

General Responses to individual statements of Board members

This will respond generally to the statements taken together, and separately to each of the statements from the four members of the Board voting for removal. Other documents respond more directly to the issues raised, one briefly, another in greater detail.

General Comment

The statements made are not constructively responsive to the question of why this action was taken. Yes, we are all interested in the reasons for believing the President should be removed. But the more important elements are:

Why the immediacy? Was there a danger so great that not even a few days transition were possible? That is of far greater interest than any putative misdeeds.

Why the secrecy? Secrecy suggests fear of discovery. What was the fear?

Why the unwillingness to hear debate? Perhaps because the coalition was not strong enough to stand up to reasoned thinking. Perhaps a simple declaration of power and the will to use it. Whatever the reason, it was an abrogation of democratic process. Perhaps they don't feel democratic process should apply. If so, that should be stated clearly.

It is a common error to believe that democracy is the rule of the majority. This is erroneous thinking. Democracy is the guarantee of power to the minorities, not the power to rule, but the power to know, to debate, to influence, and otherwise limit the natural power of the majority.

Some may claim that democratic process has no place in governing the behavior of a corporate Board. In many corporations, that argument may well hold up. In a membership organization however, I would maintain strongly that it does not. The question is whether the chapters and members have the right to know what their representatives are doing, and why they propose to do it, and the opportunity to register their opinions on significant actions before they are taken.

Ultimately, this is a far more serious question than whether I am President, or who is on the Board.

Response to Bob O'Malley' statement

This is the lengthiest and broadest reaching. However, the assertions made are mostly not supported by facts as I understand them. Where they are supported, I have stated so. In one case the assertion (intent to declare APGA illegitimate) is directly contradicted by numerous emails to the Board. That assertion projects an intention obnoxious to American pros, and so does actual damage to the AGA by creating an atmosphere of distrust in a valuable and valued relationship. It should be retracted.

In my responses directed at issues raised, I roughly follow the course of this statement, as its assertions cover all the issues raised in the other statements.

Response to John Stephenson's statement

This is quite clear, and the broad outlines of your statement regarding the E-Journal reporting are true; but there are significant discrepancies in the details, some of which are absent or misrepresented. (addressed below) From past conversations, it is clear that this event was a turning point for you, and I think, for others as well. As such, it deserves some additional context.

You and I are in sharp disagreement about the degree of independence the Journal should have, and we had debated the issue previously. You feel the Board has an absolute right to control the content of the E-Journal, and have no hesitation about exercising that right. I feel that while the legal right of a corporation

in this regard is generally not questionable, in a membership organization, the Journal must be allowed to print legitimate news, particularly news related to the workings and activities of its leadership. That would not apply to editorial content, or information unrelated to AGA or go, so this is not a freedom of press issue. Rather it is independence of the press from influence and control over the information chapters and members need to assess the actions of people elected to serve them. I raise the issue here to make the point that you at least, were fully aware of my opinion on this issue. In a sharply divided and divisive situation, where absolutely clear instructions were obviously necessary, it was incumbent on you to make known the need for an explicit instruction in this regard. Apparently, you did not, and Dave Weimer's message to me reflected that, in the sense that it conveyed a wish that the matter be handled in a low key manner.

A miscalculation of this magnitude, requires multiple errors. One is not enough. Both Dave Weimer and I immediately acknowledged our part in this matter and repeat that acknowledgement in the current context. To summarize: the Board could have voted the issues clearly in my presence. John could have said "Dave, Chris will let the Journal publish this unless we tell him clearly not to". Dave could have conveyed that more strongly than asking us to "low ball it.". I could have asked Dave what exactly was meant by "low ball". Chris Garlock could have told me and/or the board in advance that he planned to run it. I could have asked him to notify me of his decision before publication. None of us did any of those things; any one of which would have led to clear communications, debate, and resolution; which would have averted the subsequent distress.

Response to David Dinhofer's statement

You raise the general issue of, "If the President chooses not to follow the board's direction, then the President should be removed", as your reason for voting my removal. But you refuse to provide additional detail out of a "sense of honor and fair play". We can only guess to what you refer. Presumably not the Journal management issue, as that is certainly out in the open already and could be referenced easily. However, since there were very few actual, explicit instructions, I assume you refer to various ideas propounded at one time or another by individual Board members. Obviously, a President cannot simply accede to the wishes of any Board member at any time. The wish is only too likely to conflict with those of other members not present at the moment. Normally, there is consensus, and the word of the Chair or other members is enough to establish agreement that the will of the Board is understood. That is not the case when opinions all around are sharply divided. Everything I read points to the conclusion that "failure to follow Board direction" actually means "failure to follow the ideas of one Director".

You say we talked at the Congress, and that in view of the failed "no confidence" vote, there should have been no surprise at the current action of the four members to remove me. Contrary to your statement here, you told me explicitly that you expected me to be out before the end of the year. I received reports from others that I was not the only person told that. You say the no confidence vote should have alerted everyone that there were concerns by the Board. Hardly everyone: it was unannounced, unpublished, and unrecorded. How was "everyone" alerted? I would think that those proposing it would have been alerted that their views were not shared by the rest of the Board, and acted accordingly. The normal action for a Board to take in such circumstances is to find a compromise message more acceptable to all, which does in fact convey the level of concern. This did not happen, though the Chair did suggest that I write a letter indicating how I would act to prevent such misunderstandings in the future. That was provided shortly thereafter.

Regarding surprise at my removal: I thought something might happen shortly after the Congress. However, I felt that if the move were not made quickly, the awkwardness of doing so using a lame duck vote would inhibit such action. Thus the surprise was at the delay, not the action itself. In addition, I never considered the possibility that the whole process would occur in secret, not only from myself, but the other members of the Board, and the officers of the corporation, and then rammed through without debate. Clearly, the purpose was to prevent debate, avoid the possibility of hearing outside opinion, and present the membership with a fait accompli. This ploy was obviously successful. But it is also the cause of the current upheaval of disagreement. The issue is not my presidency, but your method of terminating it.

Response to Chendao Lin's statement

You apparently claim that you did not “act deliberately and secretly and unethically”. The issue was not on the agenda. The other directors were not informed it would be raised, and the issue was forced to a vote over the objections of the Chair and without opportunity for debate. The Chair could have, and perhaps should have, ruled the motion out of order, but did not, since he felt he would have been over-ridden.

So much for deliberate and secret. I leave the ethical question for the reader to decide.

Your accomplishments and contributions are many, valued and highly significant. I frankly do not doubt your belief that what you are doing is right. The problem is not with your intent, but your methods.

Yes, the Directors are “supposed to talk to each other and ... attempt to arrive at some meeting of the minds” That is precisely what you deliberately avoided doing. That is why the reaction has been so strong.

Your letter of concern to Dave Weimer dated March 12 was already far off the mark.

Re Fujitsu: As reported to the board, there was no intended change of procedure. The TD simply failed to follow through with established procedures.

Re Ing Committee formation: It was Chendao who insisted that a Chair be selected and allowed to form the committee. This is a case in which I followed his advice. It did take a long time to find a willing candidate, and this was discussed with the Board.

Re NAMT report: It was agreed that a copy should be sent to the principles prior to posting. There was strong reaction, which I reported to the Board. It was then decided to review the matter further in view of the strong response.

The letter of June 2 is similarly off the mark.

The “Progress on the professional liaison” was a request to produce a long range strategic planning document for Board review. No action was to be taken prior to Board approval of the long range plan. There was no need to talk to the pros about it, and in fact a positive mandate from the Board not to do so, as it was for planning purposes, not action.

You correctly indicate your continued refusal to respond to this request from both the Board and myself.

I had indicated from the beginning that the one year sabbatical was fine, but that we should have at least a bare bones announcement at the Congress, just to let folks know what to expect. As indicated, this request too was refused.

Faced with refusal to help with the Fujitsu, refusal to do the NAMT, refusal to try to recruit more people to officiate, and active opposition to allowing others to pick up what he wished to drop, I had to make difficult choices. As you say, I have a propensity to push to get things done, even if less than perfectly. One approach was to ask the pros about the possibility of running the event without referees, and other methods designed to reduce the requirement for officiating expertise. You insisted that the Board approve the letter seeking the feedback. In this and other ways the effort was actively opposed and delayed at every turn, thus severely hampering our efforts.

Certainly, my activities have not been without error, and there are many things I would choose to do differently in retrospect. However, in this case delays, revisions, and late finalization of the events and any failings in those events are significantly attributable to the presence of your active opposition.

Conclusion

I feel that all four statements go toward the writers' reasons for their dissatisfaction. Perhaps the requests for reasons weren't as clear as they should have been. The wish to know why, only incidentally asks about my actions. Rather, it asks about yours. The concentration on my performance to the exclusion of yours leaves out the most significant issues. I am aware by now that a recall petition is likely. I did not support that, but now there is probably no choice. Undoubtedly, there will be strong debate on this issue. We should all keep in mind that whatever our feelings are about these issues, we should avoid dragging innocent bystanders into the fray, and refrain from demonizing each other. Whatever the result, I am sure the AGA will find ways to move forward. However strongly we feel, we must not impede that movement.

I want to explicitly recognize that everyone involved is doing what they think necessary to "save the AGA". It is sad to see this common sentiment lead to so much discord. Clearly, changes are needed. That will be the mandate of both Board and Administration, no matter how constituted in the new year. Our obligation is to obtain rapid resolution of the issues that now divide us, so that the AGA can engage its energy to that more productive task as soon and as effectively as possible.