

The Characteristics Sought in the President-Elect Designate of the American Health Lawyers Association

Each year, the Nominating Committee recommends an individual to the Board of Directors to serve as the President-Elect Designate of the Association. This individual will serve in this capacity for a year and then subsequently serve as the President-Elect, President, and Past President. A few years ago, the Nominating Committee Chair suggested that the development of a list of desirable characteristics for the President-Elect Designate might be a constructive exercise to guide the Nominating Committee each year in making its selection.

The following are the attributes that have been suggested for use by the Nominating Committee in its selection of a nominee for President-Elect Designate. Many of these attributes are intertwined, but each suggests an important characteristic in the future President of the Association. No candidate will have all of these characteristics in equal measure, but they provide a good framework of criteria to use:

- **History of Service** – The President-Elect Designate should have a long history of loyal service to the organization in which he or she has taken a leadership role on the Board and in Programs, Practice Groups, Publications, Membership, the Web, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Service or other programs or products of the Association.
- **Educator** – The President-Elect Designate should be someone who has made meaningful contributions to the Association’s educational efforts by speaking at programs or on teleconferences and/or contributing to articles or publications. This attribute will also enhance the individual’s status as a recognized leader in health law.
- **Motivator** – This attribute enables the future President to call on Board members to approve suggested policies and to take up projects for the good of the Association and to motivate staff to achieve his or her vision for the Association.
- **Innovator** – The future President should have a track record of creative thinking and innovation to help the Association identify and develop new programs and services to meet the needs of our members.
- **Strategist** – The future President should have a vision for the Association and should be able to collaborate with staff in strategizing about how to achieve the goals of the Association’s strategic plan.
- **Teambuilder** – The President-Elect Designate should have special skill in effectuating change through a team approach. As the President, he or she will

have to guide the Board and the staff in strategically significant directions and will not be able to do so through unilateral action.

- **Consensus Builder** – AHLA’s Board has traditionally operated by consensus. Few policies are forced through on a split vote. Thus, the future President should be an outstanding communicator with skill at forging consensus among his or her colleagues. The President should not be someone who dictates outcomes or processes but rather leads others to reach agreement concerning the best way to address issues so that there is wide ownership of actions and programs.
- **Spokesperson** – As President, the individual will be called on to represent the health law bar and to articulate the Association’s mission. He or she should be an articulate spokesperson for his or her colleagues in health law.
- **Peer Relations** – The President-Elect Designate will have to work with many volunteers to implement his or her vision as Finance Chair, Programs Chair, and President. The President-Elect Designate should have strong working relationships with Association and Board members. He or she will only succeed with willing volunteers by his or her side. An essential ingredient of good peer relations is a pleasant, positive and affable personality.
- **Staff Relations** – At every level of leadership, the President Elect-Designate must achieve his or her goals by working with and through staff. A strong relationship with staff is necessary for him or her to be successful.
- **Recognized Health Law Leadership** – The President-Elect Designate will have one of the most prestigious offices for health lawyers and those interested in health law in the nation. He or she should have a positive image in the health law community and be a recognized expert in his or her field of endeavor. He or she should have a solid track record of publishing, speaking or otherwise distinguishing him/herself as a leader in health law.
- **Financial Acumen** – The President-Elect Designate should be familiar with the finances of the Association and should be dedicated to achieving the financial goals of the organization.
- **Governance Knowledge and Experience** – The President-Elect Designate should understand the role and responsibilities of a Board member and be able to distinguish that role from his or her role as a lawyer or a staff member. Board leadership positions in other organizations or institutions are deemed helpful in developing a deep understanding of his or her governance responsibilities.
- **Flexible Leadership** – The President-Elect Designate will be faced with unknown challenges in his or her three years as an officer of the Association

and should approach these challenges as opportunities to advance the Association's mission rather than impediments to fulfilling the Association's promise. He or she may need to respond to stressful situations in a constructive and positive manner in order to lead Board and staff to success.

This list, of course, describes the perfect candidate, and no person will have all of these attributes. However, the list provides a helpful guide to the Committee in making a selection.