



NJLA Statement on the proposed restructuring of ALA based upon the recommendations of the Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE).

The New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) Executive Board has reviewed the recommendations from SCOE and is opposed to its acceptance. While we appreciate the considerable thought, significant work, and expense of the SCOE, and we think there are many excellent suggestions contained within its recommendations, we cannot agree with its central recommendation, the replacement of ALA's current governance structure of the ALA Council with a smaller and less diverse Executive Committee.

We believe that, while some of the recommendations have much to offer in terms of increased opportunities for membership engagement in the profession, on the whole they take a big step backwards in terms of opportunities for membership engagement in the governance (including policy setting) of the Association. We do not believe it is wise to vest governance and policy setting in the hands of a small Executive Board of whom 30% are not even elected by the membership.

We understand that the ALA Council can be cumbersome and messy as it debates issues of importance to the Association and the profession. But its size and vast representation are, in reality, its strength. Setting Association policy should, in our opinion, be a formal process with a role for more than 17 people (of which 5 are not elected by the membership). The issues ALA must speak on are complex and can impact various parts of our profession in different ways. As a chapter we are not comfortable with reassigning formal policy-setting and governance to such a small elite group. In fact, we believe that such a small group would, by its definition, be more inclined towards cliquishness and myopic thinking than our current structure.

Also, we are disappointed that the many expressions of this specific shared concern that were heard during the sessions held by SCOE at the Annual Conference were not even addressed in the most recently revised report. We strongly urge a more robust discussion of governance options as we believe that moving from a governance body of 175 members to one of 17 members has the potential to create an Association much more removed from its members' interests than our current structure. The structure proposed strikes us as more akin to decision making in a smoke-filled backroom than a structure that invites diverse debate. We believe the Association's best and most important policy stands have come about only through the robust debate that the current structure requires.

The recommendations for the creation of assemblies seems to us a positive way to create engagement and interaction among members, although we have some concerns about the 'silo' nature of the assemblies. Still, while offering much promise in member interaction and professional engagement, we do not see them as a replacement for the formal responsibility for governance that now rests with Council, nor as a replacement for the involvement of Chapters, Divisions, Sections and Roundtables in ALA governance through their Council representation.

Approved by the NJLA Executive Board January 21, 2020

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