



# How To Handle Negative Ballots Efficiently

## A Perspective

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Handling negative votes on standards actions can be a tricky business. You want to ensure consensus, but how to satisfy everyone? Former ASTM Committee on Standards members Jim Luppens and Ron Stanton offer a guide to sidestepping the landmines in dealing with negative votes.

This article is excerpted and adapted from a more detailed paper prepared by Luppens and Stanton, which will be posted on the Web at the December *Standardization News* Web site at [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org).

Properly handling negative votes may be one of the singularly most difficult, perhaps even onerous tasks, a subcommittee faces in the process of developing a consensus standard. However, the proper handling of negative votes is essential to maintaining the strength of ASTM standards. If an impasse with the voter occurs, the subcommittee should ensure that each negative be fairly considered and addressed. The majority of the subcommittee then decides if the negative is valid or not through Not Related or Not Persuasive actions. It is not a perfect system, but it has stood the test of time and served both consumers and industry very well for over 100 years. However, by using some proper approaches, many of the frustrations associated with negative votes can be minimized or even avoided.

The authors each served three-year terms on ASTM's standing Committee on Standards. COS is responsi-

ble for the review and approval of technical committee recommendations for actions on standards and provisional standards.

After we each reviewed documents during our COS terms, it became apparent that many of the problems that required COS action can be classified into a few recurring categories. In the following sections, we will present examples of these problems from actual subcommittee action documentation and we will offer suggestions that can improve subcommittee actions and minimize the delay on the development of a standard. We hope that providing specific examples of both weak and well-crafted subcommittee actions will offer a more instructive format.

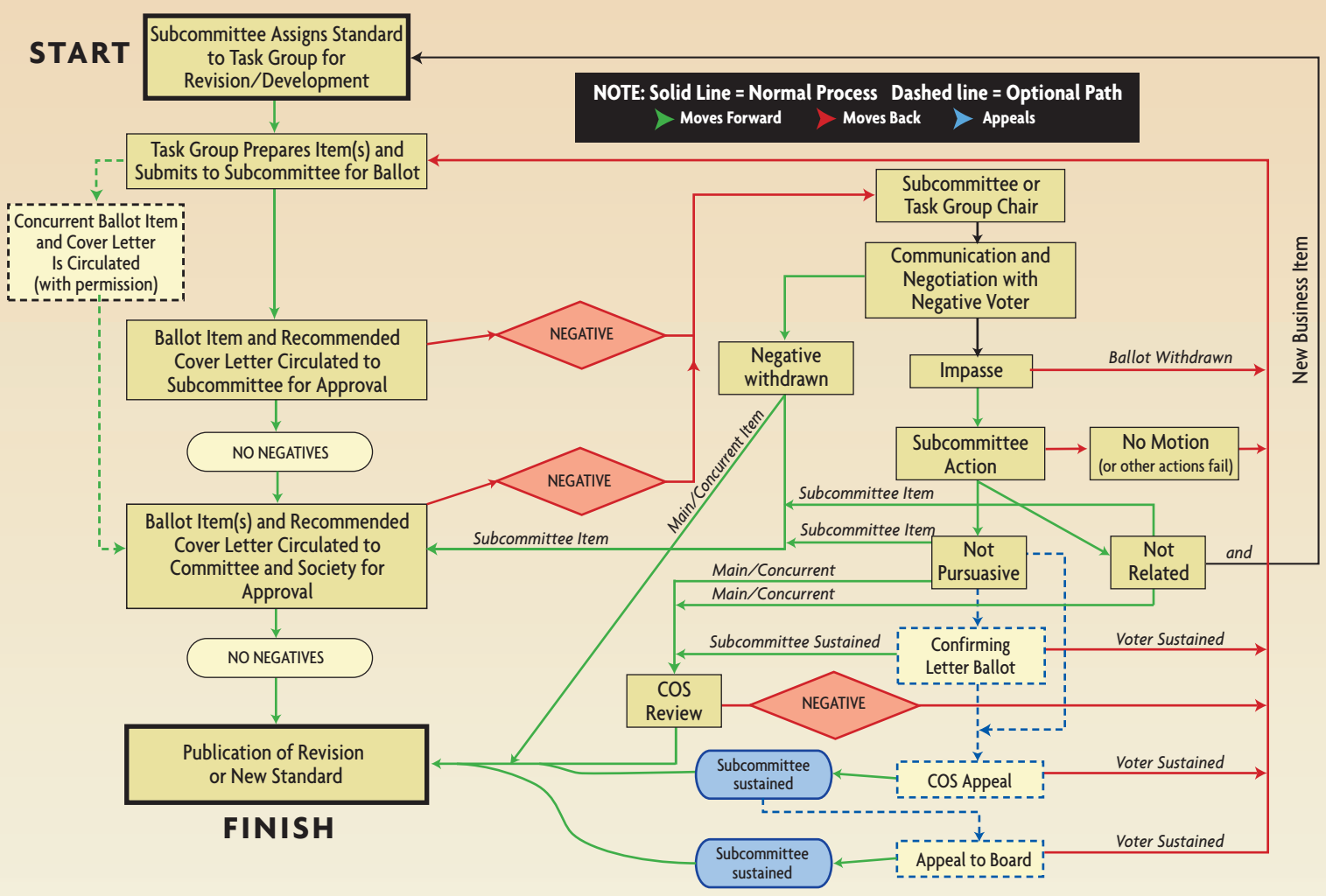
Finally, to aid in gaining a better picture of the overall balloting and review sequence, Figure 1 provides a generalized flow diagram of the entire ASTM standards development process. The next section of this paper addressing communication and bal-

lot preparation issues deals largely with the left side of the flow diagram. The second section, which discusses dealing with negatives, focuses on the right side of the flow diagram. In Figure 1, steps that move the ballot item forward are shown with green arrows. Those that move the item back at least one step are shown in red. Appeal steps are shown in blue and will result in either a green or red path.

**COMMUNICATION AND BALLOT PREPARATION**

Problems of communication and poor ballot preparation can result from a lack of compliance with the requirements of the *Regulations Governing ASTM Technical Committees* (the "Green Book") and/or the *Form and Style for ASTM Standards* (the "Blue Book"). These problems are, succinctly, often a failure to communicate during the ballot preparation phase. Often, a negative voter who still feels strongly about his negative

**FIGURE 1: GENERALIZED FLOW DIAGRAM FOR BALLOTING AND CONSIDERATION OF NEGATIVE VOTES**



that was determined Not Persuasive on a technical basis will turn to the Green and Blue Books to look for possible procedural errors to sustain his appeal. Specific examples of procedural errors are 1) failure to document actions in the main subcommittee minutes (justification, voting tallies, etc.), 2) failure to include a cover letter for concurrent ballots, 3) questions concerning committee balance, 4) questions on official voter status during actions on negatives, and 5) a variety of form and style inconsistencies.

#### Cover Letters

ASTM Regulation 11.6 states “Concurrent letter ballots shall include a cover letter ... the cover letter should include the reasons for balloting concurrently and background information regarding the proposed ballot item.” This basic cover letter requirement is often overlooked in the ballot and has been the grounds for successful appeals to COS. This simple oversight may result in publication delays of up to a year because the standard has to be cycled back through the balloting process. The

cover letter requirement provides good initial communication in the ballot process.

The cover letter must also be objective in its content. Cover letters that attempt to prejudice the balloting results can also be a problem when it comes to a “due process” determination. Example 1 is an excerpt from a cover letter that was not objective. The negative voter justifiably took issue with the intimidating tone of this section of the cover letter.

Basically, this cover letter threatens anyone who votes negative with the wording “heavily scrutinized.” Although the intent of the cover letter probably was not meant to be heavy-handed, it clearly went beyond the threshold of objectivity to the point where it compromises a sense of due process.

Example 2 is another excerpt from a biased cover letter. Mr. Doe felt that the cover letter was not objective and that he did not get a fair hearing of his negative vote. The term “favorable consideration” in the last sentence is another questionable phrase, but overall the tone of the letter is less

than objective. This letter implies “don’t look at the technical issue(s), we just need your affirmative vote to move this standard forward.” Thus the voter is not getting unbiased consideration of his negative.

Example 3 is an objective cover letter that provides not only the basic “what and why” information, but also illustrates clarity regarding the specific proposed revision being balloted and contact information for questions. Everything the voter needs is contained in the balloted item. There is no need to refer back to the book of standards or go back to the files to get the last meeting minutes or ballot to determine what was previously balloted. The voter can quickly come up to speed as to the status of the last ballot and the proposed changes are clearly indicated in the balloted item.

#### DEALING WITH NEGATIVE VOTES

One of the basic cornerstones of the entire ASTM consensus process is the rigorous assurances that dissenting views are accorded due process throughout the standards balloting.

#### EXAMPLE 1. INTIMIDATING EXCERPT FROM A COVER LETTER

If you have any questions when reviewing these ballot items or think you may be voting negative, please contact me before you cast your ballot. Our goal is to get specifications in the books so industry can have a minimum standard to go by. I urge those of you that have issues with the specification proposals, after discussion, to save them for after the specifications have been approved and put into the books. If you vote negative, it must be substantiated. Please be assured that if you vote negative, your negative will be given due process, however, it will be heavily scrutinized.

#### EXAMPLE 2. BIASED EXCERPT FROM A COVER LETTER

A negative from Mr. Doe was not completely addressed. Sub-Committee X1999 over ran its allowed time period in addressing other actions and did not take any action on his negative vote. In order for the standard to move forward to Main Committee ballot, a non-persuasive vote to his negative is necessary. A letter ballot to find Mr. Doe’s negative non-persuasive is attached. Your favorable consideration of this letter ballot is appreciated.

#### EXAMPLE 3. OBJECTIVE COVER LETTER

REVISION TO X 1111 Collection of Basket Samples of Pond Scum, Section 4.1  
BACKGROUND: One of the most important concepts in obtaining basket samples for characterization of pond scum is trying to collect a sample that is as representative as possible at any given site. In reviewing the Significance and Use Section (Section 4.1) of X 1111, it was felt that the key concept, that this practice obtains a

representative sample, was lacking in the current standard. Therefore, the recent changes to the Significance and Use were developed to address this fundamental deficiency. These proposed changes parallel those proposed for the scope of X 1112 (Scoop Sampling of Pond Scum) for consistency because both practices deal with the collection of representative samples of pond scum.

This item was on the last X99 Main ballot and received one negative and one set of comments which were similar in nature to the negative. The negative voter’s concerns and the comments received dealt with the term “representative.” The revised Significance and Use being balloted below hopefully better addresses these concerns. It was the decision of those present at the meeting that they wished to retain the term “representative” in the Significance and Use section—but just revise its position in the paragraph. Proposed deletions are indicated as ~~strike throughs~~ and insertions as **bold italics**.

REVISED Significance and Use CURRENTLY BEING BALLOTTED:

4. Significance and Use
- 4.1 A properly collected basket sample that includes the total pond scum layer provides a ~~representative~~ **representative** cross section of the pond scum layer bed at the point of sampling. Basket samples of pond scum are taken for subsequent testing needed for evaluation of pond scum quality and characterization of pond scum for commercial use, for planning of extraction operations to maintain pond scum quality, for the determination of pond scum grade with Classification X001, and for inventory of pond scum resources.

CONTACT: Contact John Doe, Chairman, X99.10 for questions at (999) 555-1111 or e-mail at xxxxx@airmail.com.

The subcommittee often views the task of handling negative votes with a certain amount of dread for a number of reasons. However, when handled properly, many of the problems associated with negative votes can be minimized or even eliminated. Regardless of the amount of effort that goes into the preparation of a ballot item, the potential for substantiated negatives is always present. The following sections offer suggestions on dealing with negative votes that will hopefully facilitate their resolution.

*Initial Communication with Voter*

Probably the most fundamental method of resolving negatives is simply to contact the negative voter and discuss the negative. Often, simple clarification of the ballot item may result in the withdrawal of the negative. Figure 1 dramatically illustrates the benefits of negotiating the withdrawal of a negative. If the item was a main ballot situation, the standard proceeds directly to publication, avoiding a number of additional steps. Valuable meeting time is not wasted discussing and acting on the negative,

the extra work involved in documenting the actions is avoided, and no review at COS level is required.

Example 4 illustrates the desirability of contacting the voter immediately upon notification of the receipt of a negative. The key word in Example 4 is “apparently.” To a COS reviewer, it appears that the voter was not contacted. It seems like a simple phone call in this situation may have cleared up this negative rather than trying to guess the voter’s concern(s). Contacting the voter and getting a withdrawal of the negative after clarification would have saved a significant amount of subsequent time and paperwork.

*Clarification of Ballot Item*

If there is a question as to what is being balloted, it is better to ask for clarification or more information. This point is illustrated in Example 5. In this case, a quick phone call to the designated contact for Subcommittee X99.22 or to ASTM headquarters could have solved the voter’s problem. Also, on the basis of the subcommittee reasons provided, if the negative

had nothing to do with the content of the standard, it should have been ruled Not Related This example also demonstrates why it is a good idea to list a subcommittee contact in the cover letter accompanying the ballot item (see Example 3).

Example 6 illustrates a similar case, but with significant differences. First, inclusion of the “promised” data may have eliminated this negative entirely. As discussed in Example 4, inclusion of pertinent data and contact information for questions with the ballot, facilitates the ballot review. Some of the responsibility also lies with the voter, who could have called the appropriate contacts to request the needed data before casting the negative, if those contacts were provided in the ballot item. Regardless of the responsibility issues, simply forwarding the data does not technically address the voter’s negative nor is it a reasonable justification for a Not Persuasive vote. After the requested data are received and reviewed by the voter, the subcommittee may decide to

**EXAMPLE 4. THE DESIRABILITY OF CONTACTING THE VOTER**

REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Ms. Doe voted negative for the following reason:  
*Insert mandatory Bias sub-section explaining why bias is not applicable to this method.*

SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 9/9/99, X99 voted 15-0-0 to rule Ms. Doe’s negative not persuasive for the following reason:  
*A mandatory Bias statement is currently in the Method X999. On ballot X27, item 12, p.98, there is a bias statement included which Dr. Doe apparently overlooked when reviewing the ballot.*

MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 15-0-5 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

**EXAMPLE 5. THE VOTER’S RESPONSIBILITY**

REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Re-approval of Test Method Z4444-95  
Ms. Doe voted negative for the following reason:  
*We do not have a copy of this and would really like to see it before a carte blanche endorsement.*

SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 9/9/99, Subcommittee X99.22 voted 12-0-0 to rule Ms. Doe’s negative not persuasive for the following reason:  
*Because Ms. Doe could have obtained a copy of the standard from ASTM to review if requested. The negative had nothing to do with the content of the standard.*

MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 15-0-1 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee

**EXAMPLE 6. INSUFFICIENT BALLOT DOCUMENTATION**

REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Mr. Doe voted negative for the following reason:  
*I am voting negative on Item 1, Revision of X9999-96. This proposed revision has the effect of expanding X9998 to include honey as an acceptable coating material.*  
*Having attended the X99 and X99.23 meetings last February, my recollection is that the people who proposed this revision promised to include testing data to document the performance of honey as an acceptable alternative to the basic sugar coating that has been specified since the inception of this standard in 1981. Inasmuch as the promised testing data are not included, the proposed revision is unacceptable.*

SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 9/9/99, Subcommittee X99.23 voted 3-0-5 to rule Mr. Doe’s negative not persuasive for the following reason:  
*The technical information is available and will be supplied to Mr. Doe by Messrs. Jones and Smith.*

**EXAMPLE 7. NEGATIVE NOT ADDRESSED ON A TECHNICAL BASIS**

REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Mr. Doe voted negative for the following reason:  
*We have already responded (negatively) to this issue.*  
SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION  
At their meeting on 11/9/97, X99 voted 13-0-8 to rule Mr. Doe’s negative not persuasive for the following reason:  
*The Task Group also obtained similar negative from ballot on X5555. The Task Group reviewed the negative, and agreed that other test configurations could give similar results. The Task Group*

sustain the negative.

One last point to stress is the need to contact the voter far enough in advance of the next subcommittee meeting at which the negative is scheduled to be taken up to allow for a reasonable amount of time to discuss and negotiate.

In situations when the negative is not withdrawn despite negotiations in good faith, the subcommittee as a whole must deal with the negative or withdraw the ballot. If it is decided that the negative is persuasive, the ballot is withdrawn for further revision. However, if it is felt that the negative is not valid, a motion to make a Not Persuasive (or Not Related) should be made and the subcommittee should vote on the motion.

#### *Adequate Documentation*

A majority of the problems associated with negatives during the COS review stem from inadequate documentation of the committee's action(s). In preparation for action on a motion, the subcommittee should prepare a written response that cites and addresses each point of the nega-

tive on a *technical basis*. This response can be circulated before or during the meeting so that those in attendance may have a clearer understanding of the issue(s). This advance preparation also facilitates subcommittee documentation in the minutes and preparation of the "Pink Sheet." If such preparation is not taken, problems such as lacking sufficient meeting time may result.

#### *Addressing Technical Merits*

Example 7 illustrates a situation where the negative was not addressed properly on a technical basis. The negative along with a similar negative (although somewhat cryptic), apparently raised a valid technical objection ("other test configurations could give similar results"). In fact, the task group effectively agreed with the negative by proposing to editorially add a note to the standard to address the negative. Subsequent to the Not Persuasive motion, both the staff manager and ASTM editorial staff ruled that the proposed note was too technical in nature to be handled editorially.

This example raises a key point.

Dispatching a negative as editorial can result in a classic "gotcha." If the "editorial" determination is overruled after the persuasive motion is completed and the meeting over, the negative has not been addressed technically and is therefore still "live." Example 7 received a negative at COS for this very reason and was remanded back to the committee for proper handling of the negative vote, which significantly delayed publication of the standard.

Example 8 illustrates a failure to technically address a negative vote. This negative appears to have been hastily dispatched as editorial, yet it is stated that the suggested change would have to wait to "be considered for the five-year revision." If this negative was truly editorial in nature, these suggested additions could have been made immediately. The proposed wording certainly appears to be more than editorial. The fact that it was tabled implies that it was substantive. Therefore, this negative should have been dealt with on a technical basis. A substantive negative cannot be simply dispatched by ruling it

*suggested that a note be added to current document allowing for the use of alternative test setups.*

*The addition of a Note was checked with ASTM editorial staff. Both the ASTM staff and X99 Staff Manager felt changes were too technical to be contained in a Note. A new project should be taken out for revision of this document, incorporating other potential equipment configurations.*

#### MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 11/9/97 the main committee voted 31-0-6 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

#### **EXAMPLE 8. NEGATIVE NOT ADDRESSED ON A TECHNICAL BASIS**

#### REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Mr. Doe voted negative for the following reason:

*Section 3.1.4: Add "other than the spring action of the drag on the fly reel."*

#### SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 02/9/98, Subcommittee X99.34 voted 3-0-0 to rule Mr. Doe's negative not persuasive for the following reason:

*Section 3.1.4 – Editorial, will be considered for the 5-year revision.*

#### MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 2/9/98 the main committee voted 21-0-6 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

#### **EXAMPLE 9. NEGATIVE NOT COMPLETELY ADDRESSED**

#### REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Ms. Doe voted negative for the following reason:

*I have voted NEGATIVE on items 13 and 15 because I believe they are reversed – that is, Item 13, Endurance Limit, should read: "see fatigue limit" and that Item 15, Fatigue Limit, should read: "The maximum stress below which a fly rod can presumably endure an infinite number of stress cycles."*

*The reason for my negative is that ASTM Committee X99 removed the term "endurance limit" in their "Standard Terminology Relating to Fatigue and Fracture Testing," ASTM Designation X7777-96. Past editions of X7777, or its predecessor document relating to fatigue had words to the effect that the term "endurance limit" was obsolete.*

*I believe that all ASTM committees should use common, or at least similar, terminology where possible and I believe this is the case where it is possible. Further, I urge the Subcommittee to review the definition in X7777 and then, because fatigue is a statistical process, consider whether or not they wish to introduce the concept of "median stress" at which an infinite life occurs; if "median stress" is adopted here, then consideration must be given to the definition in Item 26.*

#### SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 04/9/99, X99.99 voted 15-0-0 to rule Ms. Doe's negative not persuasive for the following reason:

*X7777 is not a sufficient rationale for X99 to have its own definition. Furthermore it is the opinion of this subcommittee that the terms "Endurance Limit" and "Fatigue Limit" are still widely used.*

#### MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 16-0-0 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

editorial or taken up as new business.

*Address All Points of the Negative*

Failure to address all the points of a negative is probably the most frequently encountered problem. As previously mentioned, the best way to address a negative is to dissect it into distinct, separate issues and address each point of the negative separately based on technical merit. This is especially helpful when a negative is lengthy or is submitted in paragraph style with multiple issues in a given paragraph. Example 9 illustrates the failure to fully address the negative completely.

The subcommittee could have subdivided the negative in Example 9 into two points:

a. The voter feels that the definitions are reversed and that the term “endurance limit” is deprecated. Therefore, the Committee should abandon use of this term in deference to the accepted terms in use. The voter also offers technical suggestions. The subcommittee’s reason of “still widely used” does not address the voter’s technical issues. Furthermore, “wide-

ly used” does not ensure that the definitions are technically correct or part of the committee’s terminology. In this case, the subcommittee should also be consistent with the committee terminology standard (see introduction of Part E, *Form and Style for ASTM Standards*).

b. The voter raises the issue of the possible need for the additional definition for “median stress.” While this may not be related to the balloted terms, it would have been cleaner to rule it Not Related in a separate motion. This allows the balloted item to be published and this second point brought up and considered at the next committee meeting as a new item of business.

An example of a well-crafted subcommittee response is illustrated in Example 10. In this example, each point of the negative is repeated individually and the subcommittee response is presented in italics immediately following each point of the negative. This kind of preparation greatly facilitates the entire action process. Well organized responses make it clear to those voting during the main

committee review what the issue(s) are, make it easier to prepare the Pink Sheet report, and helps at the COS review level where the balloting actions must be scrutinized based solely on the subcommittee action report provided. It also ensures that each point of the negative was adequately addressed.

*Additional Issues*

Additional issues include weak or inappropriate arguments and motions, insufficient documentation, and similar problems. Example 11 illustrates several of these problems. Whether or not the wording is being changed is not the issue if that wording was included in the ballot. For example, if a paragraph is balloted with a change to only one sentence, the entire paragraph is being balloted and vulnerable to potential negatives. Changing one sentence may affect the related sentences. If the section in question was not part of the items being balloted, then the motion should have been for a Not Related rather

**EXAMPLE 10. WELL-CRAFTED COMMITTEE RESPONSE**

**REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION**

Mr. Doe voted negative for the following reason:

1. *Para 4.5 refers to “benefits outlined above.” I don’t see any benefits outlined above this line.*
2. *I am not sure that I see a need for both sections 5.6 and 5.8, nor 5.7 and 5.9. Section 5.6 introduces Section 11. The introductory paragraph in 5.6 refers to continuous improvement which is not referenced anywhere in Section 11. Moreover, Section 11 adds nothing of value to the standard that is not better addressed elsewhere. I think the entire Section 11 (and therefore, section 5.6) can be eliminated without harming the standard. Section 5 is missing a subsection that introduces the requirements for subcontracting, outside support and customer feedback.*
3. *Para 10.4.2 suggests that duplicate records be maintained, one set in the proximity of the machine, and the other in a central repository. I find that it is difficult enough to insure that a single set of records is kept up-to-date, and the added complexity of maintaining duplicates is not worth the hassle. Keep a good set near the machine – which is after all where the corrective actions occur, and forget about duplicating them.*
4. *Para 7.2 is missing a “t” in front of the third word of the para.*

**SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION**

At the meeting on 04/9/99, Subcommittee X9999 voted 8-0-0 to rule Mr. Doe’s negative not persuasive for the following reason:

Mr. Doe’s negative contained a total of 4 points. In a subsequent phone conversation and e-mail exchange with the Chairman, Mr. Doe identified which points he considered to be editorial and which were “substantive or structural.” Of the four points, only one was deemed editorial and the remaining were voted not persuasive for the following reasons:

1. Para 4.5 refers to “benefits outlined above.” I don’t see any benefits outlined above this line.

*Response: Paragraphs 4.1-4.5 contain the benefits referenced in 4.5. Benefits are having a quality management system (4.1), use of documented accountability and QC assuring clients that adequate accuracy and precision are achieved (4.2), use of guide to develop a QM system (4.3), usefulness to clients, regulatory agencies and evaluators (4.4).*

2. Structural: I am not sure that I see a need for both sections 5.6 and 5.8, nor 5.7 and 5.9...

*Response: Section 5.6 refers to QA and 5.8 to QC. They do not duplicate. Section 5.9 refers to reporting procedures, while 5.7 refers to all aspects including reporting. Because a whole section (17) covers reporting, it was deemed desirable to emphasize this aspect in the introductory section (5). Section 11 simply introduces and summarizes critical elements of the QA system, which are covered in detail in subsequent sections.*

3. Substantive: Para 10.4.2 suggests that duplicate records be maintained, one set in the proximity of the machine, and the other in a central repository.

*Response: Duplicates are easy to make and both a central repository and a copy with the equipment serve different purposes. The Quality Assurance Manager should have copies of all such documents, for example.*

4. Editorial: Para 7.2 is missing a “t” in front of the third word of the paragraph.

*Subcommittee agrees that this is editorial and change will be made.*

**MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION**

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 17-0-1 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

than Not Persuasive action.

Another point in Example 11 that raises a “red flag” concerning due process is the statement “has been in use for at least 30 years.” In a sense, what is implied is, “It has been this way for over 30 years and we are not about to change it!” This kind of position begs the question: “Why even ballot the section?” It would have been much better to state something to the effect “we feel the item was technically correct and appropriate as balloted.”

Example 12 illustrates a similar problem. If the justification for declaring a voter Not Persuasive is that a document outside ASTM must be modified before the ASTM standard is changed, then why even vote on the item? It seems that this logic denies the voter due process by virtually creating an “automatic not persuasive” determination in such cases. While it is often desirable to keep related documents “in step” with one another, that logic should not be a constraining factor in promoting and improving ASTM standards.

Example 13 illustrates the need to more fully document committee ac-



#### **EXAMPLE 11. QUESTIONABLE COMMITTEE JUSTIFICATION**

##### REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Mr. Doe voted negative for the following reason:

*Also in D9999 11.2 what constitutes the completion of tests? Is it three months after 28 day drying or 7 day drying or is it when chemistry was done? All three dates could be construed, as completion of tests while only one date should be stipulated. This needs to be more clearly stated.*

##### SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 9/10/96, Subcommittee X99.24 voted 22-2-9 to rule Mr. Doe’s negative not persuasive for the following reason: *The Negative voter is not persuasive because the wording which he objects to is not being changed and has been in use for at least 30 years.*

##### MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 35-0-1 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

#### **EXAMPLE 12. QUESTIONABLE SUBCOMMITTEE JUSTIFICATION**

##### REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Ms. Doe voted negative for the following reason:

*Breaking length is a function only of grammage (basis weight) in units of mass per unit area, and tensile strength in units of force per unit width. The property is independent of specimen width. I agree that in standard tests the specimen width is specified and used in calculating tensile strength, but it does not further enter into calculation of the breaking length. Delete “the width of the tensile strength specimen” from the definition.*

##### SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 1/10/98, Subcommittee X99.13 voted 13-0-0 to rule Ms. Doe’s negative Not Persuasive for the following reason:

*The wording put forward is identical to that published for this same term in the DICTIONARY OF WIDGETS, 49th Edition, WIDGETS R US Press. The committee sees no reason to change this term unless and until this term changes in the Dictionary of Widgets. Committee X99 makes every effort to harmonize between Widgets R US and ASTM.*

##### MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 35-0-1 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

#### **EXAMPLE 13. INADEQUATE DOCUMENTATION OF COMMITTEE ACTIONS**

##### REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Mr. Doe voted negative for the following reason:

*The ballot does not give a reason why an effort is being made to replace the term “load” by the term “force” throughout the document. I am very comfortable with the existing terminology and, in the absence of any justification for the change, I object.*

##### SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 5/10/99, Subcommittee X99.11 voted 12-0-0 to rule Mr. Doe’s negative not persuasive for the following reason: *Mr. Doe’s negative on changing “load” to “force” was found Not Persuasive on the grounds of technical merit and ongoing X99 initiative.*

##### MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 5-0-1 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.



tions on the Pink Sheets. In this case, a negative at COS was cast in the review of this action because there was not enough information provided in the subcommittee action summary to make an informed decision. The rather cryptic justification “technical merit and ongoing X99 initiative” provides little substantive information. What is meant by “technical merit” and “ongoing initiatives”? It would have been better to state “the committee feels that *force* is a more appropriate term than *load*. Because of that decision, the committee is conducting an initiative to replace ‘load’ with ‘force’ wherever appropriate.”

Example 14 illustrates another common problem of taking the wrong action on the negative. In this example, the negative should have been broken into two parts. This would have been especially helpful because the actions required are different for the two parts of the negative. The first part dealing with the age of the user was supposedly not *intended* to be the issue being balloted. Additional information would be needed to confirm that determination. If the section the voter questioned was included in the ballot, it could be a valid argument whether intended or not to be balloted. If it was truly not an issue being balloted, the correct

motion should have been to find this part of the negative Not Related rather than Not Persuasive. The Not Related motion requires that the negative be taken up as an item of new business as the committee indicated. The second part of the negative was correctly handled as a Not Persuasive action.

#### PARTICIPATE

One final point, we strongly urge all committees to nominate members to participate in COS. Because of our participation on COS, we serve as a resource for our committee in counseling the subcommittee to prepare better ballot items, to help resolve negative ballots where possible, and to ensure proper handling and documenting actions on negatives. In our committee, we have witnessed:

- A significant reduction of COS negatives on actions taken by our committee and a significant decrease in appeals made to COS and the Board of Directors;
- An increased willingness of subcommittee chairman to efficiently and properly handle negatives;
- A significant reduction in the time required for ballot items to become standards or incorporated into standards, and;
- The development of stronger standards. //

#### References

- ASTM, 2000, *Form and Style for ASTM Standards*; American Society for Testing and Materials, 100 Barr Harbor Ave, West Conshohocken, PA 19428, 60 p.
- ASTM, 2000, *Regulations Governing ASTM Technical Committees*; American Society for Testing and Materials, 100 Barr Harbor Ave, West Conshohocken, PA 19428, 29 p.

#### EXAMPLE 14. IMPROPER MOTION AND INADEQUATE DOCUMENTATION OF COMMITTEE ACTIONS

##### REASON FOR NEGATIVE AND COMMITTEE ACTION

Mr. Doe voted negative for the following reason:

*You have not set a requirement in determining the maximum age user on a particular piece of equipment. This leaves it open to the manufacturer to state a low age requirement on equipment that they know will be used by an older age group. Thereby making the equipment unsafe.*

*Also static loads are only being used. Not taking into account dynamic loads. This must also be taken into account or the equipment will fail.*

*You are on the right track but need to take this a step further.*

##### SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

At the meeting on 9/23/96, Subcommittee X99.32 voted 13-0-1 to rule Mr. Doe's negative not persuasive for the following reason:

*Mr. Doe's first concern regarding the manufacturer specifying the age of the intended user in not the issue being balloted.\* We did consider dynamic loads and feel that our current loading requirements are severe enough, as there is no manufacturing history or injury data to suggest that home playground equipment is collapsing due to dynamic loads.*

*\* This will be considered as an item of new business.*

##### MAIN COMMITTEE ACTION

At their meeting on 04/10/99 the main committee voted 13-0-1 to uphold the decision of the subcommittee.

**JAMES LUPPENS** is secretary of ASTM Committee D05 on Coal and Coke and completed his tenure as a COS member from 1997 to 1999. He is a geologist employed by the Phillips Coal Company, Richardson, Texas.

**RONALD STANTON** is presently vice chairman of Committee D05 on Coal and Coke and served on COS from 1991 to 1993. He chaired the Form and Style Subcommittee of COS from 1992 to 1993. Stanton is a geologist employed by the U.S. Geological Survey, Reston, Va.