To approve up to $5,000 to “sponsor” up to 20 guest nights for members (to be determined in a weighted lottery) at the 2024 Annual Meeting in Cincinnati.

Background:

The Board voted 9 October 2023 for the contract with the Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza to remain as-is, meaning that we are obligated to fill at least 75% of the room blocks before we incur a penalty, called “slippage.”

Compounding this issue is the recent practice of travel bans which widely affected our MLA members in California. While this ban was recently lifted (October 2023), it inhibited many of our colleagues from fully participating at the in-person conference in St. Louis, MO in 2022 since their professional development funds were not allowed to be used to travel to certain states, among which, Missouri was one.

To address these two variables (slippage and travel bans) that relate to in-person attendance and participation at the 2024 Cincinnati Annual Meeting, we would like to offer 2 night stays at the Conference Hotel (Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza) for up to 10 individuals, assigned by a weighted lottery.

This lottery would be open to all members of MLA (including students), and would require current membership (at the time of drawing), and submitting their own name by a deadline (to be determined). The lottery would give weight to students and MLA members who were affected by their state’s travel bans, thus prohibiting them from attending the 2023 conference. This weight would be executed by the greater of: having student members’ names entered into the lottery 3 times, and those members who were affected by travel bans would have their names entered into the lottery 2 times, all other members would have their names entered once in the lottery.

The rationale behind this amount is as follows:

Last year, in St. Louis, at our first hybrid meeting since the beginning of pandemic, we had 809 night stays. In 2024, the threshold that we have to meet before we receive penalty is 829 night stays. The difference between the 2023 actual numbers, and 2024 goal (for 75% fill of hotel block) is 20 rooms. This amounts to an estimated $4,640:

Base room rate: $184  
Sales tax: 7.8% ($14.35)  
Hotel tax: 18.3% ($33.67)

Total per room (estimate): $232.02 x 20 → $4,640
The funds would be planned to come from the Convention budget, but if that budget either meets its expected amount, or goes over, this $5,000 would come from the MLA Fund.