

Panel on Public Affairs Meeting
June 5, 2015
APS Washington Office of Public Affairs
529 14th Street, NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC

Members present:

W. Barletta (Chair), J. Phillips (Chair Elect), F. Houle (Vice Chair), R. Jaffe (Past Chair), L. Greene, S. Bare (virtual), R. Cote, P. Coyle, E. Gates, W. Goldstein, M. Marder (virtual), W. McCurdy, S. Pratt, A. Taylor, P. Taylor, J. Wells

Advisors/Staff present:

S. Aronson (virtual), M. Elsesser, K. Kirby, M. Lubell, H. Neal, J. Russo, F. Slakey

Call to Order

W. Barletta called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM.

Welcome, Approval of Minutes

Introductions were made around the table. A call for edits to the minutes was made. Hearing none, a motion was introduced.

MOTION: *To accept the February 2015 minutes, as presented.*
(Phillips/Coyle)

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

APS Statement on Earth's Changing Climate

The Energy & Environment Subcommittee provided an overview of the commentary received from the APS membership. Over 1,100 comments were received and were overwhelmingly supportive of the statement. However, there were a handful of common suggestions that emerged, many having to do with a particular word choice, grammar, etc. A full discussion ensued regarding how to incorporate the feedback. After several votes on amendments to the statement, it was agreed that the Panel would now take a pause, review the modified statement in a few weeks, and then take a final online vote on whether to send it on to the APS Board of Directors & Council for consideration.

MOTION: *To accept the modified version of the statement, with interim approval, prior to a mid-July electronic vote of POPA on whether to send the statement on to the APS Board of Directors and Council for final action.*
(Jaffe/Phillips)

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

Statements up for Review in 2015

Active APS statements up for review in 2015 were considered by the appropriate POPA Subcommittees. The Subcommittees provided their recommendations on whether each statement should remain current, undergo full review, or be archived for the future.

Physics & the Public Subcommittee

APS Statement 05.3 – Electric and Magnetic Fields and Public Health

MOTION: *To archive the statement. (Jaffe/Goldstein)*

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

APS Statement 95.2 – Power Line Fields and Public Health

MOTION: *To archive the statement. (Jaffe/Goldstein)*

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

APS Statement 05.2 - Physical Science Research Funding

MOTION: *To keep the statement active, with non-substantive updating of background information/references (to be handled by the subcommittee and subsequently reviewed and approved by the APS Board of Directors). (A. Taylor/Coyle)*

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

APS Statement 05.1 – Science and Technical Advice for Congress

MOTION: *To keep the statement active, as currently written. (Gates/Greene)*

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

APS Statement 90.1 – Scientific Contact with Countries Accused of Abrogating Human Rights

MOTION: *To keep the statement active, as currently written. (Gates/Greene)*

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

National Security Subcommittee

APS Statement 00.2 – National Missile Defense System Technical Feasibility and Deployment

MOTION: *To archive the statement. (Phillips/Coyle)*

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

National Security Subcommittee Update

An update on the proposed study on NNSA Laboratories was provided. At the February POPA meeting, the Subcommittee was tasked with clarifying the relationship with Ploughshares Fund and considering comments and suggestions made regarding the motivation behind the project, the audience, and potential political controversy. They presented a revised study proposal to POPA, for consideration. The primary concern raised was that it isn't a high enough priority for APS.

MOTION: *To empower the Subcommittee to proceed, coordinating in part with the APS Physics Policy Committee (PPC), with the study scope focused on defense lab facilities (ambiguities to be decided upon by the study committee, in conjunction with laboratories, over the summer.)*
(Phillips/Coyle)

ACTION: *The motion failed. (5 in favor, 2 opposed, 6 abstentions)*
APS Staff will deliver the news to Ploughshares, following today's meeting.

Physics & the Public Subcommittee Update

The Subcommittee and APS Staff provided an update on the Education Survey underway. Two organizations (American Institute of Physics, UTeach) were interviewed for consideration in executing the education survey and collecting & analyzing the data. The Subcommittee selected AIP as the more appropriate choice for this study.

There are two statements in the queue for review by APS membership. The revised APS Statement on Civic Engagement of Scientists (08.1) and the proposed Statement on the Status of Women in Physics will be presented to membership in September for commentary.

An update was provided by APS Leadership & Staff regarding emerging concerns on the international stage, including how to handle the integration of Cuban physicists into the U.S. scientific community and

the Foreign NGO Management Law being proposed by China. The APS Office of International Affairs and the APS Committee on International Scientific Affairs (CISA) are monitoring developments.

Energy & Environment Subcommittee Update

The Subcommittee reported that the APS Board of Directors agreed an inventory of the Society's greenhouse gas emissions should be conducted under the auspices of the APS Chief Executive Officer. POPA heard from an inventory firm, Anthesis, to develop a better understanding of the work entailed, a probable timeline, and the extent to which POPA would be engaged in this long-term project.

ACTION: *A committee comprised of W. McCurdy, W. Barletta, R. Jaffe, F. Houle, and R. Cote will develop a bid process to elicit the responses we need from consultants engaged in this type of review; consider the focus, audience, and goals of the project; and prepare a proposal including all findings, to be presented at the October 2015 POPA meeting.*

The helium brokerage (APS-ACS Liquid Helium Program) founded in partnership with the American Chemical Society, has begun to deliver supplies to the seven pilot program members. The U.S. Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has been able to reduce prices for these program members by 15%, on average. Monitoring for reliability of supply will continue and, if everything goes well, there are plans for expanding the program in 2016.

The Helium Economics Study committee list has been developed and invitations are being sent out, with an anticipated study workshop later this year.

E-cycling initiatives will be expanded to additional states, modeled on the pilot program introduced at the University of Michigan during the 2015 Winter Semester. The program is designed to invite undergraduate physics majors interested in working at the interface of science and policy to apply for a unique joint internship with the APS Office of Public Affairs and their respective physics departments. Some interest has been demonstrated at universities in Illinois.

Proposed Study on Status of Women in Physics

APS Staff provided an overview of the status of women in physics. Data suggests major attrition rates moving from high school, to undergraduate physics degrees, onto doctoral tracks. There seems to be a well-defined question: What causes the attrition and what can we do about it? The Physics & the Public Subcommittee is suggesting a possible study on the status of women in physics. It was agreed that this is a complex issue with many influencing factors.

MOTION: *To have the Physics & the Public Subcommittee draft a formal proposal for a Study on the Status of Women in Physics, to be presented to POPA at the October 2015 meeting.*
(Coyle/Phillips)

ACTION: *The motion passed, unanimously.*

New Business

It was brought to the Panel's attention that we should (1) continue to consider how POPA activities align with APS Statements and (2) begin to regularly reflect on statements APS might make based on the information garnered from the activities POPA pursues.

Intersessional Minutes

- POPA voted to accept the modified Statement on Earth's Changing Climate and to send it to the APS Board of Directors for consideration at their September 2015 meeting.
- The APS Board of Directors voted to accept the APS Statement on Earth's Changing Climate. It will now be considered for final action at the APS Council's November 2015 meeting.
- All POPA Subcommittees conducted teleconferences between June 6th & October 1st.
- The revised APS Statement on Civic Engagement of Scientists and the proposed Statement on the Status of Women in Physics were presented to APS membership for comment in September 2015.

Next Meeting

The date for the next POPA meeting will be October 2nd, 2015.

Adjournment

ACTION: *W. Barletta adjourned the meeting 2:57 PM*