiscal matters should continue to fall within the Executive Board's responsibilities, but they should still be held accountable to only act within the scope of activity that the House of Delegates sets forth. The HOD should continue to be the policy making part of the AVMA governance and only in situations of extreme emergent needs should the Executive Board need to act outside of HOD policy making. This concept of an entity serving as a steward over finances and even acting upon set policies happens in our profession all over this country in the hands of office managers. They are the ones held accountable to keep the financial responsibilities met and many also act upon policies set by the practice owner(s) or management team. This would seem to be a path that the AVMA could take to meet the state laws and hold true to the current governance structures. #17 I disagree with this statement. I am only 7 years removed from veterinary school and can tell you that I knew nothing (and probably didn't have time to know anything) about the workings of the AVMA in school. I can also attest that the majority of my classmates where

in the same situation with me in this regard. Furthermore, as a student who is not yet a DVM (including some who may never be), I did not have the full investment in the veterinary profession that I do today. Therefore, I believe that it is imprudent to offer voting privileges to these individuals until they have truly reached DVM status. I believe this point raises an even more intriguing point that I touched on earlier. It seems that we have singled out and are trying to move away from the demographics in the current AVMA leadership in favor of trying to meet the demographics of the active veterinary community first and the national population second. I believe that the same concept of investment in our profession in regards to SAVMA student's having voting privileges needs to be examined in the new leadership models. I am not a practice owner, but aspire to move towards this. I believe that when that time comes, I will have an even greater investment in our profession than I do currently. With this in mind, it seems prudent to continue to have the leadership of the AVMA representing the overall level of investment that individuals have. There is nothing wrong with the AVMA leadership demographics being slanted towards older practice owners, male or female, who have financial, emotional, and long-term professional investment. Furthermore, I believe that race should not even be considered in this analysis as it tends to have a negative side effect of excluding those of the majority. At all level of veterinary medicine, whether it be entrance into veterinary school, a job application for the first job, or a campaign to serve at the AVMA, our selection process should always be based on abilities, credentials, and desires and not race or sex.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I believe that this Section is fairly sound overall, but question its necessity if the House of Delegates is not abolished. I believe that it would be imprudent to disband the HOD and therefore believe that original method of Board of Directors selection should remain intact. IF the AVMA does move away from the HOD, I would strongly urge you to reconsider the elimination of geographic districts for directors. I believe that to eliminate the geographic differences will remove the vital representation of diversity that the AVMA currently has. As an example, I am a small animal exclusive veterinarian practicing in the middle of Nebraska. We are an AAHA practice and strive for the highest quality of medicine that we can reach. I realize that this could be said about many practices all over the United States, but I also realize that my life values may make my scope of practice different than those of differing geographic regions. It is my belief that this diversity is currently represented by the HOD's diversity and should always remain a part of AVMA leadership. A lack of effective representation will result in a mass exodus of those professionals who are underrepresented.

**Feedback on Section 4:** I agree that these advisory committees are necessary and are a great way to engage more professionals in service through the AVMA. I believe that new channels should be explored for dispersing the findings of these committees to the HOD members so that accurate and efficient decision making can occur in the appropriate governing structure.

**Feedback on Section 5:** I have nothing further to add in regards to this section. The majority of my previous comments apply here. I am grateful for the chance to be heard and appreciate all of you who brave enough to look at change and bear your ideas before a lot of people opposed to change. I would be more than willing to fill in any additional questions that may arise from my comments if deemed necessary. I would like to again address the amazement I had in seeing so many of my colleagues dedicated to this professions continued stability and am honored to have a part in it!

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I believe this is long overdue so am pleased to see this activity. However, AVMA is such a staid organization that I believe conservative views will not allow the kinds of change necessary to make the organization truly progressive.

**Feedback on Section 2:** All sounds good. #15 is probably the most important.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Not sure I agree with eliminating the VP position since the possibility of having an incumbent president have to vacate office seems real. Direct member election is a must. The organization has depended on district candidates for too long. It is an old boy system that does not allow better candidates to surface.

**Feedback on Section 4:** I have served on these councils and have always believed they are the true backbone of AVMA. Anything that strengthens councils, including a freer nomination mechanism would be encouraged. As mentioned above the need to have structured nominations eliminates a lot of really good candidates.

**Feedback on Section 5:** Still reads like an old boy system!

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:** While student representation in multiple levels is very good, I do am not in favor of their voting rights until they graduate and join the association as professionals.

**Feedback on Section 3:** If VP is eliminated, who assumes President's duties should they become incapacitated? I am against removal of geographic representation of Directors. I approve the electronic campaigning and balloting.

**Feedback on Section 4:** I approve the Advisory Council concept and strongly favor in-person meetings. Preliminary or interim work can be through electronic media, however. I look forward to a more open and inclusive form of governance, and encouragement of future leaders.

**Feedback on Section 5:** I approve the distribution of power cells and approve the direction towards collegial vs disparate councils/boards. If moving away from constituency-based system, there must be a strongly representative component elsewhere in the governance system.

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:** Good

**Feedback on Section 3:** #21 – not good as to the diverse needs and outlooks of the geographic areas of our country, and the skewed population densities (i.e. the Senate of US Congress is probably more representative of entire nation than the House)

**Feedback on Section 4:** Should have at least advisory of member from another part of our profession included in committees to give input as to perception of outcome by non area knowledgeable person that may also help others in that boat understand outcomes.

**Feedback on Section 5:** #38 – We must use specific group persons as our profession has become so diversified and specialized that the majority of the members are far removed from “how the cow eats the

cabbage” and lack the expertise to come up with practical real life solutions. Reference comment on section 4.

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:** Face-to-face meetings are important for exchanging ideas, developing leaders, and fostering personal and organizational relationships.- while in some situations this may be true. Today’s technology and the current state of the economy REQUIRES EVERY company to make changes. Traveling expenses need to be minimized. My husband works for one of the the top technology companies in the world and due to economic changes they have stopped a large amount of allotted travel expenses. They have rather switched to video conferencing which is state of the art, effective, and much more economical.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I believe having a variety of geographical input is mandatory for a countrywide organization. If the country could be set up in regions (based on population and geographical needs, demographics, etc), rather than states, then have equal representation between the regions it would be more representative of the population in which you are trying to represent.

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:**

**Feedback on Section 3:** I am a little afraid that having no established districts for directors may allow those of us from heavily populated (and generally mostly small animal) to steam roll over those of us in un-populated (and more large animal) areas. If those areas aren’t able to field a director, that’s different.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I commend the Task Force for their hard work and bravery in bringing forward a concept that challenges the status quo. I agree that drastic or profound change is necessary.

**Feedback on Section 2:**

**Feedback on Section 3:** I am disappointed that the vote at the Veterinary Leadership Conference demonstrates that the Executive Board and House of Delegates are unwilling to give up geographical representation. The art and science of veterinary medicine no longer varies by geography in the United States and consequently the governance of the AVMA does not need to be based on geographical representation. I notice that the AAEP has recognized this fact and has accordingly changed its organizational representation.

**Feedback on Section 4:** I think that we need to be very careful when eliminating all or the preponderance of councils and committees in favor of Advisory Councils based on the strategic goals. The AVMA has several core competencies that are not included in the strategic goals. For example, part of the Veterinary Oath refers to the “promotion of public health.” Which Advisory Council will be responsible for environmental scanning regarding public health? And strategic goals change over time. If for example, animal welfare is no longer one of the five strategic goals, who will provide policy guidance for the AVMA in animal welfare?

### **Feedback on Section 5:**

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**Feedback on Section 1:** In general I agree, I am not certain concur that students should have voting rights.

**Feedback on Section 2:** I like the direct election of officers and directors by the membership.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I do not have a strong opinion about this matter but the proposed plan sounds reasonable.

**Feedback on Section 4:** Seems like a good approach.

### **Feedback on Section 5:**

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#### **Feedback on Section 2:**

- The most efficient and effective system of governance structure, process and culture will deliver the maximum programs, services, and benefits for members. WITH SOME CONSIDERATION FOR VALUE (\$\$) TO THE "AVERAGE" MEMBER'S NEEDS.
- Eliminating redundancy allows resources to flow to meaningful and impactful work.
- The AVMA staff has tremendous insight into the profession and its needs, and their scientific and non-scientific expertise should be utilized to the fullest.
- Face-to-face meetings are important for exchanging ideas, developing leaders, and fostering personal and organizational relationships.
- The AVMA needs to have effective channels of communication with all segments of organized veterinary medicine and other organizations with intersecting interests.
- The AVMA has a need to more directly solicit, receive and utilize input from members. YES, YES, YES!!
- The AVMA process for developing knowledge-based policy requires input from stakeholders. TRUE. SOLICITING INPUT IS NEEDED MANY TIMES BECAUSE SOME ISSUES ELICIT THE MOST VOCAL AND MOST NUMEROUS RESPONSES ARE GENERALLY FROM THOSE MOST LIKELY TO BE NEGATIVELY AFFECTED IF A POLICY ADOPTED (ie. POLICY RE: HOMEOPATHY)
- The AVMA needs a policy development process that allows the organization to respond in a timely way and take maximal advantage of opportunities. POLICIES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED BY THOSE (ENTITIES AND INDIVIDUALS AND PERHAPS AN AD HOC GROUP) CLOSEST TO THE SUBJECT OF THE POLICY. THEN THOSE DRAFTS SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO OTHERS FOR COMMENT BEFORE RATIFICATION. I BELIEVE THIS IS BEING DONE PRESENTLY BUT, AS WITH MANY OTHER THINGS, IS RESPONDED TO AT A POOR RESPONSE RATE.
- The AVMA must structure itself as a professional membership association, not a federation of associations. SOMEHOW, THE "ASSOCIATIONS" NEED TO BE ASSURED THAT THEY WILL HAVE REPRESENTATION IN THE AVMA DECISIONS. ALTHOUGH THE AVMA IS THE "PARENT" ASSOCIATION FOR ALL VETERINARIANS, THE TRUTH IS THAT MOST MEMBERS ARE MORE CLOSELY TIED TO THEIR STATE OR SPECIES' ASSOCIATIONS.
- The AVMA needs a clearly defined and effective process for leadership identification, recruitment and development. THIS IS TRUE BUT, THE HOW IS ANOTHER QUESTION. I

THINK THIS METHOD NEEDS CLARIFYING TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE MEMBERSHIP TO THE EXTENT THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A SMALL BODY MAKING THE CHOICES FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.

- There must be only one entity with fiduciary duty including authority for bylaws, articles of incorporation, and fiscal matters – and the entity with fiduciary authority should also have policy authority. WE WERE LED TO BELIEVE THAT THE WAY WE NOW WORK WITH THE HOD AND THE EB MAKING DECISIONS WAS ILLEGAL ACCORDING TO ILLINOIS LAW. APPARENTLY, THIS IS NOT THE CASE. THIS SEEMED DISINGENUOUS AND MISLEADING....ON PURPOSE????
- Students should be incorporated into the AVMA membership structure, with voting rights. STUDENTS SHOULD NOT HAVE VOTING RIGHTS!!!!.

### **Feedback on Section 3:**

- 17 members of the Board of Directors OKAY
- Eliminate the position of Vice President OKAY
- Direct member election of officers and directors NO!!!! THIS WOULD NOT PROVIDE THE ORGANIZATION WITH THE BEST LEADERSHIP UNLESS THERE WAS A SLATE PROVIDED. BUT, THEN, THE PEOPLE PROVIDING THE SLATE WOULD ALL BUT BE DOING THE ELECTING. THE AVERAGE GMEMBER HAS NO CLUE WHO ARE GOOD LEADERS IN THE AVMA!!!!. ASK BOARD MEMBERS OF THE STATES OR ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTED IN THE HOD "WHO ARE THE OFFICERS OR BOARD MEMBER OF THEIR DISTRICT OF AVMA?" YOU MIGHT BE SHOCKED!
- Eliminate geographic districts for directors POSSIBLY COULD PRESENT OVERREPRESENTATION FROM HIGHLY POPULATED AREAS OR PERSONS FROM INSTUTIONS WHERE NAME RECOGNITION IS A FACTOR. OTHERWISE, I AGREE THAT THE CONCEPT IS GOOD, ALLOWING FOR THE BEST POSSIBILITY FOR THE BEST LEADERS.
- Equal time and opportunity for all candidates to get their message out to the membership COST AND TIME SPENT CAMPAIGNING WOULD ELIMINATE MANY GOOD LEADERS
- AVMA would conduct the election for all officers and directors using an electronic secret ballot process DO NOT AGREE WITH OPEN MEMBERSHIP VOTING
- A centrally administered, online campaign will ensure consistency in the process, fair and open access to the ballot for all potential candidates, and election results in which all can have confidence IN MY OPINION, MOST MEMBERS DO NOT ACCESS THE WEB PAGE VERY OFTEN. IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW HOW MANY DIFFERENT MEMBERS ACCESS THE AVMA WEB PAGE WITH ANY REGULARITY.....NOT MANY I SUPECT
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### **Feedback on Section 4:**

- GOT ERASED ..GOOD CONCEPT THOUGH (COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES)
- Councils to be made up of somewhere between 11-13 individuals with skills, backgrounds, and interest in those areas EXCELLENT
- Each Advisory Council would also have a liaison from the Board of Directors and also a liaison from AVMA staff EXCELLENT
- Councils would report back to the Board of Directors FINE
- Advisory Council members will be selected by the Leadership Nomination Committee THE MAKEUP OF THE LNC IS PROBABLY THE MOST CONCERNING THING (SELECTING PROCESS FOR AC MEMBERS FINE)

- WHAT ABOUT THE SELECTION OF COE MEMBERS?????
- Advisory Councils would select members for groups helping them in achieving certain goals
- Advisory Council work groups would comprise structures such as sub-committees and task forces, and would include inputs from all interested AVMA members and perhaps outside stakeholders GOOD IDEA!!
- Advisory Councils would meet in person together annually to coordinate their work and provide an opportunity to perform certain ceremonial duties that are presently addressed through HOD meetings
- New system goals are to engage our membership and attract new members, continue to gather environmental scanning inputs on an ongoing basis, groom new future leaders and harness the knowledge and experience of existing ones, help forge alliances with other animal health and welfare groups, and above all, drive forward AVMA's strategic goals

### **Feedback on Section 5:**

- AVMA will need to have the capacity and leadership to take on the critical role of facilitator and convener of diverse groups to facilitate dialog, resolve conflicts, and address a wide variety of issues. OKAY
- The people nominated for leadership positions must possess the required experience and expertise to meet the needs for the specific positions being filled. The second requirement is Legitimacy. There must be a representative distribution of power among groups. DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS!!!!!!!!!!
- The various AVMA entities are divided into "camps" or "factions," such as public health, animal welfare, research, producer groups, and others, rather than groups with diverse professional perspectives IS THIS A STATEMENT OR VISION?
- Our new governance model will allow for a variety of professional perspectives to be mingled together in single entities, which will allow for more efficient and effective policy-making and a more nimble responsiveness
- Appointing committees based on balancing special interests may lead to the protection of those interests and not to the common good of the AVMA, or the profession as a whole
- The governance process is leading to a significant disconnect between those who serve and those choosing not to get involved in the current organizational hierarchy
- When filling roles within the AVMA, the LNC should actively consider how to incorporate or engage members who reflect the changing demographics of the profession YES!!
- Composition of the LNC is still to be determined, but at this time, we believe that 11 members plus a non-voting chair is a good place to start 11 PEOPLE CANNOT KNOW ALL THOSE CAPABLE AND WANTING TO FILL ALL POSITIONS
- The LNC will propose a slate of nominees as positions become available, and it may also be involved in overall leadership development FOR WHOM TO SELECT?????
- The positions for all advisory bodies will be appointed and the positions for all decision-making bodies will be elected by the general membership NO!NO! NO! NO!
- LNC will need to move away from the idea of a constituency-based board, and even from a competency-based board, and instead consider the idea of balanced skill sets AWAY FROM CONSTITUENCY BASED YES....AWAY FROM COMPETENCY BASED, NO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Each member of a group comes with his or her own skill sets, and these need to balance the other skills already present in the entity. MANY HAVE SKILL SETS BUT NOT NECESSARILY COMPETENCY

- There are certain attributes that the LNC will take into consideration as it considers nominees for various leadership positions. These include:
- The ability to think strategically and analytically and to effectively communicate thoughts and the reasons for them
- Possession of earned respect of other key stakeholder group members
- The ability to work well with as a member of a collaborative group with group decision-making authority
- An earned reputation for emotional maturity, personal integrity, and honesty
- A familiarity with the body of knowledge related to both the process for which the group is responsible as well as the substantive content of the subject area within which decisions and choices will have to be made

FWIW,

I THINK THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF THE TASK FORCE HAS BEEN THE ORIGINAL OFFER OF THREE POSSIBILITIES FOR CONSIDERATION BUT THEN OFFERING ONLY ONE. THE FEEDBACK THAT I HAVE WITNESSED FROM SOME OF THE HOD MEMBERS GIVES ME THE INKLING THAT THE PROPOSAL IS DOA IF THIS IS THE ONLY PROPOSAL PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION. MY OPINION IS THAT GIVEN THE CHOICE OF "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT" TO THIS OPTION BY THE HOD IT WILL PROBABLY BE THE LATTER.

**Feedback on Section 1:** I support what the AVMA is doing to re-evaluate the governance structure, and can recognize and appreciate the effort and thought that has gone into this process so far. My personal experience in serving on the Executive Board of the Massachusetts VMA, where we have also undertaken this task over the past year or so, has taught me much about governance and how people best work together.

I laud some of the ideas in the proposed new AVMA governance structure: I particularly like the idea of selecting leaders with clearly defined skill sets around strategy, communication, respect and collaboration as I believe these are the skills that will define the success of our profession into the future. I do however have some concern about losing the voices from some of our minority constituencies given the fact that we are a profession primarily populated with and dominated by companion animal veterinary medicine.

We too looked at this problem within our own MVMA and fell on the side of choosing to not define Executive Board or Advisory Committee positions by constituency but to purposefully seek balanced constituency representation in the EB and AC leadership and makeup. That is to say, in our Policy and Procedures Manual we have stated that our Nominating Committee is to seek balance in representing geography and minority areas of veterinary medicine where possible. We judged that the risk of not doing so was to accept further loss of membership in practice areas other than companion animal. As an equine and large animal practitioner, and a previous VLC Emerging Leader, I admit to struggling with how the AVMA represents those of us who practice with other species. While I support the idea that we are one profession – and that we share more in common than in difference – I experience AVMA member benefits as distinctly skewed to the advantage of my small and companion animal colleagues. I believe the AVMA has to make a decision about whether they want to truly represent all veterinarians, or simply the majority of them as defined by our primary constituency. I believe that a change in governance that does not purposefully address the risk of losing minority constituency members and voices, is a change that moves the AVMA toward the latter.

This does not mean that I do not support a change. Quite the opposite is true: I feel strongly that our profession is under tremendous pressure to change and I would rather we lead that change than sit back

and simply allow it to happen to us. In my opinion, the goal of a robust governance structure would be to identify and intentionally include minority representative voices in each and every body that evaluates issues such that they are peppered throughout the AVMA at all levels of decision-making. It is true that simply because I am a large animal practitioner, I will not necessary have the same view as my large animal peers yet I would argue that the perspective of a large animal veterinarian is valuable all the same and is quite different than many of my small animal colleagues. The same could be said for any member of any other of our minority constituencies.

Other ideas in the proposed new structure that I particularly like and support are those to incorporate student voices and votes, to streamline fiduciary and policy-making duties, to implement a leadership development process, to find a way to more directly engage members for feedback and involvement, and to embrace collaboration and improve communication with other organized veterinary medicine stakeholders in areas where our interests are aligned.

In summary, I am largely in support of the direction the AVMA has laid out in the proposed new governance structure and am excited at the prospect of creating a more vibrant and responsive organization that will better position us to lead our profession into the future. The one area where I would suggest we could do even better is to make it clear how minority interest voices will be embraced and incorporated in the newly envisioned AVMA.

**Feedback on Section 2:**

**Feedback on Section 3:**

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:**

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:**

**Feedback on Section 3:** VP serves a vital role when P is unavailable & when used as the lead in pursuing AVMA initiatives. Important to maintain geographic diversity. Maintain district director elections and adding directors elected at-large might be a compromise.

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:**

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**Feedback on Section 1:** No comments-looks good.

**Feedback on Section 2:** Comparative costs for face to face meetings-before and after

**Feedback on Section 3:** How will you insure that fair and balanced representation will occur under the proposal.

**Feedback on Section 4:** No comment

**Feedback on Section 5:** How to insure that “good old boyism doesn’t occur”

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**Feedback on Section 1:** The “Task Force” term is synonymous with urgent. In a well-planned organization, Task Force should not be needed, except for purposes of sensationalism.

**Feedback on Section 2:** The many layers of AVMA should be omitted, as they deplete organizational stability, purview and efficient function. Omit regions and all they entail. Then streamline the headquarters bureaucracy with the PRIMARY goal of reducing member dues! An organization cannot function properly when it feeds on member dues that are constantly increased to support the ever-burgeoning bureaucracy.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Delete, stop, or cancel all superfluous entities within the organization. Form ad hoc committees with specific goals and limited warrant. Only a select few even know or care about regional duties, if they exist. That serves to alienate the majority of practicing veterinarians

**Feedback on Section 4:** Advisory councils are a badge at best and a self-aggrandizing bunch usually. Good leaders can make decisions without consensus. Ask a corporate president if he or she takes a consensus before an decision.

**Feedback on Section 5:** Don’t look too hard for leaders from within. From my experience the AVMA has a paucity of good leaders. What it has in abundance are administrators. There is a difference. As an example, try to get a decision about an animal cruelty issue or Humane Society issue. Does anyone think for one minute that that AVMA would ever inspect the hell on earth at the Dallas Humane Society? Great advertisements; little action.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** Please do not change the House of Delegates structure. It is important that each different segment of veterinary medicine has a representative. Exotic veterinarians have different problems than small animal veterinarians who also have different views and problems than large animal veterinarians. Each different branch needs a voice!

**Feedback on Section 2:**

**Feedback on Section 3:**

**Feedback on Section 4:**

**Feedback on Section 5:**

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**Feedback on Section 1:** I am not at all sure that the consultant has served us well. To someone who is not on the task force, he seems like someone who believes that there is one system that all organizations should incorporate, and I just don’t think that is true. I would be more accepting of this Board of Directors/LNC idea if I knew that a solid majority of respondents to the questionnaire detailing the six possible leadership set-ups had indeed voted for it, but I have never seen the results of that questionnaire and find it difficult to believe that this was the overwhelming favorite of the respondents. Next, I agree that it would be wonderful to have more direct membership involvement, but I think the task force is overestimating how much time and interest the general membership is going to give to the AVMA. Even I, a member of the HoD, go to the AVMA website only rarely, and it has been difficult

for me as a practicing clinician and a business owner to find the time to set aside to really think about this feedback form. Overestimating how much the general membership will involve itself leaves the organization open to the danger of being hijacked by special interest groups that can rally their members to weigh in disproportionately on various policies that, theoretically, all members should be commenting on but may not have the sufficient time or motivation to do so. We see this in national politics: no one really believes that the Tea Party represents more than a small minority of the American electorate, but its members are highly motivated and so noisy that it ends up having an outsized influence on national policy that it does not deserve, and which has caused the country great harm. The AVMA is not immune from this.

### **Feedback on Section 2:**

Naturally. But this is something that can be worked on improving without a complete overhaul of the entire leadership structure. PS: I know “impactful” is a word that is making inroads in the business and non-profit world, but “influential” sounds much more professional, and I would urge its use instead.

Yes, but I don't think these meetings necessarily have to move around the country. It would save money and logistical effort for the AVMA annual convention to have a permanent home in Chicago, just as Western States vet conference has a home in Las Vegas and the NAVC has a home in Orlando.

Overall, the current website is a vast improvement over the old one. However, the “AVMA Policies” section - the place where members are supposed to voice their opinions about policies with the goal of AVMA's policies being more member-driven, is still not easy enough to navigate to. On the website home page it is in the bottom third of the menu list on the right hand side. In the top menu, it's hidden under “Knowledge Base.” If I were looking for a list of AVMA policies, “Knowledge Base” is not necessarily the header that first springs to mind. If you want more members to express their opinions online about AVMA policy, you need to have a big obvious button that says “Members Comment on AVMA Policies Here!” near the top of the page.

I guess I just don't see what's wrong with being a federation of associations. The good thing about it is that it ensures that no region or specialty is left out of the decision-making process. And so far as getting things done on the ground at member-level is concerned, smaller groups (state VMA's, for example) are more efficient and effective than a big national organization. The state VMA's are extremely effective and valuable, and they aren't going away any time soon because members need them for reasons as diverse as CE meetings to state legislative representation. So why not continue to fold them into the AVMA's leadership and work with (and through) them, instead of bypassing them in an effort to relate to members directly? Or even better yet, why not do both - keep the state VMA's and allied groups as the voices of the members in the HoD, but also continue to work on reaching out to individual members directly through e-mail and the website?

I don't know how you're going to do this on a national level - it's just too vast and impersonal. This is another place where I believe a federation of associations does a better job because there is a more intimate relationship among its members. Also, I firmly believe that AVMA leaders should first “cut their teeth” by participating in leadership at the state or specialty association level - that's where you can find those with an interest and talent for leadership.

Yes, this is true. Let's just make it the Executive Board, with the stipulation that whatever policy and fiduciary decisions the HoD makes, the Executive Board is bound to then declare as official policy. Problem solved.

The idea that students should have voting rights is a terrible idea. Even the recent graduates sitting at my table on the day of the presentation thought it was a terrible idea. Include them in discussions, sure. But there is a HUGE difference between being a veterinary student, and being a veterinarian - a difference that many students don't appreciate until they have crossed the divide themselves. Attitudes on a variety of subjects often change very quickly once the shoe is on the other foot. Also, there are so many students, so easily mobilized because they are clustered together on campuses, that their opinions could easily gain an inappropriate amount of weight when set against the opinions of practicing veterinarians scattered across the country. There are certain privileges that are set aside for graduates, and being able to vote in a professional organization as a recognized professional yourself is one of them.

**Feedback on Section 3:** The only issue I have with the proposed Board of Directors is that I find the concept of directors representing certain regions very useful. Our District One executive director, John De Jong, does an excellent job conveying what the AVMA leadership is doing to the membership of District One by participating in dialogues at our regional CE meeting as well as appearing at individual state VMA meetings in New England. Somehow, I just don't think that a Director elected at large would do the same, unless one of them happened to live in the northeast.

**Feedback on Section 4:** This is all fine - why don't we have this now?

**Feedback on Section 5:** LNC: This is where all the power lies, since it would purportedly be responsible for nominating the Board of Directors and filling other decision-making roles within the AVMA. This is going to concentrate a huge amount of power into the hands of eleven people, as currently proposed. It is perhaps the most radical departure from the current leadership structure, yet it is the part where the task force is the most hazy on the details. I don't know why the task force thought it could present any of these changes without having at least the LNC part fully worked out. Where do the nominees come from? Does the general membership vote for them? If so, how do you prevent special interests from stacking the LNC in their favor (see my point about the Tea Party above)? Can they be removed if they abuse their power or fail in their duties?

The House of Delegates already does this very nicely. I'm not sure how the LNC would do better than what is already in place.

Yes, but when we come together then we have an extremely diverse and representative group, and one with built-in lines of communication back to the members who selected their representatives in the first place.

This is something the HoD should be doing already by way of term limits. Members who are retired from practice should not be allowed to be delegates. These two items alone will ensure a natural progression to a governing body that more closely resembles the membership's demographics.

So the idea is to save the membership money on HoD meetings and crafting resolutions? Here is how I would do it:

Eliminate alternate delegates at HoD meetings. There can be an alternate delegate back home ready to step in if the delegate can't make a meeting, but it seems pointless to pay to import twice as many people as you need at a meeting, especially when half of them can't vote.

Resolutions should have all their tweaking done (amendments and voting to accept amended language) electronically (e-mail, live chat, etc) before the HoD convenes. The only resolutions that should be presented for a vote are the ones that are already in their final form as voted upon by a simple majority of delegates via e-mail. No more wordsmithing on the floor!

Find a permanent home for the AVMA summer convention - Chicago probably makes the most sense.

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**Feedback on Section 1:** We should all be most appreciative of the tremendous amount of effort and time that the talented people on the task force are devoting to this potentially "thankless" job. The consultant of the task force may have misread the enthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm for change in the total group. He may have thought there was a predominant will to change in the HOD membership. As this does not appear to be true, he may have needed to lead the task force in a slower, step by step method, that allowed HOD members to slowly open their minds to the process.

**Feedback on Section 2:** The foundational statements are individually difficult to argue with as they are generally true and good statements. The idea that they would be presented as something we would need to take a vote on is the difficult part of the process.

**Feedback on Section 3:** Again, the idea that we need to vote on the above statements seems to be a time waster. Most statements seem generally true.

**Feedback on Section 4:** The leadership nominating committee would seem to have a lot of power in filling the positions available. The Duties of the Advisory Councils would seem better suited to long term candidates in order to keep a consistent perspective over time.

**Feedback on Section 5:** Again the Leadership Nominating Committee, would have a lot of power in selecting the choices for Advisory positions.

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**Feedback on Section 1:**

**Feedback on Section 2:** I agree that students have an important role in the AVMA as the future of our organization. However, I feel that role is best served in the SAVMA organization. I do not feel that students should have voting rights that will guide leadership or policy as they do not have the professional experience to guide them. There is a huge difference in how you see the profession from a student perspective versus as a practicing clinician. Students could possibly also be manipulated by special interest groups swaying votes on particular issues.

**Feedback on Section 3:** I think the board of directors must be composed of veterinarians that represent all facets of our profession including but not limited to the areas of production medicine, lab animal medicine, and food safety/hygiene. A board of directors elected solely by popular vote may be made up of only small animal clinicians whom may or may not have the interests of all facets of our profession in mind. The AVMA is a highly respected organization and must represent and support sound scientific

principles and standards. Special interest groups are increasingly guiding governmental policy and societal ideals regarding animal welfare, livestock production, and food safety. We do not need the same influence in our organization. We all took an oath to conserve animal resources and promote public health. Therefore, the AVMA must continue to stand behind the underrepresented members of the organization that practice in the aforementioned areas.

**Feedback on Section 4:** Number 26 is vague in reference to how advisory committees will be formed. This will allow the potential for special interest groups to have overwhelming influence in guiding policy. For example, people involved in animal rights organizations such as HSUS may be involved in policy decisions which could be devastating to animal production. As professionals, we understand the scientific principles behind our practices and we must ensure all policy is guided in the same manner.

**Feedback on Section 5:**

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## General Comments

Blah blah blah ....too many committees...blah blah blah...too many junkets....blah blah blah... where's my health insurance.. .blah blah blah wasted member supplied funds recreating jobs and securing avma jobs...blah blah blah.....waste of time....where's my health insurance....do i really need avma if no health insurance...,,blah blah blah....

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Thank you for putting together a proposed new change to the AVMA governance structure, which I support as truly needed. I can support all the concepts proposed. The one thing I'm having trouble getting over is not having some geographic limitations on the proposed 11 directors at large. I understand that in the perfect model description, where a director hails from should not effect the governing of the body. But we as people are not perfect!!! I believe that having at least one director from a given geographic area would help to communicate geographic issues to the body as a whole a bit better. I do understand that the directors can form committees to help solve any potential geographic concerns. These committees would then present to the directors, etc. I just feel more comfortable knowing that there is a director from my area that would potentially understand my concerns. I would divide the country into east and west of the Mississippi river and then divide each half into a north and south and suggest that the board of directors have at least one member from each quadrant. You could potentially have 8 directors from one area and 1 each from the remaining three.

I guess this concern could be also noted for representation of practice type, etc. I feel comfortable with practice type being excluded as a requirement.

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To Governance taskforce:

I was unable to open the form to reply so I will make my comments here. Also in examining the presentation to HOD, transparency seems to be lacking since the questions look like the decisions have been made already.

General thoughts

The AVMA is unlike any other veterinary organization in the United States. I strongly disagree about the fact that AVMA should not be a federation. The participants of AVMA are both entities such as AABP, AAHA or AASRP and also individuals. The importance of that statement is that we do not need to follow the path of the AMA that lost members to their specialty associations. To speak for the veterinarian AVMA must involve the groups- to use the historical speaking point –be the umbrella group for veterinarians. The change that brought the allied groups to select their own member of certain committees such as animal welfare brought the best minds and representation of that philosophy to the table. I would not like to see these basic principle changed.

On that same line in my opinion the basic reason why we have a standing at the table in Washington DC is because of food safety or related issues. That opens the door for us to drive our agenda. Sit back and compare HSUS in their fights and press with our own. What if AABP or ASV were not part of AVMA and took over the food issues in Washington, would the door open for us or them?

As a past member of the allied group ( AASRP) and then elected to the executive board from District X I have an unique and unusual experience. The allied group probably is the best area of transparent broad based representation in AVMA. More diversity was at that table than other groups and their representation was by the member associations. The greatest number of female and/or youthful individuals in the HOD was initially from this group. This group did environmental scanning before that term was used at AVMA. The opportunity for those food animal practitioners to interact and engage the

companion animal practitioner and talk of the challenges was invaluable. As a result those representatives could then address their own organization with new knowledge that was not available at the HOD. Since I have been gone I do not know how the electronic age has made communication more available but face to face and hall way conversation is still extremely valuable.

Selecting people for committees was always a challenge. The first obstacle was lack of nominations. There never was an attempt to exclude anyone but as in any election past experience and past relationship with the individual often built confidence in placing them on a committee. Discussion in executive session in my opinion brought forth a better discussion and less politics. The newer nomination forms helped guide appointments but often people did not know what their function at AVMA would be. Also resumes from academics tend to be 20 pages in length but not answer the question about their ability to serve AVMA members. Again the allied groups searched for productive people and from wide and varied areas since the selection process were not centralized to a Leadership Nomination Committee. I would support the removal of Councils (except COE – that has it owns challenged) and Judicial council. Then I agree with aligning committees with the strategic goals and making the life of the committee three years with death of the committee unless renewed. (Was a recommendation from the last bylaws taskforce I was on but did not make it through staff review) The changes being suggested seemed to be throwing the baby out with the bath water. The political process to pass the HOD (they control the bylaws) needs to probably be staged. HAC could probably be eliminated with one member of the HOD elected as representative to executive board. The planning for meetings could be handled by staff.

The vice president position SHOULD be eliminated. Even though there have been a few dynamic individuals most were just older politicians. The vp has only two years on the board and in my experience did not fully participate. The visits to the schools are too important not to have a consistent message that the staff can deliver better and be replaced if they do not. At any of the activities of AVMA the students were always considered in every discussion. The turning point was in Dr. D Barnett's term as president when the students were given the vote in the HOD. Since that time everyone recognizes the importance of our future.

If we are talking finance then let the HOD members pay their own way or AVMA pay for just one member. At the same time if the HOD is to be retained their mission needs to be redefined and also need more time (a day or two) to have open sessions of visioning and strategic discussions. The major values of this group is to bring ideas, introduce new volunteers to AVMA and AVMA to them, and could bring recommendations to the executive board for action. Remember the bylaws state the executive boards acts for and on behalf the HOD between sessions except for those action stated as HOD authority. On elections I have voted electronically for officers when I only read their bios on paper and often made selection on a word or two they said on paper. Could they function- I do not know. But it is like flipping a coin often times. As far as a president why would not Texas or California always have the presidency if the state organization campaigned for them or even mentioned they were running for the office. Would Montana ever get a resident to be president?

As you change the structure look at the history of AVMA and governance both on paper and politically. From reading old HOD proceedings they had the time to discuss the items seemingly forever but the world was slow. Also because all items the executive board passed were given to the HOD and voted on they were considered actions of the HOD. When I first became involved the executive board was like a dictator and had zero transparency. As the relationship grew between the executive board and HOD, trusts and cooperation began to play well for AVMA. At the same time the new parliamentarian defined the roles and authority of the executive board and HOD that gave more authority to the executive board. The HOD wanted more political clout and conflict often appeared. So that brings us today. The HOD is

great for teaching people about AVMA and those that I served with in the 9 years at the executive board that had the HOD experience were much more valuable than those that had to take the first years to learn AVMA. The HOD should be phased out with the idea to replace it with a changing discussion groups. As your look at the change –how do you avoid the problem of generational desires of lifestyle and financial ability? I spent over 150 days a year as an executive board member which was a challenge for a single practitioner. Even our local association cannot get anyone to be an officer. CVMA just changed their executive board representation since they could not fill vacancies with volunteers from different areas. In my time as a member or liaison to AABP, AAFP, Nevada VMA, Hawaii VMA, and California VMA the leaders were older males and the females were of the same ages. AAFP membership is more female yet I believe the same age look holds true. So the simple question is for a new model to become effective who will be the leaders of the future and can AVMA survive as an umbrella?

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As a 1978 Cornell graduate that worked in mixed practice for the first 30 years, and still a member of Aasrp, I think the needs of the few many be lost if the input from industry, equine, bovine, and other low member but high importance parts of the veterinary work are not given special input. Small animal practitioners do not give the correct answers about tails for lambs, castrating Pygmy goats, and what to do about excess horses.

Rural practical farm medicine is being lost. Please reconsider the role of the practitioner groups in the governing body.

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I am writing in response to AVMA's recent request for member feedback. I am sure that by this time AVMA is aware that some members are highly dissatisfied with the organization. I am one of those members. With the exception of the PLIT I feel that I get essentially no value from the organization. In fact, I feel that AVMA is working strongly against my interests.

Most notably, I feel that the organization has become completely focused on itself and on efforts at self aggrandizement, while completely ignoring the needs of its membership. Case in point is AVMA's new push to become the "Global Leader" in veterinary medicine.

It is ironic that AVMA would wish to assume this position while the house of veterinary medicine in America is burning to the ground from over supply. There are too many vets in this country -- yet the best AVMA can do to acknowledge this is to form a committee to study a proposal to form a committee to develop a study to determine whether there might be a problem. Let me save you the effort: there is a problem, and it is dire.

If AVMA cared about its members, it would be vocally fighting every class size expansion, fiercely fighting every new veterinary school proposal, and releasing daily press releases on the horrors that face new graduates in veterinary medicine. It would be lobbying in Albany and Phoenix to prevent the proposed and completely un-needed veterinary schools in New York and Arizona.

Of course, this member advocacy not possible due to the conflict of interest created by the Council on Education, which continues to accredit third rate for-profit (or in many cases technically non-profit, but in reality for-profit) schools in developing countries (and in America -- ie, Western University) that have no business churning out more graduates into our supersaturated market. These degree farms are contributing to a massive oversupply; they also are accepting and graduating students who wouldn't have made the cut in the days when a veterinary degree actually meant something.

Many of my colleagues have compared AVMA to the band on the Titanic. I think this comparison is overly generous to AVMA. The band on the Titanic knew it was doomed, and played on as a display of stoicism. The AVMA appears oblivious to the plight of the profession and its members, and strives to become the global leader in veterinary medicine while its members starve to death.

Please, I beg you, get rid of the PLIT. Then I can quit the AVMA.

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Change is difficult in any organization but necessary to move forward and with times. I see potential problems with the proposed model.

1. You are making too much change. You are looking to go from something big to something very small. There should be consideration of some modification in the middle.
2. Leadership nomination committee: who chooses who is on that committee? I can see this staked with members who are biased in their decisions. Are there term limits?
3. What about checks and balances? I can see the board of directors having too much power and potentially unlimited decision making for all. Especially if history of poor member input continues, they will make decisions for all. At least now, councils, committees and volunteers, drive the direction of the organization. You are essentially taking a lot of those people out of the loop with these changes.

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Having sat through the work session and having experienced the general confusion or displeasure of that day, perhaps it would be possible to call it a 'mulligan' and give it another try with some real models as originally suggested months ago. I am thinking that the HOD needs to buy into the notion of 'change for the good' and perhaps this may be achieved with a more concrete work session where they get to deconstruct or construct a new model via the Leggo technique... a piece removed here, a piece added here. They need to start with something they can put their hands on before they can deal in abstract terms. Whatever they arrive at in such a session can be a starting point for what the TF moves on with from there. Then, perhaps, the TF can come back at a later date with their own modifications. I am thinking about the final Bylaws vote at the same time. Without a hands-on HOD session, I do not know how the process can be ultimately successful.

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My bulleted thoughts as a HOD member are:

1. task force members are very bright and capable of making excellent recommendations to the HOD (But they need more time to both present a concise plan AND to hear all suggestions for improvements before considering bringing it to a vote.)
2. a period of development/implementation needs to be more like 2-3 years than 6 mos
3. the task force should continue (\$\$) but without the current advisors
4. neither the "plan" nor the task force was ready for the (poorly written & manipulative) M/C questionnaire. And as such little value should be taken of the flawed (my opinion) results.
5. the task force should now focus more on **listening** to veterinary members, and focus less on thoughts of advisors and AVMA staff
6. while there is a clear need to bring AVMA up to date, we need more vetting of the detailed final plan before it can be brought forward as we cannot afford to adopt a flawed system.

While we were told it was a *draft* it came across as a "done deal" that just needed the education (brainwashing?) of members to get them to "buy-in."

7. a major concern I see is making sure, as we come up with a new governance, that we have a nearly foolproof structure that makes decisions which accurately reflect members as a whole and not staff, lay groups, and loud special interest segments.

We by our nature will always be political and a little less nimble than we may like. But we do not want to become a knee-jerk sound-bite organization that loses sight of being evidence-based and doing the right things for our profession.

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A board of directors with 17 members seems overly large and cumbersome to me. A board of 10-12 directors would probably be more efficient. Given that the AVMA has paid staff and the task force is recommending the use of multiple task forces to do a lot of the work of the organization, the board should function primarily to provide overall leadership rather than the daily tasks of the organization. A smaller board should be able to handle this. If the board is too large, it can get bogged down in discussion and not be as effective or efficient.

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Well it is about time that the AVMA recognised that it is top-heavy, ineffective, and in existence to maintain its own existence not that of the constituent veterinarians!!! I would hope that in your governance choices you can choose somebody that had sense enough to lance an abscess then collect a fee. The AVMA and we veterinarians had better get busy before we are all taken down by the lunacy that has occurred over the past 40 years at the AVMA!!!!

- Chicken Little Report
- Cow towing to the FTC
- Abandonment of Ethics
- Renewed cry of manpower shortage when veterinary practices a going broke
- Cost of education beyond the investment/benefit ratio that would allow practice
- Selection of students by grades rather than ability to practice or remain in practice to develop an experiential knowledge base
- AND (DRUM ROLL PLEASE),
- THE LOSS OF OUR HEALTH CARE PRODUCT AFTER RUNNING AWAY THE YOUNG AND HEALTHFUL PARTICIPANTS WITH LACK OF CHOICE AND ATTENTION.

This was the last straw for me.

I truly question why I am a member at current!

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Am very disappointed in the AVMA !!

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The AVMA's future also lies in the category of open mindedness re alternative productive modalities. I am 83 years of age and still actively practicing in Mt. Laurel,NJ.My 61 years of of actively participating in this wonderful profession include large and small animal as well as exotic practice ,staff pathologist at the Penn Vet School ,research in diseases of primates and owner /director of two AAHA certified hospitals in Mass. and Florida. Passing the NJ board at 80 years of age was most rewarding to say the least.After 38 years of traditional practice I was introduced to Homeopathy and went back to school in Colorado under the auspices of the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy ( AVH ).My experience and post graduate exposure has allowed me to accept another different understanding of disease and the ability to introduce a different modality in order to ameliorate those conditions that traditional medicine struggles to alleviate or cure without me employing the use of typical drug therapy; in other words "natural healing". The oft complaint by skeptics of homeopathy is that any improvement achieved is a

manifestation of a " placebo effect". That would be absolutely remarkable in a non verbal patient other than a trained parrot. I strongly suggest that such skeptics check Websters Dictionary for an accurate definition of " placebo". Instead of maligning a modality that, properly practiced by a trained professional, offers marked relief and/or cure to our animal friends suffering from acute pain or chronic debilitating illness. I would challenge ANYBODY sitting across the table who questions my experience and expertise not only as a traditional veterinarian but as an Academy Certified homeopathic practitioner of 19 years in that arena of medicine.

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**Howdy - good news - structure looks sound. Bad News - still blurry on requirement for Board members to divest themselves of special interests and represent the Core Values and Vision of the Association. As a consultant who deals with Governance on a recurring basis, leaving your moccasins at the door and representing the Associations best interests will be the hardest factor to accomplish. Good Luck.**

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I read through the summary of the new proposed governance model and overall think it could serve the AVMA much better than the current structure. It has the potential to streamline governance and reduce the influence of special interest groups. I'm glad that AVMA members get to directly vote for their leaders. This could open up more opportunities for younger leaders and a less politicized process.

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While I recognize that in a world of rapid news cycles the idea of 'streamlining' decision making may sound good, I fear that too quick of decisions with too little input will result in the wrong results.

Over the last couple of years the AVMA has already trended away from seeking input from its members (via the HOD) and instead relying too much on the limited insight of the Board.

With most of the proposed changes, I fear this trend will get even worse.

I hope that the role of members via either the HOD or regionally-elected representatives will be strengthened, instead of weakened. In my mind this protects the AVMA from political whim and extreme points of view, which can erode support of the members and its influence with the general public.

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Dear AVMA Task Force Members,

IVMA response to the Governance Task Force of AVMA

1. The Executive Board should not be elected "at large". Regional elections make the members feel "represented". It is also very likely "at large" elections will change the AVMA from an all-inclusive veterinary organization that speaks with one voice to a small animal oriented organization that may be at odds with specialty organizations such as AASV, AABP, etc. This will dilute the voice and influence of AVMA and the allied organizations. The AVMA is different than many organizations in that it does not represent just one specialty group, but an array of interests that may have natural ideological divides (rural/urban, agriculture/companion, research/animal welfare, public health). An association such as AAHA, for example, with a much more narrow focus can more easily adopt the "at large" model.

2. The task force's proposal that the advisory boards (replacement for the HOD) comprised of appointed members who are considered experts in their field will likely disproportionately load each board with veterinarians from academia who may not have the experiences of private practitioners. If advisory boards are adopted, they should represent a balance that reflects the entire profession.
3. The task force should be objective in evaluating recommendations it receives from the consultant and AVMA members. The task force should provide to the association not just the process of their proposals, but also the outcomes of them. They should also present the members with the possibility of "unintended consequences" that are being raised.
4. Although the HOD moves slowly, it provides an opportunity to raise many issues and explore all ramifications of a decision. The HOD gives all states and allied groups an opportunity to be heard, and at least some influence on decisions and policies. If there is an issue with the legality of who represents the AVMA, the Executive Board (EB) can be given the necessary powers and the EB can take advice from the HOD.
5. The resolution that resulted in the formation of the governance task force called for "a review and evaluation of the AVMA governance structure (including member participation) and process to determine if it will meet future needs of the membership, profession and Association." Without sharing the results of the governance survey, it gave the appearance that the task force skipped this step, or spent minimal time on it, and proceeded on the assumption that sweeping changes are needed. The presentation in January felt like a treatment plan without a diagnosis.
6. The Iowa Veterinary Medical Association respectfully requests the Governance Task Force proceed carefully and transparently with stakeholders and not force a final decision by spring 2013. We additionally request the task force present options with expected outcomes and include potential unintended consequences.

The Iowa Veterinary Medical Association sincerely appreciates your voluntary leadership. We recognize the tremendous amount of effort required to prepare the material and review the responses. Thank you for your consideration.

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Dear colleagues,

It seems ludicrous that a professional organisation will condemn a medical field that has been in active medical practice for over hundred years. It is sad that opinions are given from individuals within our profession who have not fully studied this medical modality and therefore are not in a position to give a credible opinion regarding the field of Homeopathy. This sounds like a personal witch hunt, rather than a true concern from our esteemed medical profession.

One at first needs to differentiate the application of "Classical" Homeopathy, as practiced for decades, in which a single low potency substance is given. This requires the practitioner to study at detail physical findings, emotional and "mental" status of the patient, and then prescribe the required substance based on these findings. This is challenging enough in the human doctor-patient relationship, and I fully agree

that to get the full elaborated information from a pet would be very difficult to do, although there are "classical" symptoms which appear to be more easily prescribed as they have been used over time.

There is however a more modern form of homeopathy, which some call complex homeopathy, using a number of substances, at various dilutions. An example of this is the German company HEEL or the Belgian company UNDA, both of which have been in heavy clinical medical use for decades.

The drugs from these companies and others are legally imported have satisfied the USA government and are officially registered in the US Homeopathic pharmacopoeia, much as any western drug is officially listed under similar drug registration.

Within the PDR, you will find official listings of a product named Traumeel, listed within it as a NSAID. It has passed close scrutiny with double blind studies to prove its worth as such and has remained in the PDR for physicians to use and who continue to use it because it works. Similarly, ZEEL is another homeopathic product that has shown with studies to result in cartilage thickening, helping the arthritic patient. If it is OK for the physician, why should the veterinary profession be so obstinate in the use of proven substances, that are at the least harmless but have been shown to provide real medical benefit? It works for the human patient and I can state from clinical improvements in my patients that it works for the animal as well. If you want scientific studies, they are available for your review.

Any drug, be it western or other, can be used or misused by uninformed practitioners, resulting in poor healing and the impression that the product is either worthless or indeed harmful. So far, most allopathic western drugs have a greater disproportionately number of undesirable side effects, whereas the homeopathic drugs have a huge safety margin, free of negative side effects and should not be cast away so frivolously. If you wish to look at dubious practices, look elsewhere.

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I strongly agree with those that spoke against the COE's recent accreditation position. We are diluting the talent pool which can be documented by evaluating the quality of students @ the off shore schools. The Western University of Health Sciences approach to training is also suspect. The AVMA needs to address this issue.

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Dear Task Force,

First and foremost, I want to thank each and everyone of you for your dedication and long hours of work on this task force. I do appreciate the work that you have done and I do know most of you on the task force and know of your dedication to the profession at all levels.

I would first like to start with disagreeing with several of the premises that were presented at the Jan. meeting.

First, I do not believe that the House's only function is to approve resolutions; it just so happens that is the only way that an item can get discussed in that forum; that is the only way to put a topic on the table. But the House is much much more than that. If we are considering getting rid of the House, we must first consider its consequences.

1. The allied groups will lose their collective voice in AVMA; it is an important voice that I respect when they speak both in the reference committees and on the floor. Yes, individuals will be appointed to advisory councils, but they won't have a collective voice.

2. The state associations will lose their collective voice. And to me, as a member of the SAC, state association involvement in AVMA is critical; we need communication from states to the AVMA and we need communication from AVMA to the state associations. In my opinion, the HOD gives us the best venue for that. Yes, it can be done online; but there is always a great benefit to the eye to eye contact; the viewing of body language; the art of dialog that is being lost by social media. We actively solicit the opinion of California's Board of Governors on all resolutions and elections. It is not only a means to make them an active part of AVMA but it also gets the information back to the local associations. And CVMA has a House that meets twice per year and the AVMA reports are an important part of that discussion; again it is letting our members know what AVMA is doing on a personal level. If we have at-large EB members and no delegates, there will be no presence at our state meetings. I don't think that we can replace this online.

3. The HOD is itself a leadership training event. We get to see who is real and who is all talk! You can not appreciate that online. I agree that we need a method of getting younger members involved but I also believe that there is great value in having institutional memory; experience from working your way up from the local association to the state association and then to the national association. I believe that we need to maintain geographic areas; we could add "at-large" representation; for example, we could have 8 geographic areas and 4 at-large positions; (if the vice-president position is removed, there would be the same number on the EB) or some combination like that.

4. I disagree that the HOD isn't doing important work. And I believe that it being 2% of the AVMA Budget is money well spent. I don't think that there is any problem with the House taking a second look at policy statements that the EB is considering or has voted on; what is wrong with more input and therefore more buy-in. If it is an urgency issue, the EB or the Board of Governors can act quickly; but there is no problem with the House reviewing it. I would also disagree with the statement about Resolution 5 being an example of inefficiency; the policy statement from the AW committee was poorly worded. I was in the reference committee that discussed it and the swine veterinarian raised an important concern. Yes, the discussion in the House was not pretty (or efficient) but the end product was excellent. I thought that is was the House at its finest.

We continually talk about being efficient, transparent, being nibble and being more corporate like. But, we are not a corporation; we are a member association; a member driven association. We could be more transparent already without changing anything. We could make AVMA member surveys public. Taking a member survey and only having the EB and staff see it is not being transparent and the present recommended changes won't change that.

There was considerable use of the term "skill sets." But I have no idea what that means. If it means having 5 attorneys on the Judicial Council, I would disagree with that method of selection. Having served on that council, the most important criteria is common sense; not an attribute shared by all attorneys.

Some of the questions we were asked to answer seemed to steer us towards the issue that we are not utilizing our staff efficiently because of the present structure. I have to assume that is because of the work load of the HOD, the councils, committees, and task forces. If we are a membership organization, why should it not be membership driven? I do believe that we (the members) are a pain to the staff; but it is our organization. It is not AVMA, Inc., a publicly traded stock company.

I do not disagree with the plans of getting members more involved by interacting with them online. I think that we can do that and maintain the institution, importance, and value of the HOD. The EB has the final say on all issues; resolutions are only recommendations to the EB; they have the final say. However, the HOD is a great conduit to our members and losing that will cause AVMA to lose an important link to its members.

Again, thank you for your work and allowing me to comment.

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Recently there has been some news media regarding the difference between state legislature and federal legislature. This obviously has spilled over into the veterinary community. The USDA has recently rewritten the rules for accreditation, and many states have altered their continuing education requirements. The veterinary schools themselves have altered some of their educational curricula as well. While I understand that different geographical locations carry different disease statistics, I think we should make it a bit easier for veterinarians to change states, to stay current with continuing education, and to formally link zoonotic diseases with the AMA. Too often I've experienced the frustration of "ping ponging" with MDs about "whose job is it anyway?" when it comes to zoonotic diseases. This does not just apply to food animals, but to companion animals as well. Parasitic diseases, viruses, the ever changing face of bacterial diseases and bio terrorism have us all on our toes. It is becoming harder and harder to stay current with all the rules, regs and discoveries in the veterinary field. I'd like to suggest that there be a coordinator between the human medical profession and the veterinary one, encompassing food, travel, zoonoses and the like. We all work hard. Let's make it not just about bureaucracy but about being the profession we used to have a reputation of being. Our profession used to have the BEST reputation of any other. We were available, the "gentle" doctors, the "good" doctors. In the recent years, in this economy, we have lost our status to a reputation of "price gougers, money mongers, and no-carers". How can we change this in this current day and age?

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AVMA Governance:

Thanks for the comment section and new governance rules being developed.

For some reason I can't open those particular files. The message I get is: "Internet Explorer" can't open this file.

My general comment however is all decisions should be well thought out based on the AVMA Constitution. A principle of decision making is well taken from our Founding Fathers and the Republic - that a republic is governed by laws and not the whim of the majority. In other words votes should reflect principles over passion, and truth over politics and political correctness. At the same time individual freedom should be allowed as long as it does not violate obvious laws and basic principles of health defined historically rather than by some pressure group pushing private agendas.

Please apply this also to the growing fields of complementary medicine, alternative treatments and natural dietary treatments where the individual veterinarian and client have freedom to choose as long as they are within the law, ethical and above all "do no harm."

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1) One of the real limiting factors to participation in AVMA leadership positions and committees is the requirement for face-to-face meetings. Younger and associate veterinarians simply may not have the

"free time" to participate since they'd have to use vacation time to travel for committee meetings. More experienced veterinarians may be working on a production-only model, and will lose income every time they have to leave work. Veterinarians with families or lots of pets may simply not be able to leave home/work for a 2-4 day meeting that involves only committee work -- not CE.

I participate in many veterinary and community based committees, often in leadership positions -- but I can do so because I can call in to a teleconference, or log on to a Webconference. I do not participate in AVMA leadership or committee work even though I've been involved in leadership positions in organized veterinary medicine since vet school -- because of the requirement to waste time traveling and meeting face-to-face when we could get more done much more quickly with a well-organized web-conference. Surely the AVMA should join into the 21st century!

2) Removal of "competency" requirements for committee work is dangerous. Why would you not want to have people with demonstrable expertise/training/excellence in these roles? Are we to believe that everyone with an axe to grind but no actual real-life or academic training in a field should be allowed to propose new policies without any balancing of their enthusiasm and/or vendettas by those who know more? We are scientists, and our policies should be based on science, which requires competency.

3) There is no explanation given for the abolishment of geographic regions. If one looks at how the country is run, geographic districts allow poorly populated areas NOT to have their concerns ignored and over-run by more populous areas. Why would the AVMA be abandoning this system?

Thanks for considering these comments.

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\$80,000 for a new logo? Countless veterinarians justifiably upset by your health insurance debacle (although it has no effect on me since I live in Maine and the AVMA has never supported me by providing health insurance)?? Now there is a new task force, I suppose to try to save the sinking ship???

Thanks anyway. Since I will not be renewing my membership after this year, I have nothing to contribute to you. Good luck with whatever future the AVMA may have.

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Looks pretty good to me. Y'all really surprised me. I especially like the national electronic balloting.

1. The NO district plan may have merit, but I'm hopeful it will be fully discussed.
2. I also hope this will take out the incessant "politicking" we are plagued with. No one should stop candidates from visiting meetings. But some reasonable curbs on campaigning should be established, such as direct mailings. A "bio" of each should be placed in the AVMA Journal and online, and included on the ballot. That should be the extent of that. Other associations should not print the "bios" (includes goals, etc) but just print the link to the AVMA website and list the print edition of the journal.

Y'all have gone quite a way in restoring my pride in being a member of the AVMA. Thanks/

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express concern that the proposed changes to the governance structure of the AVMA

may limit the voice of those veterinarians practicing in less populated states or with a focus on non-companion animal practice. It is important to hear the majority voice of all veterinarians, but the concerns from different regions of the country and from different types of practice are extremely valuable to the profession and therefore to the AVMA. The proposed changes to the governance structure might be effective at retaining these diverse voices, but it seems more likely that they will be outweighed by the larger population of veterinarians in highly populated areas and in companion practice. It is important to retain the voices of the AVMA allied associations (e.g. AABP, AASRP), and to retain voices from all areas of the country.

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Positive:

- I am pleased the AVMA is exploring ways to modernize and improve our governance structure.
- I like the idea of an Executive Board and Advisory Council as the primary policy making bodies
- I like the elimination of geographic districts for Directors as well as the direct election of Directors

Negative:

- The Leadership Nominating Committee has too much power and influence in this proposal. It also has the potential to limit leadership to organizational insiders rather than encourage participation from all members.
  - The HOD should not be eliminated. I believe it serves an important role in disseminating information to members and ensuring participation and feedback of members throughout the country.
  - The general membership will not have the time or desire to provide direct feedback on policy as expected in the new governance model, leading to policy decisions being left in the hands of a minority.
  - The HOD should continue to exist not as a policy making body, but as a information distribution tool and with a veto power if the majority disagree with policies of the Executive Board. There must exist some framework for checks and balances on the power of the Executive Board if membership disagrees with their decisions.
- 

To whom it may concern:

I would like to write some comments as to the proposed change in AVMA governance. I have been a member of the AVMA since graduating in 1976. I practiced LA/SA for 15 years and have since practiced mostly just small animal. I have been very fortunate to also been involved with organized veterinary medicine both locally (as UVMA President and most recently for 7 years as the UVMA Executive Secretary) and nationally as an AVMA delegate for 8 years. The AVMA has contributed greatly to the welfare and benefit of our profession. Another benefit for me has been the association with many the wonderful people in veterinary medicine and our associations. While we do have our challenges, veterinary medicine is a great profession and it provides so much good in so many various facets of our world today.

I am very concerned with some of the proposed governance changes especially if the House of Delegates is eliminated.

1- We are a very diverse profession with many various backgrounds. I really believe that one of the main factors of the success of our association has been striving to include as best as possible the many professional diversities on committees, councils and governing bodies. The "main proposal" would eliminate many from having a voice in our association. A nominating committee and online voting only decreases opportunity for representation of the majority. Just like trying now to voice my opinion- I

couldn't find very easy where to write my thoughts on the AVMA website and had to call the AVMA office and it still took several minutes to try this place and that to find the correct link and still the link didn't work exactly right- so I will just email my thoughts. Except for really wanting to give "an old AVMA member's opinion" like I do, most would have given up. If HOD elimination and some other changes are made, I am very afraid in a few years, too many will totally give governance over to a select few. And who knows where the AVMA could go. The potential to lead us in a direction not in the real best interest of veterinary medicine looms possible. As irrelevance sets in, then our large membership numbers will definitely decline for many of the same reasons other organizations are all on the decline.

2- AVMA Delegates have been not only been the states's representatives to the national AVMA, but more importantly--- the AVMA representative and AVMA ADVOCATE to all of us in the states. In all meetings and associations over many years, our AVMA delegates have positively represented the benefits and workings of the AVMA. Eliminating the HOD may save some money now, but the AVMA will lose a lot more than money as the AVMA will lose their main voice to most veterinarians. Now, I know it's not a perfect system, but it works and delegates are a lot more valuable than I think we realize. As a young veterinarian and over the many years, I have always looked up to the many great delegates from our state including our two very dedicated current representatives Dr. Park and Dr. Moss. Our District AVMA Representative, Dr. Cohn, always offered much to our state meetings and was another great link to our national organization. If money is such a problem with the HOD, instead of eliminating the vital HOD link, why not have the HOD meet just once a year at the annual AVMA meeting as was done for many years. With all the electronic means today, they could still be in contact and even vote on issues as they do in January without the meeting expenses. Also only one AVMA Delegate votes anyway, so if money is still the issue- then have just the one AVMA delegate come to the AVMA HOD annual summer meeting. Leave the option up to the states/organization/individual to pay all the bill for the Alternate if he/she still goes (knowing just one is required). The AVMA Delegate could be a 6 year term with the Alternate serving two years (to get ready for the Delegate position) and then mandatory that the Alternate then serve as the next Delegate to get fresh new representation. The Delegate could then become the Alternate and serve again in 6 years if the state or individual so desires or they could still strive to serve on the HAC or some other position with still being involved as to their own desire and expense.

Just some ideas. I appreciate all everyone does for our association. I worry that if the HOD and other organizations that now strive for more representation are eliminated-- that over time opportunities for true representation of the majority will be gone and thus a less effective association will evolve.

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Based on description in JAVMA.

Section 2: agree with 9,10,11      disagree with 16,17

Section 3: agree with 20              disagree with 18,19,20

Section 4:                              disagree with 29

Section 5: Problems with nominating committee. Too much power

Found form to be quite cumbersome, so will just make comments.

It is time to change the governance. In the past, there were too many layers - opportunity for power struggles and failure to act promptly or even at all, to important issues.

This plan is too drastic.

Board of Directors: Good that president-elect and vice president be elected by all AVMA members. Treasurer could be elected by delegates in House of Delegates. The Vice President has duties of visiting all the veterinary colleges as a representative of AVMA. Who else in the organization has a chance to meet veterinary students, administrators, and faculty in all US schools?

A 17 member board may be too large. (12-14 more manageable). Geographic districts should be kept. Best way to have personal contact with AVMA members through state VMA meetings.

Board of Directors in charge of business aspects of the organization.

House of Delegates: Keep it. Important for members to know delegate. Best if represented by state. To decrease cost, send 1 delegate/state, eliminate species/specialty representatives. Could do without HAC and delegates elect one member to conduct meetings. Keep reference committees: delegates meet to discuss issues based on their own interest and expertise.

HOD to be policy making/legislative arm of the organization.

AVMA Councils: Important function. Elected by delegates. Should be able to submit resolutions to HOD. Members show interest in AVMA and willing to run for office. Many of these people may be missed by a select Nominating committee which may only be aware of certain people. Everyone has a chance to be involved.

Veterinary students: It's great that they're involved in AVMA at some level, but they have their own organization. Graduate veterinarians can vote with their AVMA membership.

AVMA must spend time on important issues: supply of veterinarians, student debt, animal welfare and antibiotic/drug use in animals.

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I would like to take the opportunity to voice my concerns regarding the proposed governance structure for the AVMA. With all due respect, I see the proposed structure as more a dictatorial type leadership than a democracy. The number of people in positions of authority under the proposed structure (and the way they are nominated/voted/appointed to those positions), in my opinion, will reduce the number of constituents (members) that will be represented by those voices. As you are aware, the veterinary profession is very diverse and broad representation is essential to prevent marginalization of smaller specialties within the association. A few of the key components of the proposed structure which I feel are specifically conducive to lack of representation for minority species/specialty groups include:

- The House of Delegates (comprised of geographical representatives as well as representatives from various veterinary associations) will be eliminated
- The majority of the 17-person board will be elected by popular vote of the membership without regard to geographical region or specialty
- The 17-person board will have overriding fiduciary and policy authority
- Veterinary students will be full, voting members of the association
- The method by which people are able to serve on the 11-person Leadership Nominating Committee has not been determined/released
- The Leadership Nominating Committee is poised to have a lot of influence over how policy is formed

Again, my primary concern is the potential this structure has to reduce the influence of the minority species/specialty groups within the profession. While the majority of the membership may not have interest in the minority groups, their expertise and experience are no less important. In my opinion, it is critical that the AVMA continue to be the voice for all of veterinary medicine, not just the small animal practitioners.

## NOAH Feedback

### AVMA Governance Discussion

I'm posting this on behalf of the AVMA Task Force on Governance and Member Participation.

It's AVMA's 150th birthday this year and as we reflect on our rich heritage, it's also time to think ahead to the future. Right now, following the suggestion of AVMA's 20/20 Commission and a 2011 resolution of the House of Delegates, the AVMA Task Force on Governance and Membership Participation has been working hard to develop a new way to structure AVMA's governance where each and every member can make contributions to its future. Please check out the Governance Task Force website, review the Governance Dialog script, and provide your comments and feedback. They are important to us – AVMA is your association and it needs to work for you. We need your help to develop a new governance structure that will carry us into the next 150 years.

AVMA members have a number of ways to provide feedback:

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#### AVMA Governance Discussion

I like the direct electronic member election of board of directors with greater opportunity and access for all candidates. However, I am not sure I completely agree with the elimination of at least some degree of geographic representation. Geographic differences can have a large impact on our approach and insights to the profession that we would miss if this is no longer taken into account.

Also, I am surprised to hear of the elimination of the role of Vice President. As a veterinary student, Dr. Gary Brown was a great ambassador on behalf of the AVMA to the students. He was able to not just meet with the self-selected group of AVMA representatives who already show interest in the organization, but reached out to other students to connect them to the group. Even if the Vice President is not specifically tasked with this role, I think an AVMA ambassador to students is of great value.

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#### AVMA Governance Discussion

I would like to see statements as to how the committee feels that the proposed governance structure meets the goals it has set forth for it. Frankly, it seems that some of the discussion and goals are somewhat contradictory. For instance, in the discussion in the formation of the new councils, the website states that councils will be made up of people with skills, backgrounds, and interests in those areas. However, it seems that in the discussion on the leadership nominating committee, that part of the process is designed to break people away from 'camps' that are quite similar to the list for new councils, with the exception of producer-aligned groups. It also seems that rather than coming up with solutions to problems with engaging more membership, the committee is simply passing the buck to the to-be-formed nominating committee. How does having 11 at-large members on the policy board, with no relation to geography, give a better representation to veterinarians in rural areas (like Idaho) that have, by reason of their rural locale, less veterinarians?

## AVMA Governance Discussion

There are 2 parts of the current model which protect the less-well-represented groups:

Districts based on geography help represent areas with lower population and hence less common practice types.

Affiliate groups in the House of Delegates represent those who have special interests which will be lost in a purely democratic (read: tyranny of the majority) association.

How can you be sure you are serving swine practitioners, food animal producers in general, zoo animal veterinarians, etc.?

Veterinarians who practice CAVM have not been heard from as a group until this year. Would Resolution 3 ever have come before the HOD if they were part of the HOD? I doubt it.

The reason that Congress has both a senate and house is to prevent small interests being overwhelmed by states with large populations. I fail to see how the current model addresses this.

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## AVMA Governance Discussion

Thank you all for your excellent comments on the topic of AVMA governance. I am a member of the AVMA governance task force and I'd like to try to respond to some of the comments here.  
Geographic representation

Our intention in not reserving seats on the Board of Directors for certain geographic regions was to avoid creating an artificial barrier to selecting the best veterinarians to lead the AVMA. For example, there might be several outstanding leaders in one region, but because of geographic restrictions only one could serve on the board at any one time. On the flip side, there might be few or no leaders with the necessary skill sets in another region who are interested in serving at a particular time. As a result, a less qualified or interested person might be elected to the board at the expense of an outstanding candidate who didn't live in the region.

We recognize that issues of importance to a rural food animal practitioner are not the same as what matters to an urban small animal veterinarian. The task force members include a wide range of practice types including small animal, large animal, lab animal, public health, and others. We have definitely heard the concern raised that with totally at-large elections that we could end up with a Board of Directors made up entirely of small animal practitioners from California and Texas. That said, we don't think that is likely to happen for a few reasons:

We don't think that AVMA members are going to be that parochial in their voting decisions. If Americans always voted for the candidate from their state or region, then every President would be from a populous state. Sure, there are presidents elected from populous states, but many presidents have come from less populated states as well. Based on the proportion of the voting population that is African-American, who would have believed that we would ever have an African-American President? We

believe that AVMA members will be at least as capable of looking past parochial concerns to pick the best overall candidates for positions.

Smaller groups will often be able to get candidates elected simply by voting together as a bloc. Splitting of the vote among multiple majority candidates frequently results in a candidate being elected by a relative minority.

The new Leadership Nominating Committee would be charged with considering all aspects of potential candidates' skill sets, including practice type, time in the profession, etc. The nominating committee's mission would be to put forward candidates that fill in gaps in the skill sets needed for an effective governing board. If there were few or no board members who understood issues important to rural practitioners, the nominating committee would seek to correct that.

Nonetheless, the task force is continuing to examine the issue of geographic representation, so what you have seen so far is by no means the final state of our recommendations. However, it's important to not compare the AVMA's governance too closely to our federal government. The reasons why we have multiple branches of government, with checks and balances and two houses of Congress that balance the interests of large and small states, are based in centuries-old post-Revolutionary War lacks of trust among the newly independent states. What the AVMA needs is less about a complex system of checks and balances and more about restoring trust that if we pick the best leaders for our association, the entire profession will benefit. Besides, do we really want to replicate the deadlock and name-calling that characterizes our elected federal leaders nowadays?

The Vice President

The task force has spent a great deal of time discussing the role of veterinary students in the AVMA and the position of Vice President as a connection between the AVMA's leadership and veterinary students. The Student AVMA president, Bridget Heilsberg, is a member of the task force and is an extraordinary advocate for students. Additionally, at least two task force members are former officers of the Student AVMA and are greatly concerned about issues important to veterinary students.

The task force was directed by the House of Delegates to study the issue of whether to keep the position of Vice President. In response to that directive, we closely examined the issue and came up with an innovative solution: we would eliminate the Vice President position, but we would also elevate veterinary students to be full voting members of the AVMA (with the requirement to pay dues, albeit discounted). Unfortunately, this solution might have been too innovative as it has been widely panned in the last several weeks. We are currently reconsidering how to approach the issue of the Vice President and student outreach and hopefully we'll come up with a more successful, but still innovative, solution.

Leadership Nominating Committee

Of all of the concepts in our model, the Leadership Nominating Committee is perhaps the least fleshed out. Fortunately, we have already made progress in further developing this group and you can expect to see a much more complete picture in our final recommendations.

The exact composition of the nominating committee has not yet been established, but a large portion of the group will be made up of former AVMA leaders who understand the association and the profession, but who no longer have a political stake in the selection of leaders. They will be charged with nominating candidates who are outstanding leaders and have the skill sets needed to move the AVMA forward, without regard for political or parochial considerations. We believe that a nominating committee made up mostly of former AVMA leaders who are essentially "retired" from active

involvement in AVMA leadership will be able to rise above the "good old boy network" and nominate truly excellent leaders.

In any case, the nominating committee's role is only to nominate a slate of candidates for each open position. Multiple candidates will be nominated by the committee for each position, and additional candidates may be nominated by petition of AVMA members, so the power of the nominating committee to preordain the next generation of leaders will in fact be quite limited.

I hope that some of these responses have been helpful. I will continue to follow this discussion thread and look forward to hearing from more AVMA members. What we are doing will potentially impact the effectiveness of the AVMA for many years to come and it is important that everyone have a chance to be heard on these issues.

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### AVMA Governance Discussion

It is true that a multi-layered governance model can be cumbersome, but, as pointed out in previous posts, there are good reasons for the checks and balances it affords. Not only does a strictly "population"-based voting procedure obscure the opinions of rural areas, it dilutes out the input of different specialties and concerns within veterinary medicine. Today, common ground cannot be assumed merely on the basis of being a veterinarian. The AVMA has a PAC to educate members of Congress about the ways laws interact with veterinary medicine and to explain issues as only veterinarians can. Similarly, I believe that our own professional organization needs to ensure input from all aspects of our profession, not merely the urban/suburban companion animal practitioners who constitute our majority. The opportunity to educate each other needs to be guaranteed, not just taken for granted. Otherwise the AVMA governance changes could produce feelings of helplessness and lack of representation in constituencies whose knowledge and perspectives would be engulfed by simple majority rule.

## AVMA@work

### Looking Back...but Moving Forward

*As the staff consultant to the AVMA Task Force on Governance and Membership Participation, I'm posting this on their behalf.*

It's AVMA's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday this year and as we reflect on our rich heritage, it's also time to think ahead to the future. Right now, following the suggestion of [AVMA's 20/20 Commission](#) and a 2011 resolution of the House of Delegates, the AVMA Task Force on Governance and Membership Participation has been working hard to develop a new way to structure AVMA's governance where each and every member can make contributions to its future. Please check out [the Governance Task Force website](#), review the [Governance Dialog script](#), and provide your comments and feedback. They are important to us – AVMA is your association and it needs to work for you. We need your help to develop a new governance structure that will carry us into the next 150 years.

AVMA members have a number of ways to provide feedback:

- Submit your comments and/or the [feedback form](#), preferably by February 28, 2013, via email to [avmagovernance@avma.org](mailto:avmagovernance@avma.org); fax it to 202.842.4360; or mail it to Governance Task Force, c/o Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, AVMA Governmental Relations Division, 1910 Sunderland Place, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1642.
- Join the [discussion](#) on NOAH, the AVMA's members-only online discussion forum.
- Post your comment on this blog entry. Please note that your comment will be accessible to members and the public.

I suggest that all DVM's, current and potential Pre-Vet students, and Vet Techs read today's article in The New York Times (High Debt and Falling Demand Traps New Vets).  
URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/24/business/high-debt-and-falling-demand-trap-net-vet>.  
The article says nothing new to practicing veterinarians but may be a shocker to students, potential students, new graduates, and the consuming public. It, starkly, points to the lack of reality held in the body of the AVMA "leadership" and the lack of current control over accreditation and or formation of new veterinary schools. Like our Socialistic economy in the US, the growing number of underemployed and financially stressed veterinarians coupled with an attitude of ever increasing output of graduates will end in a flooded market, questionable practice integrity, and an overall attrition of professional skills. Certainly, these newbie's will have no AVMA GHLIT to rely on for their health needs and, little do they know, no professional guidance and support. There has got to be something better than the way we are doing things regarding our professional organization, AVMA.

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I appreciate the many comments and perspectives here, however I need to address some of these very serious concerns mentioned below. First, I have been a member of the AVMA since my graduation in 1978. I felt this organization was so important to my success as a practicing veterinarian and to this profession that I became actively involved to make a difference. Pleasing 84,000 very diverse members can be challenging, but I

assure you, the member veterinarians who volunteer their time and the AVMA's 140 staff members in your 12 AVMA divisions work VERY hard (many times over weekends) to provide us members with tremendous benefits, many of which are sometimes not as visible as others. Having traveled the country and world representing veterinary medicine in the United States these past two years as your President-Elect and President (2010-2012), you can be assured we are the most organized, productive, and respected organization in the world in many ways. That said, let me address some of these issues:

1. AVMA Governance – A recent membership survey shows 43% of our members are less than 15 years out of veterinary medical school. They are members of a new era with high speed technology communications and they want involvement in their association now, not years from now. AVMA needs to re-evaluate its current cumbersome, expensive, and somewhat sluggish and even exclusive at times governance structure so it is truly trustworthy, nimble in its decision-making, and knowledge-based in order to retain its credibility and relevance with its members and those making decisions that affect veterinary medicine, both from within and outside this profession. Old style governance will not work in the 21st century. A new more efficient and more meaningful structure for our members is imperative. We are simply in the process of looking at what would meet these imperative goals, goals specifically identified by our own members. Many of our members in leadership positions are “older” members (it seems to take years in our current model to have a seat at a face-to-face table). The younger members in this 43% are looking for ways to have a voice now, and they are extremely motivated. They don't want to wait for someone to move out of the way or retire so they can have influence on the profession they will be working in for the next 40 years. Our governance must evolve to accommodate current times and the next generation of members or we will become archaic and irrelevant. Negativity, without ideas or participation, gets us nowhere. Let's put all our heads together.

2. The Loss of our AVMA Health Insurance Plan – The AVMA GHLIT Insurance Trust did not give up the health insurance program easily. As soon as the The Affordable Care Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President on March 23, 2010, we knew we had a BIG fight on our hands to retain the health care portion of the insurance program. The AVMA GHLIT hired expert lobbyists in health care policy to try to get an exception for bona fide association health care plans like ours that benefits over 17,000 AVMA members and their families. The AVMA has been fighting for those members diligently for two years while we awaited the Supreme Court ruling on its constitutionality. On June 28, 2012 the Supreme Court rendered a final decision to uphold the health care law. It is not AVMA's fault ObamaCare would potentially terminate 56 dedicated years of medical coverage for our members. I can vouch for the fact AVMA fought long and hard to retain that program, and we were actually making great progress, when the underwriter for the program, New York Life, made the decision last November not to continue coverage for bona fide association health care plans in general. It was very disappointing. AVMA searched creative other options, but none could be found to equal what we had just lost. The AVMA GHLIT made a prompt and readily communicated decision to inform members of the situation that became insurmountable under the new rules for healthcare. The AVMA GHLIT has worked and is working tirelessly to help each affected AVMA member make a transition to new

coverage to meet each member's needs for their particular situation. The private exchange program arrangement is an excellent resource to help provide that assistance.

3. Number of Veterinarians and Increasing Schools and Class Sizes – AVMA is very well aware of the economic challenges facing our members right now. That is why we created an Economics Division with a Veterinary Economics Strategy Committee to advise our Executive Board. That is why we have one of the best organizations in the world (IHS Global Insight) assisting us with a true and accurate picture of the current status and potential future status of the veterinary workforce in the United States. The report is due in late spring. The AVMA does not and cannot control the number of veterinary graduates that our public or private education institutions choose to admit to their veterinary medical programs. The AVMA Council on Education only accredits the programs for quality and sustainability to be sure the students get the education promised and the public is assured graduates from the program have entry level competency in veterinary medicine. As long as the school provides adequate faculty, clinical resources, and physical infrastructure to accommodate the needs of their student body and sustain successful outcome assessments, they can accept as many “customers” for their educational program as choose to pay for it. Much of that determination is made in Standard 11, Outcomes Assessment. It is a very rigorous process. I know. I served on the AVMA Council on Education representing private clinical practice. I know the process, the rigors, the complexity, and the accountability very well. It is the hardest working entity in the profession, all volunteering their time and expertise to assure we have the best veterinary medical educational programs in the world and that our degree from an AVMA COE accredited college represents a very high standard. Every process can be improved and the accreditation process itself is held strongly accountable by the US Department of Education. It continues to evolve and improve its own process in order to meet those very stringent requirements.

Our next generation of veterinarians will have challenges, but they very readily recognize the value and reward of their chosen profession for animals, people, and society. They are VERY excited about veterinary medicine. Let's make sure they ALL have a voice in AVMA's governance in one way or another because it is their association too. We can always do better! I am happy to continue this dialogue, preferably on governance in this section.

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Cry me a river of regret, and I will not be holding my breath for meaningful change expect more than platitudes from the AVMA. Also, don't forget the other side of the coin! We senior practioners make up nearly 60% of the veterinarian; it is not just the young folks that want meaningful change.

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What specifically would you like to see in terms of “meaningful change” at AVMA?

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I would like to have seen and to see forethought, foresight, and immediate action on finding alternatives for the Health Care Insurance, dealing with the Federal Trade Commission and its heavy handed implementation of the Red Flag Rules, deal with the FDA on drug shortages and inspections of generic manufacturers that have resulted in loss of drugs or massive price increases, increased awareness of the economics of practice and influence in avoiding further flooding of the ranks of young graduates with little hope of jobs or practices, drawing up the gusset and reposition itself and a leadership body for the Profession with great influence or control on the quality and quantity of professional educational intuitions formed, how their faculty are formed, and the quality their graduates for a start. I have practiced for 39 years and have seen the AVMA decline steadily as a meaningful body truly representing the needs and interests of the Veterinary Profession. If we don't do it through the AVMA or some other professional body we will have allowed the gross dilution of our profession and truly have become the "Boiled Frogs".

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All very specific suggestions, but not necessarily relating to meaningful changes in AVMA Governance. Let me address each one of your suggestions.

1. Health insurance – I think I gave a pretty good summary to that item, and whether you believe it or not, the AVMA GHLIT CEO and Trustees worked long and hard on it, and truly made the best out of a situation out of their control. If we could have motivated all members, especially the members directly affected by the Executive and Judicial Branches' decisions on the Affordable Health Care Act, to contact their legislators en masse to ask that bona fide association health care plans be included in the AHCA, that may have had an even greater impact (and we did urge them all to do so). All I can do is assure you this was a very high priority item for three years for the Trustees (many general practitioners like yourself) and lots of research was done to try to find suitable alternative options.

2. The Red Flag Rule – Your AVMA Governmental Relations Division is much of the reason veterinarians are exempted from the Red Flag Rule.

See <https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/110201f.aspx>.

3. Drug Shortages – The AVMA works very closely with the FDA. In fact, our Council on Biologic and Therapeutic Agents and Clinical Practitioners Advisory Committee both communicate with the FDA on issues affecting drug availability. This article at <https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/101115a.aspx> might give you more insight.

I would also suggest calling a member or members of these entities to express your concerns. The description and member roster for the Council are located at <https://www.avma.org/About/Governance/Councils/Pages/Council-on-Biologic-and-Therapeutic-Agents-Entity-Description.aspx> and <https://www.avma.org/About/Governance/Leadership/Documents/cobta-roster.pdf> respectively.

The Clinical Practitioners Advisory Committee entity description and member roster are located at <https://www.avma.org/About/Governance/Councils/Pages/Clinical-Practitioners-Advisory-Committee-Entity-Description.aspx> and <https://www.avma.org/About/Governance/Leadership/Documents/cpac-roster.pdf> respectively. The CPAC has drug availability issues specifically stated in its charge. They would love to hear from you.

4. Economics of the Veterinary Profession – AVMA has had this on its priority list since making it the number one priority in its update Strategic Plan for 2012-2015. We have established a Veterinary Economics Strategy Committee (all brilliant people), an entire new Veterinary Economics Division, regular meetings with the AAVMC and Deans of the veterinary medical colleges on this issue including discussions on NAVMEC core competencies, financial resources, and practice readiness solutions, have a world class workforce study commissioned by IHS Global Insight to have actual current and future data on veterinary workforce issues to discuss with AAVMC, and are a founding member of the Partners for Preventive Pet Healthcare consortium with practical tools for practitioners and a forthcoming public outreach campaign. The report from IHS Global Insight late this spring should give us specific data from which to further define our actions. We have an Advisory Committee to IHS Global Insight which includes a veterinary college Dean to better assure the study results are credible to all parties.

This was all done in the last two years. We are working hard on making sure veterinary medicine remains a “personally and financially rewarding profession” as specifically committed to in our economic vision statement.

5. Education standards for accreditation – The AVMA COE has been continually sanctioned by the US Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation since its inception. Those are the two highest and most rigorous bodies with which accrediting bodies are held accountable. The COE accreditation process is the gold standard in the world. That doesn't mean it is perfect, but having sat on the Council for several years, I understand the process well, and it is constantly re-evaluating how it can improve, just like it requires of the veterinary medical schools. What don't you like about it and why?

I have been in private clinical practice for 34 years, and an owner of an AAHA practice I built myself for 15 years until recently. I have been directly involved in AVMA leadership since 1996 and, believe me, it is a world class organization. I really do appreciate your comments and even frustration, but we are transitioning through some challenging times. AVMA has evolved immensely for the better. Our dues are a better buy than many other professional associations in regard to members to staff ratios and productivity. We get A LOT of work done.

You obviously give a lot of thought to these issues. Getting back to the theme of this thread, what would you like to see us do to improve governance and function?

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As you engage CYA and toot your Horn at the AVMA, here are some ideas;

I found out about the “then” required compliance with Red Flag Rules in 2007 and the information was never conveyed by the AVMA. I complied and great time and expense in 2008-09. Now you cackle because in 2011 Veterinarians Medicine became exempt!!!! Funny thing, when you guys get you but in a vice this is the first time I have heard of the exception from the AVMA!!! I don't know that I could trust the AVMA single blurb on the matter is true and there was no documentation of source given in your articles and links. Who says that we are exempt and by what action of the FTC or Congress?

Now let's consider the Affordable Health Care Act and the 2.5% tax on dual use medications and equipment from the Obamacare Tax. What have you done to let veterinarians know, to exempt veterinarians, and to warn the public???? Here is the information that might be helpful to any practitioner: <http://miami.cbslocal.com/2013/03/11/obamacare-may-bite-you-at-the-vets-office/>

WHEN WERE YOU GOING TO BOTHER TO MENTION THIS NEW COST THAT DOES NOTHING FOR OUR PATIENTS, PROFESSION, OR PRACTICES?

So far as medical costs, are you being pro-active in determining why the FDA is gutting the generic and proprietary drug industry with inspections and requirements on old stand-by drugs that result in the loss of the product, reduction in the number of producers, and multiple times the cost of the drugs when they return to the market. Have you done anything or let us rank and file know how our efforts and money is being spent to help protect our growing overhead costs.

On the economics of Veterinary Medicine, WHAT PART OF OVERSUPPLY DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND? For the economy there are too many pet animal practioners, too few food animal practioners, and an abundance of graduates who want 8-5, no emergency, all technology/no practical knowledge practice, or part time engagement. The system of selection needs to be altered to consider those low B average students that will actually practice a full practice lifetime rather than A+ students who will never get feces on their hands or shoes.

Get real AVMA. You have become too PC, too organized around your own executive staff and their pay, and too little involved with the needs of your practioners/constituents. A few tootings of your horn and timely articles now is too little too late.

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Regardless of what the AVMA says, there is no shortage of veterinarians. In fact, new graduates are finding their employment opportunities limited. The AVMA has made it easier for foreign graduates to take jobs away from these new graduates. Isn't it interesting that this was driven by corporate veterinary medicine when the AVMA is supposed to protect and advocate for its membership. Where is the leadership of the AVMA on issues such as cities overriding state practice acts and standing up to animal rights activists. If I have a problem, I am more likely to turn to my state association. The AVMA appears to be an inept bureaucracy.

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The AVMA needs to stop caving to Animal Rights Pressure and focus on the science behind the medicine. Also, the dues are way too high for what members get—it is terrible.

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Well it is about time that the AVMA recognised that it is top-heavy, ineffective, and in existence to maintain its own existence not that of the constituent veterinarians!!! I would hope that in your

governance choices you can choose somebody that had sense enough to lance an abscess then collect a fee. The AVMA and we veterinarians had better get busy before we are all taken down by the lunacy that has occurred over the past 40 years at the AVMA!!!!

- Chicken Little Report
  - Cow towing to the FTC
  - Abandonment of Ethics
  - Renewed cry of manpower shortage when veterinary practices a going broke
  - Cost of education beyond the investment/benefit ratio that would allow practice
  - Selection of students by grades rather than ability to practice or remain in practice to develop an experiential knowledge base
  - AND (DRUM ROLL PLEASE),
  - THE LOSS OF OUR HEALTH CARE PRODUCT AFTER RUNNING AWAY THE YOUNG AND HEALTHFUL PARTICIPANTS WITH LACK OF CHOICE AND ATTENTION.
- o This was the last straw for me.
  - o I truly question why I am a member at current!

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After reading the proposed new structure, I am concerned that regional interests are not being considered in any of the committee structures. This will allow all 11 appointees/electees on each committee to come from one area rather than representing the entire constituency. I agree that the current structure is unwieldy, at best, and needs to be remodeled, but there should be at least one forum out of the three where regional representation is included. The AVMA should represent everyone and lobby for the entire constituency rather than local pockets.

Thank you for addressing the changing demographics of the profession. That is a huge step forward.

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Honestly, I'm so ticked off by how the whole health insurance thing was handled, I'm planning on quitting the AVMA as soon as this year's membership expires. I didn't appreciate the big premium hike which was almost immediately followed with a December letter telling us that we would lose our health insurance. I have three small children to take care of. If the AVMA-GHLIT was considering that, then its members should have been told as early as possible and given every opportunity to find other coverage. The way it was handled was inconsiderate and unprofessional. I also don't appreciate not receiving a reply when I wrote why I was upset. You guys are out of your minds if you think I'm going to send you another dime.

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Very well said!

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Group health insurance is what I see as the major benefit to being an AVMA member. I am extremely disappointed by the action taken by the AVMA. I understand that there are

many barriers with the current health insurance situation. As a former board member of a non-profit, what I would see as a major purpose of the AVMA Board is to speak for the interests of the members. The way the health insurance situation has been handled seems to reflect a complete lack of governance by the board and apparent lack of good policy. As an equine veterinarian, I no longer see benefit to AVMA membership without group health insurance. Maybe there is a better option out there, and I am in the process of investigating.

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There has got to be a better way, please let us all know if you find alternatives.

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Thanks for your work on this health insurance thing. I've always been happy with the coverage provided by AVMA-GHLIT and would like more than anything else to stay under the umbrella offered

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I was shocked to read in the recent AVMA journal that \$80,000 was approved to develop a new LOGO. Are you kidding me? At a time when veterinarians are picking and choosing which professional dues they can afford to pay, this is a kick in the teeth. It seems excessive and leaves me with a bad taste in my mouth about the AVMA.

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Relevance and value to it's membership are always the main criteria for the existence and viability of any organization. Does the AVMA leadership really feel they are meeting the needs of it's members? I would say they are not based on allocating an unjustifiable amount of money for a new LOGO; seemingly seldom taking substantive stands on current issues that are front and center in the public forum, out of control Veterinary College populations that have resulted in significant declines in the compensation and demand for new grads, and informing members of an impending discontinuance of important health insurance coverage with out first doing the "homework" to provide possible options for meeting the associations membership needs in this area. Most of my colleagues that have coverage through MONY AVMA group plan read the letter to convey; "well folks, your'e on your own after 2013". I can appreciate the need for vision for another 150 years, but our organization will not make it another decade if it doesn't take it one year at a time and forget the "symbolism over substance" approach. We already have much to much of that coming from our national political leadership.

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Drs. Franke and Collins, I fully agree. This is an excellent example of the AVMA's misdirection and irrelevance in our current economy, practice environment, and professional lives. Smoke and mirrors, duck and dive, just to

look like something meaningful is being done are the order of the day. The practices and paradigms at the “home office” and suited non practioners there remind me of our current Administration and Congresspersons in D.C. as well as the corrupt Union bosses in their husbandry of our funds and confidences.

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