



## You Know, I Have a Real Job Too!

by Thomas J. Finnegan, MSPA, CPC, QPA

The perils of being an ASPPA volunteer. For many years, we have been able to take unsuspecting volunteers, those who want to help their profession and the retirement system in the United States, and extract every ounce of available energy they have to write comment letters, or exam questions, or prepare textbooks, or recruit speakers, or any of a hundred other volunteer jobs at ASPPA. This system has been wildly successful.

Our conferences, organized and run by our volunteers (working side by side with the best conference staff in the business), are easily the industry standard, with the best programs, the best speakers, and the best locations.

Our education programs have triggered our tremendous growth. They are without peer in the retirement profession and have been the driving force in promoting increased professionalism in our industry. Again, the work of countless hours from our volunteers, along side an expert staff.

Government Affairs is the life's blood of ASPPA. The largest volunteer group, it has worked to influence legislative and regulatory policy, helping to preserve and enhance the employer-sponsored retirement system. This feat is accomplished through analysis of almost all legislative and regulatory actions, meetings with Congress and regulators, comment letters, issue briefs and white papers. The productivity of this group is amazing and their effectiveness is momentous.

Each of these groups (as well as the other ASPPA committees) has employed the same basic formula in its success ... get a solid core

of volunteers to devote a significant number of hours on a regular basis until the job is done. The model thrives on the basis of "more hours from fewer volunteers." This model was appropriate when ASPPA had fewer members. When we were only 3,000 members, we had the same goals and the same mission, but far fewer resources than we have now. The "more hours from fewer volunteers" model was the only way we could be successful.

Now our size is one of our greatest assets. We have more than 7,500 members and we continue to grow. We have to find a way to capitalize on our size. It is common in professional associations for slightly more than 10 percent of the members to volunteer. ASPPA hasn't achieved that level because we ask for too great a commitment from our volunteers. We are starting to change our model with the goal of attracting the more casual volunteer and also the goal of not burning out our existing volunteers.

Earlier this year, ASPPA asked the Government Affairs Committee to provide a model for their operations that would use a significantly greater number of volunteers but at a far reduced time commitment per volunteer. GAC leadership presented their model to the ASPPA Management Council at the June GAC meeting in Washington, DC. The new operational structure provides for significantly more volunteer opportunities, reduces the time commitment for most volunteers, sets up a pathway for growth as a GAC volunteer and greatly increases GAC's ability to survey membership. This structure was accomplished by creating a general GAC committee to complement the existing subject-based subcommittees. As individual projects arise in GAC, they will continue to be assigned to a subcommittee, but the subcommittee will also seek



the assistance of members of the general committee who have an interest in the topic. Those interested members will join the subcommittee for that specific task.

In addition to providing the additional volunteer opportunities, this model will allow the subcommittees to handle multiple projects and deadlines more readily and will allow leadership and the subcommittees the ability to identify the most talented/enthusiastic members of the general committee and recruit them into subcommittee service. It also allows subcommittee members who can no longer afford that level of time commitment to continue to make valuable contributions to GAC, but on a project-by-project basis, rather than a permanent basis.

The new GAC procedures will be rolled out more formally at the ASPPA Annual Conference. In the meantime, other committees are working to adapt the new GAC model to their operational structures. The goal is to create an overall volunteer structure that is scalable. We believe that ASPPA membership is an essential element for all retirement plan professionals and that ASPPA's membership will continue to grow in the coming years.

The new structures will allow a growing ASPPA to provide volunteer opportunities for all of our members who want to contribute. I encourage you to volunteer, if you have ever thought about getting involved. It is a tremendously rewarding experience. We can use whatever time you can give. We know ... you have a real job too! 🚀

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