

# Expanding Membership Criteria for the Virginia Auctioneers Association: Embracing Diversity, Experience, and Innovation

## Introduction

The Virginia Auctioneers Association (VAA) has long been committed to promoting professionalism within the auction industry through education and evolving trends and technology. As we navigate the dynamic landscape of the auction world, it is imperative that we continuously assess and adapt our approach to best serve our members and the broader auction community. In this spirit, we propose an expansion of our membership criteria to include non-licensed auctioneers, such as company staff and employees. This white paper aims to explore the rationale behind this proposal and the potential benefits it offers to our association and its members.

## VAA Position Concerning Auctioneer Licensure

It is the position of the Virginia Auctioneers Association that an auctioneer's license acts to identify the agent qualified and entrusted to act in the best interest of his/her client with a full understanding of the legal and fiduciary duties associated with the sale of assets. It is also the position of the Virginia Auctioneers Association that licensure be required for any individual or entity engaged in the sale of any type of personal or business assets, via ANY sales format, including, but not limited to "tag sales", "estate sales" etc. regardless of whether those sales are conducted live on premises or whether they be conducted online. Additionally, it is the position of the Virginia Auctioneers Association that an auctioneer's license be required of any individual or entity engaged in the sale of real property or land via the auction method of sale. Furthermore, it is the position of the Virginia Auctioneers Association that these requirements should become law and that this law be diligently enforced to protect consumers from fraud and other nefarious actions.

## Current Membership Criteria and Benefits

Membership is addressed in the bylaws under Article II. Currently, full voting membership in the VAA is limited to licensed auctioneers in the state of Virginia. While this criterion ensures a standard of professionalism among our members, it also creates a barrier to entry for individuals who play integral roles in the auction process but do not hold auctioneer licenses. Licensed members benefit from networking opportunities, educational resources, and awareness of industry trends, all of which contribute to their ongoing professional development which therefore contributes to the development of the auction industry, and further enhances the value of a licensed auctioneer and their credibility and fiduciary responsibilities. We move to include non-licensed individuals in the organization with equal rights as outlined in the Call-to-Action section of this paper.

## Rationale for Inclusion of Non-Licensed Auctioneers

Non-licensed associates, including staff and/or employees, possess valuable experiences and insights that can greatly enhance the educational offerings and diversity within our association. These individuals are often the driving force behind the creation, operation, and success of auctions, as they interface directly with clients and customers daily. By including them in our membership, we can tap into a wealth of knowledge and expertise that is essential for the continued growth and innovation of our individual businesses, industry and state association.

While this initiative is not expected to be a cure-all for our membership challenges, it is anticipated to contribute positively to our association's growth, thus allowing for additional funding to bring better education to our association and to improve individual businesses, the association itself, and the auction industry. Additionally, it can be considered that membership to the VAA would help with employee engagement within the industry and potentially provide employee retention benefits for members and firms having employees. Although this change alone may not entirely reverse current trends, it represents a strategic step towards strengthening our association and expanding our reach.

#### Addressing Concerns

We understand that there may be concerns surrounding the inclusion of non-licensed members, particularly regarding their level of commitment and voting rights within the association. To address these concerns, we propose the establishment of clear guidelines for membership with limitations in place so no one group can severely influence the association. This approach ensures that all members, regardless of licensure status, have a voice within the association while maintaining the integrity of our voting processes.

#### Industry Trends and Adaptation

The auction industry is constantly evolving, with the revolution and globalization of online auctions and the impact of events such as COVID-19 reshaping the way we conduct business. To remain relevant and competitive, it is essential that we embrace diversity and innovation within our association. By including non-licensed members, we can harness new perspectives and ideas that will enable us to adapt to changing market conditions and seize emerging opportunities. Furthermore, leveraging or enhancing our associates, we can build and grow these supporting staff to enhance and develop our individual businesses, association, and industry.

#### Comparative Analysis

In examining how other industries incorporate non-licensed associates into professional associations, we find numerous examples of successful inclusion strategies. From the legal profession to the healthcare industry, these associations have leveraged the expertise of non-licensed members to enhance education, promote diversity, and drive innovation. We can draw upon these experiences to inform our approach to expanding membership criteria within the VAA.

#### Call to Action

We move to broaden VAA membership to include non-licensed auction professionals. Upon successful vote, any existing 'associate' members will be granted full membership status, known as a "Professional Member". All future qualified applications will become an "Active Member" or a "Professional Member" based on licensure status, further referred to simply as "Member".

The following terms will apply to this new membership policy.

1) Any VAA qualified members must be employed, either part-time or full-time, by a licensed firm or licensed auctioneer for no less than 6 months, with no gap longer than 6 months, and any unique circumstances will be reviewed by the board on a case-by-case basis. An example of a unique circumstance is employment by one firm, then relocating to another firm for less than 6 months but still qualifying for membership based on overall tenure within the industry. Documentation will be required upon request of the board. Licensed members will be required to complete standard documentation to advocate and sponsor the non-licensed members applying for membership. The membership fee will be the same for all full members, whether licensed or otherwise, currently \$150.

Why? A protection measure for the association and membership to maintain quality members who know, understand and value the auction industry.

2) No one entity may include or represent more than 4 votes by unlicensed members for any full membership vote. In the case of more than 4 unlicensed members from the same entity, firm, or auctioneer, a representative of the firm will be identified by the firm or auctioneer to present the 4 total votes. Each fully licensed Virginia auctioneer will be given a vote, regardless of which entity he or she represents. No one entity may have more than one representative serving on the Board of Directors at a given time.

Why? Concerns were raised about the possibility of a larger firm monopolizing the voting process and diluting the value of membership for smaller or individual members, this should help prevent that from happening.

3) A licensed auctioneer or licensed firm must advocate, sponsor, introduce, or bring forth a non-licensed member for consideration.

Why? A protection measure for the association and membership to maintain quality members who know, understand and value the auction industry. Additionally, unlicensed, and unregulated industries, such as an estate sale company, do not affiliate with our core values of being licensed and regulated and therefore should not be qualified as members.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the expansion of membership criteria to include non-licensed auctioneers represents a significant opportunity for the Virginia Auctioneers Association to enhance education, promote diversity, and drive innovation within our industry. By embracing this proposal,

we can create a more inclusive and dynamic association that is better equipped to meet the evolving needs of our members and the broader community.

Your input and feedback are invaluable as we seek to create a more inclusive and dynamic association that reflects the diversity of our industry. Together, we can shape the future of the Virginia Auctioneers Association and ensure its continued success for generations to come.

We look forward to your support and participation as we work together to build a brighter future for the VAA.