



Sons of Norway International Board Candidate Application Letters

Candidates were asked to provide a one-page cover letter in which they describe how their background would be an asset to the governance of a fraternal life insurance company.

To: Sons of Norway 2022 International Convention Delegates
From: Sons of Norway International Nominating Committee:
Gloria Benazic (D7), Ken Johnson (D3), Jon Tehven (D1), Chair

The following are their responses:

Ron Stubbings

Candidate for International President



During the last biennium, which, due to COVID, ended up as a four-year term instead of the usual two, I have been the president, leading the organization through some very difficult times. We still have a lot of work to do to ensure we stay viable in the future. Some very difficult decisions had to be made, and I made them with the best interest of Sons of Norway in mind, and would like them to come to fruition.

For the position of International President, I bring with me years of experiencing in leading teams and meetings. I have managed to keep the meetings on track according to the agenda, and keeping discussions germane to the topic at hand. I have a good knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order and general parliamentary procedures. I have been the Secretary/Treasurer of the Sons of Norway Foundation in Canada, the chair of the Project Building Committee for the \$13 million rebuild of Normanna into the state of the art 100 bed multi-level care home that it is today. I retired from the Normanna board in 2008, and they asked me to come back on the board in 2018 as treasurer, and now the president. This currently has a 9 million dollar annual budget. I am past president, secretary and director of a 100 unit recreational strata co-op. This entailed dealing with members on a regular basis. And there is a lot more volunteering that I have done, physically and on boards. (Strata's, Norwegian Clubs, etc.)

My work experience in the export grain industry started in 1976, and in 1989 they asked me to become a supervisor, which I agreed to. In this capacity, I was also doing the computer work for the Assistant Terminal Manager who was lacking in computer skills. In 2007, due to grain industry deregulation, the site I was working for (50% Cargill, 50% Cascadia) was sold to another company in exchange for Cargill becoming the sole owner of the second-largest grain terminal in the Port of Vancouver. I had the option of staying at the old site, or as they preferred, moving to the new Cargill terminal as an operations manager. There, I initiated safety programs that led to record days of no injuries or time loss, built trust among the unionized and nonunionized staff, and together we achieved record goals and earnings.

As International President leading the International Board of Directors, I understand fully that the next two years will be a challenge, fraternally and insurance wise. But I am prepared to take this task head on.

Mark Agerter

Candidate for International Vice President



If you read the Sons of Norway constitution regarding duties of the Vice President you will see a rather spartan outline mostly centered around filling in for the President when he/she is unable to act. This does not even begin to describe what my duties have been during the past four years. As you see in Section 10 of this application, regarding Sons of Norway International Leadership, I have been very involved in many ways through active participation and leadership of many committees. This leadership takes on many forms. As VP, my responsibilities have included planning meetings, creating vision for future action, liaising between committees and the board, and the writing and editing of reports and documents.

As I hope you can tell from reading my application, I have the skills necessary to fulfill another biennium as the Sons of Norway Vice President, now Vice Chair. As a member of the IBOD for the past six years, I have been uniquely placed to take on this role due to my many years of Sons of Norway membership, the offices I have held, and the experience I have gained.

During college I excelled in such areas of study as advanced math, economics and business law. My background as a business owner for 45 years has provided the opportunity for me to gain a working knowledge of the many aspects of both the financial and legal matters that impact the workings of not only the field I worked in but of business in general. That knowledge has been put to work and augmented by my experiences on the IBOD. The ongoing training that all board members undergo, regarding those aspects specific to a fraternal life insurance company, has given me sufficient proficiency to be a productive member of the board.

By taking on the various committee memberships and chair positions in both Sons of Norway and in my private life I have amply demonstrated successful leadership capabilities. I work well with others, am very detail-oriented, and can build consensus. I am able to walk the fine line between carrying out the desires/needs of organizational leadership, recognizing member needs, and satisfying legal requirements. The work done recently with regard to the recent governance change and the resultant bylaw updates is a perfect example of working to find consensus within the IBOD, the International delegates, and the MDOC.

Robin Fossum

Candidate for International Secretary



My extensive business career in several fields has brought me to my current leadership position with Sons of Norway: serving on the International Board of Directors representing District 5, Governor of the Sons of Norway Foundation, and President of Dovre Lodge 5-353. The fraternal life insurance business has many parallels with my foundation career. The fraternal district and lodge side is the joy of learning more about Norwegian and Scandinavian culture, heritage, and friendship.

Attending my first International Board meeting four years ago resulted in the stark reality that business procedure was out of step with current industry. The Corporate Matters Committee of which I am a member is rewriting, and updating the Charter, Constitution (Bylaws), Policies and Procedures.

At the University of Illinois Foundation, I was a major gifts director with responsibility for the Midwest and West Coast. During this time, the foundation conducted two vital campaigns, one for \$1.2 billion and the second for \$2.4 billion. I worked personally with major gift donors and advised them in estate planning, charitable gift annuities, retirement plans and life insurance, real estate, tangible property and cash, and gift planning through tax incentives. All transactions were completed with writing a tailored fund agreement. Simultaneously, I was a founding member of the Number Theory Foundation (NTF) which became affiliated with the U of I Foundation. As a member, I oversaw the distribution of the NTF's assets.

As president and past secretary of the University of Illinois Spurlock Museum Board of Trustees, I was part of the team to build a new \$18M museum and helped guide the board through many transitions. I have recently accomplished the same with two organizations that were ready to close into prospering and vital non-profit businesses: a new building for the Chetek Area Museum and profitability for the Red Cedar Symphony.

I have served as secretary for several organizations. With the International Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus, board meetings were held quarterly throughout the world. As liaison to the board and Director of Membership, I was responsible for all the minutes and parliamentary procedure along with all board business.

The secretary of the International Board has the responsibility of keeping the minutes of the board meetings, and in addition, serves as a liaison between the international office staff, the executive committee, board, district leaders, lodges, and general membership. My experience and qualifications as outlined above and continuing interest in Sons of Norway will serve me well as International Secretary.

Dean Stiller

Candidate for International Treasurer



I am applying for the position of Treasurer of the Sons of Norway International Board for the 2022–2024 biennium.

My background and qualifications for this position are:

Currently serve as a Director on the Sons of Norway International Board and Chair of the Audit Committee of the Sons of Norway Foundation.

I have been employed in the life insurance industry in actuarial roles for over 40 years. My last position was as Actuary for Sons of Norway for 25 years, retiring in May 2020. At Sons of Norway my main responsibilities were in financial reporting & analysis and product development. I was also involved with strategic planning, compliance and managing in force products. During my time at working at Sons of Norway I worked closely with all other areas of the company including the fraternal area. I also have experience working with state insurance department regulators.

I am a member of the American Academy of Actuaries and a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries. These two organizations are the main professional and educational organizations for actuaries in the United States.

I am currently a member of Draxten Lodge in Minneapolis and a past president of the lodge.

I believe that my experiences make me a qualified applicant for the position of Treasurer on the International Board of Sons of Norway. I will work to the best of my ability to continue the work of past Boards to make Sons of Norway a strong fraternal benefit society in both the insurance and fraternal operations into the future.

Mary B. Andersen

Candidate for International Treasurer



My career as an employee benefits professional (corporate and consulting) will enable me to serve effectively as a member of the International Board. Employee benefits professionals must be versed in a number of disciplines including Human Resources, legal, accounting, actuarial concepts, auditing and technology. Understanding and communication of complex governmental regulations is critical due to IRS and DOL (Department of Labor) disclosure requirements.

My work experience includes leading teams that included attorneys, actuaries and experienced benefits professionals. Working with teams of individuals with various skill sets from different parts of the country lends itself nicely to serving as an International Board member. My work requires me to read, interpret and explain complex regulatory requirements to senior staff at major corporations. While employed at a Big 4 accounting firm, I oversaw many sensitive national consulting projects under client attorney privilege. Self-employment, which will end on 12/31/2022, requires me to wear many hats including marketer, communicator, webmaster, bookkeeper etc.! I believe in positioning people for success. Within the Third District this meant utilizing volunteers to the best of their abilities. It requires understanding member likes, dislikes and areas in which they excel. It is critical not to burn out our volunteers.

As a Principal at Vanguard, one of the largest mutual fund companies, I was responsible for developing a strategic consulting group which oversaw the consulting and compliance needs of many corporations, large and small, for profit and not for profit. I effectively lead a team of 70 benefit professionals including actuaries and attorneys. The ability to work effectively with others is critical for success as an International Board member.

Familiarity with policy interpretation and implementation together with my time served on the Sons of Norway governance committee, including Chair of the short-lived Corporate Governance Annual Disclosure (CGAD) subcommittee while I was District President, allows me to quickly get up to speed and “hit the ground running” on governance issues facing the Order.

My track record of success both in the corporate/consulting world and within Sons of Norway demonstrates my ability to get the job done. The Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) has an incredibly stringent fiduciary standard. To maintain my professional credentials, including an insurance producer license, I must obtain a minimum number of continuing education credits including ethics. I am no stranger to continual learning and hard work, both of which are key attributes of an effective Board member. As a Sons of Norway member, I want to see our organization thrive and succeed as we move forward.

Dennis Rusinko

Candidate for District 1 International Director



How to be an asset to the governance of a fraternal life insurance company.

The best way to help an organization like Sons of Norway to be better is to be able to clearly define itself as an organization so that all members understand their duty and place in the organization. This begins with a clear definition as to who we are and what is the purpose and mission of this organization. There needs to be a clear communication so that all members can understand what Sons of Norway stands for and how it should relate to the communities where lodges are established so the members can reflect the mission of sons of Norway.

I would bring 50 years of experience in the Sons of Norway and accumulated a wealth of knowledge about the does and don'ts of an organization such as this. You need to be a good listener, have a working knowledge of all aspects of Sons of Norway.

A leader needs to be able to confidently make decisions beneficial for the entire membership of the order. He or she must have the knowledge to seek out professional advice to help them make sound decisions.

As a Sons of Norway member, I have always advocated the need for good communications at all levels, from the top down to the bottom up. This is one area of Sons of Norway needs help and I believe I can help in this area.

I don't claim to know all the aspects of governing an organization at the level I am seeking but, I am not afraid of asking tough questions about subject matters pertaining to the governing of Sons of Norway and then delivering a judgment on any matters when I have heard all sides of the situation at that time.

Finally, if I am elected to the position of International Director I will to the best of my ability to decide on all matters that come before me are in the best interest of the Sons of Norway.

Claudia Bomier

Candidate for District 1 Alternate International Director



I have had a great deal of experience in the accounting area as well as in community service. As an employee of Oskey Gas and Oil company, now Western Petroleum Company, I did most of the bookkeeping. I also filed the tax reports with the states where we did business and the federal tax reports. This was for the gas tax collected as we sold product. We did business in 7 states when I was employed at Oskey Gas and Oil. I also headed the Sales contests with the salesmen and also had my own House accounts that I visited. I worked with our outside accountants every month to supply our financial statements. Working during the oil embargo was a challenging time for the company but we learned a great deal about how to survive. We were fortunate to prevail in our FEA challenge and we then received product to sell.

Working for both MIPH and IEA, which were companies my husband started, was also a broad experience in dealing with the ups and downs of a business. I worked only in the accounting area of the business. The experiences were varied with one company, MIPH, being a non-profit and IEA being a for profit company. During the early years I did the 990 and 990T tax returns for the non-profit and later did the early returns for the S Corporation. MIPH was acquired by Blue Cross/Blue Shield in 1988 as an asset acquisition. I worked with our accountants during this process.

I have served as District 1 treasurer for 8 years, from 2014 to 2022. I have provided the District Board members with financial statements each month, worked with our investment advisors on our trust investments, and with our financial auditors. District 1 has trust funds that are restricted to scholarships, and I have been working to provide generous scholarships and stay within our limitations. It is especially important to have youth experience the Heritage and Culture of the Nordic Countries.

I have served as co-chair for both a District 1 convention in 2012 and International Convention in 2018. Both of these experiences required me to conduct meetings and make sure that everything was being done in a timely manner with all the details under control.

I was a founder and chair for the Sons of Norway St. Cloud Barneløpet. This event is a Nordic Ski Event for youth from 3 to 13 and we just completed the 15th year. I also am their treasurer.

I also serve on the Nordic Heritage Fund board which is a 501(C)3 which I helped to start in 2015. I serve as treasurer. Their mission is to promote and preserve the Culture, Heritage and Languages of Nordic countries.

Working with HOPE 4 Youth to give a hand up to youth experiencing homelessness has been life

changing. Meeting with youth and other community members to tackle this problem has given me additional skills in presenting opportunities for people to help in our community. I have made the case for assisting these youth to many organizations. It has been rewarding to see how some have overcome obstacles and thrived.

I also worked as the chair for Crop Walk from our church, a fundraiser for CWS. I spoke on the radio presenting our cause as well being interviewed by the local newspaper to promote our event. I was chair for 3 years for our Church.

Chris Hicks

Candidate for District 2 International Director



Thank you for the opportunity to apply for International Director. After reviewing the job description it's clear you're looking for candidates that are extremely familiar with the responsibilities associated with this position. I am certain I have the necessary skills to successfully do the job.

I am a hard-working professional who has been constantly praised for results by my co-workers and management. Over the course of 20+ years on the District Sons of Norway board, I've developed a skill set directly relevant to the International Director role including communications, record management and community outreach.

I believe corporate governance is every bit as important to the organization to ensure the growth and progress of the company. A board of directors must be willing and able to fulfill its responsibilities to assist the company in staying on track and there must be an atmosphere of trust between the board of directors, management and the members to make this process work.

You will notice with my employment history I have worked for very few companies however my longevity at those companies is remarkable because I believe in working for the greater good and always looking for a solution. I have worked with management to find those solutions and I have been management working with others to find the best solution for the issues.

I believe the board has a duty to be well-informed regarding our way of business. You also must have general knowledge of the financial condition and be willing to work with the management to ensure the appropriate accountability and oversight that the company requires. Independent audits are important to ensure that all information is accurate and complete.

Gerald Erikson

Candidate for District 2 Alternate International Director

I have demonstrated leadership skills through my 30 year Army career from Platoon Leader, Company Commander, Deputy Commander, Army Materiel Command, Southwest Asia and Program Manager. I have 15 years of Insurance sales and management experience. I worked on the Department of the Army Staff taking care of General Officers.

I work well with people and I'm willing to do what is necessary to be successful as a senior District Officer. Having served as District 2 President for the past four years, I feel that what I have done has made a difference is assisting our District and working to solve membership issues.

I maintain close ties to relatives and friends in Norway and have traveled to Norway five times so far.

I have a broad background of management and leadership through my civilian and military careers. Throughout my Sons of Norway experience I have sought out leadership roles at the Lodge level and District by serving in leadership positions and serving on committees at District and International Conventions. I believe that I communicate well and work well with people from all backgrounds. I have attended 15 District Conventions and 9 International Conventions.

Kathy Dollymore

Candidate for District 3 International Director



I'm excited to apply for the position of International Director for Sons of Norway, District 3.

I am passionate about doing a good job and have received multiple compliments from International and District officers for collaboration, proven time management and writing skills.

I am a quick learner on a wide array of issues that pertain to Sons of Norway International. I have experience serving as a spokesperson on complex issues.

With a track record of over 40 years in leadership positions from Local lodge to District lodge, along with working with International officers, I am anxious to leverage my visionary leadership for Sons of Norway International. My hands-on ability to work with others has proven to be successful.

I feel the Sons of Norway core mission and culture suit what I have to offer. I have a well-rounded skill set including a keen attention to detail and accuracy.

I would like to bring my talents to Sons of Norway International and am happy to discuss how my experiences and qualifications will prove valuable in the International Director's role.

Stephen Helmold

Candidate for District 3 Alternate International Director

No statement provided.

Claudia Berg

Candidate for District 4 International Director



As a state agency director, [North Dakota State Historical Society chief administrative and executive officer] the substantial skills and experience that I could contribute include government operations, marketing, communications, and strategic planning.

Thinking strategically and utilizing resources wisely to implement the organization's goals is important. Working for over 39 years in state government, understanding state and federal laws, working with other leaders to implement good policies and procedures, and communicating clearly and effectively with other decision makers was critical in sustaining and growing an agency.

Communicating and marketing are crucial components to any project. Advisory groups and survey work help inform an organization to better utilize its resources and target efforts for successful results. The past two years have been challenging on several levels. There are now new and alternative ways of thinking, prioritizing, and implementing ideas and programs. Businesses, organizations, and agencies are embracing these changes as opportunities to stay competitive and successful.

Now that I am retired, I have more time and energy to devote to Sons of Norway and I am eager to share my experiences and leadership skills with others.

Growing up in a Norwegian family, it wasn't until I reached adulthood that I became interested in my heritage. But many fond childhood memories remain, watching grandmothers making lefse, serving lutefisk every Christmas Eve and listening to my parents and grandparents converse in Norwegian. Working at the Høstfest charged my batteries for all things Norwegian and Scandinavian. I am grateful for the opportunities I have had and would be honored to serve as an International Director from District 4.

Under state government each agency underwent an extensive annual audit; we were held to a standard of state laws, policies, and procedures. We were held accountable to the taxpayers, State Legislature, and our financial and collections donors. Investments and endowments were made wisely. We had a Code of Ethics signed by all staff, Historical Board members and State Historical Foundation Board members. Attention to Human Resources was important; a well-educated, trained and appreciated staff was the foundation to the agency's mission and vision. We had revenue streams through admissions, Museum Store sales, fees, and donations. Communications and marketing were instrumental in operating the agency and informing membership, constituencies, partners, and visitors. All these undertakings were managed by a leadership team that I was fortunate to lead.

Steve Halvorson

Candidate for District 4 Alternate International Director

No statement provided.

Duane Kittleson

Candidate for District 5 Alternate International Director



I worked for a life insurance company for 25 years. During my career in the accounting department, I began as a junior accountant and progressed to management levels including supervisor, director and assistant vice president. I had primary responsibility for preparation of the NAIC annual report to the various state insurance commissioners. The State of Minnesota was one of the states we filed annual reports. I was the project manager for a major insurance software installation which took more than two years to complete. I worked closely with the company actuary in providing the data for establishing new policies rates and rate increases to the health insurance products. Leaving the life insurance industry, I worked as controller for a commercial real estate developer. In this position I gained experience working with many banks in the commercial loan and investment area. My interest in the leadership of the Sons of Norway insurance company is to gain a better knowledge of how the policyholder's interests and concerns are being addressed as well as keeping the company in a strong financial position. The fraternal program is such a great marketing tool to spread the good word.

Luella Grangaard

Candidate for District 6 Alternate International Director



I have a long work history with the same organization with a primary responsibility to manage staff that include secretarial, technical and professional staff. I work within federal and state guidelines to protect the staff, the organization and to assure that regulations regarding staff licensing, training and competency have been met. As well as assuring that appropriate health and safety requirements for patient care are in compliance and that insurance billing and documentation of therapy services are within the guidelines set by the insurers. A department is a business, where costs must be within the budget and expenses flexed to changes in census and staffing. My 2020 year-end statistics include: gross revenue of \$2,341,567 and total visits of 21,512 outpatient, total units (15 minutes) 63,892. I also assess, review and provide input and then training in respect to Electronic Medical Documentation systems. Everything except patient care is electronic, ordering, time cards, annual reviews, policies and procedures. As a manager the skills and knowledge of human resources, legal guidelines, communication, and technology all are required and are assets I bring to Sons of Norway. In addition, I have been exposed to many different training programs to develop skills as a leader and service provider for a better customer outcome and satisfaction. All Sons of Norway members are customers and how they are served is very important to the success of the organization.

I have extensive volunteer work as a leader with State and National Occupational Therapy Associations, holding many positions from Director to President. I have participated in decision making that has significantly impacted the future of the profession from the amount of dues, writing and submitting legislation. Sometime these decisions weren't easy. As president of the State Association, our team managed the Sunrise Legislation which involved interactions with legislators, legislative staff and testimony. The legislation was passed into law and I was appointed by the governor to serve on the first California Board of Occupational Therapy. Within this context we wrote all the regulations, held hearings and set the future for the profession of occupational therapy in California, which had the largest number of therapists in the US. We also hired a board executive, worked with board counsel and the department of Consumer Affairs. As a volunteer for professional associations and as a state board member many of the skills that are developed and used in these organizations of strategic planning, governance, budgeting, legal, marketing, ethics, disciplinary action and communication would be assets for Sons of Norway.

As a lifelong learner I really enjoy the Cultural Skills Program and learning about my heritage I have completed three levels of nine of the skills. Culture programs and heritage programs are very important to engage our members and keep them coming back to our lodges.

An additional asset that I think is very important to the success of Sons of Norway is communication and the awareness of how to communicate with different generations. As a therapist a large percentage of

my patients are older and my staff range from 25 to 69, so I have to communicate in many different ways for each generation. They all have different things that motivate them and that are important to them. It is a very big challenge and this is a current challenge for Sons of Norway.

I have many assets I would bring to Sons of Norway from a strong background as a manager, therapist, educator, program developer, regulator and volunteer. It would be an honor to serve this organization.

Gloria Benazic

Candidate for District 7 Alternate International Director



Experience gained from past employment and volunteer positions is varied working with children, adults, students, and seniors. These interactions provide a variety of prospective life challenges and successes. As a wife and mother of three children, juggling home life, workplace life, and volunteer life requires planning, time management and diplomacy. I have developed patience and calmness in adverse situations, am thoughtful in decision making, logical in mapping steps to success, caring for others, and developed experienced problem solving skills. I bring leadership and knowledge of working with people of all positions in life - customers; clients; managers; service workers; politicians locally, provincially, nationally; and even Queens. I manage our consulting firm with all aspects of bookkeeping, payroll, budgeting and negotiating contracts. I worked for a multi-million dollar meat packing plant and retail store preparing payroll, accounts payable, bank deposits, and month-end reconciliations. While at the University, I prepared proposals and made appeals to business owners, communities, and individuals in support of my fundraising efforts. I worked directly with Buckingham Palace and Queen Elizabeth's entourage when she accepted our invitation to open UNBC in 1994; worked with federal and provincial protocol offices; worked with International, National, Provincial and local Security Agencies for the opening. I also worked with the Governor General of Canada Ray Hnatyshyn and his staff to plan the presentation of the Coat of Arms to UNBC. As a Financial Aid Officer, my work dealt with extreme financial barriers for university students as well as working with government departments across Canada and USA to cut through regulatory red tape in assisting students secure financial loans or deal with problems for existing loans. Planning and implementing strategies for potential donors required a great deal of research to find areas with resources, preparing the initial ask, planning strategies for follow-up or revising the ask to better suit the client, and finally closing the deal but continuing to build on the initial relationship to keep the donor involved with the school and students for years to come. Throughout my time at UNBC, I sat as a member of the Senate, the governing body which sets Policies & Procedures, By-Laws, and Rules of Order for the running of the university. Governance and communication were critical in quickly becoming one of the top small universities in the country.

Tor Arild Halversen

Candidate for District 8 Alternate International Director



My skills are in management, strategic planning, leading human resources and technology. These areas have been a part of my job for about 40 years. As a teacher and school leader, my job has been to lead (inspire) pupils or employees throughout my career. Included in this is the ability to inspire, to form good, small teams that find their place within the larger team that a school with 55 different staff members consists of. I also had the responsibility for the financial side of the school, as well as contact with parents and school authorities.