



July 22, 2017

Dear AMTE Colleagues,

As president of AMTE, I am writing to you about a time-sensitive issue that has recently arisen related to the site of the 2018 Annual AMTE Conference due to a recent travel ban against the State of Texas.

Background: Travel Ban

In September, 2016, the State of California passed a travel ban, [Assembly Bill 1887](#), stipulating that California state employees may not be required to travel to or be reimbursed for travel to any state identified by the California State Attorney General as engaging in discriminatory behavior toward members of the LGBTQ community. At the time of passage, four states were listed, and in June, 2017, four additional states were added to the ban, resulting in eight states on California's list: Alabama, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas. The state of Texas was added because of [House Bill 3859](#), which allows faith-based agencies to deny adoption and fostering services to couples if allowing such adoption is in opposition to the agencies' "sincerely held religious beliefs." The bottom line is that this law makes it possible for private agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ families wishing to adopt children or serve as foster parents.

Currently the State of California is trying to determine how the ban will be applied, and although exceptions are listed in the bill, California residents expect the ban to affect their university-related reimbursement for travel to the 2018 annual conference.

AMTE's Board faced a decision: Do we continue to hold the conference in Texas, relocate the conference, or cancel the conference? And if we hold the conference in Texas, do we take any other measures designed to reflect AMTE's commitment to equity and social justice?

Background: AMTE's Commitment to Equity

AMTE is committed to non-discriminatory behavior, and our constitution includes the goal of advocating for equitable practices. As part of the 2017 organizational restructuring around five divisions, we created an Equity Committee. Recent examples reflecting our commitment to equity include the Board adopting as one of its three strategic initiatives for 2017 that we, "Continue to place issues of equity and social justice at the forefront of AMTE's focus;" the 2016 publication of the edited book, [Cases for Mathematics Teacher Educators: Facilitating Conversations about Inequities in Mathematics Classrooms](#); the strong equity stance (e.g., [recent AMTE videos](#)) expressed in our recently published [Standards for](#)

[Preparing Teachers of Mathematics](#); [AMTE's Equity Stance](#); and various presidential statements (e.g., [December 2016](#), [May 2017](#)). Furthermore, AMTE is actively engaged with other national organizations around the [Collective Action](#) to develop awareness for equity and social justice in mathematics education.

Reconsidering the AMTE 2018 Annual Conference Location

The process of selecting a site for an AMTE annual conference is complex and takes up to two years of planning, and finding another site to hold the 2018 conference would be challenging, if not impossible. Furthermore, cancelling the meeting would eliminate opportunities for colleagues to collaborate toward improving mathematics education by discussing issues of teaching and research, and some faculty rely upon conference presentations as a means to build their vitae toward promotion. Additionally, canceling or relocating the conference would result in major financial implications for our organization. AMTE's two major sources of revenue are the annual conference and membership dues, and given that our organization would incur a hotel cancellation fee of \$110,000 were we to cancel our reservation in Houston, the Board is faced with the prospect of incurring a huge deficit. Finally, if we do not hold the 2018 conference, we would not only incur a large deficit, but we would also lose the conference income as a means by which to begin to climb out of the deficit.

Many of us engage in work-related travel all the time, and the act of traveling to another city or state within the U.S., or even to a foreign country, does not, in and of itself, carry with it the assumption that we condone all of the policies and practices carried out by the city, state, or country we visit. (In fact, trying to keep abreast of all of the policies and practices of states and cities is no easy task. A web search identified that five states, California, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, and Washington, and several U.S. cities have instituted travel bans against a variety of states, although only California has instituted a ban against the state of Texas. Furthermore, I was not always clear on whether a particular ban had been dropped.) On the other hand, AMTE's Board recognizes that issues of equity are serious and must be weighed heavily against the workload and institutional costs of canceling or moving a conference from the state of Texas.

AMTE's Board's Decision

Given all of these constraints and our current commitments, the AMTE Board of Directors has decided that the 2018 AMTE Annual Conference will neither be cancelled nor relocated; the conference will be held in Houston, Texas. However, the AMTE Board has also determined that a) efforts will be taken in planning for the 2018 conference to highlight our stance of equity in general and our commitment to stand by our LGBTQ colleagues in particular, and b) we will consider instituting a policy about the location of future conferences vis-à-vis the discriminatory policies of the city or state under consideration. To

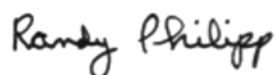
address a), I am constituting a task force, which I will chair, to develop a plan by which AMTE will reflect its values and commitments to our LGBTQ colleagues and community at the 2018 conference. (Examples of ideas to be considered include inviting speakers with LGBTQ foci, holding special discussions or sessions, and working with particular organizations in the Houston area to highlight our commitment and support.) To address b), the AMTE Board will place on its agenda at its October retreat the issue of instituting a policy about the location of future conferences.

Final Comment

California's addition of the state of Texas to its list of states occurred just prior to the 2017 AMTE STaR Fellows annual conference in Park City, Utah. I attended that meeting, and working with the STaR Leadership team, we altered the schedule of the week to provide opportunities for the STaR Fellows to discuss this important matter. As President of AMTE, I listened to the STaR Fellows voice their deep concerns about issues of equity. I heard calls for canceling or moving our conference, and I heard calls for keeping the conference in Texas but taking a stance toward future conferences. I heard the importance of standing up for our rights. And I tried to explain to AMTE's 2017 STaR Fellows, early career colleagues who represent the future of our organization, how the AMTE Board operates to represent the views of its members. I recognize that in times like this, when we live in a nation of hyper-divided political factions whereby compromise is considered weakness, the desire to take a stand is stronger than ever. I respect that. I recognize that in these difficult times, there are some issues we face for which no decision will please all of our members.

And I also recognize that in the grand scheme, AMTE is a relatively small organization comprised of colleagues who are collectively working toward improving mathematics education in our nation for all students. I hope that AMTE will continue to stay strong and that we will not splinter over politics, but instead, pull together and open ourselves to taking thoughtful, principled stances toward the critical issues facing our members in the service of supporting teachers of our nation's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Philipp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr. Randolph Philipp
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