



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

Dear Tony,

As the incoming presidential administration aims to make infrastructure investment a cornerstone of its plans to boost the nation's economy, ASCE is driving home the need with a new release in our Failure to Act series of economic reports. Issued Tuesday, *Failure to Act: Economic Impacts of Status Quo Investment Across Infrastructure Systems* quantifies how persistent underinvestment in our aging infrastructure affects the economy. Specifically, it notes that inefficient infrastructure from disruptions such as hitting a pothole, sitting in traffic, power outages, and water main breaks costs the average American household \$3,300 a year. The full report, along with an infographic of report highlights, is available at asce.org/failuretoact.

The new analysis includes information from the five Failure to Act segment reports released over the past year that cover 11 infrastructure sectors critical to economic prosperity. [Read more about the report](#) and stay tuned for a membership webinar to learn more.

INSIDE THIS EDITION

New ASCE report finds infrastructure underinvestment costs families \$3,300/yr

"Ask the President" monthly town halls are lively, informative

New Government Engineers Council off to a good start

Federal loan program for project resiliency approved with ASCE support

SECTION INFORMANT

Best Practice: Digital outreach to students during the pandemic

Make a difference this Mentor Month

Ask Counselor Tara: How do we ensure proper lines of authority to execute contracts?

TALKING POINTS

Questions, answers about the new Code of Ethics

Have you attended the monthly "Ask the President" virtual town halls? Jean-Louis Briaud launched the series in November so members could meet him and share their comments and questions about ASCE. The December event

and share their comments and questions about ASCE. The December event was lively with a wide variety of questions, including [student voting rights](#). Since this issue will be on the election ballot in May, Jean-Louis was able to expand on the merits of the proposal. Town halls are held the first business day of each month and are open to all members; the next one is scheduled for [Feb. 1](#).

Last month, the new Government Engineers Council gathered (virtually) for the first time. I joined in to welcome each of the council's 12 members and learn more about the vision and plans for the GEC. It's a strong group eager to hit the ground running. The GEC is a standing board committee dedicated to building ways to engage public agency civil engineers in ASCE initiatives, recognize the critical role government engineers play in society at home and across the world, and more.

Highlights of other activities

- Just as 2020 ended and 2021 began, Congress approved and President Trump signed into law one of ASCE's legislative priorities – the Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act. The new law creates a “resilience revolving loan fund” program that lets states and territories get low-interest loans for projects that minimize the risk of future disasters. Earlier in the month, I represented ASCE at a news conference to urge passage of the bill, joining forces with the Mississippi Rivers Cities & Towns Initiative and its member mayors, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. ASCE endorsed the bill because it helps prioritize the nation's need to build resiliently to withstand the growing frequency and severity of extreme weather events.
- ASCE will host a client summit to assess the value of post-P.E. certification to clients and employers. The organizing committee will reach out to potential participants from organizations such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, federal and state departments of transportation, and municipal public works departments. The hope is the summit will clarify whether post-P.E. certification is desirable enough for ASCE to pursue the concept.
- President Briaud facilitated another meeting of the Region Institute Presidents Group, which agreed to take a deeper dive into three areas, forming subcommittees on interactive and collaborative opportunities, growing membership, and student transition. They're also eager to promote practical, practice-oriented content, including summaries of practical applications in ASCE journal papers.
- Jean-Louis Briaud, President-elect Dennis Truax, and I joined dozens of leaders of other scientific and engineering societies for training on governance issues and the like in a leadership workshop conducted by the Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives.
- I represented ASCE at a meeting of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100 that focused on what 2021 may bring. I spoke about

our upcoming Report Card and our Failure to Act studies, which mesh well with the Chamber's hard push for infrastructure investment and a goal to have a bill passed by July 4.

- I also joined other infrastructure stakeholders in sharing the very real pressures on our nation's infrastructure systems in this ABC News piece, "[Public Transit Faces Unbelievable Crisis as Commuters Stay Home.](#)"
- ASCE Technical Region Director David Odeh and I met with the leadership of Nucor to explore opportunities to work together, particularly on advocacy efforts. We were delighted to welcome Nucor's president and CEO, Leon Topalian, to our Failure to Act press conference this week, and we look forward to Nucor's participation in next month's 2021 ASCE Infrastructure Report Card release.
- Past President K.N. Gunalan and I met with the World Federation of Engineering Organizations' president and officers to discuss ASCE's participation in WFEO, specifically including the possibility of ASCE hosting the WFEO UN Relations Committee, providing an opportunity to engage the engineering community globally to meet UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

In memoriam

Reginald "Reggie" Vachon, Ph.D., P.E., F.ASCE, has died at the age of 83. He was an engineer with NASA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – retiring as a colonel – and was the founder and chair of several engineering companies. Vachon was chaired professor of mechanical engineering at Auburn University and was a registered engineer in six states, Europe, and Asia. He authored or co-authored more than 200 peer-reviewed papers. In addition to his ASCE Fellow status, Vachon was a past president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Pan American Academy of Engineers, among several other leadership roles. An attorney licensed to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court, he co-represented ASME on a case and won. We join in mourning Reggie's passing and extend our sympathies to his family and friends.

Congratulations to ...

... the newly named recipients of our **Outstanding Projects And Leaders awards for 2021**, recognizing career achievements in each of five categories: construction, design, education, government, and management. Each will receive official honors this fall during the ASCE 2021 Convention:

Sreenivas Alampalli, Ph.D., P.E., F.SEI, F.ASCE, recently retired as director, Structure Management Bureau, New York State Department of Transportation, for government.

James L. Barnard, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, Dist.M.ASCE, global project and technology leader, Black and Veatch Consulting Engineers, for design.

Jesus M. de la Garza, Ph.D., Dist.M.ASCE, NAC professor and chair

Jesús M. de la Garza, Ph.D., Dist.M.ASCE, NAE, professor and chair, Glenn Department of Civil Engineering, Clemson University, for construction.

Terry F. Neimeyer, P.E., ENV SP, BCEE, F.ASCE, chairman of the board, KCI, for management.

Vijay P. Singh, D.Sc., P.E., Hon.D.AWRE, F.EWRI, Dist.M.ASCE, Distinguished Professor, Texas A&M University, for education.

In closing, we were reminded last week that while resilience carries a certain connotation in our profession, it also applies to our democracy. We saw what can happen when democracy's foundations are shaken – to the U.S. Capitol building itself and to the ideals for which it stands. Yet by the end of the day, we were grateful to witness the resilience of both. Long may each endure.

Until next time,



SECTION INFORMANT

BEST PRACTICE OF THE MONTH

Digital precollege outreach during the pandemic

This month's best practice is on K-12 student outreach and comes from the Central Pennsylvania Section. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools are in session via a virtual or hybrid learning format. Therefore, bringing student outreach to a digital platform is more important than ever.

Last October, the section collaborated with the Philadelphia Section YMF K-12 Outreach co-chairs to hold a live virtual panel event. The event had seven panelists and drew more than 50 attendees from Philadelphia and Central Pennsylvania area schools. The virtual meeting began with a short presentation on engineering and then focused on civil engineering.

Next was a panel portion which covered topics including the engineering design process, challenges facing infrastructure in the 21st century, and the favorite part of being an engineer. This event then concluded with a hands-on "Fireworks in a Jar" demonstration.

Another great practice used as part of this event was tapping the local [STEM Ecosystem](#). Read more about this best practice in the K-12 Student Outreach of our [Best Practices Guide](#) (Section 6.15).

Make a difference this Mentor Month

January is mentoring month! To celebrate, ASCE is hosting a virtual roundtable – “Cultivating a Mutually Beneficial Mentoring Relationship.” This edition of “Thursdays @ 3” will be held Jan. 21 at 3 p.m. EST / noon PST. A panel of civil engineering leaders will share insights and answer questions about mentoring. [Sign up to attend](#).

You can also share your expertise through [ASCE Mentor Match](#). This tool pairs civil engineering mentors and mentees to help them develop professional and technical skills, master work-life balance, resolve dilemmas and navigate the industry. Encourage those in your group to [get involved](#).

Support student member involvement

Do you know any student members who might be interested in attending an official ASCE event during the spring or summer? If so, show your support by telling them about the Student Activities Reimbursement Fund. The ASCE Foundation is accepting StAR Fund applications until Feb. 1. To find out how to apply for the program or how to support it, [follow this link](#).

Get ready for ASCE Younger Member Week

Join ASCE for a week full of virtual connection, sharing, and fun, all celebrating younger members. Daily activities will explore the unique aspects of ASCE and civil engineering, then take part in an evening of games and networking with your ASCE friends across the country, plus social media contests, prizes, and more! It’s all coming Jan. 25-29. [Here’s the link to register](#).

Take a survey on staff and volunteer relations

One of ASCE’s strategic priorities is to enhance staff and volunteer relationships. In order for us to work on improvements, we’d like to ask for your views on how we’re doing. Please [take a brief five-question survey](#) and give us your feedback.

Serving on an ASCE committee boosts the profession and careers

Each year, thousands of professionals lend their time and expertise to support the Society’s efforts to continually advance the civil engineering industry. Call on your members to offer their skills and perspectives to the profession. The [application](#) deadline is March 15. Direct your group to [asce.org/asce_committees](https://www.asce.org/asce_committees) for more information.

What's happening around the Society?

A new year means new ways to get involved with various ASCE activities. Inspire your section to join in too! Follow [ASCE on Instagram](#) and check out [local news highlights](#) to see what sections, branches, younger member groups, and student chapters have been doing.

ASK COUNSELOR TARA

How do we ensure proper lines of authority to execute contracts?

ASCE General Counsel Tara Hoke responds to legal questions posed by Sections and Branches here each month. [Send Tara an email](#) with your question.

Question: The so-called “law of agency” gives an individual actor (the “agent”) the authority to conduct business on behalf of the nonprofit organization and/or its governing body (the “principal”). *How do we ensure proper lines of authority to execute contracts?* [Read Tara’s reply.](#)

DATES TO KNOW

January 2021

15 Board of Direction Nominating Committee meeting
16-17 Board of Direction meeting

February

21-27 Engineers Week

TALKING POINTS

Exclusive to the Board: Strategic topics, initiatives at ASCE

Questions, answers about the new Code of Ethics

In October, the Board of Direction approved a completely revised Code of Ethics, the first such overhaul of the code in 45 years. The new code went into effect immediately upon approval. The Task Committee on the Code of Ethics spent nearly two years updating the code's language and format to make it more concise, readable, and modern. An updated format allows for more flexibility, relevance, and a higher likelihood of use.

How does the new code differ from what had been used?

The new code addresses several issues:

- The canon format lacked clear, concise language and organization, making it difficult to interpret and apply.
- The former code did not address how engineers resolve a conflict between two ethical obligations.
- The former code did not address the role of an engineer as a leader, particularly with respect to ethical leadership.
- The former code's language was uninspiring.
- In some regards the former code was dated, having not had a wholesale review since 1974.

How is the new format an improvement?

The committee prioritized usability and enforceability, most notably replacing the canon structure with a hierarchy of stakeholders within an engineer's ethical responsibilities. This graphic succinctly captures the new stakeholder approach:



If I have any questions, whom should I ask?

General Counsel Tara Hoke at thoke@asce.org.