



Panel on Public Affairs (POPA)
Meeting Minutes October 13, 2023
Time: 9:30 am EST - 3:00 pm EST

Committee Members in-person attendance: Ian Coddington, Member, Sarah Demers, Member, Brian DeMarco, Vice-Chair, Lisbeth Gronlund, Member, Don Lamb, Chair-Elect, Bill McCurdy, Past-Chair, Patricia Rankin, Member, Bob Rosner, Advisor and APS President, Washington Taylor, Member,

Committee Members in attendance via Zoom: Marty Baylor, Member, John Doyle, APS Vice President, Frances Hellman, Chair, Physics Policy Committee, Member, Clifford Johnson, Member, David Somers, Member, Young Kee-Kim, Advisor and APS President-elect, Marion White, Member, Brad Marston, Member, Eric Mazur, Chair, Jim Adams, Representative, Forum on Industrial and Applied Physics

APS Staff Present in person attendance: Jonathan Bagger, CEO, APS, Nico Hernández Charpak, Federal Relations Senior Associate, Mark Elsesser, Director of Government Affairs, Yewande Lewis, Operations Administrator, Francis Slakey, Chief External Affairs Officer

APS Staff in attendance via Zoom:

APS Guests in attendance via Zoom:

Chair Mazur welcomed committee members in attendance in person and via Zoom. He began committee business by asking for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 2023 meeting.

Motion: to approve the June 2, 2023 POPA Committee Meeting Minutes. The motion was called by Brian DeMarco and seconded by Jim Adams. The motion passed unanimously with 16 votes.

Physics and the Public Subcommittee Update (Demers)

Demers began the update by outlining the work of the subcommittee.

Statement on K-12 Access to Physics and Teacher Preparation

The subcommittee advises a renewal of the statement with minor editorial changes. Stating the topics cover high priority areas for our community.



Motion: to approve that the statement be forwarded to the APS Council, as per the APS process for statements that do not change in scope. The motion was called by Bill McCurdy and seconded by Don Lamb. The motion passed unanimously.

Statement on Teaching Evaluations

Demers discussed the importance of the statement for the physics community. She notes that currently, teaching evaluations can unfairly disrupt tenure and promotion of physics professors and that there is a poor correlation between student learning and student course evaluations. Physics requires strong foundations and effective teaching at every step. Ensuring that instructors are fairly evaluated also ensures that students receive high quality teaching in a rigorous subject matter.

Hellman voiced support for this statement. Bill McCurdy also seconds support and highlights the brevity of the statement. Edits were made for clarity and context to determine how this statement may best be applied.

Motion: to approve that the statement be forwarded to the PPC for comments, as per the APS process for new and significantly revised statements. The motion was called by Jim Adams and seconded by Don Lamb. The motion passed unanimously.

Statement on Public Engagement

This was brought to POPA's attention by the Committee on Informing the Public (CIP) in 2022. The initial draft was suggested by CIP with the motivation being the lack of rewards and support that many physicists have in their public engagement efforts. The proposed statement text is unanimously supported by the Physics and the Public subcommittee and it was enthusiastically supported by CIP after review.

Motion: to approve that the statement be forwarded to the PPC for comments, as per the APS process for new and significantly revised statements. The motion was called by Patricia Rankin and seconded by Don Lamb. The motion passed unanimously with 16 votes.

Statement on the Status of Women in Physics



Membership comments of this statement were overwhelmingly supportive! The subcommittee unanimously approved the statement following member comments and suggested edits.

Motion: to approve that the statement be forwarded to the Board for the final steps of Statement approval, as per the APS process for new and significantly revised statements. The motion was called by Bill McCurdy and seconded by Don Lamb. The motion passed unanimously.

Statement on the Status of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Physics

In the June POPA meeting, the committee benefitted from a presentation by Dr. Tim Atherton on this topic. He noted that the community of gender and sexual minorities in physics is diverse, and has many perspectives.

This statement is important as the 2016 APS LGBT Climate in Physics report identified several challenges that are heightened for this community including a hostile climate, isolation and a lack of allies. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding in the physics community about whether or not under-representation is a problem. Finally, the LGBT community does face a need for legislative advocacy.

Motion: to approve that the statement be forwarded to the PPC for comments, as per the APS process for new and significantly revised statements. The motion was called by Don Lamb and seconded by Lisbeth Gronlund. The motion passed unanimously with 16 votes.

National Subcommittee Update (Demarco)

Demarco began the subcommittee update on two statements. Demarco began with a Status Update on the Statement on Assessment of Strategic Missile Defense Capability. Previously, this statement was sent to PPC for comments, there were no substantive changes to the statement, so it has now been forwarded to the APS Council for approval.

Statement on nuclear explosion testing

Gronlund discussed the changes to this statement. APS reaffirms its April 1997 position that nuclear weapons testing is not currently required. A resumption of testing would unravel the



Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995. There are no significant revisions in content or scope, but revisions for brevity and modernization.

Motion: to approve that the statement be forwarded to the APS Council, as per the APS process for statements that do not change in scope. The motion was called by Don Lamb and seconded by Jim Adams. The motion passed unanimously with 16 votes.

Statement on Freedom of Scientific Communication

The statement is still in draft for discussion. The subcommittee discussed the appropriateness of adding references with supporting evidence to the statement.

POPA Report on Carbon Dioxide Removal - Wati Taylor

Taylor gave an update of the state of The Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) report draft, which was circulated to the committee. The structure, essential content and executive summary are basically complete. The report group is working on refining technical details, clarity of exposition, focusing on the nuance of expression in the conclusions and consistency of notation and statement throughout the report. Additionally, they are receiving feedback from experts on certain aspects of the report as well as organizing which technical details belong in the footnotes. Taylor also discussed the timeline for feedback, editing and finalization of the report so that it may be sent to external review in December. The committee offered insights, feedback and suggestions for the report.

Energy and the Environment Subcommittee Update (Wati Taylor)

Taylor began his update with a review of subcommittee activities.

Statement on the Protection of the Electromagnetic Spectrum

This statement was approved by POPA in the June meeting and the feedback from the July PPC meeting was incorporated into the draft presented today. The statement received generally positive feedback from POPA .

Motion: to approve that the statement be forwarded to the APS Council, as per the APS process for new and significantly revised statements. The motion was called by Patricia Rankin and seconded by Demers. The motion passed unanimously with 17 votes.

Statement on Nuclear Energy



The E&E subcommittee has worked on this statement all year. The goal of the work of the committee has been to try to explore is a new consensus, distinct from the current statement, can be found. The subcommittee has not found a new position that can generate consensus. The committee agreed that a decision on this complex topic could be made next year.

New Business - Eric Mazur

During the June meeting, POPA discussed topics for new POPA reports including Geoengineering technologies and pathways into physics. Mazur suggested the issue of a lack of access to a quality high school physics education in the United States. DeMarco suggested a report on laboratory research lab infrastructure. Artificial Intelligence was also suggested as a topic..

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

The committee recognized the end of service for several POPA members. The meeting was adjourned by Mazur.