

2025 SPRING ACBL NATIONAL BOARD REPORT

The ACBL Board of Directors convened its spring meetings virtually on March 3 and continued F2F in Memphis, TN March 10-13. The Board, its Committees and Task Forces continue to meet regularly via Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

FINANCE

Full-year 2024 revenue, \$17.955M, was \$1.568M better than budget and \$2.093M greater than 2023 revenue.

Full-year 2024 expenses, \$16.396M, was \$304K better than budget.

2024 change in net assets, \$2.388M, resulted from a \$1.559M gain from operations and a \$829K gain in the value of market investments.

For February 2025, the gain from operations was \$159k, exceeding budget by \$81K but \$39K less than the 2024 figure. Monthly revenue was \$1.32M, \$45K better than budget. Expenses were \$1.16M, \$36K better than budget.

February year-to-date, the gain in net assets is \$257K which is \$364K greater than budget but \$186K less than 2024 YTD.

The balance sheet remains strong with \$9M in investments and \$5.8M in deferred revenue from future membership expirations.

MEMBERSHIP TRENDS

As of February, membership decreased from 130,602 to 124,076, year-on-year. 2025 YTD figures indicate a positive trend with a 25.77% year-on-year increase in new members and a 27.27% increase in new guest members.

GROWING THE GAME

Two exciting initiatives, the ACBL Community and Jump Start Bridge, are invigorating the bridge community by involving current players in new ways and cultivating a new generation of enthusiasts. These programs address membership engagement, support local clubs, and the long-term vitality of bridge.

ACBL Community

ACBL Community enables players to support their local F2F bridge clubs while enjoying online competition and earning special Masterpoint awards. This central hub connects players from local clubs, the ACBL Clubhouse, and Community Games within the bridge community. A portion of every game entry fee in the Clubhouse goes directly to the player's local F2F club(s). By participating in the Community Club, players invest in and strengthen their local bridge communities and positively impact F2F clubs.

For details, go to <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/daily-online-games/>.

Jump Start Bridge

An initiative led by Patty Tucker, Jump Start Bridge, in partnership with the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation, introduces bridge into curricula of middle schools and high schools. It helps develop critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and social development skills.

The program is gaining widespread interest, including among teachers actively seeking enrichment for their students. Their enthusiasm is fueling the program's impressive growth.

In Memphis, Tucker updated the Board on the successes of Jump Start Bridge. As of mid-March, over 100 dedicated volunteers have contributed more than 3,000 hours, connecting with nearly 2,000 prospective teachers at 20 gifted children and math conferences in North America. As a result, 411 teachers have registered, bringing the game to over 18,000 students in 236 cities across 35 states and two provinces. The program is poised for further expansion, with presentations scheduled at upcoming educational conferences.

Jump Start Bridge provides teachers with valuable standards-aligned resources, ongoing support, and incentives like stipends and free supplies. Students gain exciting opportunities to participate in championships, summer camps, and youth games.

With a continuing need for financial and volunteer support, the program's impact continues to grow. Tucker emphasizes the significant role of community support in further expanding its reach. Individuals can contribute through donations, volunteering, program promotion within their networks, and advocating for bridge in school curriculums.

For details, go to <https://www.jumpstartbridge.org/>.

MEMBER RETENTION

During its meetings, the Board reviewed a proposal for a Ranking Rewards Program to recognize and incentivize member progress in rank achievement. The initiative aims to reward dedication, strengthen local communities, increase tournament participation, and enhance member loyalty through benefits for reaching milestones such as Life Master. Implementation will include a communication plan, partnering with local organizations, and creating a tracking system.

SUPPORTING UNITS AND DISTRICTS

The Board addressed "Pathways to Improving Tournaments," an initiative aimed at challenges faced by tournament organizers. Drawing on feedback from organizers and players, and in consultation with ACBL Field Operations and Bridge Operations, three areas were discussed and addressed: optimizing tournament schedules, refining overall scheduling, and improving staffing models.

Concerning tournament schedules, organizers are seen as best positioned to create appealing and rewarding player experiences by tailoring event types and format, anticipating attendance, understanding players' interests and preferences, ensuring viable event sizes, and balancing pair and team events. This includes learning from past tournaments, collaborating with area supervisors and tournament directors, and creating realistic event schedules, which can be challenging especially for smaller tournaments.

Regarding tournament scheduling, the Board examined declining attendance, especially at open regionals and by past Gold Rush players. The viability of alternative types of regional tournaments, e.g., senior, Intermediate and Newcomer (I/N), and split regionals, can be an avenue to explore. Some locales have had success with I/N Regionals – as an alternative to or to supplement open tournaments – including in conjunction with sectionals. I/N tournaments can be a stepping stone toward some players' greater comfort and interest in progressing to open tournaments.

In the area of tournament staffing, it was noted there is a need to better support organizers while balancing cost and quality considerations. Transparency and cost oversight of staffing are potential areas for improvement. Areas for consideration could include offsite support for some TD functions during tournament sessions and setting a fixed per-table TD session fee and expense structure to perhaps better level expenses across the spectrum of tournament sizes and geographic locations.

Going forward, best practices and promising innovations can be captured and shared with organizers.

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

The Memphis meetings provided an opportunity to interact with representatives of international bridge. The entire Wednesday morning session was devoted to a F2F meeting with officials from the World Bridge Federation (WBF). This provided a better understanding of WBF's organization, functions, processes and challenges and an opportunity to discuss ACBL's interests. Presidents of the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF) and the Federation of Mexican Bridge (FMB) participated in the meeting via Zoom. A senior representative from the United States Bridge Federation (USBF) participated F2F.

COMBATING ONLINE CHEATING

ACBL continues to employ a Computer-Based Cheating Detection (CBCD) tool, EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach), to detect online cheating. Since February 1, 2024, 12,089 players have been submitted for screening, with a total of 37,875 examined (the greater number includes partners of players whose names were submitted). Approximately 700 players identified by EDGAR have been charged, and the current cumulative online cheating rate of all examined players (members, non-members, and inactive accounts), is between 2.5% and 3%. Screening of all online players is hoped to be completed by year-end. Disciplinary actions have included Fast Track Discipline (303 players), Negotiated Resolutions (45), Expedited Disciplinary Panels (9), and Institute of Bridge Arbitration resolutions (26), with 20 resignations to avoid discipline, and other cases pending.

APPEALS AND CHARGES

The Appeals and Charges Committee Chair reported on one approved Negotiated Resolution for an Ethical Violation case initiated by CBCD. An appeal of a May 2024 Expedited Disciplinary Proceeding decision was heard in February, and the original decision was affirmed. ACBL management issued two Suspensions Pending Hearing in March for players competing in the online regional tournament under extraordinary circumstances.

Hearing Reports and the Under Discipline List are at <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>.

GOVERNANCE

To improve user-friendliness and efficiency, the Governance Committee is leading initiatives to streamline the ACBL Codification, revise the Board Resource Manual, and review the Board's election processes.

The ACBL Codification is the central collection of Board-approved rules and regulations. Its language and structure are being simplified, and navigation will be improved through cross-referencing to foundational documents such as the ACBL Bylaws and the Board Resource Manual, and to the ACBL website.

The Board Resource Manual, a reference tool for new and continuing Board members, is undergoing revision to better anticipate and address common questions and information needs. This will enhance new Board member onboarding and offer quick access to key information, improving efficiency and effectiveness.

Governance is also reviewing and proposing updates to ACBL Board member election provisions to improve processes and timelines and better employ technology. The Committee aims to improve pre-election communication, increasing awareness of these positions. The updated Board/Advisory Council (AC) election notice, better defining position criteria, has been published in the March and April editions of the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*.

The Board clarified reimbursable incremental expenses based on potential timing and length of the fall meeting, better accommodating Board members and ACBL staff who wish to return home for Thanksgiving.

Enhancing Communication Practices

The Board is improving its own communication practices with new Email and Social Media Policies (effective March 13, 2025) based on responsible and reliable digital engagement. The Email Policy sets an expectation of professional, secure, compliant use of corporate email, while the Social Media Policy provides for clear and consistent messaging, for a more unified and consistent online presence for the ACBL.

The Governance Committee plays a role in keeping membership informed about Board activities. The Committee creates a draft of this *National Board Report*, providing a

summary of key discussions, decisions and ongoing initiatives. Governance also provides content for the Board page of the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*, offering an additional avenue for members to be informed about the work of the Board.

Bylaw Amendments Pass Second Reading

Two motions to amend the ACBL Bylaws received unanimous Board approval at their second readings in Memphis and, with the Advisory Council's having ratified them during its March 30 meeting, will take effect:

- Motion (251-BY01) updates Articles V-X concerning the Board and AC elections by eliminating outdated information, simplifying language, and generalizing Board vacancy provisions for greater flexibility.
- Motion (251-BY02) amends publishing procedures, allowing the ACBL to notify members of bylaw changes by either publishing the full text or providing a website link in its official ACBL publication, streamlining the notification process.

NABC SITE SELECTION UPDATE

ACBL management, with Board approval, has selected the following host sites for upcoming NABCs: summer 2028 at the Hyatt Regency Orlando (July 21 - August 8) and summer 2029 at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta Downtown (July 27 - August 14). Contracts will be signed after final negotiations set hotel room and meeting space, costs, and logistics.

APPOINTMENTS

Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Committee: Betty Starzec has been appointed to the Central National Goodwill Committee, effective March 3, 2025, to complete the unexpired term of Rebecca Brown, who resigned following her election as Region 9 Director on the ACBL Board. Starzec's term will continue through March 2027.

Competition and Conventions Committee: Franco Baseggio, Doug Doub, Jeff Ford, David Grainger, and Jeff Meckstroth were appointed for three-year terms ending at the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

Hall of Fame Committee: Kevin Dwyer-Rimstedt, Adam Grossack, and Joe Grue were appointed for three-year terms ending the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

Ethical Oversight Committee: Kevin Bathurst, Jon Brissman, Bruce Ferguson, Hendrik Sharples, and Eddie Wold were appointed for three-year terms ending the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

ACBL Disciplinary Committee: Iftikhar Baqai, Chris Benson, Jan Martel, and Chris Moll were appointed for three-year terms ending the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

Laws Commission: Chris Compton, Ron Gerard, and Adam Wildavsky were appointed for five-year terms ending the spring 2030 NABC, effective March 25, 2024.

Masterpoint Committee:

- President At-large Member Appointments: Doug Couchman, Lee Lin and Russ Jones with terms ending at the spring 2026 NABC.
- Management Appointments: Rob Maier, David Metcalf and Sol Weinstein (non-voting Advisor) with terms ending at the spring 2026 NABC.