

Convention Report 2010 – Ruthann Gavitt

PAHA's seven delegates (Wayne, Ruthann, Virginia, Kriss, Linda, Joy, and Vic) were among the 325 delegates voting at the AHA Convention in Orlando Nov. 17-21. Of the 43 Resolutions considered, 33 were approved (many after amendment), 2 disapproved, and 8 withdrawn or referred to committee, according to my count. Two of the latter were #1, which would have restored the old calendar membership year, and 43, which would have asked the AHA Board to rescind its endorsement of re-opening slaughter plants in the U.S.

Two of the amended versions passed were, I thought, an interesting study in what sometimes happens to a resolution when it passes through multiple committee reviews on its way to the floor. Number 14 initially forbade the use of ear plugs for performance horses, but by the time it passed on the floor, it permitted the use, declaring that they are not artificial appliances. Number 17, which started out with the intent simply to add some abbreviations for select rider classes, was dramatically amended to expand what one may win before losing select rider status.

I attended all the general sessions, which included several of the usual "state of the organization" reports from leadership, awards and honors, elections, and most notably, outstanding coverage of the Arabian presence at the World Equestrian Games. Martha Murdoch was honored for organizing the Arabian breed demos there, the Galleries had thousands of visitors, and an Arabian race was held at Keeneland.

Wednesday night's plenary session, intended to clarify the intent of all the Resolutions to the attendees, was dismally disappointing because so many of the proponents were not present to field questions. I was particularly concerned about #13, which seemed to eliminate TBA's from show's repertoires of options for adding classes. I received a round of applause when I stood up at a microphone and urged that it be defeated if no one was present to assure us that its language really didn't mean that. Consequently it was amended before coming to the floor, preserving TBA's as well as adding other possible options.

Committee sessions I attended included equitation, awards, amateur, and eventing and driving, the latter three of which I am a member. As most of these are covered in others' reports below, I will simply mention that the large Amateur Committee reviewed a sizable number of resolutions and approved most of them, but also had some time left to discuss some other issues of concern, such as how impossible it is to enforce the provisions of the recently-approved AOTS (Amateur Owned, Trained, and Shown) class, which requires that a professional has not trained, schooled, groomed, etc. the horse for at least a year. (The amateur may be assisted by another amateur).

I also made a special effort to attend the seminars and forums that related most closely to club leadership; these included marketing, development, and promotions, and a Regional Boundaries Forum. This latter consisted of a report from a committee of highly-respected, longtime members who took on the mandate for a long-overdue review of regional boundaries every five years. They traced the history of the regional system, and presented a possible revision based on balancing out the membership of regions at an average of 2600 members each. This proposal reduces the number of Regions and re-numbers them. (According to a map they supplied, PA would be included with New York and NE in what is now Region 16.)

Participants in the Forum raised a number of difficulties they foresaw in implementing such a change. For instance, some Regions have accumulated considerable funds; how would these be re-allocated? How would Regional shows be impacted? Some regions already encompass vast distances because of sparse member population; wouldn't this be made worse by this plan? Regional-quality show sites are limited, and some Regions would have two or more, while others would have none. If the number of Regional Directors on the AHA Board was reduced, would the number of Directors at large be reduced also?

The Board is expected to take up this subject in March or April of 2011. Only then will we know whether or not they will go forward with any kind of boundaries revision.

A couple final notes: it is important to remember that most of the Resolutions approved will not go into effect until the end of 2011.

The Convention will be in Vancouver next November.