

Resolution No. [Resolution Number] [Type]

Report: REINFORCING EDITORIAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY BY EMPOWERING THE COUNCIL ON COMMUNICATIONS Date Submitted: 04/04/2025

Submitted By: Dr. Spencer Bloom

Reference Committee: D (Legislative, Governance and Related Matters)

Total Net Financial Implication: [Total Net Financial Impl.] Net Dues Impact:

Amount One-time: Amount On-going:

ADA Strategic Forecast Outcome: Tripartite: Promote Tripartite stability, success, and future growth.

[REINFORCING EDITORIAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY BY EMPOWERING THE COUNCIL ON COMMUNICATIONS]

Background:

This resolution requires an amendment to the ADA Constitution and Bylaws to ensure that editorial governance is vested in the Council on Communications, as the official member-led body charged with ensuring that ADA public-facing communications reflect adopted policy, professional ethics, and transparency standards. Proposed amendment language is included in the resolved clauses below.

This resolution does not restrict individual speech or scientific discourse. It ensures that official ADA communications—including journals, news publications, emails, and social media—reflect the adopted policies and values of the membership. Staff, including dentists employed in staff roles, retain the right to express themselves personally. However, if their statements on personal social media or public platforms may reasonably be perceived as representing the ADA—especially when professional titles or affiliations are used—those statements must meet the same standard of professionalism, neutrality, and policy alignment expected of official communications. This is a matter of transparency, accountability, and professional ethics—not censorship [3].

In recent years, members have raised growing concerns that ADA communication channels are not operating in alignment with adopted policy or representative member values. Instead, editorial space in flagship publications has been used to promote controversial positions without counterpoint or approval by member-led councils. For example, a 2024 JADA editorial authored by senior ADA staff—including the ADA's Chief Economist—promoted value-based care as an emerging and desirable trend in dentistry. This was published without a rebuttal, despite widespread member concern that such models increase **commodification of care**, reducing the doctor-patient relationship to a transactional business model, and accelerate the **commoditization of dentistry**, where clinical services become indistinguishable and primarily priced for volume. This signals a breakdown in oversight [1].

Further concerns have been raised over ADA News and ADA social media accounts publishing content that appears to endorse the sale of dental practices to corporate entities, including dental service organizations (DSOs), without offering alternative perspectives. Official ADA platforms have also engaged with representatives of organizations that oppose ADA policy—without input from the Council on Communications [2]. These actions undermine the perception of neutrality, create reputational risk, and violate internal ADA policy which requires alignment with member-adopted positions [3][4].

The ADA Code of Professional Conduct, Section 3.B, requires the organization to reflect professional self-governance with honesty, accountability, and transparency [3]. Governance documents further state that no program, initiative, or advocacy activity should be presented to the public unless approved by the House of Delegates or an authorized governing body [4][5]. ADA’s own **Standards for Dental Society Publications**, revised by the 2023 House of Delegates, mandate that all official communications reflect adopted policy and adhere to standards of accuracy, fairness, and editorial integrity [6].

While scientific content in JADA is managed by the independent Editor-in-Chief, other content—such as editorials, commentaries, and news—currently lacks structured member oversight. ADA News, digital content, email campaigns, and social media are produced by staff with limited governance involvement [5]. This resolution restores a balance between professional communication standards and member-driven oversight. It is consistent with the ADA’s core values of integrity, evidence-based action, and commitment to members as outlined in the ADA Strategic Plan [7].

To protect the ADA’s reputation, rebuild trust among members, and ensure that all communications reflect the values and directives of the membership, oversight must be formalized. This resolution ensures that content disseminated under the ADA name does not violate policy, misrepresent positions, or promote ideologies that commodify the profession [8].

References:

1. *JADA Editorial: Value-Based Care in Dentistry – It’s Happening Now* (2024)
2. *ADA News Article: One Dentist’s DSO Journey* (2023)
3. *ADA Code of Professional Conduct* (2025)
4. *2025 Constitution and Bylaws*
5. *2024 Governance and Organizational Manual*
6. *ADA Standards for Dental Society Publications* (2023 HOD Edition)
7. *ADA Strategic Plan 2020–2025*
8. *2024 Manual of the House of Delegates and Supplemental Information*

Resolved Clauses:

Resolved, that all non-scientific editorial content appearing in ADA publications and platforms—including JADA News, ADA News, official editorials, ADA email communications, and ADA social media accounts—shall be governed under the editorial oversight of the ADA Council on Communications, composed of member dentists selected through established ADA governance channels; and be it further

Resolved, that the Council on Communications shall have the authority to review, approve, or reject any official ADA content or statement that may reasonably be perceived as representing ADA policy, advocacy positions, or professional norms, including but not limited to public-facing content authored by ADA-employed dentists or staff, and that the absence of Council approval for such content may be considered a violation of ADA policy and Section 3.B of the ADA Code of Professional Conduct; and be it further

Resolved, that ADA staff—including dentists employed in staff roles—shall refrain from publishing content or engaging on official ADA channels in a manner that appears to conflict with policy adopted by the House of Delegates or to promote commodification and commoditization of the profession, and that such actions without Council approval may be subject to internal review and correction; and be it further

Resolved, that when opinion-based content or editorial perspectives appear on ADA platforms, the Council on Communications shall provide an equal opportunity for timely, prominently placed counterpoint from dissenting or alternate viewpoints, in accordance with ethical publishing standards adopted by peer organizations; and be it further

Resolved, that if the ADA engages external marketing, media, public relations, or research consultants, a report shall be issued to the Council on Communications and the House of Delegates within 90 days detailing the scope of the engagement, cost, duration, and rationale, including an explanation of alignment with ADA policy and governance oversight; and be it further

Resolved, that the Council on Communications shall annually report to the House of Delegates on the status of all ADA communications channels, including public content, editorial standards, member feedback, compliance with adopted policies, and any incidents requiring Council review or correction, and shall encourage the development of inclusive pathways for members to contribute to ADA publications and platforms; and be it further

Proposed Amendments to the ADA Constitution and Bylaws

Amend Chapter VII (Appointive Officer), Section G

Current:

“The Editor shall have complete control of the editorial policies of the *Journal of the American Dental Association* and other ADA publications, subject to the Board of Trustees.”

Amended:

~~“The Editor shall have complete control of the editorial policies of the *Journal of the American Dental Association* and other ADA publications, subject to the Board of Trustees.”~~

“The Editor shall have editorial responsibility for scientific content in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*. All non-scientific editorial policies and oversight for *JADA News*, *ADA News*, *ADA.org*, social media, and ADA email communications shall be governed by the ADA Council on Communications, in accordance with standards set by the House of Delegates.”

Amend Chapter XIX (Publications), Section A and B

Current (Section A):

“Except as otherwise provided in the powers of the Board of Trustees in the ADA Bylaws, the editor of *The Journal* shall have the authority to determine its editorial content and shall be responsible for its publication.”

Amended:

~~“Except as otherwise provided in the powers of the Board of Trustees in the ADA Bylaws, the editor of *The Journal* shall have the authority to determine its editorial content and shall be responsible for its publication.”~~

“The editor of *The Journal* shall retain full responsibility for peer-reviewed scientific content. Oversight of all non-scientific content—editorials, commentaries, and *JADA News*—shall fall under the authority of the ADA Council on Communications, which shall ensure such content aligns with adopted policy, is clearly labeled, and offers opportunity for rebuttal.”

Add New Subsection to Section B:

“All ADA publications, including *JADA News* and *ADA News*, must reflect policy adopted by the House of Delegates. The Council on Communications shall serve as the governing editorial body for all non-scientific ADA content, including web, email, and social media publications. ~~Editorial discretion for such content shall not reside solely with staff or contractors.~~ No content promoting advocacy, business models, or professional norms may be published under the ADA name without Council review and approval.”

Amend Governance Manual, Chapter VIII (Councils), Section K – Council on Communications

Current Responsibilities:

“To serve as an advisory body on Association communications, branding, media relations, and member engagement strategies, and to provide feedback to the Executive Director on marketing performance.”

Amended:

~~“To serve as an advisory body on Association communications, branding, media relations, and member engagement strategies, and to provide feedback to the Executive Director on marketing performance.”~~

“To serve as the editorial oversight authority for all ADA public-facing, non-scientific content including *ADA News*, *JADA News*, ADA.org, email newsletters, social media, external public relations consultants, and other marketing or policy platforms. The Council shall ensure that all content complies with standards set forth in the ADA Code of Ethics, reflects House-adopted policy, and adheres to the ADA Standards for Dental Society Publications.”