

To: ALSC Executive Committee

From: Aimee Strittmatter, ALSC Executive Director

RE: Clarification language around frequency of service on award committees, Notable Children's Books, and Wilder.

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## **Background**

The frequency of service on award committees is set and defined by the ALSC bylaws.

*Article VIII: Committees, Sec. f) No individual may serve on either Batchelder Award, Caldecott Award, Geisel Award, Newbery Award, Sibert Award, Wilder Award or Notable Children's Books Committees more often than once every four years. The four year period shall begin from the last year of the term of service regardless of length of term. This guideline will apply to Batchelder Award, Caldecott Award, Geisel Award, Newbery Award, Sibert Award, Wilder Award or Notable Children's Books Committees only. This guideline will not apply to the selection of nominees for Chair. This guideline will not apply to other ALSC committees.*

Over one-quarter of ALSC's total members (1,015) voted in the 2009 election with 92.3% in favor of adopting the current language (noted above), which was expanded to include **all** ALSC-only administered awards and the Notable Children's Books committee. The rationale provided to members in advance of the vote was, "The proliferation of awards in recent years affords ALSC the enviable position of providing more opportunities to attract, develop, and encourage members to become part of some of our most public work. This motion speaks to the need to involve as many members as possible in award committees and to honor all awards equally by creating a standard term of service. The more opportunities there are to include more members to take an active part, the more appealing our organization becomes."

## **Current Issue**

While it is most desirable to afford as many opportunities to as many members as possible, in practice, ALSC leadership has found the parameters of this frequency policy to be problematic in cases where there is a need to make a mid-term replacement due to a member withdrawing from the committee because of personal reasons or a conflict of interest. The appointment process is not a nimble one. There are many considerations taken into account in order to balance a committee's makeup. Some, but not all of these include: expertise, access to materials, diversity in all aspects (ethnicity, gender, age, type of profession, geographical location, etc.), and commitment to ALSC and its mission. Researching potential members and vetting for eligibility take time. Including members who have served in the last two- or three-year period expands the pool of experienced alternates available for consideration in a situation where time is of the essence.

Another aspect to consider is the support and engagement of members willing to step up and fill a need. A mid-year replacement member may be subject to challenges when entering a cohort that has already established a rapport, and someone who has recently served may more easily integrate into an

established committee, and be up to date on recent interpretations. In addition, after serving the abbreviated term, the replacement member must wait another four years before being eligible to serve a full term, which can feel punitive. It may be desirable to engage someone who has recently concluded committee service—someone recent to the eligibility waiting list, having had a full-term experience. Does the current practice short-change a replacement member who has been waiting for many years to serve and deter future engagement?

Association governance best practice indicates bylaws should not be the organization's operational manual.

Article by Venable, LLP (a legal firm specializing in non-profit clients)

<https://www.venable.com/SnapshotFiles/a9acafa5-11aa-4faf-ad88-e49127f6cef2/Subscriber.snapshot?clid=c2d1036d-648d-4bf6-9ef1-4e6f4e391844> Note: Keep bylaws current, flexible, and leave the details for policies.

Article written by leading association governance consultants Glenn H. Tecker and Paul Meyer:

[http://apps.prsa.org/Intelligence/Tactics/Articles/view/7436/101/Evolving\\_association\\_governance\\_for\\_the\\_21st\\_centu#.WnOYKWfzIBM](http://apps.prsa.org/Intelligence/Tactics/Articles/view/7436/101/Evolving_association_governance_for_the_21st_centu#.WnOYKWfzIBM) Note statement: "In addition, bylaws include mechanisms that allow associations to change as their members change so the structure and process of governance supports — rather than obstructs — decision and work systems. Bylaws must allow organizational change to keep pace with change in the profession. Overly prescriptive and complex bylaws thwart necessary change."

### **Recommendation**

It is suggested that the Board approve an operational practice, disclosed in the Policy for Service on Award Committees, Policy for Service on Notable Committees, and Policy for Service on the Wilder Committee, that allows for flexibility and latitude in making mid-year appointments. Such language could be, "Additionally, in the event that an emergency, mid-year replacement appointment must be made, the four-year rule may be suspended, providing the appointing officer the necessary flexibility and a greater pool of experienced candidates.