Thank you, Tim, for those kind words and your support and partnership this past year. …

First, I want to tell you that ASWB is coming around the corner on our 40th anniversary. Yes, we are turning 40 in 2019. As we enter our 40th anniversary year, ASWB is proud and strong. As you have heard, we are in a very good place. We’ll be celebrating all year but particularly at our two major meetings.

Since the education conference will be held in the D.C. area, we are very excited to bring our staff to the Friday sessions. They will arrive after the first break, stay for lunch, and then leave about 2:00 p.m. They are excited to meet our members, especially since we had a great reception with our Board members when they attended the August board meeting and strategic planning session in Culpeper for the first time ever! We will also be inviting valued stakeholders from the D.C. area to attend our Thursday night opening dinner and reception.

Plans for a special speaker at the 2019 delegate assembly are also in the works, so stay tuned!

…I am so glad that we added all of the leadership meetings to our two major annual gatherings—the education conference and the delegate assembly business meeting—and by the fantastic attendance, I believe you agree with me.

I know that “like-minded folks” who are trying to navigate positively and effectively in the current regulatory climate need to connect with each other in meaningful, supportive, but also powerful ways. Together, ASWB staff is making it happen by adding the structure, but you, as ASWB members, are truly making it happen by showing

Mary Jo Monahan, MSW, LCSW
ASWB Chief Executive Officer

Looking forward, choosing hope, and daring to lead

Mary Jo Monahan offered her leadership message at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly on November 17, 2018, in San Antonio, Texas.
up, taking leadership, and deeply communicating with each other. Thank you.

I also am encouraged by the attendance and participation at the First-Time Attendee session and the ASWB Leadership session. I hope you know that ASWB staff invite your participation because this is your association and also because we truly value your contributions. …Staff “lives ASWB” every day as our full-time work, and we are committed to continue our work.

But we realize that you have full-time day jobs, serve on your jurisdictional boards, have families, and also contribute to your communities. We so appreciate your volunteer involvement with AWSB and recognize it as going “way above and beyond.”

I also know that those of us gathered here truly are the future of social work regulation, and I encourage you to get or stay involved with ASWB in a way that makes sense for you and also stretches you.

Last month, I attended a CEO conference sponsored by Board-Source, and one of the presenters introduced the concept of “stretchy thinking.” Actually, it was an offhand comment that she made, then realized what she said was very cool. So, of course, some of us grabbed it from her! I think this concept of stretchy thinking resonates with the concept of generative questions, and I plan to talk with you more about generative, stretchy conversations at ASWB in the coming year.

So, let’s do some reflecting on years past.

For the past six years, I have chosen a theme to frame and guide each year’s direction.

Dwight and I had a good laugh when I reminded him of my first year’s theme: “2013 – Nothing Is Impossible.” …Yes, I have gotten more realistic over the years. I believe that as I look back, each year’s theme has been the focus we needed that year to keep moving ASWB forward and lay the foundation for the future. Here’s a quick review.

2014 – Work Worth Doing. We reinforced the importance of social work regulation to the other pillars—social work education and social work practice—and forged collaborative bonds with these important stakeholders.

2015 – Full Speed Ahead. We were in Fort Lauderdale during the annual boat show. It was a year of growth that led to the decision to buy property and build a corporate headquarters in Culpeper.

2016 – Think Differently. We took on seriously tackling practice mobility and license portability, causing jurisdictions to focus on commonalities and trusting each other’s professionalism and due diligence in initial licensing.

2017 – Be Ready…. Be Ready for Anything. We developed the ability to adapt to rapid change, surprising events, and building our capacity for resilience. I also stated that ASWB had evolved into a complex, mature, and influential organization, which would position us to “Be Ready”!

Then 2017 happened.

So, last year’s remarks were a bit of a departure from the regular association report, since 2017 had been such a “wild and wacky” year. There were so many natural and human disasters and policy and regulatory challenges that none of us had anticipated. …

I focused on ASWB’s capable responses to these challenges and urged our members to “not be beaten down, become discouraged, or complacent, and check out.” I encouraged us to understand and live our shared sense of purpose as regulators and our common goals.

Using the resources of ASWB, FARB, and other like-minded regulatory organizations, I encouraged us to tell our story of protection of the public and commonsense regulation in support an informed public.

This year, in 2018, we definitely followed through on these ideas, assisting many of you who were asked to defend or modify your regulations, testify before your legislatures, and work collaboratively with other regulators and various stakeholders in telling your story. The education conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, challenged attendees to develop a regulatory tool kit full of strategies to lead these important conversations. I know many of you have done that, and staff continue to be available to provide research, guidance, and creative support to your efforts.

I also suggested that we insist on civility and solution-focused thinking in our organizations and in the other organizations that we collaborate with. I suggested that this would free us from succumbing to the divisiveness and resentful negativity that was prominent in the civil discussions in 2017. I know that at ASWB
headquarters, when others have “gone low,” our staff have “gone High.”

Interestingly, this year, our exam call center has experienced an unusual number of particularly uniquely stressed candidates signing up to take an ASWB exam after not passing on their last attempt. In one two-week period, we even had two suicide threats. Both of these calls were escalated to senior staff and were handled appropriately. As a result, not only have Tanya [Carpenter] and her new call center manager provided new training for our call center staff, but when staff is talking with social work educators, we have a serious conversation with them to incorporate civility and solution-focused thinking into their class discussions about taking the social work exams.

And finally, I reminded us that any crisis or disaster can also present the best opportunity for transformative change as long as we engage the right people, support each other to stay at the table long enough to figure it out, then set a realistic plan to implement agreed-upon solutions, and always, continue looking forward.

And we definitely did that in 2018. One of ASWB’s biggest accomplishments is the 2019–2021 Strategic Framework that was completed with significant input from our members, volunteers, staff, and respected stakeholders from both the social work and regulatory professions. I hope you read the framework closely and agree that it takes ASWB to a new leadership role in both the social work and regulatory professions. It is future forward and will take the dedicated involvement of all of us over the next three years to reach our “stretchy” strategic goals!

2018 – Anticipate: Last year, I chose “Anticipate” as the theme for 2018. Adopting an “anticipation mindset” as the guiding force this year helped ASWB be less reactive and more anticipatory—not adjusting to or becoming complacent about the continuing concerning political climate but being more steady and deliberative in our responses. We are taking a longer “Futureview” and are being more strategic in our responses. Although threats to the stability of professional regulation continue, with this mindset it seems that they are not as insistent and persistent.

I would like to reflect with you on three major impacts that are represented in the three major goals of the strategic framework.

The first impact is internal. I am calling it “coalescing” of both space and people. Hopefully by this time next year, ASWB staff will be coming together under one roof.

Currently, we are a staff of 52 spread out in eight buildings on three different campuses. In the spring we conducted an organizational culture assessment in addition to the strategic planning SWOT analysis with staff. One of the major findings was the strength of our bonds with one another and staff’s identity with ASWB. We have stayed connected despite physical separations. …We are committed to working toward the near future of being together as one team, one association again, under one roof.

What gives any building its value are the people who occupy it. It’s the people who dwell there that make a building a place of warmth, light, productivity, safety, and leadership.

Two important staff “coalescing” events are the growing IT department under Dan Sheehan’s leadership and adding a full-time finance director and a full-time human resources manager to the newly configured Finance and Administration department. With these additions, ASWB staff are becoming more professional to manage the current advances and complexities as well as the future growth of the association.

Our staff and our soon-to-be building truly represent ASWB as a leadership organization for the professions of social work and regulation. Staff are developing their proud identity as ASWB staff and they will be able to tell their story and declare that they are part of “that beautiful building in the community of Culpeper.”

The second impact is that of external collaboration with the social work academic community. I was invited to participate on CSWE’s Visioning the Future of Social Work Task Force, as CSWE prepared for its strategic planning process. This helped me to again appreciate the importance of educators and regulators being more in harmony to achieve social work regulation for aspiring licensed social workers. In addition, producing the Curricular Guide for Licensing and Regulation … shed light on the need for ASWB to adopt a clearer focus on relevant regulatory research.

The third impact is international in nature and comes from the years of work on [practice] mobility
in North America. In July, I was invited to make a presentation at the IFSWR [International Federation of Social Work Regulators] meeting in Dublin. Tim [Brown] and I also attended a meeting with the social work regulators from the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales about their beginning mobility efforts. Interestingly, in the next two years, both of the international social work meetings will be held in Canada—IFSWR and CLEAR [Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation] in Vancouver in 2019 and IFSWR and IFSW [International Federation of Social Workers] in 2020 in Alberta. ASWB has committed to a leadership role in working with all three organizations in planning regulatory sessions at both meetings. British Columbia’s social work regulatory board and chair Deborah Jones will cohost in 2019.

This brings us to the theme for 2019 – **Daring Leadership**.

Leadership for the future must be daring. As I said at the beginning, all of us here are the leaders in this moment. It is our leadership job to counter and get through attacks on regulation and tell the story of “smart regulation.”

I am inspired in choosing this theme by two books that have challenged me and comforted me this year. The challenging book is: _Dare to Lead_ by Brené Brown, a social worker. Many of you may know of her. She tells us that daring to lead is “doing the brave work, participating fully in the tough conversations, and showing up wholeheartedly.”

The comforting book is _The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels_ by historian Jon Meacham. Both authors state that daring (and successful) leaders understand the importance of leading with hope versus leading with fear. I want to close with Jon Meacham’s words on page 16.

The opposite of fear is hope, defined as the expectation of good fortune not only for ourselves but for the group to which we belong. Fear feeds anxiety and produces anger; hope … breeds optimism and feelings of well-being.

Fear is about limits; hope is about growth. Fear casts its eyes warily, even shiftily, across the landscape; hope looks forward, toward the horizon.

Fear points at others, assigning blame; hope points ahead, working for a common good.

Fear pushes away, hope pulls others closer.

Fear divides, Hope unifies.

Thank you, Jon Meacham. And I want to add: Hope is what sustains us. Let us all dare to lead and to choose hope.

I thank all of you for a great year!
Jennifer Henkel volunteers to help California wildfire survivors

“It is triage, it is assessment, it is crisis intervention....”
– Jennifer Henkel, LCSW, CAE, ASWB Director of Member Services

“It was nice to dust off my clinical license and use my clinical skills again,” said Jennifer Henkel, ASWB’s director of member services. She was deployed in late November as a disaster mental health volunteer with the American Red Cross, spending nine days at a Gridley, California, shelter where she provided mental health services to clients displaced by the Camp Fire in Butte County. The wildfire burned over 150,000 acres, killed at least 86, and destroyed 18,804 structures. Henkel, who lives in and is licensed in Virginia, was able to help because California does not require licensed social workers volunteering with the Red Cross to be licensed in state.

She arrived in California around the time the fire was contained. “I was amazed at how many people give up their life to respond to a disaster...at the range of backgrounds, age, skills, experience that show up to work these 12-hour days,” Henkel said. “And the majority of the other volunteers always had a smile, always had a kind word, and were always

A nonprofit organization, the American Red Cross has a mission that includes sheltering victims of disasters. It carries out its mission through the volunteer efforts of people like Henkel. With a few exceptions, the organization requires its disaster mental health volunteers to be currently licensed in their own state. Henkel learned via an announcement on the NASW-VA website that the Red Cross was recruiting licensed social workers. She signed up and completed online training so that she could join the pool of volunteers.

Jennifer Henkel, LCSW, and Pamala Harris, LPC, of Michigan, pose in front of a tally of contacts made by disaster mental health volunteers working in shelters set up in response to California’s Camp Fire.
positive. Everybody realized the goal was for the clients, and that was their mission.”

Despite the cheerful outlook of many of the volunteers, working at a shelter is challenging. Henkel’s assignment took her to a staff shelter set up in the gym at the Wellness Center that is part of the Colusa Indian Community. She shared sleeping quarters with more than a hundred other volunteers serving clients in various ways throughout Butte County.

Henkel’s charge was to provide mental health support to the clients and also to the volunteers who staff the shelter as food servers, shelter workers, shuttle drivers, caseworkers, and other roles. Sometimes Henkel intervened in a conflict, maybe by pulling a client aside to talk. Other times, she would help by sitting down next to a person at a meal who was visibly in crisis. “We tried to offer support to staff. Maybe they’d already been there for three weeks and were experiencing secondary trauma,” Henkel said. “Our work was ‘drive-by.’” She and the shelter’s other mental health volunteer, a licensed professional counselor, would often just approach staff volunteers and ask how they could help. “It would be a quick chance to debrief, to vent, to validate their feelings or their experience, or maybe just suggest they take a break,” she said.

“It is really not therapy,” Henkel said. “It is triage, it is quick assessment, it is crisis intervention, it is distracting…trying to make somebody laugh or smile.” Often clients did not even know they were speaking with a mental health professional. “Unfortunately, there is still a stigma attached to getting mental health services,” Henkel said, so the vest she wore did not identify her role.

Henkel brought back some inspiring stories from California. She shared an anecdote about a client whose cash-filled wallet went missing when it slipped out of his pocket while he lived in the tent city outside the shelter. “It was returned to him, with all of his money still in it,” she said. “That made me extremely happy.” She also related a story of a young mother who came to the shelter to find household items at the “store” filled with donated goods. Like many still seeking services at the shelter two weeks after the fire, the woman had many barriers even before disaster struck. But access to emergency resources helped her get her life on a better track. “She had been living so marginally in Paradise, that when she came down to Gridley, she was able to find a better life.”

This volunteer experience, Henkel said, “reminded me of my priorities and helped me remember what’s important.” It also demonstrated the value of a social work license. “It’s cool that social work is a licensed profession, and we can help in disasters,” Henkel said.

“Under California social work law,” said Kim Madsen, executive officer of California’s Board of Behavioral Sciences, “a license is not required to volunteer for this organization.” She urges regulatory boards in other jurisdictions to avoid creating barriers that might prevent those affected by disasters from receiving help. “Following a disaster, individuals need support and assistance to begin the process of rebuilding their lives,” Madsen said.

It wasn’t just California’s acceptance of licensees from out of state that smoothed the way for Henkel to join the hundreds who volunteered their time to help those affected by the wildfire. ASWB offered not only time off but also moral support. “Several people would send a quick check-in email or text.” Overall, the experience was one Henkel would be happy to repeat. “I will definitely go again,” she said.
Send us your memories for ASWB’s 40th anniversary celebrations!

ASWB is celebrating 40 years of service in 2019. The Communications and Marketing department needs your help in gathering memorabilia to display at the 2019 Education Conference in Virginia and the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in Florida. If you have meeting notebooks or other meeting materials from the past that you have held onto, take a picture and send it on! We also would love to get pictures of members at the meetings or photos and stories of any side trips you took! If you have memories that you want to share, please send them to jwood@aswb.org.

Best wishes in retirement!

MICKI LILLY of North Carolina sent a message through ASWB’s administrator list that we are reprinting here:

Dear friends and colleagues,

Like so many that have gone before me, I too will be retiring at the end of this month. I started with this Board in January 2000 and my official last day as Executive Director for the North Carolina Social Work Certification and Licensure Board will be December 31st. It has truly been a wonderful and rewarding experience in every sense, and I will deeply miss our time together and getting to know all of you over the years. The ASWB trainings, the meetings, and this list serve have been my go-to resources for knowledge, support, and guidance (and “a little fun” along the way). The information gained and the friends made over the years will be something I will treasure always.

San Antonio tour guide

GREG SEARLS of Wyoming led some staff members back to the Westin Riverwalk after the group watched “The Saga” light show at the Main Plaza in San Antonio. Apparently GREG has taken part in scavenger hunts in San Antonio on other visits, giving him a commanding understanding of the local geography!

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a winner!

KIM MADSEN of California was selected at random from attendees who submitted an evaluation for the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. KIM will receive a funded registration for the 2019 Education Conference in Arlington, Virginia. Congratulations!

Back on two feet

CARLA MOORE of Louisiana reported that she had broken her foot again this summer but recovered fully by the time of the annual meeting in November.

Send all news and pictures to Jayne Wood, newsletter editor, at jwood@aswb.org or call Jayne at 800.225.6880, ext. 3075.
A role model

The ASWB Board of Directors presented CEO MARY JO MONAHAN with a Sister Jean bobblehead. They’d discovered that she coveted the collectible when she didn’t win one in a drawing at Loyola University’s booth at the CSWE Annual Program Meeting in Orlando. MARY JO admires the 99-year-old nun, Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, a former civil rights activist and the university’s biggest basketball fan.

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Record turnout

The Board Member Exchange (BMX) held before this year’s annual meeting set a record—more than 50 social work regulatory board members attended. Facilitated by BRIAN PHILSON, the day-long meeting gave board members opportunities to discuss common concerns and network with their colleagues from throughout the United States and Canada. Not only was the turnout record-setting, but participants had good things to say in their evaluations: “Wow, so much information was provided in the Board Member Exchange. In particular, the discussions about mobility. I was so inspired! I hope that I can attend again next year.”

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Positive reviews

The Administrators Forum in San Antonio featured a new format for attendees. Chair JIM MARKS asked administrators to answer questions on flipchart paper hung throughout the room, letting participants provide more information and seek out colleagues with similar concerns. The comments from meeting evaluations about the new approach were overwhelmingly positive: “I absolutely LOVED the idea of each state putting their jurisdictional info around the room ... instead of every jurisdiction reporting separately!!! Let’s do this every time! It gave us time to discuss important issues.”

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Taking shape

The framing crew has started work on the ground-floor walls at the new ASWB headquarters in Culpeper!
Recognizing careers of service in leadership

The Sunny Andrews and Glenda McDonald awards are given annually and are named after social work regulators who exemplified the attributes and character of outstanding board members and staff through their service to their individual jurisdictional boards.

“He denies being a hero,” said Florence Huffman, executive director of the Kentucky Board of Social Work, “but he is steadfast and tireless doing the work he does because he says he owes a debt to those who helped him.” She was describing Jay Miller, chair of the Kentucky board, as she presented him with the Sunny Andrews Award for Outstanding Commitment to Social Work Regulatory Board Service at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. Huffman shared highlights of Miller’s journey from foster care to leadership in child welfare and juvenile systems, in academia, and in public service. And she spoke of his leadership within the Kentucky board, saying: “He encourages his fellow board members and his board staff to be leaders ourselves.”

“I never thought having an interest in licensing as an undergraduate student and starting to conduct research around how we think about licensing…and now being an academic…would lead me into this place,” Miller said. He noted that the award was a testament to the other members of the Kentucky board, who understand that “we are not just issuing licenses, that we are indeed protecting vulnerable people to ensure that they receive adept social work services.”

This year, two administrators who happen to be social workers themselves received the Glenda McDonald Board Administrator Award for Outstanding Commitment to Social Work Regulatory Board Service: Richard Silver of Québec and Stanley Weinstein of Maryland.

Guylaine Ouimette, chair of the Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec, presented the award to Silver, who recently retired as legal counsel to the order.

“In its statement of value, the order promotes excellence, professional diligence, and social
commitment,” Ouimette said, “Mr. Silver embodied these values that are central to the mission of the everyday life of our order. During his mandate, Richard oversaw a number of important initiatives intended to promote the ethical, responsible, and effective functioning of the order, and to ensure public protection.”

She concluded by thanking Silver for the legacy he left and pointing out one area of valuable service outside the realm of regulation: “And a little bonus—he always finds us a good restaurant!”

In his acceptance of the Glenda McDonald Board Administrator Award, Silver recalled his time working with McDonald, who was founding registrar and CEO of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers and served the organization for 15 years. “We started as professional colleagues, and we became very good friends over the years,” Silver said. “I have very poignant memories of Glenda, so to receive an award which is named in her memory is particularly significant for me.”

He added, “And if I was able to do all those great things that were mentioned, it certainly wasn’t me doing it alone. It was in collaboration with my colleagues at work. And so, I feel that when I receive an award for work as a professional regulator, it’s not just for me personally but for all of us who do this work which is so important.”

The second Glenda McDonald Award went to Stanley Weinstein, executive director of the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners. Presenting the award was board chair Denise Capaci, who described the theme of Weinstein’s tenure as one of partnership and accountability. “Stan has also helped to eliminate fear and to work with a clear momentum and always move us forward,” she said.

Weinstein recapped his career, one marked by diversity. In the social work profession, he said, “…you can be so many different things, and I’ve tried to taste them all.” His past roles have included family therapist, teacher, leader of a mental health scholars program at a historically black university; director of several mental health programs, and regulatory board member. The difference between his five years of service as chair of the Maryland board and his work now as its executive director, he said with a smile, is that “today I get paid.” He credited the staff and regulators he works with for their contribution to earning the award. “I’m the point person, but I’ve been blessed with some great people.”
Your Board in action

A summary of the work of ASWB’s Board of Directors at its meetings in San Antonio, Texas, on November 15 and November 17, 2018

The ASWB Board of Directors met in person on Thursday, November 15, and Saturday, November 17, at the Westin Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas, in sessions before and after the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly. Here is a recap of the activities of the Board at those meetings.

From the November 17 meeting

Treasurer's report. Board members reviewed and accepted financial statements through September 30, 2018, and received an update on investments. ASWB’s COO notified the Board of a realized gain due to the sale of underperforming funds. There will be a net gain due to capitalization of the portion of IT salaries used in the creation of software, a change to recognize that software produced by the IT department is an asset. Capitalization of salary gives a more accurate picture of finances, can be depreciated as an asset, and is compliant with generally accepted accounting principles.

The COO also notified the Board that 2018 net revenue will most likely be used for the new headquarters rather than placed in general reserves. The association also will be tapping into the line of credit for the first time to pay upcoming construction invoices.

The treasurer complimented the work of the 2018 Finance Committee.

Building update. The COO reviewed progress on the new headquarters, noting that work continues despite rain-related delays. The slab was expected to be poured by early December. The association paid a first installment to the solar company, with a second payment scheduled before year end. The Board asked that any cost overruns be detailed in the monthly building reports. The Board also voted unanimously that all boards involved in the building project since May 2014 be recognized in the new headquarters.

Executive leadership reports. The CEO reviewed her operations report and the ASWB president thanked Board members for their work over the year and recognized M. Jenise Comer, Florence Huffman, and Joyce Bell for their service.

Strategic discussions. Board members participated in strategic discussions about the following subjects.

Potential exam contract changes. The Board received a report from ASWB’s COO about possible changes to use of exam contracts with members because
of jurisdictional restrictions that are becoming more prevalent and challenging. Options are being explored, and the 2019 Bylaws and Resolutions Committee will be asked to look at possible bylaws changes to address the issue.

**CSWE Curricular Guide for Licensing and Regulation.** The CEO announced that the new licensing and regulation curricular guide was presented at the annual program meeting of the Council on Social Work Education in November. She explained how it will be used by social work educators and how its development was managed by ASWB. The guide was sponsored by ASWB and NASW Insurance Company, RRG.

**Interprofessional CE contract.** Board members reviewed a strategy paper outlining the purpose and benefits of ASWB becoming an associate member of the Joint Accreditation for IPCE organization. Through this affiliation, IPCE providers can offer CE for social workers involved in health care teams through ASWB’s Approved Continuing Education program.

**SocialWorkPRO.** Board members reviewed a strategy paper outlining the new software platform developed by the IT department in support of Member Services that is designed to integrate access to ASWB application processing, exam registration, and Registry services for member boards, social workers, the Candidate Services Center, and Registry subscribers. The new platform is being rolled out in 2019 to applicants in Massachusetts, Utah, and Colorado (boards that currently use ASWB contract services). The system and pricing tiers were discussed.

**2019 Path to Licensure Institute.** Board members reviewed a strategy paper about the 2019 Path to Licensure Institute that will be offered next year. Six scholars will be selected for the 2019 cohort and they will be encouraged to attend a New Board Member Training session prior to attending the June intensive at ASWB offices. Facilitators are Anwar Major-Durack of Michigan and Carl Brun of Ohio. Both facilitators are licensed social workers, educators, and current or former regulators.

**CSWE Workforce Project funding request.** The Board received a report from staff about a request for additional funds to support the ongoing work of CSWE’s Workforce Project. Staff reported that there does not appear to be a direct benefit to ASWB from the study and that the project leader had failed to develop a sustainability plan to identify other funding sources for continuing the work. The Board voted unanimously to respectfully decline the request for additional funding.

**Review and adjustment of strategy.**

**2019–2021 Strategic Framework presentation.** The Board reviewed the plan for presenting the 2019–2021 Strategic Framework to membership at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly.

**Review of delegate assembly agenda and script.** Board members reviewed the annual meeting agenda and script.

**Security report.** The Board received a report from staff about plans for an exam security audit by Caveon in 2019. Caveon has conducted the last two exam security audits. The Exam Development department is exploring a readability study and a sensitivity study for diversity issues related to the exams. The IT department is working toward PCI compliance for financial security related to use of credit cards.

**Executive session.** The Board entered executive session to discuss exam matters.

**Policy—Public and operational.**

**Exam use policy exception request.** The Board discussed and approved by a vote of eight to two a jurisdiction’s request for an exception to ASWB’s exam use policy.

**CEO evaluation.** The Board reviewed Policy 6.2, Evaluation of the CEO in preparation for conducting the annual CEO performance evaluation in December. After discussion about the planned process, the Board made changes to the policy and approved the policy by a vote of nine to one subject to the changes being made to sections 5 and 7.

**Ongoing Board business.**

**Approval of minutes and ratification of email motions.** The Board unanimously approved the August 12, 2018, minutes subject to a change to the motion related to the writing of an article about ASWB for the Encyclopedia of Social Work. The minutes from the August 14 in-person meeting and the October 25 virtual Board meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously. The Board ratified decisions made in email meetings conducted in July, August, September, and October by unanimous voice vote.
Committee/Task Force/Meetings reports. The Board received reports from Board members who attended the Citizen Advocacy Center annual meeting, the FARB Regulatory Law Seminar, the CSWE annual program meeting, and the meeting of the ASWB Continuing Competence Committee. The Board received reports from staff about their attendance at the Canadian Registrars meeting and about plans for the 40th anniversary celebrations in 2019.

Consent agenda. Reports approved via consent agenda included New Board Member Training evaluations and the August Board meeting survey.

Board meeting evaluation. The Board president announced that the meeting evaluation would be sent electronically.

From the November 17 meeting (2019 Board)

A meeting of the 2018 Board was called to discuss concerns raised by Canadian provinces about proposed amendments to the bylaws related to voting on exam issues. The Board cannot stop or withdraw the proposed amendments, but delegates can make a motion to send the amendments back to the committee for reconsideration. The Board voted to express support if a motion was made.

Introductions of Board members. Board members introduced themselves and shared how they hoped to contribute to the Board.

Board governance training. Board members received training on serving on a nonprofit board from a local BoardSource consultant. Roles and responsibilities were explored, as well as expected communication protocols.

Action items.

Review of Exam Committee appointments: The Board unanimously approved appointments of the 2019 Examination Committee members.

Review of ASWB Contributor Award. The Board reviewed a strategy paper outlining the criteria and selection process for a new award intended to recognize exemplary support of social work regulation. The Board approved by unanimous voice vote the concept of the award.

Selection of first Contributor Award winner. The Board approved by unanimous voice vote the selection of the first winner of the ASWB Contributor Award.

CEO evaluation. President Tim Brown announced that he would be sending out the electronic CEO performance evaluation packet to Board members in December.

Homework. Staff reviewed the 2019 ASWB meetings calendar and Board members received two books about governance for their reading prior to the January 2019 Board meeting.
Respectful dissent

Bylaws amendments require a two-thirds majority to pass (ASWB bylaws, Article XIII, Section 2); the presiding officer may accept written or verbal motions (ASWB policy manual, Policy 4.1, Annual Meeting).

Delegates at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly listened carefully as Kathy Outland of Oregon, chair of the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee, gave the committee’s report on Friday, November 16. In the report, she reviewed the three groups of proposed amendments that delegates would vote on the next day after a discussion period preceding the vote on each amendment group. Options available to delegates at that juncture are to vote on the amendments as proposed or make a motion to return amendments to the committee. When the second group of amendments came up for a vote, delegates exercised their option to make such a motion.

The second group of amendments, which delegates moved to return to committee, involved changes to the bylaws to allow only member boards that contract with ASWB to use the exams to vote on exam-related issues. The proposed amendments involve sections of Articles IV, Membership, V, Delegate Assembly, and VI, Association Meetings related to eligibility to vote and quorum.

The committee received the proposed amendments from the ASWB Board of Directors in response to a recommendation from the 2017 Membership Task Force that only member boards that contract with ASWB to use the exams should make decisions about the exams.

Barb Temmerman (MB) spoke in favor of the motion to return to the Bylaws Committee amendments involving voting on exam-related issues.
When the committee receives amendments from other groups within the timeframe prescribed by the bylaws, its role is to receive and consider the proposed amendments and offer a recommendation of Do Pass or Do Not Pass to the membership. All amendments received in accordance with the bylaws are forwarded to membership for a vote.

At their in-person meeting in July, committee members discussed the Board’s proposed amendments and recommended Do Pass. Discussion centered on how Canadian member boards might respond to being restricted from voting, because those members currently not contracting to use the exams are New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Québec.

When making its Do Pass recommendation for the proposed amendments, the committee also offered the following points for added context in its report to membership:

- Committee members were informed by staff who attended the June meeting of the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators that exam use was discussed and that most provinces indicated they would not be implementing use of ASWB exams for entry to practice registration any time soon without significant changes such as translation into French and development of an exam for social service workers, a separate profession represented in Ontario’s regulatory structure.

- The committee found compelling the Board liaison’s contribution that strong opinions on exam-related issues have been around for a long time and tend to surface when the association brings up the need for exam fee increases. He explained that in those discussions some members that don’t use the exam have advocated for raising fees.

At the annual meeting, the motion to send the issue back to the committee for review and reconsideration was made by Lynn King of Alberta and seconded by Kim Madsen of California. During discussion, the president was made aware that King was not the delegate and therefore not permitted to make the motion according to ASWB bylaws. Richard Gregory, who was the delegate for Alberta, then stepped forward to make the motion in King’s place.

When President Tim Brown of Texas opened the floor for discussion, three jurisdictions participated. When the vote was called, delegates voted to send the issue back to committee. It will be included as a 2019 charge.

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Model law amendments pass

The 2018 Resolution and Standards Committee recommended changes to the Model Social Work Practice Act that advance ASWB’s Mobility initiative and implementation plans. At the annual meeting, delegates voted 48 to 2 to pass the amendments.

New language in Article III, Section 308 replaces the section titled “Qualifications for License Transfer” and its nine requirements with a new section titled “Qualifications for Licensure by Endorsement” and two requirements related to payment of fees and proof of an active license in good standing. Meeting these requirements and receiving a license by endorsement is subject to the receiving board’s review and acceptance as well as being subject to a review of discipline (Article IV, now renamed “Enforcement”).

Article III. Section 308. Qualifications for Licensure by Endorsement.

(a) To obtain a license by endorsement at the equivalent designation and subject to Article IV of this Act, an applicant currently licensed as a social worker in another jurisdiction must provide evidence satisfactory to the Board, subject to Article III, Section 311, that the applicant:

1. Has submitted a written application and paid the fee as specified by the Board; and
2. Has presented to the Board proof of an active social work license in good standing.
The first and third groups of amendments passed without significant discussion. The first group included amendments to various sections in Articles III, Definitions, Article VII, Board of Directors and Officers, and Article IX, Committees and involved:

- amending the definition of public member to clarify that the person identified is the jurisdictional board member appointed as the “consumer representative” (Article III)
- adding a definition of “licensed professional” to encompass licensed members of Member Boards other than “Licensed Social Workers” who may be elected to serve on the ASWB Board of Directors (Article III)
- clarifying the eligibility of licensed allied professionals serving on consolidated boards to serve on ASWB’s Board of Directors (Article VII)
- removing appointment of a member of the ASWB Board of Directors from the Nominating Committee (Article IX), an amendment received from the ASWB Board and put forward with a Do Pass recommendation from the committee

The third group of amendments related to changing the name of the education meeting to education conference (various sections of Article VI, Association Meetings).

Comments received from attendees’ evaluations of the annual meeting reflected positive feedback on the voting process:

“I think the fact that we were able to delay any action on the exclusion of Canada and the decision-making process of the tests is a testament [to ASWB] code of inclusion as opposed to exclusion and for that I was very proud of the organization.”

“I didn’t understand why the exam vote bylaw was changed but was glad it got postponed for further review.”

“Think important issues were brought up. There probably needs to be some follow up this next year for a more complete understanding of the issues.”

“There was plenty of time for discussion and discussion were respectful.”

The amended bylaws are available on the ASWB website.
Social work licensees seeking continuing education for license renewal have traditionally had many options, including courses offered by providers accredited through the National Association of Social Workers, state board approved courses, and ASWB’s Approved Continuing Education program. What has been missing is interprofessional continuing education (IPCE) designed for the social worker on the health care team from providers accredited through Joint Accreditation for Interprofessional Continuing Education™. Missing, that is, until now.

Earlier this year, ASWB signed a memorandum of understanding to become an associate member of the Joint Accreditation collaborative. Beginning in 2019, providers accredited by Joint Accreditation may expand their offerings to social workers by adding ACE approval to their IPCE credit listings.

Launched in 2009, Joint Accreditation is a collaboration of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), the American Academy of PAs (AAPA), and the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry’s Council on Optometric Practitioner Education (ARBO/COPE). The collaborative was founded to “establish the standards for education providers to deliver interprofessional continuing education planned by the health care team for the health care team (jointaccreditation.org).” The benefit to the public consumer of integrated health care, such as a hospital patient, is improved health care delivery and better patient outcomes, according to Joint Accreditation.

Jennifer Henkel, director of member services, brought the opportunity to ASWB executive staff, proposing to explore IPCE as a benefit to ASWB member boards. Henkel and Lisa Casler Haun, continuing competence and continuing education manager,
researched and visited this organization and also attended their annual meeting. Henkel presented financial and marketing plans that ASWB executive management accepted. “Social workers are an important part of the interprofessional team, and ASWB is delighted to be able to offer CE to them by joining Joint Accreditation,” says CEO Mary Jo Monahan. “The health care team is strengthened when all members receive integrated high-quality and relevant training, and the benefits to patients and public protection are thereby multiplied.”

For ASWB, the opportunity allows the ACE program to advance its mission of supporting competency in the social work profession and increase its revenue stream from providers adding ACE accreditation. “We don’t often talk about the diversification of revenue with our members,” said Monahan, “but an organization that relies solely on exam-based revenue is at a disadvantage should that revenue be interrupted, such as in the case of a legal challenge or a security breach. Member Services is charged with developing services or expanding existing services to help diversify ASWB’s revenue sources, and Jennifer and Lisa found such an opportunity with Joint Accreditation.”

Beyond the operational benefits, however, ASWB’s affiliation with Joint Accreditation serves to increase social workers’ access to high-quality, relevant continuing education. According to the Joint Accreditation website, “healthcare teams receive education designed to be independent, free from commercial bias, based on valid content, and effective in improving the quality and safety of care delivered by the team.” These benefits accrue to the regulatory boards that accept continuing education accredited through the ACE and Joint Accreditation affiliation.
Numerous circumstances can arise whereby social workers are placed in the unenviable position of disclosing otherwise confidential information to appropriate authorities or child protective services. Such disclosures are based upon facts set forth in law that essentially determine that disclosure outweighs the confidentiality expected by recipients of mental health services. At times, the social worker must draw conclusions based upon observations not always corroborated by spoken words. To protect practicing professionals and other reporters who disclose confidential information, their identities may also remain confidential. When the disclosing person is a licensee, there may be consequences of divulging the identity of informants. Consider the following.

In Michigan, licensed social workers (and others) who have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or child neglect are required to make an immediate report to centralized intake. Additional Michigan law provides that the identity of the reporting person is confidential, subject to disclosure only with consent of that person or through judicial processes. In the matter at hand, a Limited Licensed Master Social Worker (Social Worker) provided therapy and treatment at the counseling center where she was employed for two minor children and their mother. The parents were divorced. At a session, the children disclosed physical hitting and hair pulling by the father. Based on the mandate to report, the Social Worker reported the alleged abuse to Children’s Protective Services (CPS).

The Social Worker informed the mother of the children that she would be filing a report as required by law. The Social Worker suggested that the mother also file a report with CPS. The father of the children, upset that a report had been filed resulting in limited access to the children based upon the allegations, contacted the Social Worker seeking information about who had filed the report. The Social Worker did not tell the father that she had filed the report because she was worried that he was potentially dangerous. The father later confronted the mother, who denied filing the report and stated that the Social Worker had done so.

The father apparently did not believe the mother’s denial and reference to the Social Worker as the informant. Eventually, he spoke to the clinical director of the counseling center (Respondent) and the nature of their discussions formed the basis for the administrative action. The Respondent, a
Licensed Clinical Social Worker, was responsible for supervising the Social Worker. Shortly after the incident described, the Social Worker was terminated from her position with the counseling center, ostensibly because she was too inexperienced. She thereafter filed a complaint with Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), asserting that the Respondent had wrongfully disclosed the Social Worker’s identity to the father. This led to LARA filing a complaint alleging that the Respondent, either expressly or by way of inference, had revealed to the father (the alleged abuser) that the Social Worker was the person who filed the report with CPS.

LARA alleged that the actions of the Respondent constituted negligence and incompetence, in violation of relevant Michigan law. The Respondent denied the allegations, and a hearing was held in April 2016. Conflicting testimony occurred among the expert witnesses who opined on the facts of the matter. Testimony on behalf of the Respondent emphasized the efforts to protect the parties due to the volatility of the situation and that an inference was reasonably drawn that the mother informed the father that the Social Worker filed such report. Additional testimony identified that, under the circumstances, the Respondent acted reasonably by informing the father that the mother did not file the report and that persons who had reasonable knowledge at the counseling center were required to file with CPS. In short, Respondent’s experts were of the opinion that her communications with the father did not constitute a violation of the standards of care for a social worker and did not give rise to negligence or incompetence.

The hearing examiner (HE) concluded that LARA did not prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the Respondent violated either statute related to negligence or incompetence. Further, the HE found that the Social Worker, through her admission that she informed the mother of her intent to file a report with CPS, effectively consented to the disclosure. LARA filed exceptions to the HE proposed decision, and the Disciplinary Subcommittee ultimately adopted the HE’s findings of fact but rejected the conclusions of law. The subcommittee found that negligence and incompetence were established by a preponderance of the evidence. A final order was issued placing the Respondent on probation and requiring continuing education in areas related to child abuse and mandatory reporting. The Respondent appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeals.

The Court of Appeals agreed that adequate evidence existed to establish disclosure by the Respondent to the father. However, the court emphasized that nothing in the record indicated that the whole record was taken into consideration. The facts indicated how potentially volatile the situation was and the Respondent’s concern for the safety of all persons involved. As stated by the court, “We find it harsh to criticize respondent’s conduct in hindsight, as her motivation was honorable, and it is impossible to ascertain whether the father would have believed respondent about the mother’s noninvolvement… However, if this issue were our only concern… we could not conclude that the ruling was unauthorized by law…”

But, based upon the additional facts related to consent by the Social Worker, the court reached a different conclusion. It held that the evidence clearly indicated that the Social Worker informed the mother that she would be filing a report with CPS and that it was reasonable to expect that the mother would inform the father. Importantly, the court noted that this disclosure from Social Worker to mother was known by the Respondent before she spoke with the father. Thus, the Respondent not only knew of the potentially explosive situation, she knew that the mother was aware that the Social Worker would be filing a report. The court held that “we are at a loss with respect to how the subcommittee could find that respondent acted negligently or incompetently.”

Based upon the entire record, the court found that the ruling of the subcommittee was not supported by competent, material, and substantial evidence and, at most, was supported by a scintilla of evidence. Accordingly, the court reversed the subcommittee’s ruling and ordered that the complaint be dismissed.

Administrative rulings must be based on evidence made of record in a contested hearing. In this case, the court found that the entire record was not taken into consideration as a part of the findings. Determining negligence and/or incompetence under complex circumstances can be challenging.

Familiar faces, new roles

Delegates elect nine established ASWB leaders to serve on the Board of Directors and the Nominating Committee

ASWB’s annual business meeting is referred to as the delegate assembly for a reason: The attendees who serve as delegates of the member jurisdictions assemble to conduct some critical business at the meeting, including elections for ASWB leadership positions on the Board of Directors and the Nominating Committee.

Elected to the ASWB Board

The 2018 delegate assembly elected six members to the 2019 ASWB Board of Directors: Harold Dean of Arkansas, office of the president/president-elect; Lisa Crockwell of Newfoundland and Labrador, secretary; Deborah Jones of British Columbia and Roxroy Reid of New Mexico, directors at large, licensed social worker; Ken Middlebrooks of Minnesota, director at large, public member; and Kate Zacher-Pate of Minnesota, director at large, member board administrator. Claude Savoie of New Brunswick, Glenda Webber of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ginny Dickman of Idaho were elected to serve two-year terms on the Nominating Committee.

The office of the president, unlike other positions on the ASWB Board, is a four-year commitment. Harold Dean will begin his term by serving one year as president-elect before stepping up for a two-year term as president, then completing his service as immediate past president for one year. Dean served

Newly elected members of the 2019 Board of Directors are, from left: Lisa Crockwell (NL), Roxroy Reid (NM), Kate Zacher-Pate (MN), Harold Dean (AR), Ken Middlebrooks (MN), and Deborah Jones (BC).
three years as chair of the Arkansas Social Work Licensing Board and has been involved with ASWB as a member of the Mobility Task Force and as a member of the Board. This year marked the end of his term as director at large on the ASWB Board. In his election speech, Dean emphasized practice mobility and strategic thinking. “We must continue to move forward implementing the Mobility resolution” that passed in 2017, Dean said. “Operationalizing our new strategic framework will be very important in giving clarity and focus to our organization on helping member boards strengthen their role in public protection.”

Lisa Crockwell was re-elected secretary, a position she has held on the Board of Directors since 2016. Crockwell has served as registrar for the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers for 19 years. In her remarks to the delegate assembly, Crockwell drew on an electricity metaphor, comparing ASWB members to protons and electrons. “We need to appreciate our differences and understand we all have legislative realities,” she said. “But at the same time, know that it’s truly only when we bond together and are on the same wavelength that we find those solutions to important issues that we have in common.”

Debora Jones and Roxroy Reid, both elected as directors at large, come to the Board of Directors with direct experience with the ASWB examination program. Jones and Reid both worked as item writers, and Jones also served on the Exam Committee and as a form reviewer. Each of them emphasized the importance of practice mobility for ASWB member jurisdictions. Jones pointed out that she brings practical experience with practice mobility as a social worker who has practiced and been regulated internationally. Reid talked about the value of practice mobility as a workforce issue in New Mexico. “We need to come together [around mobility]” he said. “Mobility is my thing.”

Ken Middlebrooks was re-elected for a second term as director at large, public member. In addition to his service on the ASWB Board of Directors, Middlebrooks has served for 15 years on the Minnesota Board of Social Work. Middlebrooks cited his family’s experiences with licensed social workers as motivating his service with ASWB and the Minnesota board. “I feel a personal responsibility,” he said, “to ensure that everyone who needs a social worker has access to a social worker who is both ethical and culturally competent.”

Joining Middlebrooks will be his long-time colleague from the Minnesota board, Kate Zacher-Pate, as director at large, member board administrator. In addition to her 25 years of experience in social work regulation, Zacher-Pate has been involved with ASWB for two decades, most recently serving as chair of the Regulatory Education and Leadership (REAL) Committee, and a stint as chair of the Administrators Forum. She sees the priorities of ASWB as “Mobility, service to jurisdictions, exam integrity, sustaining partnerships, and promoting leadership.”

With the exception of Dean, the newly elected Board members will serve two-year terms, which began with a brief meeting of the Board following the annual meeting. Rounding out the 2019 Board are President Timothy Martel Brown of Texas, Treasurer Mel Harrington of South Dakota, and directors at large Patricia O’Reilly of West Virginia and Beatrice Traub-Werner of Ontario. The vacant seat for director at large following the resignation of Joyce Bell of Maryland earlier this year was filled by appointment. (See the sidebar on page 3.)
Elected to the Nominating Committee

Ginny Dickman has a long history with the Idaho Board of Social Work Examiners and with ASWB. She served on ASWB’s Board of Directors at the turn of the century and most recently on the ASWB REAL Committee. In her candidate statement, Dickman emphasized the need for candidates who are “diverse and talented members who embrace our mission.”

Claude Savoie currently serves as president of the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers and chaired the NBASW disciplinary committee for ten years. He sees the challenge of the Nominating Committee as rooted in an overall decline in volunteerism. “The Nominating Committee must play a vital role in motivating candidates to serve their organization as leaders.”

Glenda Webber is president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers and recently served on the ASWB Continuing Competence Committee. The critical work of the Nominating Committee, she says, lies in “recognizing and fostering leadership amongst peers, engaging them in the work that must be done, and highlighting the importance of their contribution to safe, ethical social work practice.”

Dickman, Savoie, and Webber will join Carla Moore of Louisiana and Ann-Marie Buchanan of Tennessee, who were elected to the Nominating Committee in 2017.

2019 Board of Directors vacancy filled

In December, the ASWB Board of Directors approved the appointment of Brian Philson of Michigan to serve a one-year term as director at large, open. The appointment fills the vacancy left when Joyce Bell of Maryland resigned for personal reasons. Philson will serve until elections are held at the November 2019 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, when he will be eligible for election to the same position if otherwise qualified.

Philson received his MSW from Michigan State University and a B.A. in social work from Spring Arbor College. He is president and CEO of Highfields, a $9.2 million human services nonprofit where he has worked for more than a decade. Previously he was executive director of a juvenile detention center in Jackson, Michigan, for 15 years. Philson has served as an adjunct instructor at three Michigan schools of social work, including Michigan State University.

Philson is serving his second, four year term on the Michigan Board of Social Work and is in his third year as the board chair. He has been active with ASWB for many years, most recently serving on the Finance Committee in 2017 and 2018. He has also served as Michigan’s delegate at ASWB’s annual meetings and attended ASWB education meetings.
New exams launch smoothly after years of preparation and anticipation

“The close of 2018 recalls its beginning: January 2, 2018, was a red-letter day for ASWB’s exam-ination program. More than three years of planning, preparation, and anticipation culminated when eight new social work licensing exams, all based on the 2017 practice analysis and the resulting new content blueprints, went into effect on that day.

At the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, the 2018 exam program report hearkened back to the creative work done in prior years that led to the successful launch of the new exams and exam products and provided a glimpse into where the exam stands now.

“It’s difficult to do an exam program report for 2018 that doesn’t include 2017 because all the many activities we engaged in in 2017 served to feed into where we are now in 2018 with the newly launched exams and exam products,” said Lavina Harless, ASWB’s director of exam development. “All the pieces you heard about last year served to set us up for 2018.”

Guiding principles

Harless spoke of the guiding principles that “led us to the creation of

The Exam Committee presented their year-end report to ASWB membership at the annual meeting. From left: Carl Hokanson (MN), Adolpha Bassett (NC), Bora Sunseri (LA), and Examination Development Director Lavina Harless.
a solid, reliable, legally defensible exam to launch in January 2018.” The first of these principles was efficiency. “We wanted to make sure we were using our subject matter experts’ time wisely…. We used their talents and expertise to accomplish our goals without burning them out.” She also spoke of resource management and best practices. “We followed industry best practices for developing a valid, high stakes licensing exam, and we met—and even exceeded—these testing industry standards surrounding how to create this type of test.”

Work continued after the initial release of the eight exams—two each for Bachelors, Masters, Advanced Generalist, and Clinical—with 17 more exams created according to the new blueprint released in 2018 and three ready to go online in January 2019. Harless said, “This is about making sure the exams are secure by having many forms of each exam online at any given time.”

Smooth and on time

Harless followed up on her discussion of the program’s guiding principles with some statistics demonstrating the success of the launch. She shared that the first three quarters of 2018 saw a 5.2 percent increase in candidates registered compared to the same period in 2018. There was also a 1.7 percent increase in exam administrations. At the same time, calls to the Candidate Services Center went down by nearly 6 percent. “I like to think [the decrease in calls] was because of all the well thought out and planned communications around the exams and products,” she said. Significant increases were also seen in sales of exam products, new versions of which were released between June 2017 and April 2018. Sales rose for The Guide to the Social Work Exams, 2nd edition, (9.99 percent increase), the online practice test (15.9 percent increase), and the group review practice test (27 percent increase.)

Industry leadership

The smooth, on-time launch of the exams and products garnered interest from other organizations involved in examination development. “The Association of Test Publishers asked me to present on our practice analysis process,” Harless said. “They were interested in how we did it… with the resources we had.” Harless also spoke to the Council on Licensure Enforcement & Regulation this fall.

Accomplishments in 2018

The Examination Committee returned to its customary schedule of four meetings in 2018 after following an altered schedule in 2017 when the program’s subject matter experts were repurposed for other tasks. Committee co-chairs shared details of the year’s accomplishments as part of the report to annual meeting attendees.

Clinical exam committee co-chair Bora Sunseri of Louisiana spoke of the committee’s diversity. “It’s represented by people from all over—Canada, the U.S., rural areas, urban areas, universities, professors and social workers who are in academia, as well as social workers who work in grassroots community clinics, community centers, and state agencies…as well as private practice.” The 18 examination committee members, selected from a pool of proficient item writers, serve one-year terms, renewable for up to three years.

Sunseri then described the work of the committee. “We review and edit, approving new items by committee process,” she said. She described how committee members vet each item during six-person meetings in darkened hotel conference rooms. “We have a passionate discussion about each item,” she noted. “We might say, ‘That terminology is outdated,’ or ‘That is offensive,’ ” Committee members frequently look up sources to back up their opinions. They also ensure that each new item is linked to appropriate KSAs (knowledge, skill, and ability statements) and is assigned to the right exam. Other tasks include evaluating performance statistics for pretest items to decide whether they should become scored items, approving examination forms, participating in passing score studies, and contributing to policy decisions about matters related to item writing.

Adolpha Basset of North Carolina, Masters exam committee co-chair, discussed the structure of the Examination Committee, which has three subgroups of six members each. He shared sample items with attendees, describing the parts of an item and sharing what the committee would look for. As each item is projected on the screen, committee members ask whether it is critical to practice, is focused, and has only one correct answer. They also make sure the correct answer—the “key”—does not depend on jurisdictional factors, and the item is appropriate for use in Canada. And they guard against items that are too easy or too difficult. “A surefire way of determining if a question is too
difficult,” Bassett quipped, “is if all the members get the answer wrong.” Finally, they look at stylistic elements like readability, bias, and the presence of extraneous information.

In reviewing the performance of the committee in 2018, Bassett spoke of the importance of reducing deletions of items. “By the time an item makes it to the Examination Committee,” Bassett said, “significant time and money have been spent on the item writer, the item development consultant, and ASWB staff, so instead of simply deleting items, the Exam Committee provides feedback to the writers and consultants to help fix the problems.”

Carl Hokanson of Minnesota, co-chair of the Bachelors exam committee, talked about the problem item review process the committee uses when pretested items are statistically flagged and need review before they can be included as scored items. “It’s something we’re all familiar with as social workers: problem-solving,” Hokanson said. “The committee looks at them, this time with a little more statistical guidance, to determine whether there is a way to make this a stronger item.” Aside from the more than 1,000 new items the committee worked on in 2018, Hokanson said more than 400 problem items were reviewed and revised, approved, or archived. Archiving—which might happen, for example, when terminology becomes dated—preserves items for later revision and use.

Hokanson also described the form review process that occurred four times in 2018. Form reviewers are subject matter experts who work in pairs on what they call the “draft operational form”—the final version of a particular exam containing all 150 scored items. They look for issues with content and terminology and check for “enemies,” stems that contain information that would help a test taker answer another item on that form. They also look at the pools of pretest items that are selected at random for inclusion on the exams each candidate sees.

Following the reports from the co-chairs, the meeting went into executive session and Harless; Gordon Waugh, a psychometrician from HumRRO; and Tanya Carpenter, ASWB director of Examination Administration, presented the technical report on the 2017 examination year.

Learn more

More information about the 2018 examination committee is available in the 2018 Examination Program Yearbook.
Public knowledge

Public members bring unique expertise to social work regulatory boards

When ASWB legal counsel Dale Atkinson leads New Board Member Training, he asks attendees to “raise your hand if you’re a public member of your board.” Maybe one or two hands go up in response, and Atkinson is quick to point out that every single person serving on a regulatory board is, effectively, a public member. Social workers who serve as regulators represent the interests of the public by bringing their expertise about the profession to its regulation.

Those few hands that go up initially, however, also bring important expertise to the table. Patricia O’Reilly of West Virginia and Ken Middlebrooks of Minnesota serve on the ASWB Board of Directors as directors at large, public members. They have each pointed out that they and their family members have received social work services and their perspectives as social work clients inform their work as regulators.

When Joan Cloonan of Idaho thinks of social work clients, she imagines some of her refugee friends. Artisans For Hope is a nonprofit cofounded by Cloonan that teaches refugees creative skills like knitting, sewing, jewelry making, and bookbinding, while also helping them with their English language skills and teaching them how to market and sell the items they make.

Brenda Dennis (OR) and Joan Cloonan (ID) were among several social work board public members who attended the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in San Antonio, Texas.
For Cloonan, working with these refugees was her first window into the services that social workers provide.

Cloonan has been a public member of the Idaho Board of Social Work Examiners for more than five years and describes herself as a “recovering lawyer” with an extensive background in environmental law and regulation. She has also been involved in Republican politics in Idaho for many years, including an unsuccessful run for the state legislature.

“Even when you lose, you gain respect for having run,” she says, citing her campaign as an asset in dealing with legislators. “Legislators trust me because of my work.” That trust was evident when Cloonan visited the state capital with Robert Payne shortly after her appointment to the Idaho board. Payne was serving as the board’s chair. “The governor hugged me and called me ‘Joanie,’ ” much to Payne’s surprise, Cloonan says. “I developed a reputation for integrity and knowledge” through political involvement.

That reputation and Cloonan’s regulatory experience are assets to the Idaho board. “Legislators have no conception of what licensing boards do,” she says. “They think we’re like a business association. …Explaining what we do and why we do it is important, and sometimes I can do that more effectively than the other professionals” on the board.

“Regulation should be a nonpartisan issue,” says Cloonan, who takes very seriously her responsibility to help educate the public about social work regulation. “A lot of the public don’t recognize social work as a licensed profession,” she says.

“I’ve gotten more from the board than I think they’ve gotten from me,” Cloonan insists, but her background in politics and regulation lets her navigate waters that may be less familiar to licensed social workers.

Brenda Dennis came to the Oregon Board of Licensed Social Workers around the same time Cloonan was appointed in Idaho. “I applied for it,” says Dennis. “I’ve always felt an affinity for the social work profession” and worked closely with social workers. Although a first-timer on her board, Dennis brought a familiarity with regulation to her board service. She works for the State of Oregon certifying psychiatrists and psychologists who conduct evaluations for the courts.

While the certification process is different, she recognizes links between certifying and licensing, and between the mental health professions she works with and the social workers licensed by the Oregon board. “I bring work experience that has a broader focus, including work with federal agencies and federal regulation,” she says.

“The collaboration on our board—the thoughtfulness,” has made her involvement fulfilling. “Our board is very cohesive,” she says. “We may take longer to come to a decision,” she says, but “the public interest is our first thought. …We want to make sure our decisions are fair and [we] think about the long term.”

Unlike Cloonan, who is the only public member on the Idaho board, Dennis has two other public member colleagues on the Oregon board. Having public members “definitely helps us keep the focus on our state-mandated mission to protect the people of Oregon,” says Randy Harnisch, administrator of the Oregon board. The involvement of public members “forces the board to think about language longer than we would have…[it] forces the professional members to move away from jargon,” he says.

Harnisch points out that public members “don’t have the extra baggage of thinking about the profession.” Dennis says that disciplinary cases “feel more black and white” to her. “I don’t see many mitigating factors. I feel less compelled to create a remediation plan for people,” she says.

Frances Klahr of Missouri says, “It was a little bit of a surprise” when she was appointed to the state Division of Professional Licensing Committee for Social Workers. “I just looked at it as a new area with more to learn.” She credits ASWB’s New Board Member Training as very helpful in climbing that learning curve. With three years on the committee now, Klahr attended her first ASWB delegate assembly in San Antonio, Texas, in November.

Like Dennis, Klahr also considers participating in disciplinary cases to be a critical part of her service as a public member. Given the hard work social workers put into getting their licenses, she says, disciplinary cases still surprise her. “Whenever I see someone jeopardize that, I’m just floored,” she says. She is also committed to doing her homework and making sure she has sufficient information on hand to make decisions, but
there are times when she disagrees with her colleagues on the board. She also appreciates having the board’s attorney on hand to help clear up questions. “They’re knowledgeable individuals who’ve seen and heard everything,” she says.

As Dale Atkinson would point out, all regulators bring knowledge and expertise to the regulatory table. Whether it’s specialized knowledge of the profession being regulated, an understanding of legislative processes, or experience as a consumer of services, the work of all regulators benefits the public.
Delegates affirm 2019–2021 Strategic Framework

“I think the mark of a really successful strategic planning process is when members can see themselves in the goals, and I’m really struck by ... the inclusivity and the excellent work that went into this strategic plan. ... I think we should really congratulate the Board and feel very proud of that process.”

– Lise Betteridge, Ontario

After a year of preparation and development facilitated by strategic planning consultant Paul Meyer of Tecker International, the ASWB Board of Directors and ASWB staff were ready to introduce the new 2019–2021 Strategic Framework for a vote of affirmation at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in San Antonio, Texas. The presentation was given from the floor of the delegate assembly—not from the stage—to reflect the grassroots approach used to arrive at the three goals the organization will pursue over the next three years. President Tim Brown reviewed the Values, Mission, and Vision that form the foundation of the framework, and three teams of a Board member and an ASWB staff member presented the goals.

Goal 1 – Advance knowledge and acceptance of social work as a licensed profession

Goal statement: The social work community and the public understand that a license is the legal

Attendees at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly got a first look at the draft of the 2019–2021 Strategic Framework before affirming it by electronic voting.
Board member Harold Dean of Arkansas and ASWB CEO Mary Jo Monahan explained the rationale behind this goal and its strategic objectives. Dean and Monahan noted that in implementing this goal, ASWB will focus on social workers and aspiring social workers from a new perspective that includes the entirety of their career—not just the entry point of licensure. In addition, the goal calls for awareness-raising of consumers of social work services to seek out licensed professionals.

As envisioned in the strategic objectives, ASWB will support the efforts of social workers to “get licensed and live licensed” and assist the public in their search for licensed professionals by:

- Decreasing the number of social work licensure exemptions
- Increasing collaboration with social work educators to accept regulation of professional social workers
- Educating legislative stakeholders to increase their acceptance of the importance of social work regulation for public protection

“As long as exemptions remain in regulatory laws and rules,” said Monahan, “we are not licensing all social workers, and we truly are not ‘protecting the public’ from harm.” Currently 40 U.S. jurisdictions exempt social workers from licensure in some jobs, and 46 exempt nonprofessionals such as students, clergy, and qualified other professionals.

Ways that ASWB can accomplish these objectives include expanding the Path to Licensure program for social work educators and encouraging educators to use the Licensing and Regulation Curricular Guide newly published by the Council on Social Work Education and sponsored by ASWB and NASW Insurance Company, RRG. By developing their “social work regulation stories,” said Dean, member boards can “make the case for maintaining the regulation of the social work profession … and educate legislative stakeholders on the purpose of regulating social work professionals.”

Goal 2 – Facilitate mobility by licensure through endorsement

Goal statement: ASWB’s mobility implementation process allows a licensed or registered social worker in good standing in one jurisdiction to practice in other jurisdictions without having to undergo significant additional training, experience, examinations, or assessments.

Board secretary Lisa Crockwell of Newfoundland and Labrador and ASWB Director of Member Services Jennifer Henkel introduced the three objectives for this goal, which extends ASWB’s commitment to achieve social work practice mobility and license portability from the previous strategic plan.

- Develop and maintain processes and data systems that are used by members to support social work practice mobility
- Collaborate to protect the public by accepting that the knowledge, skills, and abilities of licensed social workers needed to perform the scope of practice are equivalent across jurisdictions
- Educate social workers and the public about rights and responsibilities related to how and where social work practice occurs

Henkel described current services in place for members and future services to be developed, including the new IT platform, ASWBCentral, that will improve user experiences for ASWB staff, exam candidates, license applicants, member boards, and social workers. SocialWorkPRO will be the integrated and outward facing component of ASWBCentral that meets the needs of ASWB members and customers. According to Henkel, “PROfile is the [Social Work] Registry reimagined. By using the portals and personal records that are set up in SocialWorkPRO, all application materials may be stored and transmitted for jurisdictional board review.”

Crockwell reminded members of their acceptance of the Mobility Resolution and strategy at the 2017 annual meeting, which established consistent standards of three license categories and four criteria. She added that the licensure by endorsement amendments to the Model Social Work Practice Act proposed by the 2018 Regulation and Standards Committee will help jurisdictional boards more efficiently process additional licenses for current licensees in good standing in their originating jurisdictions.
According to both, the third objective will require a strong public education component to get important information widely disseminated and “will cover the who, the how, the where, and the why of social work licensure so that the public, including social workers, legislators, regulators, and consumers better understand licensing and registration.”

The three objectives that will help ASWB achieve this goal are:

- Develop and manage a library of research to benefit the social work regulatory community
- Conduct and commission regulatory research and collaborate with other researchers
- Develop and provide useful information to member boards and the social work regulatory community in pursuit of best practices for public protection

Comer explained that ASWB has taken the activities of the Foundation in house and will commit staff and necessary resources to gather existing research and support the creation of new research. “We want others to recognize ASWB as a valuable source of knowledge and come to the library seeking information,” she said.

In addition, it is anticipated that research could be commissioned in support of members’ requests. While one ASWB staff member currently conducts research for members, Hymans noted, ASWB may need to add to staff time or create additional resources for monitoring the regulatory environment to make sure members have the best information.

Goal 3 – Curate research for best practices in regulation

Goal statement: ASWB is the conduit for and repository of quality research about best practices in social work regulation.

Immediate past president M. Jenise Comer of Missouri and ASWB Chief Operating Officer Dwight Hymans presented the last goal, which is related to regulatory research. As explained by Hymans, the goal extends the research efforts that ASWB started with its 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to regulatory research, the American Foundation for Research and Consumer Education in Social Work Regulation. According to Hymans, “This particular goal of the framework builds on that initial goal and is intended to reinvigorate work in these very necessary areas.”

Delegate Doc Davis of Arizona made the motion to affirm the 2019–2021 Strategic Framework and it was seconded by Delegate Richard Gregory of Alberta. The discussion that followed contained both praise for the process and recognition that the goals and objectives may pose challenges.

Guylaine Ouimette, Québec delegate, was first to offer her congratulations “on the work and the presentation of the strategy framework. It's really clear that your objectives are very well targeted, and it's really inspiring.”

Pat McKernan of the New Jersey board expressed concern about the goal related to social work practice mobility because equivalency of experience is not yet recognized across jurisdictions and is “something that New Jersey will have to consider and work with other boards to recognize, but I just need to... bring that to everyone's attention.” Her concerns were met with recognition by other members.
that achieving the goal would be challenging but also with encouragement, as Board member Robert Payne of Idaho said, “Take from this document and see what you can do at home. … We have work to do in our own jurisdictions.”

Kim Madsen of California, who served on the Mobility Task Force also acknowledged McKernan’s concerns: “I appreciate the angst in having to open up your laws and your regulations, but if we're going to move forward with portability and serving those underserved populations, we really need to give portability a strong, strong consideration.”

As the final voice closing discussion, COO Hymans reminded members that ASWB staff were ready to “back you up and support you as well, so let us know how we can do that as you try to move forward with our strategic plan as well, in your particular jurisdictions. We're here for you.”

President Brown then called for the vote, which overwhelmingly passed. The 2019–2021 Strategic Framework was affirmed on Saturday, November 17, to cheers and applause.