

# Letters to the Editor

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## Schools Spread Sexism

Three cheers for Jack Carter and his excellent editorial "Warning, Schools Spread Sexism" (ABT 40:9). The do-nothing position taken by the NABT leadership regarding holding conventions in non-ERA states is, indeed, as Dr. Carter says, a "view in favor of continued discrimination against the sexes." The membership of NABT should join Susan Offner (see letters, same issue) and voice their protests about this poor decision by their association's foot-dragging leaders.

Who are our leaders in NABT? Are women adequately represented? The 1978 "Leadership Team" consists of no women and 6 men, the Board of Directors does much better with 6 women and 18 men; the eight standing committees have the following proportions of women compared with total membership, 0/7, 0/4, 1/3, 1/4, 0/5, 1/3, 1/5, 0/5, (excluding ex-officio members). This makes a total of 4 women out of a total of 36 committee positions.

The new slate of nominees for next year's NABT leaders perpetuates this discriminatory pattern. I was astounded to unfold the pages of photos of the proposed slate. We see 21 faces of which 17 are men.

It should be possible to do better than this.

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## NABT and Political Issues

Joan Creager's editorial, "We Cannot Be Apolitical" [ABT 40(7); 405] has much to commend it in defining a problem (biologists' inadequacy in the political process) and pointing to ways the classroom can

become a vehicle for sensitizing students to the political (if not also simultaneously to personal ethical) questions that arise from a number of biological topics. To that point I say, "Amen" and "Let's go." I say likewise to the suggestions that NABT take several of the suggested steps to improve communication among its members on biopolitical issues, but with one strong caveat.

For, if any, voluntary professional organizations have the capacity and competence, let alone perhaps the right, to take a specific position on a particular issue (unless it be something like academic freedom). Both the strategy and tactics for reaching such posits are beyond the pale of associations like NABT and can be divisive of its membership. There is also the risk of whatever beneficial IRS status the organization may have if it engages in direct political activity. Though Creager has indicated such position papers would present "biological perspectives on various issues," I worry about who will be minding the gate to assure that no single perspective sneaks through.

I am personally ready, willing, and able to join in an NABT effort to improve communication, but I am not prepared to have an NABT representation be necessarily mine. Thus, I urge the Board of Directors to take up Creager's challenge taking care to avoid single focus political statements.

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## Creager Responds

"Amen" and "Let's go" to Kormondy's caveat. Though nowhere in my editorial do I recommend single-

focus political statements, I am exceedingly pleased that Kormondy wrote to emphasize the dangers of one-sided views on complex issues.

Stands the NABT has taken in the past include the one on the teaching of evolution, which I believe had the strong support of its members, and the issue of holding conventions in ERA and non-ERA states, which a poll of half the members showed to be a divisive issue [ABT 40(6):372]. From my five years' experience as an *ex officio* member of the Board of Directors, including the meeting at which convention sites and ERA were discussed, I feel it is reasonably safe to say that the NABT Board is unlikely to articulate a position on any issue without the strong support of the members of the Association.

However, the resolution on the convention site issue to distribute meeting sites in proportion to the number of states that have and have not ratified the ERA emphasizes my original point that *we cannot be apolitical*. Any possible decision on this issue would have been a political decision—even the decision to avoid the issue.

I respect Kormondy's concern about who will be minding the gate, but I am also concerned that the gate-minders recognize that anything they do will have political implications including locking the gate.

## Isosmotic and Isotonic

I read with great interest and agreement Sheldon Gottlieb's article "Isosmotic and Isotonic are not the same" [ABT 40(5):321]. Very few basic anatomy and physiology texts do treat this topic properly. I have found that Vander, A.J., Sherman, J.H., and Luciano, D.S., *Human*