



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our meeting this month will be held on Thursday, December 9th. We will again be at the Arthur and Louise Price Community Room at the Chandler Fashion Center where we have been holding our meetings since June. Networking starts at 6:30 with dinner and continued networking about 7.

Traditionally, the December meeting is our annual business meeting when we elect Board members and have our roundtable discussion. Each year we elect three members to the Board for three year terms. The incumbents whose terms are expiring, Ron Sprague, Lane Garrett and Vaughn Treude, have agreed to continue if reelected by the membership, and the nominating committee has put them on the ballot. Anyone else with an interest in serving on the Board will also be more than welcome. Just indicate your interest to Ed Mischen, chairman of the nominating committee, ed.mischen@philips.com, and he will put your name on the ballot as well. We will also accept nominations from the floor at the meeting. The requirements are that you are a member in good standing of both IEEE and PACN. That means your dues to both organizations are up to date. Be careful though; even if you don't get elected as a regular Board member you are sure to get put on a committee or two.

The election is followed by the roundtable. This is a free-for-all discussion of the issues

confronting our Network and how we propose to resolve them. Anything and everything that someone wants to bring up is fair game. The major issue will undoubtedly be our meeting location. The Board decided to "try out" the Price Room through the end of the year to see how it works out. We had a lot of complaints about Monti's being too expensive and the menu choices too restricted. So we went to the Price Room on a trial basis. You can get any kind of food you want from any of the regular restaurants or food court outlets and bring it to the Price Room. The normal \$200 fee for use of the room is waived for us since we are non-profit. The room is quiet and just about the right size, large but not too large. The biggest disadvantage is that we lose the atmosphere of a sit-down restaurant that we had at Monti's. The other issue is the location in the southeast part of the Valley. It is located at the intersection of two freeways so it not too hard to get to, but it does mean going through rush hour traffic since our meetings start at 6:30. A more central location would probably serve everyone better. We had hoped that attendance would pick up if we moved to the Price Room and overcame the problems we encountered at Monti's, but it hasn't worked out that way. Please let your thoughts on this subject be known. That is what the roundtable discussion is for. If you haven't been coming to the meetings recently because of the location, it is especially important that you make this meeting and let your opinion be known. The business meeting will start around

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8. If you can't make it for networking and dinner, come then and "let your voice be heard". Also, any suggestions for alternative meeting locations will be greatly appreciated by all.

The other major meeting issue is the program content. We have set up a Program Committee for next year, and we hope that the quality of the programs will improve as a result. Mike Jordan is the committee chairman. Please contact him at mike.jordan@ieee.org if you have any suggestions for speakers or topics. I am not sure what the committee has set up for next year, but I bet it will be good.

Bruce Johnson presented *The Historical Perspective of Windmills* or something to that effect at last month's meeting. Bruce talked about a power generating windmill built on a mountain top in New England in the '30s and carried the subject up to the present. It was a very interesting presentation and many thanks to Bruce for giving it to us.

The Executive Board meetings precede the regular meeting and start at 5, again in the Price room. PACN members are always welcome to come and participate in the discussion, but please keep side conversations turned off so we can conduct the meeting.

See you on the 9th.

ACTING EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Our regular editor Clark Jones is still vacationing in Italy, so I'm in charge of the newsletter again.

Playing editor gives me a chance to get on my

political soapbox again. I won't pretend to be "fair and balanced." But it is balanced in the sense that my message is contrary to the majority opinion. As Rush Limbaugh said, back when he was a lone conservative voice on the airwaves, "I am equal time."

In the IEEE we often hear about the merits of PE (Professional Engineering) registration. It may be beneficial to some engineering careers and a required in others (civil in particular.) I don't have a problem with registration in the sense of putting names on a list. But I don't like when people call it a license, because that means asking the government for permission to work. Supposedly occupational licensing protects the public from unscrupulous practitioners and improves the quality of the profession. It fails at both.

But licensing succeeds in increasing government control over the public. State governments have many requirements for licensees that are unrelated to professional competence. They threaten to revoke licenses for offenses like unpaid parking tickets or being behind on student loans or child support. Recently I saw a headline in the *Business Journal* saying the state of Arizona was considering revoking the licenses of businesses that hire illegal immigrants. These issues have two things in common: they have nothing to do with the business or profession being licensed, and they duplicate existing laws and regulations. This is more than wasteful government redundancy. It bypasses the due process of law, with licensing boards acting as judge, jury, and executioner. It also allows the government to meddle more pervasively, conserving the scarce resources of judges and court time.

Professions would resent these controls on their members, except for another "benefit" of licensing-- it restricts competition. The American Medical Association, for example, was founded in 1848 with a primary goal of increasing doctors' earnings. It has accomplished this through government restrictions on who may practice medicine, and on how many doctors medical

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schools produce. Other professions do the same. This explains the “licensed contractor” stickers on the vehicles of builders and home repair businesses. These individuals benefit from restricted competition, which allows them to raise costs to the consumer.

Despite its pervasive anticompetitive effects and the spread of intrusive regulations, we might favor licensing if it fulfills its promises to “improve quality” and “protect the public.” If it does not, licensing is simply a legal form of racketeering. I don't have the space to review the research that have been done on this question. I will say that many studies raise serious doubts as to whether licensing assures competence in new professionals, and whether “continuing education” requirements are any guarantee that practitioners stay up to date. Then there is the matter of discipline of professionals for incompetence and fraud, also questionable in effectiveness. Licensing boards often become captives of the professions they regulate, valuing the licensees' “privacy” over the public's right to know.

But even if professional licensing does what it claims to do, the public may experience unintended consequences that negate the benefits. Economists call these “availability effects” and “substitution effects.” If a price of a service rises, or if its availability is restricted, consumers seek less desirable alternatives or do without. For example, the high cost of medicine may induce people to seek quack remedies (criminals tend to ignore Contact Info:

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government regulations) or avoid medial care when they shouldn't. These effects are strongest in highly regulated professions. America has been lucky that computer engineering has not been regulated like medicine or law. Otherwise I doubt that computers would have become affordable for the masses, that Microsoft could have become a multi-billion dollar company, or that Linux could have arisen as upstart competition.

I'm not criticizing anyone who has a PE or is planning to get one. I do think that the IEEE should oppose any further restrictions on engineering practice, and advocate replacing the current system with voluntary, privately-run certification agencies.

For anyone who's interested, I've listed some web articles on this topic:

“Professional Licensure and Quality: The Evidence”

by Stanley J. Gross,

http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=945

“The Medical Monopoly: Protecting Consumers or Limiting Competition?” by Sue Blevins,

http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=1105

“Medical Control, Medical Corruption” by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.,

<http://www.lewrockwell.com/rockwell/medical.html>

“Flower Power”, by Jacob Sullum,

<http://www.reason.com/sullum/010904.shtml>

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to rant!

Vaughn Treude

**IEEE Phoenix Area Consultants Network
Membership Application Form**

Membership is available to anyone who is interested in the goals of the organization. Full membership entitles a member to voting privileges at business meetings, and to a web site listing. Associate members are not listed and do not vote, but receive all mailings. Note that the newsletter is distributed via e-mail.

I hereby apply for (full____ associate____) membership in the IEEE Phoenix Area Consultants Network.

NAME: _____
(Last) (First and initials)

IEEE member? Yes____ (Membership number _____) No____

P.E.? Yes____ (States: _____) No____

Area(s) of expertise: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Company address: _____

Telephone: _____ FAX: _____

E-mail: _____

Web site URL: _____

Home address: _____

Home telephone: _____

Preferred mail address: Work____ Home____ Signature: _____

Mail completed form with membership fee payable to "IEEE-PACN" to:

William D. Morgan
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Fees: Full member, IEEE Member: \$25
Full member, non-IEEE Member \$30
Associate member: \$20