

# On Joining ASPPA PAC



by David B. Vail, APM

I confess to only recently becoming an ASPPA PAC supporter. Although I'd like to claim a long history of understanding the contribution that the PAC makes to our industry and the people we serve, I can't. Like many of you, I have walked past the PAC booth at the ASPPA Annual Conference, given it a few seconds' thought, and then walked on. After all, what was an apolitical group of pension professionals and actuaries doing with a political action committee? Then I got it.

At an after-work refreshment break at a recent conference, I was asked by another TPA why I didn't belong to ASPPA PAC. Then came a flash, enlightenment, self actualization, satori! I realized I had no reason, and probably never did—certainly not a good one. It's not the cost, it's not the work they do, and so what keeps us from doing what is in our best interest?

Until recently I had harbored an image of all ASPPA PAC contributions being of the large, fat-cat type. I thought ASPPA PAC members were somehow different than the average business owner. Another myth busted! The average contribution is in the low hundreds, not thousands, of dollars. Don't get me wrong, thousands are good, but modest contributions from the approximately 90% of ASPPA members not yet supporting ASPPA PAC may be more reasonable. ASPPA PAC members are hardworking people, sharing the belief that what we do makes a difference. We all want to protect our private retirement plan system, and the PAC does it by educating lawmakers. When modest contributions are made by more of us, it allows ASPPA PAC to support more of our representatives in Congress and helps them understand the importance of private plans to the economy, the workers and the future.

It occurred to me that American workers and ASPPA PAC have some strange parallels. We all know the statistic that without the structure of employer-sponsored plans only 7% of Americans contribute to their retirement security. As Americans we do not save with the degree of commitment that is needed for our retirement. Interestingly, without some similar mechanism to push ASPPA members, less than 10% of us contribute to our future security via ASPPA PAC. So we act just like those American workers who,

when left to their own devices, do not act in their own best interest. Supporting ASPPA PAC is as important to our future as active participation in qualified plans is for our clients and their employees. While we might bemoan the lack of self-determinism in the American worker, we seem to exhibit that same behavior when it comes to our own industry.

I like positive spin. What the above means is that more than 90% of the 5,500 members of ASPPA have an opportunity to preserve and improve our industry! A huge untapped market! I believe that providing services to the private retirement plan industry has provided a great deal of success for many of us and for our employees, and that given the right circumstances we would want to help those working to protect and strengthen this industry. With so many ASPPA members not yet involved, the potential to have an impact on our lawmakers is great. With a modest commitment from each of us, we can better influence our future and that of our clients and their employees.

So I had my small call to action. I hope each of us gives this due consideration. Details on the ASPPA PAC are on the ASPPA Web site ([www.asppa.org/government/gov\\_pac.htm](http://www.asppa.org/government/gov_pac.htm)), or you can contact the chairs of the ASPPA PAC, Karen A. Jordan, CPC, QPA, QKA ([karen@akpension.com](mailto:karen@akpension.com)) or Fred Reish, APM ([fredreish@REISH.com](mailto:fredreish@REISH.com)), or the ASPPA PAC Manager, Jolynne M. Flores ([jflores@asppa.org](mailto:jflores@asppa.org)).

ASPPA PAC is us. It works to inform and guide those who would, with all good intentions but without good counsel, do things that would weaken the private retirement system. We all benefit from ASPPA PAC and we should all contribute to it. The work is important and all of us should share in it. Sign on for the five-year plan. Make your first contribution. If you contributed in the past, re-join. But do not miss the chance to take action to protect private retirement plans; it feels so good when you do. ▲



*David B. Vail, APM, CLU, has been in the pension industry since 1969. After 16 years of training at a large east coast insurance company, in 1985 he founded Penret Services, Inc., a TPA firm outside of Boston, MA.*