

Background

During May/June 2008, the External Affairs Committee (XAC) had several conference calls to discuss how local chapters interface with RIMS with respect to public positions on issues. Since there is no guidance currently provided by RIMS to chapters on issuing public positions, it was decided that guidelines should be developed to ensure there is congruency between RIMS and its chapters. The guidelines will help to eliminate misunderstandings, promote efficient and appropriate communication between RIMS and its chapters, and ensure that RIMS goals and objectives are maintained in communications with the public.

The following points are recognized:

- There are differences in the legislative, political, economic and social environments between local chapters and RIMS.
- Communication among local chapters, RIMS XAC and the RIMS Board of Directors is of primary importance. Designating chapter liaisons would facilitate proactive communication.
- Chapters would benefit by the creation of a Director of External Affairs position on the chapter board of directors.
- Local chapters and RIMS must be consistent on issues made public. All policy statements and positions proposed by chapters must be approved by XAC/RIMS prior to being made public.
- Local chapters can benefit by following XAC best practices with respect to effective relations with legislators, policymakers, the media and the public.
- These guidelines establish responsibilities with respect to legislative, regulatory and other external affairs issues at the federal, state and local levels.

Guidelines

Local chapters may not take public positions on behalf of RIMS or use the RIMS brand for any public positions not approved by RIMS. The following guidelines apply.

A. Identification of Issues

New issues or policy positions may be proposed by any RIMS Chapter Board of Directors Member, any RIMS Deputy or Associate Member, or any representative from RIMS staff.

B. Process and Approval at Chapter Level

1. Using the following process, a local chapter board of directors may approve policy statements or action plans on legislative, regulatory or other external affairs issues and authorize their release to the public or media.
 - a. Distribute the proposed documents to chapter members with a fixed date for comment and response. Concurrently, forward the proposed documents to the External Affairs (XAC) Chairperson and RIMS Government Affairs staff.
 - b. Revise as required.
 - c. Prior to the release of the policy statement or action plan, receive written concurrence from the External Affairs Committee (XAC) and RIMS.
2. The chapter Director of External Affairs or other designee may release the documents to the public or media. RIMS staff may advise the local chapter on appropriate procedures and guidelines for issuing public statements.

C. Society Consideration of Policy Positions and Action Plans

1. The new issue or proposed policy position should be forwarded in writing to the External Affairs (XAC) Chairperson and RIMS Government Affairs staff.
2. The XAC Chairperson delegates research or investigation and coordinates with RIMS Government Affairs staff and the External Affairs Board of Director's liaison to XAC (External Affairs Committee).
3. The research process will include contact with the local chapter for potential conflicts with any existing RIMS position(s), and to obtain additional information relative to the new issue or policy position being proposed.
4. The External Affairs Committee (XAC) will consider all available information and determine a course of action based on two categories of issues:
 - a. RIMS has already taken a position on the issue. If a local Chapter proposes issuing a statement, policy, or position on a matter about which RIMS has already adopted a public position, the local Chapter may proceed provided that the local Chapter's position aligns with the

RIMS position. A local Chapter may not take a public position on an issue if that position is not consistent with the RIMS position.

- b. RIMS has not taken a position on the issue. If a local Chapter proposes taking a public position on an issue that has not been addressed by RIMS, then RIMS will need to determine whether the Society will adopt a position. Should RIMS decide to adopt a position, and that position will align with the proposed local Chapter position, then the local Chapter may proceed. Should RIMS decide to adopt a position and that position differs with the position taken by the local Chapter, then the local Chapter may not issue their position. Finally, if RIMS decides that it will not take a position on the issue, the local Chapter may proceed upon the review and approval of External Affairs Committee (XAC) on behalf of RIMS. The local Chapter must clearly state that the views represented are reflective of the local Chapter only and not necessarily shared by or endorsed by RIMS.

5. The External Affairs Committee (XAC) and RIMS will process chapter requests promptly and have committed to responding to all inquiries for new issues and new policy positions within a 30 day time frame. In the event mitigating circumstances require an immediate response, the External Affairs Committee will endeavor to provide a formal response within seven days.

D. Retention of Chapter Documents

All public positions issued by local chapters will be posted on the RIMS website. This will provide a resource for chapters to share information and provide a consistent format for similar documents.