

**BLOCH COMMITTEE**  
**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

THE COMMITTEE

NAA President Kathleen Miller formed this Committee in mid-2017, requesting that we review the current state of the Annual Meeting and report our findings and recommendations to the Academy Board of Governors in time for the 2018 Meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia. As originally constituted, the committee consisted of six members, including the Chair, past President Richard Bloch, President-Elect David Petersen, Past President Roberta Golick, Past President John Kagle, Past President Allen Ponak and current Secretary/Treasurer Walt De Treux. Our committee lost a valued friend and an invaluable asset when David Petersen lost his battle to illness in early 2018. We deeply valued Dave's insight and experience and were thankful he could share his time with us, which he did energetically and unreservedly.

We held four plenary conference call meetings and exchanged numerous emails in the latter part of 2017 and the early part of 2018 and respectfully present this report, containing our deliberations and findings, to the President, Officers and Board of the NAA.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

Since its founding in 1947, the Annual Meeting has been a centerpiece of this organization's activity. Held in a wide variety of cities in, and occasionally outside, North America, the Meeting has served as a focal point that enables the organization to accomplish its stated goals of enhancing labor management relationships in general and dispute resolution techniques in that arena, in particular.

Annual meetings have also served an important, indeed, critical collegial function, allowing arbitrators to meet and exchange thoughts with peers and invited guests from the labor management community in settings outside the more formal and pressured litigation context. The advent of this group, and its capacity to offer the industrial relations community this unique mix of education and collegiality has served to meaningfully advance the cause of internal dispute resolution in North America and beyond.

Now, some 70 years later, times have changed in ways that, we conclude, meaningfully challenge both the existing format of our Annual/FEC Conferences and, indeed, the Academy itself. In certain respects, the changes are endemic to the current state of organized labor/management relations. In other respects, we have become the victims of our own success, particularly with respect to program content, as will be explained below.

## THE PROBLEM

### **Annual Meeting<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Year/Location</b>	<b>Total Attendees</b>	<b>Non-Member Attendees</b>
2000/San Francisco	467	243
2010/Philadelphia	350	120
2015/San Francisco	285	99
2016/Pittsburgh	251	85
2017/Chicago	243	68

### **FEC**

<b>Year/Location</b>	<b>Total Attendees</b>	<b>Non-Member Interns</b>
2000/Scottsdale	160	3
2010/Cleveland	147	4
2015/Denver	115	3
2016/New Orleans	128	1
2017/Miami	Cancelled -- Hurricane	N/A

<sup>1</sup> See Summary of 2017-18 Membership Survey on Academy Meetings, attached.

Attendance has been dropping continuously and precipitously at our Annual Meetings, as reflected in the attached Survey Summary. prepared by Past President Ponak. The reasons for the decline are several-fold. First, active Academy membership has declined significantly. There are currently about 470 active members and approximately just over 100 inactive or retired members. Second, the currently embattled state of organized labor leads to tighter budgets and a consequently more difficult task of justifying the time and travel-related expenses that are real factors in a meeting of this nature. Management groups and representatives are no longer as evident in our guest rosters; the very limited participation of union organizations is even more apparent.

Another factor in the decline is tied, ironically, to the achievement of this institution's goals in terms of promoting an understanding of the virtues of internal dispute resolution. At its inception, the Academy offered a unique opportunity to understand the legal and practical implications of collective bargaining and the necessary interaction between public law and private contract. Our meetings provided the opportunity for labor and management representatives to not only meet the adjudicators whom they were inviting to pass judgment on their bargained workplace rules, (and in some cases to create them), but also the opportunities to forge better working relationships with each other in the context of informal learning and socializing. These were seriously valuable opportunities for participants charged with the responsibility of building new relationships in the shadow of a country that, in the not too distant past, had considered union organizing as something akin to a criminal conspiracy. The success of the War Labor Board, and the *imprimatur* of its alumni,

many of whom were among the founders and guiding lights of the young Academy, dispelled much of the animus, inspired the development of the arbitration process and stoked the enthusiasm that supported annual attendance.

Yet, for all its virtues, the arbitration field is a very narrow discipline. In the decades that followed, the field has been plowed repeatedly. Program committees face increasingly daunting tasks in terms of providing new and meaningful material. As the cadre of arbitrators expanded, and as the labor and management cliental became increasingly accustomed to the process and to the providers, the prospect of meeting and greeting, however informative and pleasant, has become increasingly less urgent.

The “familiarity” issue is reflected, as well, in the literature that has, as its genesis the programs at the Meeting. Over the years, distinguished speakers, arbitrators, advocates, academics and others have addressed the Academy in formal and informal settings, and, significantly, the contributed papers and presentations have formed the basis for bound copies of our Proceedings, published by the Bureau of National Affairs. These volumes, in the aggregate, have formed the most meaningful contribution of arbitration and dispute resolution literature available today.

But the law and the literature of this field, however valuable, has remained relatively narrow, at least from the practitioner's standpoint. This is in no way to undercut the prodigious contributions of the men and women who nurtured this private dispute settlement process to the maturity and wholesale acceptability it has achieved. It is to say, instead, that it was far easier to contribute keystone concepts earlier on in this organization's existence. Today, program committees are often involved in a desperate search to find topics that have both broad and current appeal and that have not been the subject of countless previous sessions. As such, we have frequently relied

on "training" type sessions (the "red light/green light" sessions, for example) in lieu of prepared papers or panels. These sessions are, to be sure, instructive and entertaining. But they are also a reflection of this group's perceived need to rely on more "nuts and bolts" modules rather than the more academically oriented presentations that had characterized the programs during the early decades of the NAA's existence. There is no problem inherent in a training module itself: The problem is that, with the development of the labor relations field in general, the number of groups and organizations presenting similar programs, sometimes devoted exclusively to training, has expanded dramatically. Attendees, particularly guests, may well-conclude that training can be accomplished in other ways and that the academic presentations, if relevant, can be gained, if necessary, by reading the Proceedings in the office or at home.

Moreover, in 2010, the Academy launched the Regional Education Program that has been very successful in increasing the size and activity of regional meetings. It has been possible for the involved parties to convene more readily with colleagues, but this, too, impacted the potential attraction of a centralized annual meeting, a problem that was in some measure enhanced by the onset, in the 1980's, of the Fall Educational Conference.

The falling attendance numbers are startling and cause for concern. Reviewed against the backdrop of the millennium year, (see attached Summary), there has been a 50 percent drop in membership attendance, and a 75 percent drop in non-membership attendance. In 2000, non-member attendance was about one half the number of members; now it has dropped to about 25 percent. The last Vancouver meeting had 182 members; this one has 135 so far. Non-members appear to be in the 50 range. As a result of the falling membership and attendance numbers, the Academy has been

experiencing difficulty in meeting its contractual guarantees to the hotel meeting site; and the financial framework for meetings is no longer feasible.

### OUR REVIEW

As discussed below, this Committee is firm in its belief that the continued vitality of this organization requires a rejuvenated, energized Annual Meeting. In making our recommendations, we have attempted to answer a difficult, albeit simply-stated question -- How can the NAA best put people in the seats at the Annual Meeting? We started from scratch, discussing, among other things, the question of whether an Annual Meeting was, itself, essential to the NAA's existence, as contrasted with a more decentralized approach. Based on the surveys and our collaborative discussions, we concluded the meeting continues to be an essential element of this group's *raison d'etre*. The strong, indeed overwhelming, reaction of the responding members is that the NAA continues to provide, through the Meeting, the type of comradery camaraderie and collegiality that is a welcome facet of what can be a relatively solitary professional existence for many of us. The decision in favor of substantial restructuring will, however, require major changes, together with consideration of meaningful financial commitment.

### THE SURVEY

What follows are the major areas of guidance gleaned from the Survey, (condensed in italics), together with our responses and recommendations.

## THE FALL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

*A significant number of members, but hardly unanimous, showed support for eliminating the Fall Educational Conference.*

The Committee believes the FEC is no longer a viable meeting. Like the Annual Meeting, attendance has been dropping – from 160 in Scottsdale in 2000 to 128 in New Orleans in 2016. The 2017 Miami conference was cancelled on account of the hurricane, but, had it occurred, the Academy would have fallen far short of the required minimums and would have suffered costly penalties. The significant increase in regional activities and conferences, while certainly encouraging, draws members away from two national meetings per year. The increased regional activity lessens the need for the FEC as currently constructed. We believe the substantial resources extended in the preparation and subsidization of the FEC can better be directed to enhancing the Annual Meeting.

## THE TIMING OF THE MEETING

*A relatively strong negative, response by members was directed to the Memorial Day weekend as timing for the Annual Meeting. Many members suggested moving it to the middle of April or the middle of May.*

There is merit to the objections: While Hotel rates are generally more hospitable on this weekend, family long-weekend breaks, graduation exercises and other issues make consideration of other times worthwhile, on balance.

## MEETING LOCATION

The survey reflected a wide range of views on preferred locations for the meetings. The accepted lore has been that locations on the coasts, and Chicago, would always be good bets for a variety of reasons, including ease of access and attractive locations in and of themselves. That said, we note that San Francisco, which attracted 467 attendees in 2000, only yielded 285 in 2015. And, as indicated earlier, from 2000 to 2017, attendance dropped steadily, reaching a low of 243 (as contrasted to 467 in 2000) in Chicago. Our belief is that, while location may be of some significance to some attendees, the more important items will be program content and timing of the meetings.

During the entire history of the Academy, we have made it a practice to rely on in-house talent for all of our meeting planning and most of our presentations. With an eye toward the goal of filling the seats, our recommendation is that the Board consider using professional planners in terms of site selection and hotel negotiations. We do not suggest this as reflecting shortcomings in any way from the members who have devoted long and tedious hours to these functions. It is instead our belief that professional planners may well be able to save the Academy money by recommending hotels and locations that will accommodate the desire for a better schedule and where, based on their expertise and experience, bargains can be gained.



## LENGTH OF THE MEETINGS

*Attendance at all sessions and events, plus travel, can take up the better part of a full week. This has obvious cost and scheduling implications. Concern was also voiced over the nature of the daily schedules. A number of respondents commented that the Meeting should build in more time during the day for socializing with colleagues and friends.*

The Committee submits for the Board's consideration the prospect of shortening the Annual Meeting, a move that would respond to the comments of many members who felt, generally, that we attempt to cram too much in. A shorter meeting would have an immediate impact on finances – hotel costs would be meaningfully lowered as would the costs of attending the meeting, in general.

Consideration should also be given to shortening the meeting days by, for example, providing program offerings that would be over in the early afternoon, giving attendees more time for socializing. One model might be a 2-day substantive session that would include a presidential luncheon and a featured speaker luncheon, these to happen on Wednesday and Thursday, with Friday being reserved for members-only sessions and a half-day business meeting. A shorter day schedule would likely mean later start times and/or earlier finish times and fewer sessions, particularly concurrent sessions. A reduced number of sessions could reduce meeting room usage, therefore reducing costs.

## SPONSORED SESSIONS

*Several responses raised the prospect of bringing back guest-sponsored receptions that could enhance socializing and act as an attraction to advocates and participating parties.*

Chairman Bloch recalled that, to his recollection, he was the one who, some 30 years ago, proposed the abolition of the sponsored parties on the general grounds that the specter of lavish receptions from a management or a union group might be considered unseemly and that, additionally, while there was some union sponsorship, management groups were holding receptions that were, in some cases, embarrassingly opulent. It was at that point the Academy enhanced the Secretary's and President's receptions, among other things.

The Committee recognizes the potential support that could be gained by inviting such outside participation but we remain concerned about the appearances and the potential imbalance. Instead, we recommend consideration of Academy-sponsored hospitality rooms. In May 2017, the Chairman wrote incoming President Miller with a suggestion of a model:

We have three function rooms, each designed to hold, say, 150 people. Assume the room would be open from 8:30 to 10:00 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. Each room would be equipped with a bar and a dessert table, the expectation being that attendees would be on their own for dinner, then returning after dinner for some camaraderie and some entertainment. The goal would be to have people mix to whatever extent they wished. Brief entertainment could be hired for the rooms, with the entertainers instructed to do one 20-minute set at various times in each of the three rooms. (Twenty minutes is plenty – people want to talk.)

This dessert/entertainment/congeniality approach would, in at least one model, entirely replace the Friday night dinner. That, in itself, would generate substantial savings that would be even further enhanced by cutting out the pre-dinner open bar reception. For budgeting purposes, the hospitality rooms could either be open bar or, as we have done in the past, allocating each of the guests one chit for the bar, after which they would be on their own. Folks who wished to dance could easily be accommodated by designating one of the three rooms as the "dance hall" for dancing that would begin at some defined time.

## THE PROGRAMS

*Members responding on the survey also noted a desire to have programming that would be sharper, more relevant and more interesting.*

Allen Ponak commented:

In my personal view (not based directly on the survey), achieving this goal will require a re-think of how we compensate non-Academy speakers. To attract subject experts, we need to be prepared to pay travel costs, hotel accommodations, conference registration, and in some cases, a speaking fee. Large-screen broadcasts should be a requirement at all plenary sessions. The Academy has a large surplus of funds – saving the quality of the Annual Meeting may be a good use of that money.

On this particular subject, the Committee discussed the prospect of hiring high-profile speakers on current topics, even those that might not be directly related to labor arbitration or labor management relations at all. The goal, it should be remembered, is to enhance the attractiveness of the Annual Meeting, including spicing up programs by inviting speakers who will address contemporary topics and whose very presence will enhance attendance. We direct the Board's attention to the Research and Education Foundation, which is currently well funded and could likely, and appropriately, direct funds to such a speaker.

## MANDATORY ATTENDANCE

Over the years, there have been numerous discussions by the Board of Governors and other bodies surrounding the possibility of some type of financial incentives that would be linked to attendance at the Annual Meeting. Suggestions directed to attendance as an element of retention of membership have drawn little support over the years, and we do not recommend that option at this time. Another option would be to raise dues to allow the reduction of registration fee. We are not persuaded, however, that, while the costs of attending an Annual Meeting can be substantial, the registration fee is necessarily out of line. Walt De Treux reports that we are by no means at the high end of similarly situated meetings, rather, we are somewhere in the middle. The Committee did discuss, however, the possibility of inviting management and labor representatives at a significantly reduced fee. The major cost of running the meetings is the food and beverage associated with the luncheons and, in the past, the dinner/dance. If the fee for invited non-members were reduced to the point where it would cover the meals, the cost to the Academy would be minimal. Moreover, the invitations themselves could be issued by Academy members, who would become instrumental in spreading the word of the new format.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Move to one 3-day meeting per year: Combine the Fall Education Conference with the Annual Meeting -- structure and format to be determined.

2. Move from our current Memorial Day weekend meeting, seeking other appropriate dates.
3. Consult with professional site and meeting planners.
4. Revise the programming day to allow more social interaction.
5. Replace the Friday night dinner/dance with other social events each evening.
6. Examine the prospects of funding and inviting major speakers.
7. Consider low-cost invitations for labor management representatives, students, interns, and newer arbitrators.

A number of our recommendations incorporate substantial changes from our standard procedures. The Committee acknowledges a meeting constructed in the new mold will look dramatically different from the ones our members have (or, more importantly, have not) attended in past years. We forward them for your consideration because we believe drastic change is urgently required. We have not, however, abandoned in any sense the original purpose of this extraordinary group – to foster understanding and support for a critically necessary private internal dispute resolution process. We believe that utilizing resources gained from a leaner, but more energized gathering of advocates and neutrals will enhance the goals of the process and revitalize the Academy’s historic role in supporting the process.

As a Committee, we extend our sincere thanks to President Kathleen Miller for her foresight and support, and to the rock-solid, always-there-when-we-need-them staff, Kathleen Griffin and Suzanne Kelley.

**Richard Bloch**

**David Petersen**

**John Kagel**

**Roberta Golick**

**Allen Ponak**

**Walt De Treux**

**May 4, 2018**

## **SUMMARY OF 2017-18 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY ON ACADEMY MEETINGS**<sup>2</sup>

### Background and Introduction

As a result of declining attendance at the Annual Meeting and the Fall Education Conference (FEC), leading to some financial losses, NAA President Kathleen Miller established a committee to consider the future of these meetings. The Committee members are: Richard Bloch (Chair), Walter de Treux, Roberta Golick, John Kagel, and Allen Ponak.

Attendance figures for selected meetings are set out below (provided by the Operations Center):

### **Annual Meeting**

<b>Year/Location</b>	<b>Total Attendees</b>	<b>Non-Member Attendees</b>
2000/San Francisco	467	243
2010/Philadelphia	350	120
2015/San Francisco	285	99
2016/Pittsburgh	251	85
2017/Chicago	243	68

### **FEC**

<b>Year/Location</b>	<b>Total Attendees</b>	<b>Non-Member Interns</b>
2000/Scottsdale	160	3
2010/Cleveland	147	4
2015/Denver	115	3
2016/New Orleans	128	1
2017/Miami	Cancelled -- Hurricane	N/A

The Committee canvassed the opinions of NAA members through an email survey carried out in December 2017 and January 2018. All members with email addresses were invited to participate; after several reminders, **responses were received from 192 members**, a response rate of approximately 30%.<sup>3</sup>

### The Respondents

88% of the respondents live in the USA; 12% live in Canada.

Length of membership was widely distributed: 33% had been members since 2005; 37% became members between 1990 and 2004; and 30% became members prior to 1990.

Slightly more than half of the respondents indicated they usually attended meetings with their spouse.

Of the 192 members who responded:

- 84% of the respondents attended at least one of the past five Annual Meetings;

---

<sup>2</sup> The Committee extends its profound thanks to Member Allen Ponak, who undertook the daunting task of interpreting and applying the Survey results from the 192 respondents.

<sup>3</sup> The most recent previous canvas of members prior to 2017-18 was conducted in the fall of 2012. At that time as well, the response rate was close to 30%.

- 69% attended at least one of the past 5 FEC's (or were registered for Miami).

Only 16% of the respondents had not attended any Annual meetings in the past five years. Thirty-one percent of respondents had not attended any FEC's in the same period.<sup>4</sup>

The survey did not attempt to canvass non-members (e.g. union and management attorneys, HR managers, union representatives). We cannot draw conclusions from the survey about the declining attendance of non-members.

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

### Reasons for Attending Annual Meetings (Q6):

Respondents were asked to rate reasons on a scale from 1 (unimportant) to 3 (very important).

The **two most important** reasons were (in order):

Visiting with friends and colleagues (2.4)  
Education and learning opportunities (2.3)

The **least important** reasons were:

Obtaining CLE credits (1.44), meeting advocates and attorneys (1.67), and attending committee or BOG meetings (1.69).

### Reasons for Not Attending Annual Meetings (Q9):

Respondents were asked to rate reasons on a scale from 1 (unimportant) to 3 (very important) for not attending.

We received 144 responses to this question; I assume those who almost always attend skipped the question.

The **three most important** reasons for **not attending** were:

Undesirable timing of the meeting (1.88)  
Uninteresting program (1.86)  
Undesirable locations (1.84)

---

<sup>4</sup> The 2012 survey included NAA-wide figures for meeting attendance. In the 5-year period 2008 through 2012, 51% of members attended at least 2 national meetings (annual or FEC). Of those, approximately 25% attended 8 or more national meetings. 49% of NAA members attended 0 or 1 national meeting in the 5-year period.



Meeting length, preference for regional conferences, and registration fees were less important factors for deciding not to attend.

### Factors Increasing Likelihood of Attending Annual Meeting (Q17):

Respondents were asked what factors would increase their likelihood of attending.

The strongest factors were:

- More free time in the schedule (53% agreed/strongly agreed)
- Off-site events (48% agreed/strongly agreed)
- If dinner dance was eliminated (42% agreed/strongly agreed).

Less important were sponsored receptions by law firms and other organizations, weekday only meeting, and different evening entertainment.

### Comments for Attending/Not Attending Annual Meetings

We received 69 comments on questions 6, 10 & 17.

**Scheduling Conflicts**, both personal and business, were the most frequently mentioned as interfering with the ability/willingness to attend. On the business side, attending meetings means giving up potential hearing days.

**Programming** was also mentioned critically by a number of respondents. Programming was seen as uncreative and repetitive.

*“The programs are too pedestrian and predictable. No bang for the buck in terms of learning.”*

*“More substance and less entertainment (e.g. “red light/green light)”*

**Location and Expense** were infrequently mentioned. When location was mentioned, there were some who preferred the convenience of a place like Chicago and others who wanted more exotic locations. There was no discernible consensus.

There were some comments, not a lot, about NAA members being insular and not particularly welcoming. Those who expressed these sentiments did so pointedly.

*“If our members were more ‘LOVING’ it would be more inviting”*

*“I felt like the kid left out of the high school dance”*

### Would Attend/Not Attend Regardless (Q18)

69% of respondents said they would attend the Annual Meeting regardless of the above factors.

Only 15% said they would **not attend** regardless.

These results are consistent with the 84% of respondents who have attended at least one Annual Meeting in the past 5 years.

## **FALL EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

### Reasons for Attending/Not Attending FEC's (Q7 & 9):

The results were virtually identical to the responses as to why people attend or do not attend the Annual Meetings: friendships and learning opportunities are the most positive reasons to attend; timing and programming quality the most important reasons for not attending.

### Comments for Attending/Not Attending FEC's

We received 39 comments on questions 7 and 9.

A number of respondents simply commented "same reasons as above" referring to why they attend/do not attend the Annual Meeting.

A number commented favorably on the FEC "intimacy" and stated they enjoyed the FEC more than the Annual Meeting.

Programming quality and busy schedules were most commonly cited as problems. A number mentioned that the FEC is one meeting too many.

*"The fall meeting competes with the many fall activities that draw on my time, and essentially posits a choice between spending those dollars on a getaway weekend with my wife, or attendance at another meeting in a distant city. My wife will win that one every time."*

## **NUMBER OF MEETINGS AND TIMING**

Questions 11, 12, & 13 asked respondents whether they wanted to continue having both an Annual Meeting and FEC and the preferred timing for such meetings.

The results showed a **preference for one meeting per year** with the FEC (i.e. members only) becoming part of the Annual Meeting.

- 50% of respondents were opposed to continuing to hold two meetings per year versus 30% who wanted to continue to have two meetings.<sup>5</sup>
- 65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal of folding the FEC into the Annual Meeting; less than 25% of respondents disagreed.

With respect to meeting timing, there is a **preference for moving the Annual Meeting away from the Memorial Day weekend.**

- 37% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the conference should be held on the week leading up to the Memorial Day weekend.
- 29% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with holding the conference on the week leading up to the Memorial Day weekend.
- Those who opposed Memorial Day felt more strongly about this issues than those who preferred Memorial Day: only 5% **strongly agreed** with the holding the conference the week leading to Memorial Day while 22% **strongly disagreed** with the Memorial Day weekend for the conference.
- One-third of the respondents did not care whether or not the meeting was held on Memorial Day.

### Comments on Questions 11, 12, & 13

There were more than 200 comments to these three questions, indicating a high degree of interest in whether there should be one or two meetings per year and when the meetings should be held.

- By far the most sentiment was expressed for early May or late April, as long as **not on Memorial Day weekend**. There were suggestions for other times of the year (e.g. “somewhere warm in winter”) but none came close to the number who preferred late April or May prior to Memorial Day weekend.<sup>6</sup>
- There were a number of comments about avoiding fall meetings that overlap with or are close to Jewish High Holidays. In April, attention should be paid to avoid Passover and

---

<sup>5</sup> In 2012, 56% of respondents who answered the question preferred one meeting per year; 44% of respondents who answered the question wanted to maintain 2 meetings per year. The 2012 survey indicated that switching to one meeting would have no effect on attendance.

<sup>6</sup> In 2012, among those respondents who attended meetings regularly, the April to June period was cited as most preferable. Among those who attended regularly, location of the meeting is irrelevant. Among those who attended just two to five national meetings in five years, the location was a significant factor, with major U.S. and Canadian cities were cited as preferred locations

Easter, holidays whose dates move around in the calendar. Most years these holidays fall before the middle of April.

### **COST OF ANNUAL MEETING (Q14, 15 & 16)**

Registration Fee: Respondents were very evenly split among the four price points: \$300; \$400; 500; 501+. Approximately 25% chose each of the listed registration fees (e.g. 26% chose \$500). For 2018, on-line early bird registration fee is \$525.

Hotel: 45% of respondents chose \$201-250. A \$200 limit has been in place for some time.

Airfare: Only 21% of respondents were unwilling to spend more than \$350 and 42% were willing to spend more than \$500.

These responses suggest keeping the registration fee close to \$500 and booking hotels that charge no more than \$250. Airfare is tougher since our members live throughout North America and costs can vary enormously depending on location. However, moving away from Memorial Day should make travel less expensive.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (Q20):**

We invited respondents to make any additional comments they wanted us to consider. 93 members took us up on this offer.

There were many thoughtful, quite lengthy suggestions on a variety of topics, showing that our members care. There was little discernible pattern except perhaps a feeling that things had to change if the Academy is to thrive. Much of what was said had been made in comments to previous questions (for example, better but less programming, attracting advocates, and competition for people's time in a crowded calendar). The numerous comments in this section (and elsewhere) should be mandatory reading for future program committees and the site selectors.

I have distilled a small number of comments that I thought best reflected the sentiments of our members.

*Forces larger than those covered in the survey are driving attendance, both by members and guests.*

*In the heyday, there was less competition for meeting time. Now we have an annual AAA LM meeting plus the FMCS meeting from time to time -- and others. The probability that NAA Annual Meetings will again become the LM event of the year is incredibly slight*

*If the Academy wants to increase attendance, the incentive for me is to increase--greatly--non-neutral attendees.*

*At the Annual Meeting we should always have distinguished speakers, and they more often than not, should be oriented to the interest of advocates*

*We need to make the Annual Meeting fun again, and that means providing more opportunities for members and guests to interact socially, not just during breaks in the program.*

*I find the meetings generally boring. I am not interested in hearing so much from members of the Academy; would prefer more outside and lively speakers, and perhaps more interaction.*

*Consider partnering with other organizations such as LERA or the ABA's Section on Labor and Employment Law, whose fall CLE meeting draws close to 1200 people, including many Academy members.*