

Annual Meeting— Change Ahead



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In many ways, the study of the State Bar of Michigan's Annual Meeting is a great example of the important decisions we must make together in how we use Bar resources and money. Your needs and the realities of a fast-changing society require us to reevaluate long-held assumptions. It was a given years ago that associations had an annual meeting. Members came together in one place for two to four days and did a variety of things relating to networking, business, and education.

Well, demands on us are changing how we use our time. Most of us just plain don't want to book three or four days to travel in our cars for an hour or hours to another meeting unless it is one incredible shindig. We are weighing that use of time and money against other meetings, other work, family, or personal commitments, and against a much needed two to four days off.

Our annual meeting has served some of us very well in the past. For the vast majority, we either have ignored it or would prefer not to pay for it. Our meeting has the potential for the useful exchange of information, networking, CLE, recreation, and entertainment. It also has the potential, if not adapted to your present desires and needs, to be a high expenditure of money with not enough return for the bucks.

We need your help to either confirm that what we are doing is working, help it to be more useful to you, or to tell us to drastically reduce or eliminate it. There is not an easy answer right now as we balance the pros and cons.

By rule we are required to have such a meeting, but rules can be changed if the reason for the rule changes. We, like most bars, have attempted to accomplish many things by having these meetings:

- allow business to be conducted by sections and committees
- provide CLE
- provide vendors to allow you access to products and services at reduced rates
- provide interesting speakers
- provide networking opportunities

Our attendance has remained steady at around 1,500. Statistically, that is about 4.3 percent of our membership. The participants tend to be those who participate in Bar work and activities, who can be viewed as those who help our Bar serve you and the pub-

lic. The cost in the past has been about \$9 for each member licensed by the State Bar of Michigan.

Our strategic plan has given us the goal to improve services, increase effectiveness, and reduce costs or to dramatically cut it back or even eliminate it. This year, we are working

to try some new things. We hope to bring justices, judges, and lawyers together to share an opportunity to learn together and grow closer in our working relationships. We are planning to reduce the number of days, as well, to honor your time restraints.

In the works are ideas such as regionalizing the meeting and working more closely

with local bars. I'd appreciate it greatly if you would e-mail me and give me your thoughts. As you send your thoughts, help us weigh the cost to you versus what you personally get or could get out of such meetings both directly and indirectly. How would you change it? ♦

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**Share your
thoughts/concerns**

Please forward comments to
voice@mail.michbar.org