



**SOCIETY OF  
ACTUARIES®**

Article from

**Health Watch**

June 2018

Issue 86

# Up Front With the SOA Staff Fellow

By Joe Wurzburger

People often ask me what I like best about my job. After all, I have a fairly nontraditional role for an actuary. And while there are a lot of aspects of my job that I enjoy, the best part is the people. My colleagues on staff at the Society of Actuaries (SOA) are amazing, and I enjoy working with them. But what I really mean is that I love our member volunteers and the other people I get to meet through them.

In early March, I had the pleasure of going to Washington, D.C., for Initiative 18|11. It was an event that I had been helping to plan for roughly a year, and it was a massive success, at least in part, because we were able to identify action steps for our group to take to lower the cost of health care in the United States. But I don't plan to share those substantial details with you in this article. There will be plenty of time for that as the workflows resulting from the event play out. What I'd like to share with you today is the other reason that I call this event a massive success: the people.

For much of the past year, I have worked closely with two SOA volunteers whom many of you probably already know—Joan Barrett and Brian Pauley. Joan was on the SOA Board of Directors at the time this project turned from a vague idea to an actual initiative. She was the original champion of the push to make sure health costs were a high priority for the Board.

Joan, Dave Dillon and I gave a presentation about health care to the Board at its March 2017 meeting. This presentation was well-received, and Board members advised us to start a project focusing on the rising costs of health care in the United States. They noted that the SOA was in an advantageous position as a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with a focus on data-based solutions. We could solidify our role as thought leaders by bringing together a diverse group of professionals in the health care industry to address the problem of rising costs in a way that could be truly impactful.

To carry out the Board's directive, a leader was needed. Enter Brian Pauley. Brian was nearing the end of his term as Health Section Council chair, and he was looking for a way to continue



to make a significant impact as an SOA volunteer. He became the chair of Initiative 18|11, and he has done an amazing job.

Joan, Brian and I began meeting regularly, and we decided early on that we could really take this to the next level if we were able to partner with the right organization. We wanted to position actuaries as thought leaders, but we also wanted to make sure our attendees understood that the issue was much broader than where our expertise as actuaries lie. We reached out to Larry Levitt at the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) and were pleasantly surprised by his immediate interest in partnering with us. Our project's mission lined up well with KFF's interests, and suddenly our three-person planning group expanded to include three amazing people from the foundation: Larry, Gary Claxton and Cynthia Cox.

I can't say enough about what Larry, Gary and Cynthia brought to the experience. They were integrally involved in every step along the way. As it became clear that we were building to an in-person event, and we recognized that inviting the "right" people to the event would be key, they leveraged their networks in ways that complemented our SOA network perfectly. We collaborated to assemble a veritable who's who list of diverse thought leaders in the health care industry, and we were floored by the passionate support we received from these folks as we reached out to them.

Larry also recommended Ian Morrison to facilitate the event. If you don't know Ian, you're missing out. He led off the event

We collaborated to assemble a veritable who's who list of diverse thought leaders in the health care industry ...

by saying, "The SOA and Kaiser were looking for a Scottish-Canadian health futurist to lead this event, and luckily there aren't many of us." The line is indicative of the combination of humor and subject-matter expertise that he brought to the event. We in fact would have considered someone without Ian's pleasant Scottish brogue, but I can't imagine the event being nearly as successful with anyone else leading the way.

Not only were the people involved in the planning process amazing, but they recruited the most phenomenal group of people to attend. There were many notable names in that room,

actuaries and nonactuaries alike. Attendees commented about just how diverse the group was in terms of the organizations represented and the varying perspectives brought to the discussion. I truly relished the opportunity to get to know many of them personally. I would no doubt leave out names if I tried to list them, but suffice it to say that the interaction with these folks was very gratifying on both a professional and personal level.

I'm excited to see the next steps of Initiative 18111 play out, and we will be sure to keep you informed of its progress. In the meantime, I'd like to express my sincere thanks to Joan, Brian, Larry, Gary, Cynthia, Ian and all of the other participants. I can't wait to take the next steps of this initiative with you. ■



Joe Wurzburger, FSA, MAAA, is Health staff fellow at the Society of Actuaries. He can be reached at [jwurzburger@soa.org](mailto:jwurzburger@soa.org).



## Listen at Your Own Risk

The SOA's new podcast series explores thought-provoking, forward-thinking topics across the spectrum of risk and actuarial practice. Listen as host Andy Ferris, FSA, FCA, MAAA, leads his guests through lively discussions on the latest actuarial trends and challenges.

Listen  
at your  
own risk



Visit [SOA.org/Listen](http://SOA.org/Listen) to  
start listening.

