

## **Moving the 99s Forward: VOTING AND DELEGATE RIGHTS FOR ACADEMIC MEMBERS!**

**By Laura Smith, Bay Cities Chapter Chair**

Okay, this time around I'm going to discuss one of the proposed bylaws amendments that should not, in all reality, be very controversial if the membership understands one basic fact: Academic Members are in all cases 99s, not FWPs.

*BL V: Membership*

*Section 4. Classes of Membership*

*D. Academic Member—~~Such a member may not vote, be a delegate, or give a proxy as a delegate at the International level.~~*

Academic members are 99s. Future Women Pilots—our student pilot members, those who are students of flying—are not eligible to be Academic Members until after they become full-fledged 99s. Our Academic members are full-time high school, undergraduate, or graduate students. Finances are often tight for students, and The Ninety-Nines have done a wonderful thing in providing these members with a reduced dues rate.

Unfortunately, a restriction was put into the bylaws—perhaps when this membership category was created—that makes it so these members may not vote or be delegates at the International level of the organization (you will need to refer to Chapter and Section bylaws to determine if the Academic members may vote at those levels, it varies throughout the organization). I went to the Fall 2007 International Board of Directors Meeting, and recall the IBOD putting together this very proposal. I was very excited that the IBOD was doing the right thing, but somehow that proposal never showed up with the proposed amendments for the 2008 Annual Meeting. Of course, the Meeting Minutes are not available to the membership, which I find completely unacceptable for a non-profit corporation. Not that I'd trust those Minutes if they were published now.

So the Bay Cities Chapter has endorsed this proposal for this year. It is time to recognize that these women are an important part of our future, and to make them feel included in the decision-making of the organization. We need these women to have a positive 99s experience from the get-go, so that they in turn will promote the 99s to their peers. We need to groom these 99s for leadership within the organization, but first we need to give them a voice, a vote. So here's what a couple of our Academic members have to say about this issue:

Heidi Klein, Grand Forks, ND, Northwest Section (No Chapter), AE Scholarship Winner: "What I can say is that our prospective chapter is entirely composed of Academic members leaving us at somewhat of a disadvantage for voting. I do find it somewhat discouraging, but I look forward to hopefully seeing a change in this bylaws stipulation. As a CFI (ASEL/AMEL Commercial Instrument) and 5 year member of the 99s, I think I would make a good, competent voting member."

Jessica Miller, Minnesota Chapter, North Central Section: "I am currently an academic member of the Minnesota Chapter of the 99s. I recently joined and I went to my first meeting in January; at that meeting I was nominated for the position of Vice-Chair and I accepted the nomination. I believe it is unfair to be so involved in the 99s and not have a vote at the international level. Just because I am currently a student member does not give the 99s the right to exclude my vote. In fact my vote matters exponentially more because I am the future of the 99s, I am currently 18 and I have my Private Pilots License and I am currently working on my instrument rating. I feel it is important to be involved as a young aviator to learn more about the history of aviation and to

receive advise on how to make it in the industry, but to reject our votes at the international level is like rejecting our thoughts on how to get other young women in aviation. Please accept our thoughts by accepting our votes!"

Heidi and Jessica have eloquently shared their thoughts on this issue. Their enthusiasm for The Ninety-Nines is obvious. Let's do the right thing by them and the other seventy-six Academic members currently in our ranks. The power will be in the hands of the delegates, and now is the time to start rallying for the changes we need to have a sustainable future for The Ninety-Nines.

As a reminder, the Bylaws Committee will officially disseminate the proposed amendments to the chapters and sections in the spring so that the delegates can be prepared for the Annual Meeting. I look forward to hearing your analysis and opinions, you are welcome to send your feedback to: [laura.smith@att.net](mailto:laura.smith@att.net).