

June 26, 2008

**I. APSA Policy for Siting the Annual Meeting and other Conferences**

This document states the broad objectives for siting APSA’s Annual Meeting, and where appropriate, other APSA conferences and meetings. It outlines broad principles for siting our meetings based on long-standing practice, Council policy, and professional standards. It also discusses in some detail the practices we follow to implement these objectives in a variety of circumstances.

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## **I. Siting APSA Meetings**

The APSA Annual Meeting represents the foremost intellectual and community gathering of political scientists in the world. Other meetings and conferences of the Association, similarly, are of heightened significance because they carry with them the endorsement of the Association itself.

For these reasons, the manner in which the meeting is carried out, the venue in which it is held, its accessibility to participants, and the means by which it is represented to the public have important symbolic and practical importance, along with the caliber of the scholarly and professional content of the meeting. Quite often, not all APSA general objectives and policies can be met simultaneously. It is therefore necessary to find some compromises among them, or to adopt added policies for special situations.

This document discusses general objectives and principles in siting APSA meetings, and then identifies a number of special situations for which added policy has been developed or is under consideration.

## **II. General Objectives and Principles**

The Association is guided by the following major principles in selecting sites and venues for its meetings and conferences. While APSA has not previously documented all of these policies, they all represent practices that have regularly been followed for many years.

### *A. Rotation of Sites*

*APSA rotates its meeting within North America to afford regional access in every part of the country (and now Canada.)*

APSA recognizes that the time and cost of travel is a significant factor in meeting attendance, and seeks to locate the meeting in all regions of the country in a general rotation. This rotation serves multiple goals: helps to equalize travel costs and time demands for members in different regions who travel regularly to the meeting; provides access to the meeting to those scholars who are less inclined to travel if the meeting is not nearby; and offers local access to institutions and facilities in different regions of the country.

Washington DC remains the hub in this rotation, because of its special importance to US and international politics.

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**B. Urban Settings.**

*APSA holds its annual meeting in major urban settings with national airport access.*

APSA's goal is to hold meetings in venues that are easily accessible and are within easy access of other transportation, hospitality, and cultural resources.

**C. Contiguous Properties.**

*APSA selects locations with adequate hotel space within walking distance of meeting rooms.*

APSA meetings no longer fit in a single hotel in any city where we meet. However, our policy continues to be to seek hotels that are next to each other or directly connected to a convention center, to avoid busing members from widespread hotels. The goal is to achieve as much opportunity for community interaction among participants as well as scholarly discussion.

**D. Low costs.**

*It is a goal in siting and timing of the meetings to keep costs as low as possible.*

APSA's stated goal is to include and to increase participation in the Association and meeting by scholars from many settings, including graduate students and those with relatively few resources to support conference travel and attendance, such as community colleges and non-PhD granting departments. For these reasons, minimizing the total cost of attendance is a major objective.

**E. Partnership with the convention and hospitality industry.**

*APSA recognizes it is in a partnership with the convention and hospitality industry and its workers, and seeks long-term positive and cooperative relationships with local Convention Visitors Bureaus (CVB's), hotel chains, and other vendors.*

We seek to work with these partners in ways that build long-term positive relationships because reliability in keeping our commitments is good business and also assures APSA of more favorable terms for its meetings in the long-run.

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*F. High standards of professional conduct and non-discriminatory siting.*

*APSA is committed to high standards of professional conduct and ethics in siting, planning, and conducting its meetings, including protection of academic freedom, equitable access to opportunity, and a commitment to non-discrimination.*

We follow the same core principles in planning and locating our meetings as guide the APSA Statement of Professional Rights and Responsibilities, which expresses those values for the discipline as a whole.

In 1990, during Judith Shklar's presidency, and on the request of the Gay and Lesbian Caucus, the Council voted that APSA should only meet in cities where all members are welcome. The contract language agreed upon focused on the behavior of the city with particular focus on discrimination in employment, housing, and access to public accommodations. That language read<sup>1</sup>:

*10.02 APSA has selected [name of city] as a site of its annual meeting in light of the city's anti-discrimination record. APSA reserves the right of termination of this agreement, without penalty or liability, if the government of the city in which the hotel is located establishes or enforces laws that, in the estimation of APSA, abridge the civil rights of any APSA member on the basis of gender, race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, physical handicap, disability, or religion.*

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<sup>1</sup> Language for future contracts, conforming to new APSA policy has not yet been developed.

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*G. All members should have a reasonable basis for feeling welcome.*

*In making siting and venue selections, APSA is mindful of adopting sites in which every member has a reasonable basis to feel welcome to attend the meeting.*

This “welcoming” principle underlies our policy to rotate our meetings around the country to venues that are easily accessible to members in all regions and to meet in major urban venues rather than secluded sites, and also underlies our commitment to non-discrimination. APSA seeks to assure that the meeting facilities, venue, and immediate community do not unduly discomfit any member or groups of members attending the meeting.

Feeling welcome extends to personal relationships as well as to professional ones. APSA endorses “family friendly” policy in professional life. We have taken many steps in the past at our meetings in recognition of these values, including deeply subsidized child care at the annual meeting.

*H. Non-partisan and policy neutral positions.*

*In making siting and venue selections, APSA is also mindful of its Constitutional policy to be non-partisan and not to “commit its members on questions of public policy nor take positions not immediately concerned with its direct purpose...”*

Frequently issues arise in which APSA must make decisions about siting and venues that impinge on partisan, political, or social issues – such as when meeting facilities are affected by labor actions. APSA will respond to all such issues with a focus on actions that advance the purposes and effective implementation of its meetings and not on the policy or partisan issues themselves.

The Constitution adds: “the Association nonetheless actively encourages in its membership and its journals, research in and concern for significant contemporary political and social problems and policies, however controversial and subject to partisan discourse in the community at large these may be” and of course APSA meetings are a central resource for this expression.

*I. Recognized same-sex unions and partnerships*

*In locating its future meetings, APSA presumes that states with legal restrictions on rights afforded recognized same-sex unions and partnerships create an unwelcoming environment for our members in cities where we might meet. We would notify authorities at all levels that these conditions make it difficult for us to site our meeting in these states. APSA would closely examine practices on a case by case basis in cities within these states to assess whether demonstrated positive local practices or other Association goals warrant holding our conferences there.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> This policy was adopted by the APSA Council at its June 26, 2008 meeting. The Council has not yet fully reviewed the suggested procedure for implementing this policy.

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Examination of local practices should include whether or not the city enforces state laws in a manner that creates a clear pattern of discrimination that substantially impede members from freely participating in the meeting. In turn, examples of evidence of positive local practice include items such as the following:

- a) adoption of anti-discrimination legislation for its employees;
- b) presence of equal opportunity legislation;
- c) opinions of and invitations to APSA of local civil rights and LGBT advocacy organizations;
- d) recognition of medical power of attorney from city and local hospitals;
- e) experience of other associations or groups meeting in this locality; or
- f) other evidence of the local climate in respecting same-sex relationships.

Additionally, APSA may consider other information in a decision to accept the locality as a meeting site. Examples of such other information might include regional accessibility, advice and invitations from local political science departments, or contractual responsibilities.

Making a determination about future meetings in states with severe legal restrictions on rights afforded recognized same-sex unions and partnerships would be handled in the following way:

- a) a proposal to meet in a city in such states would be coordinated by the Annual Meeting Committee on the instruction of the Administrative Committee. The Annual Meeting Committee would consult widely and work with APSA staff on relevant information gathering;
- b) the annual meeting review committee recommendation and background information would be given tentative review by the APSA Council who could either reject the site or seek member comment;
- c) if sent forward, the proposal would be available for member comment for a period of at least one month; and
- d) the Council would make a final decision about the site.

APSA policy with respect to same-sex unions is also guided by general policy referenced below regarding engagement with host cities and intellectual engagement on issues pertaining to siting issues.

#### *J. Organized Labor*

*APSA shall make every effort to give preference to a suitable unionized hotel and/or service provider, cost considerations being otherwise equal.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> The Council adopted this policy at its August 2007 meeting, on the recommendation of the Annual Meeting Review Committee.

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Many APSA members encourage the association to be attentive to labor conditions in its meeting facilities, and to respect the role that labor organizing can play in improving worker conditions and, in turn, improve the quality of meeting facilities and the Association seeks to recognize these values where circumstances allow.

APSA contracts have always included a provision that would allow APSA to terminate a contract in the case of “labor disputes and strikes” and the Annual Meeting Review Committee recommended and the Council has adopted an addition to that provision to assure that APSA may terminate the contract in such instances “without penalty or liability.”

#### ***K. Accessibility***

*APSA works closely with our hotel partners to assure accessibility to facilities at our meeting, including ADA compliance. We provide other reasonable accommodation to members notifying us of their needs.*

#### ***L. Carbon Neutrality and Green Meetings***

*APSA is cognizant of the environmental consequences of holding large meetings, and of the interests of many members to reduce them.*

APSA members are urged to make a judgment about their travel and its environmental impact and to act accordingly. To assist all members in making such judgments and taking action, the Association will provide voluntary options for members to make their attendance at meetings carbon neutral.

We also are committed to working closely with the hospitality industry and local visitors bureaus to make the local sites as green as possible, cost considerations and the quality of meeting services otherwise equal.

#### ***M. Economic Development for High Racial/Ethnic Concentration Cities***

*The APSA also recognizes that its meetings raise the visibility of communities in which it meets and provides positive economic benefit for them.*

The Association values the contribution that our presence can provide for urban centers with high concentrations of racial and ethnic groups or with high levels of economic need, and will seek to work with minority contractors in its meeting sites wherever circumstances allow.

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*N. Addressing Public Issues at APSA Meetings*

*APSA siting policy calls for enhanced engagement with host cities on state and local issues of importance to APSA, including restrictions on rights for same-sex unions and the economic development of meeting cities.*

*APSA policy also calls for the Association to promote the advancement of scholarship and enhancement of intellectual engagement among members at the annual meeting on questions of inequality that may arise in relation to the siting of the annual meeting, including restrictions on same-sex unions and the economic development of meeting cities.<sup>4</sup>*

APSA has multiple ways in which it may address important public issues within the community where it is meeting, when it holds the Annual Meeting or other conferences. These generally fall into three groups: topics organized into the meeting itself; statements directly from the association; and activities within the local community.

Meeting topics. APSA’s Constitution itself calls for vigorous expression by political scientists of views and findings on important issues, and this can be advanced at our conferences in a number of ways:

- a) The conference theme and plenaries
- b) Topical panels
- c) Short courses
- d) Hyde Park debates
- e) Forums on prominent state and local issues
- f) Press releases on relevant research

Statements. Where the Association’s position is clear, it is also possible for APSA to express concerns about appropriate matters, such as constraints on academic freedom or other association issue, directly. Steps might include:

- a) Negotiating relevant language in hotel and facilities contracts
- b) Meeting with the CVB
- c) Meeting with public officials

Activities. APSA might also use the presence of its meeting in a community for direct public engagement. Activities might include:

- a) Locally based service learning activity for APSA meeting participants
- b) Study tours of the city
- c) Workshops with local residents or groups
- d) Donation of exhibit hall books to local libraries.

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<sup>4</sup> Both provisions were adopted by the APSA Council at its June 26, 2008 meeting.