

December 29, 2024

CB&L Committee Chair Past President David Sneed

International Association of Arson Investigators

Proposed Amendment #2024-02 Comment

Chairmen Sneed,

As President of the International Association of Arson Investigator (IAAI), in April 2024 I established the Foundation Committee within the IAAI, In November 2024 I changed the name to Grants and Research Committee as a pathway for the IAAI to receive and process funds or donations from our strategic partners and corporate sponsors. The name change was done to remove the foundation name from the committee, so we do not confuse membership thinking it was part of the IAAI Foundation.

In the past the IAAI always forwarded these funds to the IAAI Foundation to maintain and distribute. This sometimes adds concern or questions from the corporate sponsors or strategic partners, as to why we are using a separate organization which is managed by a separate board to maintain these funds. The IAAI Foundation is a separate yet closely tied 501c3 organization.

The purpose of the new proposal is to establish the Grants and Research Committee as a standing Committee of the IAAI to put in place operational processes for receiving and managing funds donated or collected by the IAAI for research grants and research projects. This would also include the development of CFI Trainer modules, core curriculum training courses and the advancement of the International Training Conference (ITC).

This committee will not be handling scholarships to the ITC and other educational scholarships currently provided by the IAAI Foundation. Should opportunities arise for donations for these types of scholarships the donations would be handled by the IAAI Foundation. This committee was not established to compete with the Foundation for funds or donations. It is simply to establish a pathway for additional funding and donations.

As a member in good standing with direct involvement on the IAAI Board of Directors, Executives, and Administration for the past 9 years I am in favor of this proposed change and hope everyone understands and supports moving the IAAI forward to the future by adding additional educational opportunities.

Respectfully,

*Trace L. Lawless*

Trace Lawless, IAAI Member # 119959

To The Membership of the IAAI,

As a member of the IAAI Board of Directors and a member of the Foundation Board of Directors I would like to offer some of my reasons for my support of the constitutional amendment to create a standing Grants and Research Committee.

I would first like to point out the fact that the President of the IAAI has the sole right to establish committees during his/her term as President in order to accomplish the needs and missions of the IAAI. These committees are not standing committees and as such can be dissolved by any incoming President. By establishing a standing committee under the Constitution and Bylaws, the standing committee can only be dissolved with a change to the Constitution by a vote of the membership.

President Lawless recently established a Grants and Research Committee in an effort to establish a mechanism for the IAAI to seek, receive and administer funds from individuals, corporations, or government entities. The IAAI Grants and Research Committee, with oversight from the IAAI Board of Directors, would then be able to determine areas of need, such as research that would be beneficial to the Fire Investigation Profession, and then provide grant funding for that research. The research findings would then be made available to our membership and the fire investigation community in an effort to improve our knowledge base. The IAAI is a 501c3 organization, which allows donations to be considered as tax exempt.

The IAAI Board recently established a reserve account in hopes of someday having its own training and research facility. Any donations to the IAAI earmarked thusly could be used by the Grants and Research Committee to further this endeavor someday.

The establishment of the Grants and Research Committee, whether as a standing committee or a regular committee, does not in any way encumber any of the funds in possession of the Foundation. The Foundation's funds are separate funds that belong to the Foundation for their use as prescribed by their own Constitution and Bylaws. I do not see the IAAI Grants and Research Committee as a competitor of the Foundation. I fully support the Foundation's current mission. I believe the activities of the Foundation are of value to our members and I hope that those services continue.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for your vote in support of establishing a standing IAAI Grants and Research Committee by voting in favor of this constitutional change.

Cordially,

Chris

Chris M. Van Vleet, IAAI-CFI®

IAAI President 2023 -2024

## 2024 Proposed IAAI-Constitution & By-Law Changes

David E. Bridges' Comments

December 30, 2024

### **Proposed Amendment No. 2024-02:**

Article V, Government

Section 1. Standing Committee. The following committees shall be standing full-time committees of the IAAI.

N. IAAI Grants and Research Committee. The duties of the Grants and Research Committee shall be the development, administration and management of monetary assistance opportunities for education, professional development, and research assistance for individuals and institutions engaged in the field of fire, arson, and explosion investigations under the direction of the IAAI Board of Directors. The committee will manage donations to fund scholarships and grants to members to enhance the field of fire investigation. The committee will oversee fundraising opportunities, and propose grants, scholarships, and expenditures to the IAAI Board of Directors for approval.

**Comment:** I **support/endorse** Proposed Amendment No. 2024-02 to the IAAI-Constitution & By-Laws. Previously, the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) obtained its nonprofit organization status, allowing the IAAI to maximize resources and strengthen its ability to achieve its mission through funding opportunities and tax advantages. By formalizing processes for funding educational and research initiatives, managing fundraising, donations, and other monetary assistance opportunities responsibly, and ensuring oversight by the IAAI-Board of Directors, the Proposed Amendment aligns with the requirements for nonprofit organizations.

Executive Director Stone:

Below is my Public Comment on the Proposed Constitutional Amendment.

I am 100% in support of the Proposed Constitutional Amendment elevating the previously established IAAI Grants and Research Committee to a Standing Committee.

Several years ago the IAAI pursued and obtained its 501(c)3 Non-Profit status. This was necessary to properly apply for tax exemptions concerning the ITC and other administrative functions. This saves the Association a significant amount of money on a yearly basis. A side benefit of obtaining the Non-Profit status is the ability to receive donations and contributions to further propel forward the mission of the IAAI. However, when the Non-Profit status was obtained, no mechanism was put in place to receive, supervise and administer any donations. Recently, President Lawless established the IAAI Grants and Research Committee to administer any donations received and to be able to put those donations to use in the furtherance of the IAAI mission, as stated in the committee description. The creation of this committee allows for accountability to the IAAI Board of Directors and the IAAI Membership. Elevating this committee to the status of a Standing Committee will ensure this committee and mission continues through the decades. Also, this action provides assurances to donors that the donations are administered by a committee whose scope and purpose are specifically spelled out in the IAAI constitution.

I would urge the membership to vote in favor of this amendment, creating the IAAI Grants and Research Committee as a Standing Committee.

Sincerely,

Randy Watson

IAAI Past President

To Whom it concerns,

The IAAI Foundation was established in 1992 to support the IAAI and the fire investigation community by operating as a 501(c)3 organization and supplying grants, scholarships, and research funding to promote the field of fire investigations.

Over the 32 years our mission remains the same as we continue to look for opportunities to support the fire investigations community, the IAAI ITC, and support research in the field of fire investigations.

The Proposed IAAI C&BL Change located on the IAAI website. If this passes, this will create (2) organizations that are competing for the same mission. The C&BL change mirrors the IAAI Foundations mission and only was developed after our decision to remain a separate corporation. The IAAI Foundation Board of directors decided to keep these (2) corporations separate because as elected officials we could not define any benefits that this would add to the IAAI Foundation and its supporters. The majority of the board of directors for the IAAI Foundation does not support this bylaw change and we hope that everyone understands the reasons that we have made the decision to maintain control of the IAAI Foundation corporation in whole. The IAAI Foundation has always supported the IAAI, and its members and we will continue to foster this relationship and be a part of investing in the training and education of the IAAI Membership and the ITC. If this bylaw change was to form a committee for grant assistance this would be different; however, when the mission mirrors that of the IAAI foundation, the organization that the IAAI has leaned on in the past 32 years, it is not fair for the IAAI to make a proposal that could negatively impact our relationships and ability to continue to serve the fire investigations community.

Tommy Sipsy

Chief Fire & Explosion Investigator

Southern Company Gas

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