

## SPRING 2026 ACBL NATIONAL BOARD REPORT

The ACBL Board of Directors held its spring in-person meetings February 23-26 in St. Louis. The Board and its Committees and Task Forces continue to meet regularly online using Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

### FINANCE

ACBL concluded the 2025 fiscal year in a stable financial position with net assets increasing \$1.367M to \$12.58M.

While operating revenues of \$17.98M were slightly below budget, primarily due to a \$1.1M shortfall in club table fees, this was offset by NABC performance \$358K better than budget and steady membership dues. Administration and operations cost management resulted in year-end expenses \$992K below budget, resulting in a positive bottom line.

There was an unrealized gain of \$688K in the market value of investments.

Strategic investment remains a priority, with \$640K dedicated to capital projects. Of this, \$553K was invested in continuing modernization of the AS400 back-office system, securing the foundation of membership and scoring infrastructure and data for the future.

### MEMBERSHIP

The February 2026 report showed a year-on-year 5% membership decline from 124,076 to 117,813.

Year-to-date sign-ups dipped to 701, down from 1,508 in 2025. However, there was a 170% increase in new guest memberships, from 914 last year to 2,482 this year. This indicates a pathway for growth as guest members transition to long-term commitment.

For 2026, the primary focus remains centered on effective delivery of member-facing programs.

#### **Growth Framework & Reporting**

Management's approach to expanding the membership base focuses on the 5-5-5 program and specific membership pathways. Key elements include:

- **A Retention-First Strategy:** Prioritizing retention of existing members as the most sustainable basis for net membership growth.
- **Funnel Expansion:** Broadening participation by opening the funnel to new players, ensuring a more diverse entry point into the organization.

- **Systems Integration:** Improving tracking by reconciling legacy and back-office reporting data to ensure outreach to lapsed members is based on accurate metrics.

## Engagement & Recognition

Updates were provided on the Sapphire program, which serves as a primary vehicle for tracking and recognizing member engagement. Management highlighted several critical areas for program scaling:

- **The 60-Day Conversion Window:** Data indicates that engagement within the first 60 days is the greatest correlator in converting guest members to permanent members.
- **Grassroots Coordination:** Focus is on strengthening communication with clubs and units to improve recruiter tracking and mentor involvement.
- **Strategic Outreach:** Refined tracking to allow for more targeted communication with members at risk of lapsing, ensuring they remain connected to the community.

## ONLINE ETHICAL OVERSIGHT

ACBL continues to utilize EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach) to detect online cheating. Since December, the processing of approximately 20,000 additional player numbers was completed, with another 10,000 currently nearing completion. Two final large batches will be submitted to EDGAR to complete first-pass screening of all 82,000+ individuals who have played ACBL sanctioned events online since 2020. These final runs and their subsequent processing are anticipated to conclude by May.

## Processing Statistics & Outcomes

From February 2024 to date:

- **Total number of players screened and fully processed:** 50,795.
- **Disciplinary Actions:** 1,812 players identified by EDGAR have been charged or issued Official Warnings.
- **Current detected cheating rate:** Approximately 3.5%. This figure includes members, nonmembers and inactive accounts.

The online cheating rate is expected to decrease as the pool of players subject to Player Memos (PM) for purported ethical violations has now been fully screened. The estimated final rate is projected to be approximately 3%.

Disciplinary outcomes have included Official Warnings (498); Fast Track Discipline (FTD) (939); Negotiated Resolutions (NR) (54); Management Adjudications (10); Institute of Bridge Arbitration (IBA) resolutions (44); 41 resignations with charges pending, and 154 pending cases.

### **APPEALS & CHARGES COMMITTEE**

The Committee Chair reported that there were no hearings and no Negotiated Resolutions (NR) or IBA Consent Offers to review since the Fall board meetings. Two players were given a Suspension Pending Hearing (SPH) by Management, as they were repeat offenders (having previously served a suspension for online cheating). They subsequently resigned from the ACBL.

To view Hearing Reports and the Under Discipline List, go to the ACBL's ethics page: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>. This information is updated several times daily.

### **BRIDGE COMMITTEE**

The Bridge Committee and Management are working on a suite of operational and membership initiatives for 2026. These efforts, along with those of the Competition and Conventions Committee, prioritize refinement of the Masterpoint system to improve consistency and proportionality of Masterpoint awards across events to incentivize play in clubs, tournaments, and online; support restructuring of NABCs to create a championship experience for players of all levels; and modernize recruitment pathways for new players in support of ACBL's strategy and growth framework.

### **TOURNAMENT TASK FORCE**

Efforts in 2024 and 2025 included comprehensive evaluation of the ACBL competitive play landscape that focused on improving tournament staffing, scheduling of tournaments, and schedules of events for regional tournaments of all sizes.

Working with Management, in 2025 the task force created an updated *Regional Tournament Planning Guide*. This comprehensive "nuts and bolts" guide includes checklists and best practices for sponsoring organizations and Tournament Chairs and is currently being distributed to district and unit host organizations.

Organizational changes reflecting input from this task force were enacted by Management. These changes redefined Tournament Director and staff responsibilities at headquarters and in the field to help achieve ongoing objectives of improving overall player experience while helping ensure financial viability for ACBL and tournament organizers.

To help ensure that recommendations and regulations are readily available to those who need them, the task force will continue to work closely with Management on the development of Tournament *Trails*. This initiative aims to gather all tournament-level information into a centralized, user-friendly website space—like a Club Corner for tournaments—to improve accessibility for players, organizers, and teachers alike.

Also in 2026, this task force will continue its forward-looking efforts to ensure that the current mix of Sectionals, Regionals, and NABC-level events meet player needs. This will include understanding how Local Sectionals, Sectional-Tournaments-at-Clubs (STaCs), Non-life Master Sectionals and Regionals, and hybrid tournaments encourage player participation. Key to this focus will be ensuring flexibility to accommodate geographic differences across ACBL while retaining the high standards of the ACBL brand.

## **REAL DEAL UPDATE**

The Board received an update on The Real Deal digital initiative which transitions ACBL from a transactional gaming model to a community-centric Digital Clubhouse.

Utilizing the RealBridge platform, the program replicates the social interaction of in-person play through integrated audio and video, reducing the isolation characteristic of much of traditional online bridge and providing a high-quality home club experience.

With over 1,200 players engaged in a single month, the initiative has already demonstrated strong interest. Current efforts focus on streamlining technical onboarding and developing teaching programs to build a long-term player pipeline.

For more information, visit: <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/realdeal>.

## **COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Newly formed in 2026, the Committee is dedicated to enhancing procedures and optimizing communication. Initial efforts focus on the following initiatives, with additional priorities to be identified as the year progresses:

- **Organizational Synergy:** Refining existing communication channels between the Board, Advisory Council (AC), and membership for more effective information sharing.
- **Member Engagement:** Implementing a structured process to collect and review member, club and teacher feedback.
- **Online Platform Neutrality:** ACBL now sanctions games across multiple online platforms, including BBO (Bridge Base Online), Funbridge, IntoBridge, OKbridge, RealBridge, RSVP Bridge (new) and Shark Bridge. The Committee and Management will create a promotional framework that strives for equitable promotion and provides members with clear definitions of benefits.
- **AI Strategy:** Drafting policy language regarding AI-driven usage to ensure organizational guidelines remain current with this growing technology.

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee introduced its 2026 work plan which prioritizes modernization of governing documents and procedural efficiency.

- **Codification Review:** Ongoing efforts to refine our regulations and policies include:
  - Updating the membership chapter.
  - Relocating the awards and trophies section.
  - Revising the Committee section.
  - Reviewing and consolidating the unit and district chapters.
  - Updating international bridge content and NABC site selection provisions.
- **Bylaws Amendment:** A motion (253-BY01) providing the AC greater latitude to structure and eliminate committees is progressing through the required publication and approval stages.
- **Language and Consistency:** Updates are being implemented across the Bylaws, Codification and Board Resource Manual to ensure uniform terminology.

## **Streamlining Election Procedures**

Motion (261-GV01) improves the candidacy process by requiring all documentation to be received and acknowledged by the ACBL before a name is added to the official Elections Chart. It also clarifies submission requirements for declared AC candidates.

## **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Audit Committee report highlighted ongoing audit work and confirmed that no whistleblower complaints have been filed since 2022. Key updates included a review of fraud safeguards and follow-ups regarding conflict-of-interest forms. The Board formally received the report.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

Motion (253-INT01) restructures financial contributions to international bridge organizations and World Bridge Federation (WBF) dues. With WBF discussions concluded, implementation was set for March 31, 2026.

The motion directs ACBL to maintain its \$50,100 annual WBF Zone 2 dues contribution to the North American Bridge Federation (NABF) from operating funds. Additionally, it stipulates that specific entry charges included in North American Bridge Championship+ (NABC+) events will be remitted to the NABF, earmarked specifically for WBF Zone 2 dues. This action is contingent upon the approval of a pending multi-party agreement between the NABF, the three Zone 2 national bridge organizations (NBOs) – the United States Bridge Federation (USBF), the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF), the Federación Mexicana de Bridge (FMB) – ACBL, and the WBF.

## **NABC SITE SELECTION & FISCAL OVERSIGHT**

The NABC Site Selection Committee presented a comprehensive review of the current selection process, focusing on the infrastructure required for future NABCs. Key considerations include:

- **Operational Requirements:** Evaluating compliance with technical and logistical requirements for modern tournament play.
- **Space & Hospitality:** Assessing venue capacity and infrastructure to ensure high-quality player experiences.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Ensuring future sites reflect projected attendance trends and evolving event delivery models.

The Board reviewed a proposal for upcoming fall NABCs. Following a friendly amendment to adjust the second hosting year from 2036 to 2035, the Board unanimously approved Washington, D.C. as the host city for the Fall NABCs in 2031 and 2035.

The Finance Committee provided an update on its reviews of financial considerations as part of site selections.

Discussion centered on:

- **Optimizing Venue Footprints:** Ensuring facility size requirements are proportional to projected attendance in order to increase the population of viable cities/sites, protect margins and eliminate unnecessary overhead, while providing a premium player experience.
- **Long-Range Budgeting & Risk Management:** Securing site contracts for 2030 and beyond mitigates risk of rising venue costs and provides a stable basis for future operational and fiscal planning.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Three-Year Term (end of spring 2026 NABC – through end of spring 2029 NABC)

- Competition and Conventions Committee: Sabine Auken (D24), Owen Lien (D7)
- Hall of Fame Committee: Iftikhar Baqai (D23), Bart Bramley (D16), Kerri Sanborn (D9)
- Ethical Oversight Committee: Cheri Bjerkan (D13), Marty Fleisher (D24), John Fout (D24), Rick Roeder (D22), Kevin Wilson (D7)
- ACBL Disciplinary Committee: Bob Glasson (D3), Christal Henner (D24), Eric Stoltz (D20), Jeff Brown (D22)

Five-Year Term (spring 2026 NABC – spring 2031 NABC)

- Laws Commission: Doug Couchman (D17), Howard “Howie” Weinstein (D9)

One-Year Term (Effective February 23, 2026)

- NABC Seeding Committee: David Berkowitz (D9, Chair)

### **Masterpoint Committee Appointments**

The following appointments are effective from the end of the spring 2026 NABC through the end of the spring 2027 NABC (one-year term):

- Presidential Appointments: Dennis Carman (D5), Jeff Overby (D8)
- At-large Presidential Appointments: Bob Heller (D7) and Lee Lin (D23)
- Management Appointments: Rob Maier and David Metcalf; Sol Weinstein (non-voting advisor)

Kyle Rockoff (D17) was appointed to a three-year term, effective from the end of the spring 2026 NABC through the end of the spring 2029 NABC.