

IRE Board Email Vote to Create an Affordability Task Force

Via email on Oct. 6:

- President Brian Rosenthal noted the board has made some notable progress on making IRE's programs more affordable but we haven't made the type of systemic changes that could really move the needle. The Board wants to pursue innovative solutions to help members with costs such as tiered pricing and group discounts, including addressing costs for travel and lodging.
- Rosenthal envisions the Affordability Task Force working closely with staff, meeting 3-4 times, doing research on best practices, and making recommendations to the Board by IRE24.
 - In emails on Oct. 10, Rosenthal added the task force will report to the Conference Committee before it makes recommendations to the board.
- The chair for this task force will be Mark Katches, the editor of the Tampa Bay Times. Other members include Treasurer Mark Greenblatt and Cindy Galli, Conference Committee Chair. Other appointments will be focused on journalists of color and local journalists who so often face these challenges.

Via email on Oct. 9 and 10:

- Rosenthal made a motion to create the IRE Affordability Task Force.
- Seconded by At-Large Officer Lam Thuy Vo.
- Nine directors voting yes: Vo, Kate Howard, Vice President Josh Hinkle, Simone Weichselbaum, Hyuntaek Tag Lee, Greenblatt, Rosenthal, Secretary Darla Cameron and Aaron Kessler
 - Greenblatt added:
 - Very glad we are being intentional about strengthening coming up with more solutions here-- especially on lodging options which are so much more costly than registration (and a larger barrier to entry).
- Four directors voting no: Galli, Jodie Fleischer, Ana Ley, Mark Walker
 - Galli explained her vote:
 - While I think affordability is and should be a concern for us, I also feel like much of that work to find innovative solutions can be done both in committees and by staff. As Brian and others know, we take this up on the Conference Committee every year (with the exception of this year, as the Board discussed and voted on rates at the retreat). It's a welcomed discussion and the committee always likes to weigh in on that – and I'm sure it would also like to brainstorm solutions going forward. I'm happy to create an affordability subcommittee on Conference (and perhaps other committees would want to also, or simply make a commitment to brainstorm ideas) as an alternative to a new task force – which I fear adds more work for the board. That said –

if the board approves a task force, I will absolutely serve as Brian has requested,

- Fleischer explained her vote:
 - While I believe affordability is certainly important, I think all of our Board members and committees already view this as a top priority. I believe the mission of our task forces needs to be narrow and clearly defined- not a broad topic such as affordability, which should factor into all of our committee work. I think creating a separate task force for affordability implies otherwise and could send the wrong message.
 - Having separate task forces for everything also minimizes the work of our committees and we've already added several this year.
- Ley explained her vote:
 - I am voting no because I agree with Cindy's point and it seems to me this issue is more in her domain than Brian's, but I will note that it is a very close call for me.
- Walker explained his vote:
 - I'm voting no as well. Ana, Cindy and Jodie have already made the necessary points. No need for me to rehash.