

March 2017 - Letter

From the Executive Director

Thomas W. Smith III
ENV SP, CAE, F.ASCE



Dear ASCE leader,

These may be changing times, but one thing remains a constant: the nation's need for a safe, efficient, and sustainable infrastructure to help it remain competitive in the global economy. Just weeks into the start of a presidency that has repeatedly stated an intent to seek \$1 trillion in infrastructure investment, we have helped drive the conversation with the release of our [2017 Infrastructure Report Card](#).

Our Report Cards have become regarded as the definitive sources of information on the state of our nation's aging and underperforming infrastructure, and our debut of the 2017 edition at a release event on Capitol Hill captured the attention of the media, lawmakers and the general public. Major news sources eagerly disseminated the updated findings, highlighted by the cumulative D+ grade and an investment gap of more than \$2 trillion through 2025. The thousands of media mentions in the first week alone included prominent features on CBS News, CNBC, NPR's Morning Edition, NBC News, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Live video streaming of the announcement and discussions was viewed by more than 6,500 people, and we conducted post-announcement interviews on Facebook Live ([see them here](#)) that received more than 4,200 views.

Helping to bolster our case for developing infrastructure solutions were people highly regarded for their grasp of the urgent need and its benefits for the economy. Joining us for discussions were Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy, former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, DC Water CEO George Hawkins, and Marlin Wire CEO Drew Greenblatt.

Two days prior to the formal release, ASCE President Norma Jean Mattei, Managing Director of Government Relations and Infrastructure Initiatives Brian Pallasch and I briefed officials at the U.S. Department of Transportation on the *Report Card's* findings. Brian and his Government Relations staff held similar briefings with several other agencies.

We are indebted to the volunteer members of our Committee on America's Infrastructure and our Government Relations and Infrastructure Initiatives staff for the four years of work that went into a report sure to be cited for the next four years. In particular, ASCE President Mattei and Committee on America's Infrastructure Chair Greg DiLoreto, Pres.13.ASCE, worked tirelessly conducting

dozens of radio, TV, and other media interviews. I urge you to explore the incredible wealth of material at infrastructurereportcard.org and spread its message. The *Report Card* is also packed into a great app that you can refer to any time you need to bolster an argument.

With media reaching out to us, I was interviewed several times to discuss the *Report Card* findings and what they may mean for infrastructure investment. *Transport Topics*, a trade publication for the trucking and freight transportation industries, conducted a [video interview](#). The **Americans for Transportation Mobility**, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce-led coalition that ASCE is a part of, spoke with me for a podcast. Stay tuned for that; I'll share it in a future Leadership Letter.

The *Report Card's* findings in water and wastewater-related categories also attracted the attention of the **U.S. Water Alliance**, a nonprofit coalition of groups, which includes ASCE. During an alliance event at the Rayburn House Office Building with four members of Congress in attendance, I spoke about the findings and took part in a panel discussion.

Also on the topic of our nation's infrastructure, I participated in a transportation visioning summit led by the **International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association**. The summit included discussions of next generation vehicles, a topic of particular focus within ASCE's Transportation and Development Institute. See a copy of the [final report](#).

This year's **Legislative Fly-In** benefitted from the strong tailwinds of a new *Report Card* and a new president who has said he wants to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure over the next 10 years. More than 200 members from around the country came to Washington, DC, and [made strong impressions with members of Congress](#) and their staffs. The *Report Card's* findings served as the basis for discussions focused on solutions.

A packed week and a half also featured an ASCE Board of Direction meeting. Many of the significant agenda items involved work-in-progress activities geared to future decision-making.

- A strategy roadmap for student transition and Younger Member retention was approved. The roadmap suggests eight action items with desired outcomes, including an emphasis on giving Younger Members a greater voice in the Society. [Details are in ASCE News](#).
- The Committee on Diversity and Inclusion and the Committee on Ethical Practice proposed adding an eighth canon to the ASCE Code of Ethics. The canon would provide a basis for adhering to the Society's longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion, and establish an accountability to our diversity and inclusion guiding principles. The Board viewed the proposal favorably and it will go to a vote in July.

- An approved revision of [Policy Statement 465](#) – Academic Prerequisites for Civil Engineering Related Licensure and Professional Practice now makes it civil-centric. As previously worded it was generally interpreted to address all engineering disciplines.

A presentation by the Task Committee on Governance Structure offered thoughts on alternatives to the Board's present size and structure. The vigorous discussion among Board members that followed provided the task committee with ideas to consider as it continues working on a proposal.

During this intense run of activity, our annual celebration of civil engineering heroes and achievements, the **OPAL Gala**, came along at the right time. We gave thrilled representatives of the San Diego County Water Authority the [2017 Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement award](#) for their Emergency and Carryover Storage Project. This 25-year campaign, which included dam expansions, ensures a continuous water supply to the city. Also a great pleasure was handing five Outstanding Projects and Leaders trophies to the [honorees for 2017](#). The next day, many gala attendees enjoyed a VIP screening of Dream Big: Engineering Our World at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, among them members of the ASCE Board, the Industry Leaders Council, and the local National Capital Section.

Among the OPAL recipients was Tony Bartolomeo, P.E., F.ASCE, for his achievements in management, whether in service to ASCE on the Industry Leaders Council or as the CEO of the Philadelphia engineering firm **Pennoni**. At the company's annual Ellipse Award gala, I joined in the applause for this year's recipient, John Grady, president of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation. Pennoni's vice chairman Tom Rust is a 2015 OPAL honoree, and last year ASCE was Pennoni's Ellipse honoree for our *Report Card*.

The **Industry Leaders Council's** spring meeting considered a number of issues, led by a good discussion among ILC members on ASCE's Raise the Bar strategic initiative and how it is currently positioned. A pro/con debate included outside industry representatives and Raise the Bar Committee members, bringing to light valuable points.

The topic of risk is another growing concern for the ILC, which heard a cautionary tale from our Committee on Claims Reduction and Management, presented by ASCE Foundation President Jon Magnusson. ILC members also considered ASCE's future strategic direction with an eye toward providing comments to the Board of Direction for consideration during its strategic planning session in July. As keynote speaker, DC Water's chief innovations officer, Sudhir Murthy, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, discussed how the utility is reinventing its water resource facilities by applying innovation life cycle principles.

It's been more than six years since we joined forces with the American Public

Works Association and the American Council of Engineering Companies to create the **Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure**, home of the Envision sustainability planning and rating system and the ENV SP credential in applying the system. To date, 28 infrastructure projects have qualified for Envision ratings and over 5,600 Envision sustainability professionals have been certified. I enjoyed a get-acquainted meeting with new Executive Director John Stanton, who has taken the place of Bill Bertera. An attorney licensed in New Jersey and the District of Columbia, Stanton comes to ISI with an extensive environmental background, most recently as an executive vice president of Solarcity, the nation's largest solar energy company. Three ASCE members on ISI's board will help assist Stanton: our 2013 President Greg DiLoreto, currently ISI board chair; 2016 President Mark Woodson; and Michael Mucha, past chair of our Committee on Sustainability.

ASCE and Mexico's official civil engineers' association, **Colegio de Ingenieros Civiles de Mexico, A.C.**, or the College of Civil Engineers of Mexico, share common interests around licensure and a similar mission with an emphasis on ethics. I call them "official" because in the 1940s they were sanctioned by Mexico's government and given the legal authority to oversee civil engineering professional practice. We hosted a delegation of their leaders at our Washington, DC, offices to discuss ways we could work together to our mutual advantage, including education and training for new civil engineers, anti-corruption policies, and sustainable infrastructure development. They're also keenly interested in completing an infrastructure Report Card for Mexico.

Britain's **Institution of Structural Engineers** is another sister international society with which we're working toward new or increased collaboration, especially in this case through our Structural Engineering Institute and its new global activities division. At a spring meeting, SEI leaders built on work started last fall in areas such as licensure and credentials, standards, ethics, and safety programs. IStructE Executive Director Martin Powell and 2017 President Ian Firth came to ASCE headquarters for talks with SEI President Andy Herrmann, Managing Director of Engineering Programs Jim Rossberg, and Institute Director Laura Champion. Serving as liaison to each side was SEI Global Activities Division representative and iStructE Council Member Glenn Bell. I dropped in on their work to say hello, as did our 2017 President Norma Jean Mattei and President-Elect Kristina Swallow.

I'm delighted by news of the extraordinarily successful **Region 10 Assembly** held in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Highlights included a global sustainable infrastructure seminar and the first screening of *Dream Big: Engineering Our World* in the Middle East. Congratulations to the organizers and to everyone who took part.

Engineering practices and the professionals employed there may need to refine their internal culture to make it more comfortable to express dissent on matters of ethical concern, in order to forestall potential safety-related failures. For [an article now appearing](#) in the spring 2017 issue of *The Bridge on Engineering Ethics*,

published by the **National Academy of Engineering**, our General Counsel Tara Hoke and I encourage a heightened emphasis on ethics by those at the top, to set a tone that allows staffers to come forward.

The **American Society of Association Executives** counts me among the executive directors that serve on its Key Professional Associations Committee, and we met recently for an idea swap. Discussing topics ranging from office space design to association challenges and opportunities in the new administration, I was struck by the commonality of issues facing a diverse variety of associations.

Critical to the ability to generate revenue from our publications is a modern website that makes reviewing our offerings and making purchases as streamlined as possible. The **new online ASCE Library** meets that goal and more, [relaunched recently](#) after a complete overhaul. At a special lunch to celebrate the achievement, I extended my thanks to our publications, customer service, and IT staff for the enormous amount of work they poured into the makeover.

Congratulations to ...

... **the nine new Distinguished Members** among ASCE's class of 2017. Bear in mind that only 688 civil engineers in the 165-year history of ASCE have been similarly honored, and of our current 150,000-plus global membership, only 228 can call themselves Distinguished Members. We will announce these deserving professionals publicly in early May, and honor them in person this fall during the 2017 ASCE Convention in New Orleans: **Bilal M. Ayyub**, Ph.D., P.E., Dist.M.ASCE; **Stephen A. Curtis**, P.E., D.PE, Dist.M.ASCE; **Charles Dowding**, Ph.D., P.E., D.GE, Dist.M.ASCE; **George M. Filz**, Ph.D., P.E., Dist.M.ASCE; **David J. Hammond**, P.E., S.E., Dist.M.ASCE; **James O. Jirsa**, Ph.D., P.E., Dist.M.ASCE, NAE; **Kincho H. Law**, Ph.D., Dist.M.ASCE; **Richard N. Palmer**, Ph.D., P.E., D.WRE, Dist.M.ASCE; and **John G. Tawresey**, P.E., F.SEI, Dist.M.ASCE

... **staff members at ASCE headquarters** who have demonstrated their commitment to the Society in years of service and through exemplary teamwork recognized by their peers. At our annual all-hands service awards ceremony, we saluted 44 colleagues with anniversaries from five years to 35 – the latter being our IT Director Dan Santiago. Together, our staff honorees' combined service spans over 600 years. We also revealed and celebrated five winners of our Employee Recognition Awards.

Until next time,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom', written in a cursive style.