



From the President **Jiri Stejskal**

president@atanet.org

Who We Are, Who We Are Not

Last month you read about the changes in our administration and about ATA's core objectives. Let us now review who we are as an organization and what we stand for. ATA is a not-for-profit membership corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York, where it was established in 1959. The 501(c)(6) tax exempt status was granted by the Internal Revenue Service in 1963. One of the main characteristics of a 501(c)(6) organization is that it must be an association of persons having some common business interest, and its purpose must be to promote this common business interest. This ties in nicely with ATA's core objectives as described in our bylaws.

In 1991, ATA Headquarters moved from New York to Virginia, which is its current location and the place where we file taxes, namely Form 990, a tax return for organizations exempt from income tax. Today, we have 11 paid staff members at ATA Headquarters, headed by Executive Director Walter Bacak. The ATA Board, consisting of 13 volunteer members (9 directors and 4 officers), sets the policies and makes strategic decisions about the future of the Association, while the staff focuses on management and administration.

We are by far the largest association in the U.S. serving the needs of translators and interpreters. We are an American organization with an international orientation, with members in 80 countries. Our primary goal is to promote the profession and our common business interests. Membership in the Association should be viewed as an opportunity to participate in the promotion of the profession and of our interests, rather than as a purchase of certain

services and benefits provided in exchange for membership dues (ask yourself what \$145 would buy you elsewhere—half an hour of an attorney's time?). Your membership means that you are a part of a large community of translators and interpreters that creates synergies and opportunities for you to participate actively in the shaping of our industry, and to develop your skills as a translator or an interpreter.

Speaking of skills, let's also look at

others to become professionals.

We are not a political organization. While 501(c)(6) organizations may engage in limited political activities that inform, educate, and promote their interests, ATA should not take a political stance and must remain non-partisan. It is often not possible to stay out of politics when humanitarian issues involving our profession are concerned. In such instances we need to ask ourselves how such issues relate to the core objectives of the

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who we are not. We are not an association of professional translators and interpreters. Paying membership dues does not make anyone a professional. This is a conundrum that ATA's Public Relations Committee is facing when addressing the media, because while we want to present ATA as the "go to" place, we cannot claim that all ATA members are professionals. Our Association welcomes students and new entrants to the profession who benefit from the experience of those who are professionals. If you consider yourself a professional, show it by getting and maintaining certification or pursue active membership status through the active membership review process if no certification is currently offered for your language combination(s), and help

Association and whether they concern our common business interests, and act accordingly. Neither ATA's Board nor individual members are immune to errors of judgment, and ultimately it is up to the voting members to determine through their collective wisdom whether a given action, resolution, or position is appropriate.

Without a doubt, ATA is an important organization that contributes to our profession in a great variety of ways as a major player in the U.S. and around the world. Be an active member so that you can exercise your voting power and make your own contribution to our profession.