

## **Committee on Public Affairs and Public Relations**

### Report to the ACS Board of Directors

The Board Standing Committee on Public Affairs and Public Relations (PA&PR) met on June 3, 2016 in Puerto Rico. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Committee members, gave an overview of the meeting agenda, reviewed Committee reference materials in the agenda book, and in his Chair's report highlighted several items:

- Status of the reauthorization of the Toxic Substances Control Act, which included an update provided by ACS staff
- ACS support for the World Conference of Science Journalists meeting – October 26-30, 2017
- Review of Capitol Hill advocacy activities – Congressional Visits Day - April 12 & 13; ACS Legislative Summit – April 19 & 20; and DOE Lab Day – April 19
- Kick-off of the Congressional Chemistry Caucus – April 27
- ACS involvement with the Alan Alda Flame Challenge Award Ceremony (June 5) and the World Science Festival (June 1-5), both taking place in New York City
- ACS support for the visit to the U.S. of a delegation of Cuban chemists– June 28 & 29

**Approval of Minutes** - The Committee **VOTED** to adopt the minutes of the March 3, 2016 meeting.

**ACS Science & Human Rights Portfolio** - The Chair reported on the transfer of the ACS Science & Human Rights portfolio to the Committee from the Board Standing Committee on Professional & Member Relations as a result of the Board's governance agility review.

The Chair highlighted several key documents governing ACS review and involvement in human rights cases and turned the presentation over to Dr. Dorothy Phillips, who serves as the Board human rights liaison for a review of how ACS becomes involved with human rights cases.

Dr. Phillips reviewed the steps used to evaluate human rights cases to determine if ACS involvement is appropriate, outlined current cases in which ACS is involved and monitoring, identified organizations with which ACS works cooperatively in the human rights science arena, and concluded with a review of outreach she has conducted in webinars, national meeting symposia, and C&EN Comments.

**Public Perception of Chemistry** - The Chair led this agenda item by summarizing Committee involvement with this topic over the last three meetings and asked ACS staff to report on follow-up items the Committee assigned at its March 2016 meeting.

Staff recapped the Committee assignment from the March meeting, which was largely a decision not to pursue a large-scale survey of ACS members and the public regarding their perception of chemistry, but to focus instead on helping create awareness and use of the many Society tools and resources designed to help them engage productively with the public and media. Staff outlined both near-term and longer-term methods to engage with members, including use of the ACS Insight Lab (2016) and the ACS membership survey (2017).

Staff continued with a presentation on three communication panels they are helping organize and participate in at the August 2016 national meeting in Philadelphia and concluded with a review of an ACS funding grant submission to The Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation. This invited submission is focused on several high-level concepts targeting enhanced public appreciation for chemistry and

chemists' ability to communicate with the public. The Foundation will be considering the ACS submission at its July 2016 meeting.

**National Historic Chemical Landmark Nomination** - The Chair advised the Committee that the PA&PR Subcommittee on National Historic Chemical Landmarks (NHCL) has approved and forwarded a nomination submitted by the ACS North Jersey Section recognizing Merck's discovery and development of the drug Mectizan to treat river blindness. The Chair called on ACS staff to provide the overview of the nomination for the Committee.

ACS staff, prior to discussing the nomination, called attention to the new NHCL subcommittee chair and members as well as the three upcoming NHCL designations scheduled for 2016. ACS staff then presented the Mectizan nomination, and the Committee VOTED unanimously to approve it as a NHCL.

**Green/Sustainable Chemistry Case Study** - The Chair introduced a new approach (essentially a case study) to the Committee's consideration of policy statement topics that expands the discussion to a more holistic examination of how the ACS Office of Public Affairs interacts with other Society units to achieve objectives within those policy statements.

ACS staff used the advancement of green and sustainable chemistry as the basis for the case study and reviewed OPA's work with ACS staff units, ACS members, and several peer organizations. Staff structured the case study by examining message development based on Committee-approved policy statements; tailoring that messaging to address several distinct audiences; translating the messaging into legislative advocacy; working with the U.S. Government Accountability Office and the National Science Foundation; engaging in outreach to the chemistry community and media; and empowering ACS members to become involved in the promotion of green and sustainable chemistry to a variety of audiences.

Committee members commended the cross-functional approach taken and expressed support for this approach being the norm rather than the exception at ACS. Staff committed to using this approach more frequently and to involving the Committee during the policy statement prioritization process in identifying opportunities for cross-Society collaboration.

**Public Policy Statements** - The Chair outlined for the Committee the policy statement tasks that will need to be addressed at its December 2016 meeting. ACS staff discussed ongoing efforts initiated by the Chair to engage and encourage relevant ACS policy committees in providing input into the development of the biennial ACS Public Policy Priorities (PPP) statement. The Chair indicated that the Committee would examine input received and have its own discussion on the PPP at its August 2016 meeting. The Committee also was updated on the nine statements expiring at the end of 2016 and on the next steps to renew or sunset them.

**New Business** - The issue of whether ACS ought to move more towards characterizing its scope of interest as "molecular science" rather than "chemistry" was raised, recognizing that such a shift would influence the contents of public relations pieces produced by OPA. Because such a shift would have a much broader impact on ACS operations the topic was referred to the full Board for future consideration.

### **Adjournment**

There being no additional business, the Committee adjourned at 10:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. John Adams, Chair