

WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Subject: B-2 WSMA House of Delegates

Introduced by: Yakima County Medical Society

WHEREAS, in 2009, the WSMA commissioned the Rona Consulting Group to review the efficiency of its governance structure. The resulting Rona Report criticized the structure of the House of Delegates, but was never adopted by the HOD as WSMA policy<sup>1 2</sup>; and

WHEREAS, at the 2015 House of Delegates, the Bylaws Committee proposed **Report B - Determination of WSMA Policies**, a Bylaws Amendment:

*Article VII, Section 1. House of Delegates. All powers of this Association shall be vested in the House of Delegates, except as provided in Article XII, which shall have authority to determine the policies of this Association, **including ratification of policies presented to it by the Board of Trustees. Any policies not ratified by the House of Delegates shall expire at the close of the meeting of the House of Delegates.** The House of Delegates shall be vested with all other powers of this Association including, but not limited to, the power to amend the Bylaws, and elect the officers and the elected committee members....*

This amendment was not adopted, and in the general session, there was a long and thoughtful discussion of the disadvantages of the proposed restructuring.<sup>3</sup>, and

n B-2 – Authorization to Establish WSMA Policy was passed by the House of Delegate, and stated that “the WSMA Bylaws Committee shall propose amendments to WSMA bylaws to grant authority to the Board of Trustees to adopt policies for the WSMA, subject to ratification by the House of Delegates...”<sup>4</sup>, and

WHEREAS, the July 2015 WSMA Reports, and the 2015 Report of the Bylaws Committee to the House of Delegates incorrectly stated that 2014 HOD Resolution B-2 “formalizes the authority of the WSMA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees to establish WSMA policy, subject to later ratification.”<sup>5</sup>, and

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<sup>1</sup> **Rona Consulting Group Report**

[https://www.wsma.org/doc\\_library/Education/AnnualMeeting/2016/Rona\\_white\\_paper.pdf](https://www.wsma.org/doc_library/Education/AnnualMeeting/2016/Rona_white_paper.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> **Executive Committee Report G (A-12)**

[https://wsma.org/doc\\_library/Education/AnnualMeeting/2012/EC\\_ReportG\\_2012.pdf](https://wsma.org/doc_library/Education/AnnualMeeting/2012/EC_ReportG_2012.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> **Actions of WSMA House of Delegates (archive)**

[https://www.wsma.org/doc\\_library/AboutWSMA/TheOrganization/HouseOfDelegates/HOD\\_2015\\_official\\_actions\\_final.pdf](https://www.wsma.org/doc_library/AboutWSMA/TheOrganization/HouseOfDelegates/HOD_2015_official_actions_final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> **Actions of WSMA House of Delegates (archive)**

[https://www.wsma.org/doc\\_library/AboutWSMA/TheOrganization/HouseOfDelegates/HOD\\_2014\\_official\\_actions\\_final.pdf](https://www.wsma.org/doc_library/AboutWSMA/TheOrganization/HouseOfDelegates/HOD_2014_official_actions_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> **Proposed Amendments to the WSMA Bylaws - 2015.** WSMA Reports, July, 2015.

[https://wsma.org/doc\\_library/ForMembers/WSMAReports/WSMA%20Reports%2007%20July15.pdf](https://wsma.org/doc_library/ForMembers/WSMAReports/WSMA%20Reports%2007%20July15.pdf)

WHEREAS, immediately after the 2015 HOD, the WSMA Executive Committee posted harsh criticism of the HOD structure on the WSMA website, and requested input from WSMA members.<sup>6</sup> The current House of Delegates structure was characterized as a barrier to “broader input on policy decisions”, “representational governance”, and “inclusiveness”. Unfortunately, none of the input from the HOD session was posted, so members had no access to those remarks.<sup>7</sup>, and

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<sup>6</sup> **WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 2015 OPEN FORUM ON GOVERNANCE**

[https://wsma.org/doc\\_library/Education/AnnualMeeting/2015/EC\\_Open\\_Forum\\_Report.pdf](https://wsma.org/doc_library/Education/AnnualMeeting/2015/EC_Open_Forum_Report.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> **Open Forum on Governance**

[https://wsma.org/wcm/The\\_Organization/Open\\_Forum\\_on\\_Governance/WSMA\\_Governance\\_Reports/wcm/AboutWSMA/TheOrganization/Governance\\_Reports/WSMA\\_Governance\\_Reports.aspx?hkey=e123e014-b871-407b-a24f-1a779956f7f0](https://wsma.org/wcm/The_Organization/Open_Forum_on_Governance/WSMA_Governance_Reports/wcm/AboutWSMA/TheOrganization/Governance_Reports/WSMA_Governance_Reports.aspx?hkey=e123e014-b871-407b-a24f-1a779956f7f0)

WHEREAS, at the January 2016 Board of Trustees meeting, a new plan for restructuring the House of Delegates was proposed, including the assertion that these changes could be implemented without a Bylaws Amendment.

Therefore, be it ...

RESOLVED, that WSMA recognizes that the HOD is the policy-making body of the organization (reaffirm WSMA Bylaws), and be it further

RESOLVED, that WSMA leadership will not attempt to restructure the HOD without authorization from a Bylaws Amendment (reaffirm WSMA Bylaws), and be it further

RESOLVED, that WSMA shall regularly poll their entire membership regarding member concerns and facilitate member discussion on the WSMA website. (Directive to Take Action)

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Comments for Virtual Reference Committee (online)

This is a disturbing election year, in which we are probably all thinking about the rules and challenges of elected representative governance. And we can think about how general principles apply to WSMA, its Bylaws, and its House of Delegates.

WSMA does not have representative governance. The Nominating Committee presents a single slate of candidates for all offices. That slate is usually “rubber stamped” by the House of Delegates, and the candidates do not even articulate their program priorities. The Nominating Committee is headed by the Past-President and other members are appointed by the current President; their program priorities are also not transparent.

Judicial Council members are appointed by the President. Reference Committee members are appointed by the Speaker of the House. Consequently, all positions which can influence what WSMA **actually does** are controlled by a small, self-perpetuating circle of Executive Committee members, and some of the Trustees.

The Rona Report endorses inner circle control and states, “WSMA members who have a limited view of the big picture may disagree if the organization takes a position that seems detrimental to physicians in the short term, but supports the greater good long-term.” (page 25). Even more strangely, on page 23, there is a graphic which characterizes the “Board and House of Delegates” as “Authoritarian”, and the “Staff and Executive Committee” as “Democratic”.

We know from US history and our current election campaigns, that representative democracy is imperfect, messy, and often contentious. We accept these challenges as an inescapable consequence of including many voices in deciding what action “supports the greater good long-term”. The proposed restructure of the House of Delegates is not going to make WSMA more representative of the concerns of working physicians, it will further weaken the only outside voices that WSMA currently has.

To tie “Reference Committees” to the BOT meeting schedule promotes dominance by the same inner circle. To limit the House of Delegates to a few hours, reduces it to a rubber stamp.

In the age of electronic polling, the current structure of the House of Delegates is not a barrier to understanding member concerns.



