Before I broach this month’s article and subject matter, I would like to take this opportunity to bring our membership some outstanding news. Many of you know Jeff Nash, and for those who don’t, Jeff has served this organization selflessly for many years. He has served as past chair of the section and currently serves as our Association director. Recently, during the January FSAWWA winter board meeting, Jeff was selected as a vice-president of the Association. This is a very important position in which to serve, and seeing as Jeff was selected by his peers, they definitely recognized Jeff’s contribution to AWWA over the past several years. This is also a prestigious recognition for the Florida Section, so please join me in congratulating Jeff on being selected to serve in this role.

Guest Columnist

As you no doubt have guessed by now, the articles and themes I have covered for the past two months focus on our utility members and the benefits that membership in FSAWWA provide. Keeping with that theme, I have asked our current Utility Council chair, Pat Lehman, to write this month’s article about the benefits of the FSAWWA Utility Council and what it offers our valued utility members.

The FSAWWA Utility Council is responsible for the establishment, coordination, and direction of the Florida Section relating to legislative, regulatory, and water management activities within the state and on a national level. The council is comprised of utilities from around the state representing a large segment of the population that advocate for legislative and regulatory issues. Membership in the council is separate from section utility or individual membership, and council members pay separate annual dues. The primary purpose of these dues is to retain a professional firm, Anfield Consulting Group Inc., that provides a recognized and unified voice in Tallahassee representing the position of FSAWWA utility members before legislative and regulatory agencies.

To meet its primary goal of providing the membership with information on legislative and regulatory issues that impact water utilities throughout the state, a set of white papers have been developed with input from a cross-section of utilities regarding current legislative and regulatory issues:

- Water infrastructure funding
- Ocean outfalls
- Minimum flows and levels (MFL)
- Public-private partnerships
- Longer-term consumptive use permits for alternate water supply
- Utility employee safety
- Water conservation
- Aquifer storage/recovery regulation

Many utilities in the council are participating in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Consumptive Use Permitting Consistency Initiative (CU Pcon) to move forward with consistency among the five water management districts and the potential rule-making that will follow. Those participating provide input in the regulatory process and provide information for distribution to those utilities that are not able to participate.

The council also provides a forum for utilities to exchange information regarding specific issues, such as:

- How do other utilities adjust rates?
- Comply with a regulatory issue?
- Staff their facilities?
- Train their employees?

These are all issues that utilities have in common and they can learn from what others are doing to address them. This provides benefit to all utilities, large or small.

Information regarding current legislative and regulatory issues is emailed to council members to keep them abreast of the topics and solicit input. The council maintains a webpage on the section website at www.FSAWWA.org to provide up-to-date information to council members.

Involvement is key, and a common voice with a unified strategy provided by the council is instrumental in assuring that utilities can meet the task of providing a reliable and affordable water supply to the public many years into the future.

In closing I would like to echo Pat’s comment that involvement is key. Without our utility members, FSAWWA’s mission and vision wouldn’t exist. Please make use of Pat’s invitation and visit our website for more information on the Utility Council and information on what benefits FSAWWA can provide for your utility.