

ACBL BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT: FALL 2025

The ACBL Board of Directors held its fall in-person meetings from Sunday, November 23 to Tuesday, November 25 in San Francisco. The Board, Committees, and Task Forces continue to meet regularly online via Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

A QUICK WORD FROM YOUR REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Our recent Board meetings in San Francisco saw the conclusion of my second year as ACBL President with the election of my colleague Cindy Shoemaker from Tucson (D17). The Board—working together with Bronia, Management, and Staff—has made considerable progress over these past two years with the hard work of all, including the dedicated task forces that have reviewed and addressed tournament structures, creatively implemented new player incentives such as Sapphire Awards, strengthened international partnerships, and allowed more flexibility in disciplinary measures. I am proud of what we have done and confidently turn over leadership of the Board to Cindy, who I know will continue to improve our organizational processes and our communications with one another as she puts her own stamp on important projects. Critical, of course, will be ongoing and new membership recruitment and retention efforts as membership declines despite concerted efforts to reverse these trends. 2026 will also see renewed focus on the formats for all levels of tournaments—sectionals, regionals, and NABCs—and how changes in these separately and in combination these will better serve the interests of our members. An updated Regional Planning Guide and user-friendly grouping of tournament-related topics on the ACBL website (similar to the Club Corner) will be distributed/released soon.

What follows is the standardized report that is produced thanks to the dedicated efforts of one of my Board colleagues (the same Cindy mentioned above!) following our three “regular” Board meetings (held at the time of an NABC. Please let me know if you have any questions!

Thanks for reading...--Margot

FINANCE

The 2026 operating and capital budgets were approved. Budgeted revenues for 2026 total approximately \$18.188K while estimated operating and administrative expenses total approximately \$18.168K; an estimated gain of approximately \$20K.

The capital budget totals \$780K, the majority of which will be spent on the continued migration of applications from the AS400 to Back Office. It is anticipated that this project will be completed in the fall of 2026.

MEMBERSHIP

The November 2025 report indicates a 7% decline in total Membership, falling from 128,622 last year to 119,618 today. This is accompanied by a slight dip in new Members, with YTD sign-ups reaching 5,663, down from 6,181 in 2024. However, these figures are balanced by a significant expansion in new guest memberships, which rose from 2,813 last year to 7,524 this year—a growth of 167.47%. This substantial interest represents a vital path to recovery as we work to advance guest members from initial engagement to long-term commitment.

COMBATING ONLINE CHEATING

The ACBL continues to utilize EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach) to detect online cheating. Two large, new runs, comprising almost 20,000 player numbers were submitted in August and September.

Since February 1, 2024, 31,057 players have been submitted for screening. Of those, 1,462 players identified by EDGAR have been charged or have received Official Warnings. The current online cheating rate, which includes all players (Members, non-members, and inactive accounts), is estimated to be between 3 and 4%. This number will decrease as all players who were subject to Player Memos for purported ethical violations have now been run. We estimate the final rate will be ~3%.

Disciplinary actions have included Official Warnings (431); Fast Track Discipline (FTD) (719); Negotiated Resolutions (NR) (50); Management Adjudications (7); and Institute of Bridge Arbitration (IBA) resolutions (44); with 35 resignations with pending charges, and 139 pending cases.

APPEALS & CHARGES COMMITTEE

The Committee Chair reported on three approved Negotiated Resolutions (NR). Two of these cases involved conduct violations at tournaments; one was a repeat offender who agreed to a 6-month suspension for acts of abuse or violence and rude behavior. The other player received a 120-day suspension for public accusations of cheating and improper conduct at the Summer NABC in Philadelphia. A third NR was for Misuse of Hand Records. He was a Virtual Club director who made use of his access to Common Game records to cheat in online games. He agreed to a 2-year suspension. This person was still directing at the time his behavior was detected, so Management issued a Suspension Pending Hearing (SPH) until the case was resolved.

To view Hearing Reports and the Under Discipline List, go to the ACBL's ethics page (<https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>). This information is updated several times daily.

NABC BUSINESS MODEL UPDATE

Following the Summer 2025 meetings in Philadelphia, this update details the Championships for All initiative. This strategic restructuring of the NABC business model aims to improve

operational efficiency, bolster financial sustainability, and elevate the tournament experience for players of all skill levels.

Key initiatives include:

- Consolidating events, streamlining schedules, and right-sizing venues to optimize staffing and volunteer time.
- Implementing pre-registration and tiered pricing to align fees with participation and facility costs.

The Fall 2028 NABC in Austin will serve as the pilot for this streamlined model. Its success will be evaluated over two years, using participation trends, budget outcomes, and Member feedback to maintain an adaptable and inclusive approach.

NABC SITE SELECTED: SUMMER 2031

The Board approved the Rio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas for the Summer 2031 NABC due to availability, projected profitability and waived resort fees.

CONTINUING ONLINE EVENTS AT IN-PERSON REGIONALS

The Board eliminated the Codification requirement (Chapter IX, Section 6) that permitted online events to be held in conjunction with in-person regionals.

This change replaces a "one-size-fits-all" mandate with a flexible approach centered on local sponsor autonomy. Removing this language does not prohibit online events; rather, it empowers local organizers to decide if an online component is right for their specific tournament.

Going forward, the process will focus on:

- **Sponsor Decision-Making:** The final determination to host this online event will rest with the local sponsoring organization.
- **Management Consultation:** Management will serve as a strategic partner, working directly with sponsors to evaluate cost impacts and identify the most suitable, effective platform for their needs.

REFINING SECTIONAL TOURNAMENT GUIDELINES

The Board continues to evaluate Local Sectionals, a tournament category that enables Units to host lower-cost tournaments using certified local directors. Current discussions address concerns regarding fairness—specifically private clubs operating these tournaments for profit—as well as variable director costs and the potential impact on standard Sectionals and Masterpoint structures.

Proposed adjustments include allowing ACBL directors to staff nearby Local Sectionals, raising table limits beyond 30 (with the addition of assistant directors), and clarifying the codified distinctions between Local and Non-Life Master Sectionals.

A uniform solution is unlikely, as discussions will continue with the goal of establishing a comprehensive structure for tournaments by the end of 2026.

GNT FINANCIAL REVIEW AND CHARGEBACK ADJUSTMENTS

Management reported that the ACBL will cover *Championship Flight* entry fees for the first two days of Grand National Teams (GNT) events in Minneapolis (in the past, the Championship Flight participants paid their own entry fees on Days 1 & 2). Participants in *Flights A, B, and C* have not paid and will continue to not pay entry fees for Days 1 and 2. However, the ACBL was and will continue charging the entry fees for Flights A, B, and C back to the districts for these first two days. In accordance with existing policy, costs for days three through five will continue to be paid by the participants.

During this review, Management discovered a long-standing formula error that resulted in Districts being undercharged for approximately 10 years. Correcting this error will result in higher chargebacks for several Districts, particularly smaller ones with limited grassroots funding.

To mitigate this impact, the Board reached a consensus to forgive all negative GNT chargeback balances for a one-year period, providing Districts a transition window to implement proven ways to help raise monies to accommodate these higher costs. Moving forward, chargebacks will be applied correctly.

Management will implement an education and communication plan to assist Districts in expanding grassroots fundraising and the sharing of best practices. The goal is to support the continued growth of the GNT while maintaining a sustainable financial balance for both the ACBL and its Districts.

SUPPORT FOR UNIT PRESIDENTS

The ACBL Unit Presidents Handbook is complete. This concise online resource provides guidance for ACBL Unit Presidents, incorporating the latest programs, policies and resources available from the ACBL. Access the Handbook here:
<http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/units/unitpresidenthandbook.pdf>

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Governance continues to streamline the ACBL Codification, the central repository of Board-approved rules and regulations. By shifting operational details out of the Codification, the Committee aims to provide greater clarity and transparency regarding the regulations that impact Members.

The Committee completed and the Board approved the Board Resource Manual (**Motion 253-GV05**). This internal guide serves as the definitive reference for governance, procedural, ethical, and administrative matters of the Board.

Following this project, Codification, Chapter IV - Board Procedures, was replaced by the newly revised Chapter IV: Governance and Operations (**Motion 253-GV04**), with the exception of the Committee sections which are being revised.

Looking ahead to 2026, upcoming Codification deliverables include formal approval of the rewrite of the Membership Chapter and revisions to the Unit and District Chapters. Also, a focus on standardizing terminology and phrasing across all foundational documents, with a key priority on implementing gender-neutral language, will occur.

Summary of additional motions and actions:

- **Motion 253-GV01:** Transfers independent management of the ACBL Charitable Recognition Award to the ACBL Charity Foundation, continuing the tradition of honoring Members for exceptional dedication to charitable causes.
- **Motion 253-GV02:** Establishes a Board Oversight Committee framework, including the Code of Conduct and ethical commitments expected of Board Members, and outlines the disciplinary process for infractions.
- **Motion 253-GV03:** Amends Codification Chapter I - Membership, A. Membership, Section 2, Definitions and Rights of ACBL Membership by defining the rights and responsibilities of non-members.
- **Motion 253-GV06:** Amends Codification, Chapter VII - International Bridge, B. WBF Representatives and NABF Board Members by clarifying requirements for North American Bridge Federation (NABF) Board Members and revising requirements for the NABF Representative to the World Bridge Federation (WBF) Executive Council, specifically setting a two-year term and requiring the representative to be an active ACBL Board Member.
- **Non-agenda Item 253-01:** Formalizes the ACBL Organizational Framework, the hierarchy of governing documents that define the structure, rules, and operating procedures for the ACBL and the ACBL Board of Directors.

BYLAWS

Motion 253-BY01: Advisory Council Committees (First Reading). This amendment to Article IX, Section 9.2 of the ACBL Bylaws proposes granting the Advisory Council full discretion over its committee formations, allowing committees to be established as needed rather than by mandate.

Following this First Reading, the proposal remains subject to a second Board approval, *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* publication, and final ratification by the Advisory Council.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Committee has updated the Conflict of Interest forms, distributed and collected the forms for 2025/26 from both incumbent and incoming Board Members, and emphasized the importance of self-reporting any potential conflicts.

ELECTIONS

Cindy Shoemaker, Region 10, was elected by acclamation as ACBL President for a one-year term, January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.

Dennis Carman, Region 5, was elected as ACBL Vice President for a one-year term, January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.

Joann Glasson, Region 3, was elected as ACBL Treasurer for a one-year term, January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.

Rebecca Brown, Region 9, was elected by acclamation as ACBL 401K Trustee to complete the unexpired portion of the four-year term (January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2028) held by David Lodge, Region 11, effective January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2028.

Margot Hennings, Region 4, was elected by acclamation as the North American Bridge Federation (NABF) Representative to the World Bridge Federation (WBF) Executive Council for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027.

Tim White, Region 13, was elected by acclamation as a North American Bridge Federation (NABF) Member to complete the unexpired portion of the three-year term (January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2027) held by Mark Aquino, Region 2, effective November 23, 2025 – December 31, 2027.

CERTIFICATION OF ELECTIONS

The following individuals have been certified as duly elected to the ACBL Board of Directors for a three-year term (January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2028): Dennis Carman, Region 5; Cornelia Gould, Region 11; Margot Hennings, Region 4; and Susan Miguel, Region 2.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Jackie Zayac, Region 12, was appointed as the Western Zone Executive Committee Member for a two-year term, January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027.

Tim White, Region 13, was appointed as the Western Zone Executive Committee Alternate Member for a two-year term, January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027.

Rebecca Brown, Region 9, was appointed as the Central Zone Executive Committee Alternate Member, filling the vacancy for the remainder of Dennis Carman's current three-year term that ends December 31, 2026.

ANNUAL HONORS

James Holzhauer, District 17, was appointed by ACBL Management, and approved by the Board of Directors, as the 2026 ACBL Honorary Member of the Year.

Susan Bridges, District 10, was appointed by the ACBL Board President, and approved by the Board of Directors, as the 2026 ACBL Volunteer Member of the Year.

Noel Stewart, District 10, was recommended by the Goodwill Committee, and approved by the Board of Directors, as the 2026 Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year.