

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
February 2 – 4, 2010
Washington, D.C.**

**Proposal to Create a Committee of Past Presidents
(Prepared by Past Presidents Elizabeth Adkins [2006-2007],
Frank Boles [2008-2009], and Mark Greene [2007-2008])**

BACKGROUND

Recent past presidents of the Society have experience and information that would be of considerable value to SAA officers, Council members, and the executive director. Unfortunately SAA has no formal mechanism through which the opinion(s) of recent past presidents can be formally sought or through which recent past presidents can easily offer collective advice and counsel on Society matters that they believe are important.

DISCUSSION

Because of the post in which they have served, past presidents of the Society are particularly well positioned to know the circumstances and background regarding issues that the Society has faced and the rationale underlying past decisions. This information forms a valuable resource; however, SAA lacks a formal means through which to call upon this resource. The creation of a Committee of Past Presidents would provide a mechanism through which the advice and counsel of past presidents could be sought and through which, on occasion, the past presidents might choose to offer formal advice and counsel.

The nature of the presidency also gives past presidents a unique insight into the services that individuals have given to the Society. We believe it would be advisable for this insight to be shared in the form of advice to the Nominating Committee regarding individuals whom the committee may solicit to run for office.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the SAA Council create a new standing committee, the Committee of Past Presidents, with the following charge and description:

I. Purpose

The Committee of Past Presidents (COPP) serves as an advisory board by addressing issues that its members believe are of importance to the Society or which they are asked to address by the current president. It also serves in an advisory capacity to the Nominating Committee.

II. Committee Selection, Size, and Length of Terms

The Committee of Past Presidents consists of the three immediate past presidents of the Society. The past president who has most recently held the office of president serves as chair.

III. Duties and Responsibilities

- A. The committee serves as an advisory body to the current president, responding to such inquiries as may be directed to it. Such inquiries may encompass any issues of significance to the Society for which the recent governance experience or other professional expertise of committee members is relevant. With the consent of the current president, the committee may consult directly with the executive director.
- B. The committee may periodically approach the current president on issues that committee members feel it would be wise to discuss. In this role, the committee may simply suggest the importance of a particular issue, or it may present anything from an informal thought piece to a more formal white paper to a request for Council action.
- C. The committee serves as an advisory body to the Nominating Committee, with particular interest regarding individuals suggested as nominees for the positions of vice president, treasurer, and member of Council. The purpose of this advisory capacity is to help ensure that broad representation of the Society's institutional memory be brought to bear on potential nominations.

IV. Reporting Procedures

The committee will report to the president on an as-needed basis. The committee will annually consult with the chair of the Nominating Committee regarding nominees and offer such advice as it deems helpful or as is requested by the Nominating Committee.

In order to retain familiarity with SAA issues, the committee members will have access to information identical to that of seated Council members. On certain occasions, either the current president or the committee will request committee access to information shared in Council executive sessions. Granting such requests will be the privilege of the Council sitting in executive session.

Support Statement: Past SAA presidents possess substantial, important, and unique pieces of SAA's institutional memory. Creation of the Committee of Past Presidents provides an institutional mechanism through which current leaders and decision makers in the Society may have ready access to the institutional knowledge found among past presidents.

Fiscal Impact: None.