

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 virtually on March 20, 2017. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming new and returning Committee members, reviewed the agenda, and highlighted several upcoming events of interest to the Committee:

- **Senate Chemistry Caucus** – The Caucus will be kicked off on March 29 at an evening reception with the bipartisan group of Senators creating the Caucus along with ACS, the American Chemistry Council, and the National Association of Chemical Distributors.
- **March for Science** – ACS announced its support for the March for Science on March 15, 2017. A press release was issued along with communications to ACS members, local section and division chairs, and councilors. The March coincides with the annual ACS Chemists Celebrate Earth Day event.
- **ACS Legislative Summit** – will be held on April 25 & 26 in Washington, DC and will have the participation of 11 ACS Board members, a past ACS president, and an ACS Expert.
- **National Historic Chemical Landmark designations** – two events are upcoming:
 - April 18 -- designation of CFCs & Ozone, UC Irvine
 - May 15 – designation of Mars Mariner infrared spectrometer, UC Berkeley

The Chair concluded opening remarks by highlighting several items behind Tab 1 of the agenda book:

- PA&PR Committee Information Sheet
- Message points for communicating with policymakers on ACS top-tier policy priorities
- Snapshot of Governance Advocacy
- Chart of major ACS coalitions and partnerships associated with policy statements
- Federal legislation tracking chart

Approval of Minutes There being no additions or corrections to the minutes of the December 1, 2016 meeting as distributed, the minutes were APPROVED without objection.

ACS Public Policy Statement Prioritization

The Chair introduced the annual exercise to prioritize individual ACS public policy statements and thanked committee members for submitting their input via a survey instrument.

ACS staff presented the background for the prioritization process and explained how the committee's input helps set the ACS advocacy agenda. Based on survey input received from both PA&PR members and EA&C staff, policy statements were put into four tiers. The committee reviewed each tier, discussed the statements proposed for inclusion in each tier, and in two cases revised the statement ordering.

After discussion, the committee **VOTED** to approve the advocacy prioritization for 2017.

External Affairs & Communications

The Committee received an update from staff about the December 2016 creation of the External Affairs & Communications (EA&C) unit in the Office of the Secretary and General Counsel. EA&C combined the government affairs and communications functions of the former Office of Public Affairs with the Office of International Activities, formerly located in the Membership division. A new Domestic Outreach & Alliances function was also added to the new unit. The Chair and committee members wished the new unit success in all of its undertakings on behalf of the Society.

New Administration & Congressional Outlook

Staff provided Committee members with an overview of the 115th Congress' agenda, the ACS strategy to engage with the new Congress, the establishment of a Senate Chemistry Caucus, the agenda for the 2017 ACS Legislative Summit, the status of the Administration's filling of key cabinet and senior science positions, and the President's FY18 budget outline. A key theme of the staff presentations was the continued uncertainty as to funding for key science agencies in FY18 as well as when nearly 50 key federal science agency positions might be filled.

Chemical Weapons Task Group Report

The Chair recapped his convening of a working group in December 2016 charged with delineating the appropriate ACS response to recent evidence of the deployment of chemical weapons in various conflicts around the world, a response which might include lending the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) its technical expertise to ensure that chemicals are not being weaponized. The Chair gave an overview of the working group's report and its various recommendations. The Chair discussed a timely request received from OPCW requesting ACS and the American Chemistry Council to organize a technical workshop on chlorine for its staff, the workshop to be held at The Hague this spring. Thematically, the workshop is in line with recommendations of the working group. Based on the PA&PR discussion, the Chair indicated that he would ask the working group to continue refining its work and specifically request that they set priorities among their recommendations and identify metrics that would measure progress toward reaching their targeted outcomes.

Human Rights Report

ACS Board member Dorothy Phillips provided the Committee with an update on her recent activities in her role as the Board's human rights representative, including a visit to the United Nations (UN) and attendance at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) "Science and Human Rights Coalition Meeting". She also provided an overview of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Communications Update

ACS staff provided the Committee with updates on an agreement with PBS Digital Studios and on the Embargoed Content program with the ACS Publication division. ACS entered into an innovative agreement with PBS Digital Studios whereby they are starting to market ACS videos on their YouTube site that has 10 million+ subscribers and 915 million+ content views. The agreement will bring ACS-generated content to even higher levels of public viewership. The Embargoed Content program is being expanded from four to seven ACS journals in an effort to build on current publicity success by securing even greater media attention to research published in ACS journals.

Adjournment

There being no old or new business, the Committee adjourned at 3:55 PM (ET).

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. John Adams, Chair