

PRESIDENT'S MEMO

APRIL 18, 2009

Greetings,

Here is a short recap of the SPJ board action from Saturday, April 18.

Budget

The board approved a budget that spends about \$1.6 million and projects a \$30,000 surplus at the end of the year. We have added categories to the Mark of Excellence Awards in hopes of adding entries. Quill magazine will be printed six times instead of nine, saving about \$40,000

We are also going to replace the roof at the headquarters in Indianapolis, sharing the cost with the SDX Foundation. Revenue projections are based on membership levels of 8,200. We are at 8,500 this week. Membership is about 32 percent of our revenue.

New chapters

The board admitted five new chapters to the Society. This is very exciting. Please welcome Angelo State, Butler University, Harding University, Northern Kentucky University and Western Michigan University campus chapters.

Relief for laid off journalists

The board approved a six-month extension for existing members who have lost their jobs. The offer is good for the next year. This will help journalists who have been laid off to maintain their SPJ memberships while they transition to their next job. Quill will be sent digitally to members who apply for this option. Look for more details in the coming weeks.

2010 Convention

We are going to Las Vegas. We had a successful convention there in 2005 and we plan to return in 2010. The convention will probably take place in early October. The board also considered New Orleans. Hotel rates are expected to be under \$150 a night. The conference was originally scheduled for New York in 2010 but the board rescinded that when it became clear travel and hotel costs would be too expensive for members.

2011 Convention

SPJ plans to pursue the concept of a joint convention with the Radio Television News Directors Association in 2011. Both organizations have a goal of creating a giant professional development conference that might some day include additional partners. The partnership provides the opportunity for more participants, better room and meal rates. It also ends the need to compete for speakers, fundraising and attendance with another large organization.

It is important to note that both organizations will keep any traditions they have in this new setup. We would still have the President's Installation Dinner, the LDF auction and the Mark of Excellence Awards. Our business meetings would still be conducted.

The board rescinded its plan to have the convention in San Francisco in 2011 so it could work on a location that is suitable for both SPJ and RTNDA.

Fairness Doctrine

The board took a position in opposition to the Fairness Doctrine. No bill exists but there has been discussion. The organization opposes government intervention in speech and journalism ethics. A number of people have been contacting us asking what our position is on this issue. We will post a statement on the web site next week. The Fairness Doctrine was originally put in place in 1949 and required anyone with a broadcasting license to provide both sides of any controversial issue. The FCC repealed it in 1987.

We believe that the Fairness Doctrine is an attempt to regulate speech.

Branding statement

The Public Outreach committee was asked to recommend a branding statement that can be used as a slogan internally and externally. The board approved the slogan, "Fighting for your right to know, one story at a time."

This will complement and not replace the "Improving and Protecting Journalism" that is now being used. It will start gradually making its way onto our promotional materials during the next few weeks.

Chapter reports

A recommendation to put before the delegates a plan to remove from the bylaws the annual report requirement was rejected. The regional directors are working on improving the current system to rate student and campus chapters.

Shield law

SPJ has scheduled July 13-15 as its annual trip to Washington D.C. to talk to congress about issues important to journalists. More information will come out later on how board members and committee leaders can take part if they are interested.

Improved digital communications

The Digital Media Committee recommended SPJ improve its blog system, engage more in social networking opportunities and put all digital tools in one place on the web site. All of these things are in the process of happening in the next year.

Strategic plan

The board is still committed to the strategic plan approved in 2007. It met for about an hour Saturday to talk about the next steps in meeting the goals of the plan.

Dave Aeikens

President

Society of Professional Journalists