



IEEE WASHINGTON FOCUS

A supplement provided by the IEEE Washington Office*

USAB 1981 Report

Last year, United States IEEE members achieved one of their major professional goals of the preceding eight years: widespread pension reform. The pension victory and other 1981 professional activities of the U.S. Activities Board (USAB) represent efforts to respond to member needs and deliver member services. Work on employment, careers, Government interaction, and societal/technical concerns summarizes the 1981 USAB program.

Employment

Pension reforms. In response to member surveys, the USAB made a concentrated effort over many years to achieve pension reforms. USAB studies concluded that since many company plans require 10 years or longer to vest, and numerous IEEE engineers change jobs in less than this 10-year period, many EEs were not vested. In addition, 84 percent of U.S. IEEE members were ineligible to establish tax-sheltered individual retirement accounts (IRAs), the USAB said, because Federal law prevented individuals already participating in company plans from establishing IRAs. And even those engineers who could participate in company plans may have found them wanting. Thus, the board argued, many EEs could be left without adequate pension funds accumulated through company plans or individual savings.

Under the Economic Recovery Act, endorsed and supported by USAB, all employed individuals can contribute to IRAs. Now, EEs and others who may not vest in company plans have an attractive alternative for retirement saving, if they choose to take advantage of it.

In addition, following a three-year effort, USAB negotiated a group IRA for members.

Richard J. Gowen, 1980-81 Vice President of Professional Activities and USAB chairman, called the new tax law "a major victory for the engineering profession," involving "one of the most important efforts that USAB has made over the last decade." Though a major goal of the IEEE pension effort has been met, the USAB is continuing to work on the pension issue. USAB volunteers met during September of last year to discuss ways of (1) encouraging members to invest in IRAs, (2) decreasing the vesting times required by conventional corporate retirement plans, and (3) opposing reduction of corporate pension plan benefits tied to Social Security increases.

Detroit gains. Another membership survey, conducted quarterly by the USAB, pinpointed high unemployment in the Detroit Southeastern Michigan Section, due to layoffs in the auto industry. Beginning in 1979, Professional Activities Committee and Society members across the country provided job leads to a Southeastern Michigan Section hot line.

In addition, last year a special mailing was sent to Section members describing a new on-line employment information system available free of charge to the IEEE and IEEE members. Through the Professional Abstracts Registries, endorsed by the Institute for a one-year trial, prospective employers obtained the resumes of participating individuals in the U.S. With these and other efforts, unemployment among IEEE members in the Southeastern Michigan Sec-

tunity to supply draft language for a bill designed to eliminate abuses under service contracts. The draft language (reviewed by counsel in November) refers to both wages and benefits.

Patent rights. This past fall, Representative Robert Kastnmeler (D-Wis.) introduced a bill supporting nationwide patent rights for the employed inventor, as suggested by the USAB West Coast Patent Subcommittee and the USAB Patent Task Force. The Kastnmeler bill (H.R. 4732) would give the employee rights to his own invention unless certain conditions prevail such as the employee's using his employer's technical data.

Engineering manpower. Background papers on engineering manpower supply and demand have been prepared for possible use in the Congress. The papers note substantial differences in manpower surveys—some showing decreased demand and others increased demand. They suggest that though there might be a shortage of manpower in some areas, there is an overall balance in supply and demand. Engineering productivity can be enhanced, the papers argue, with additional clerical and technician support.

Attempting to reconcile differences in manpower statistics, the USAB convened a two-day workshop last November examining relationships between engineering manpower supply and demand. Representatives of the American Association of Engineering Societies (AAES), trade associations, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the National Science Foundation (NSF) attended the meeting with IEEE members and the trade press.

Finally, in the engineering manpower area, the USAB prepared Congressional testimony on alien engineers. It also approved a recommendation of an interim report by its Subcommittee on the Employment of Alien Engineers in the U.S. The report recommended that "all IEEE members and Professional Activities Committees (PACs) [should] be encouraged to advise USAB of any abuses of Department of Labor certification procedures, so that such abuses can be brought to the attention of appropriate authorities for corrective action."

Careers

Careers conference. Last October in Denver, the USAB Career Maintenance and Development Task Force organized the second national careers conference in two years. Entitled "What's Working to Enrich Engineering Careers," the two-day meeting attracted over 125 participants. Information on the conference proceedings is available from the Washington Office.

Draft Uniform Code of Ethics. In November, the USAB Ethics Task Force submitted a draft

a third Congressional Fellow for the first time last year. Societies are encouraged to participate. The 1980-81 IEEE Congressional Fellows were Eli Fromm, T.R. Simpson, and Frederick J. Twogood.

Visit with Presidential science advisor. Last summer, a USAB delegation visited George A. Keyworth, President Reagan's science advisor, continuing a dialogue with the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Key concerns such as industrial innovation, national productivity, Federal support of R&D, and engineering education were raised by Richard W. Damon, 1981 IEEE President, Dr. Gowen, and other delegation members.

Tax credits. USAB also supported legislation (later enacted into law) that gives R&D tax credits to high-technology manufacturers and laboratories.

Societal/technical concerns

In addition to its major professional activities last year, the USAB was involved in numerous technical activities that have an impact on society.

IEEE/NRC conference. More than 400 individuals attended a conference to review a guide for evaluating nuclear power plants, hosted by the IEEE in conjunction with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. With the support of USAB, the meeting attracted individuals both in and outside the nuclear industry who employ probabilistic risk assessment (PRA) techniques. The group produced a revised review guide that is undergoing further changes in a similar conference this year.

R&D Committee. Last year, the joint Technical Activities Board (TAB) and USAB R&D Committee provided technical testi-

Conference in Washington, D.C.

USAB organization

Under Dr. Gowen over the last two years, the USAB completed a major reorganization of its activities, creating four major councils: the Member Activities Council; the Government Activities Council; the Career Activities Council; and the Technology Activities Council. In an attempt to make the board more responsive to members, a nominations and appointments committee was also designated to select candidates to head each of the four councils, as well as candidates to become the controller and national PAC chairman.

Professional Activities Committee. One volunteer calls the Professional Activities Committee (PAC) "the yeast" of the organization. As noted above, PAC members in the Regions and Sections have been instrumental in initiating, supporting, and implementing USAB policies at the local, state, and Federal levels.

The PAC bimonthly periodical, *Impocf*, informs PAC members about their counterparts in other Regions and Sections. Additional USAB publications such as the monthly *Legislative Report* and intermittent *Legislative Alerts* continue to provide members with current information. Other publications include PAC flyers, booklets, and source sheets on such topics as pensions, patent rights, and ethics. These materials are incorporated and updated in the *PAC Source Book*.

Some \$66 000 of USAB funds was distributed to the PACs through the Regions and the Divisions. These funds have been used by PACs for high school counseling



Richard W. Damon, 1981 IEEE President (left) and Richard J. Gowen, 1980-81 IEEE Vice President for Professional Activities and Chairman of the U.S. Activities Board (right), visited with George A. Keyworth, Presidential Science Advisor, in Washington, D.C. in July.

mony on fiscal year 1982 budgets for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Department of Energy, the DOD, and the National Science Foundation. The committee also prepared a briefing and an analysis of the electrotechnology section of the FY 1982 Federal research budget.

Energy Committee. The IEEE Energy Committee completed a slide presentation entitled "Energy in Perspective." The show, intended for viewing both in and outside the Institute, attempts to present a comprehensive and balanced view of U.S. energy needs and resources from now until the year 2000. An audience brochure and presenter's guide were developed to accompany the show.

In September, the Energy Committee held a briefing on photovoltaics for 18 congressional staff members, prior to a Senate hearing on the DOE photovoltaics program.

In addition, the IEEE issued a position

projects, local job/data banks, seminars/workshops, continuing education programs, local/state government interaction, and newsletters.

Interaction with IEEE entities. Many of the 1981 USAB activities reflected the increased support and cooperation of IEEE officers, entities, and outside organizations. For example, the Energy Committee's slide show was funded by TAB and USAB. USAB and the PACs joined the Educational Activities Board (EAB) in EAB's revision of a proposed career guidance booklet.

For the first time last year, the IEEE President participated in the National PAC Workshop held in Minneapolis, Minn. Both Dr. Damon and Robert E. Larson, this year's IEEE President, spoke at the Denver, Colo., Careers Conference. The USAB supported pension, ethics, engineering manpower, public affairs, and R&D programs of the