Summary of Advocacy Committee Meeting
January 28, 2010

1. Call to order

Judy Duncan called the meeting to order at 8:30 am CST on January 28, 2010, at the Chicago winter meeting. Committee members introduced themselves and attendance is recorded in Attachment 1.

2. Discussion of survey comments

Judy Morgan presented an overview of the survey she conducted for her master's thesis. The survey was sent to 1250 labs and she had a 40% response rate, which is considered very good. 46% of the respondents were commercial labs and 54% were non-commercial.

The most positive result of the survey was the finding that 80% of the respondents indicated they would recommend NELAP accreditation. In addition, there were a number of comments received that seemed to have merit. These comments were divided up into categories and forwarded to the Advocacy Committee. Susan Wyatt analyzed the comments and then linked them to the strategic plan for committee review. The Advocacy Committee plans to refer these comments to different parts of TNI and ask them to consider and give feedback as to whether any action is warranted.

A question was raised about whether or not the survey results would be posted. Respondents were promised confidentiality, but comments could be sanitized and posted. The decision to share the comments is Judy Morgan's since this is her data. Posting comments might encourage additional feedback. Region 6 is posting Judy Morgan's presentation to the Region 6 Quality Conference on their website. It was also suggested that another survey could be conducted after implementation of the new standards.

3. Update from Small Lab Advocate

Len Schantz presented an overview of the activities of the Small Lab Advocate and the accomplishments since the winter meeting in Miami. Activities include:

- Len's role is to facilitate feedback from small labs
- He started the Small Lab Advocacy Group (SLAG) using the state assessors group as a model. He has good participation from labs and also has several assessors and consultants in the group. The format is to choose a topic of interest, invite a guest speaker, and have discussion.
- Continuing demonstration of capability has been a big topic. SLAG developed an opinion paper on how small labs can comply with CDoC

requirements. This paper is under review but will soon be posted on the SLAG bulletin board.

- PT frequency is another big topic. The majority (70%) would like to see a requirement for only 1 PT. Small labs believe there is not a good rationale for why PTs are needed and used. Emails related to PTs are posted on the SLAG bulletin board.
- A common discussion theme relates to the role of an assessor. Should the assessor be an adversary or consultant? This is an area where small labs could get some help if the assessor were more of a consultant.

Accomplishments for the SLA include:

- Opening lines of feedback from small labs
- SLAG bulletin board
- SLAG pamphlet

Len believes that the greatest opportunity for TNI to help small labs is through the assessors. He suggested that TNI needs also to spend money to de-mystify the standards for small labs. A "NELAC for Dummies" document could help to break down the standards into essential elements for small labs. Jerry Parr commented that a document like this should be tied to the new standard. Also Jerry pointed out that ISO 17011 prohibits consultancy by assessors. The question was posed as to what should be de-mystified for small labs? The answer was quality systems and data integrity. Jerry suggested that a document prepared by Tom McAninch could provide a good foundation for "NELAC for Dummies". We would need to train assessors on the tools available to help small labs. Also, we will need to train assessors on consultancy clause in ISO 17011.

It was suggested that TNI explore funding to develop NELAC for Dummies possibly through organizations like the Bill Gates foundation or the Small Business Administration.

4. EPA-TNI Relationships

Judy Duncan reported that EPA had sent a letter responding to TNI's request to develop an MOU between the organizations. EPA declined to enter into an MOU with TNI at the present time due to some issues outlined in their letter. A meeting with representatives of the NELAP Board, the TNI Board and EPA met to discuss the letter at lunch on Wednesday. At that time, TNI explained that as an organization, TNI does not accredit labs and does not get in the middle of lab and AB disputes. TNI is however a new organization and some issues relating to transparency of the NELAP Board and findings on AB evaluations need to be addressed. The TNI board is responsible for preparing a response to the letter.

Additional comments on this issue included:

- Does the NELAP board have authority to interpret standards? No, interpretations should be done by the AB committee and adopted by the NELAP Board.
- If supplemental state requirements are being imposed on accredited labs by ABs, labs should advise the Advocacy Committee.
- The NELAP Board needs a total management system to avoid these issues in the future.
- The TNI organization chart needs to be refined to show roles better. There should be FAQ's about where to direct questions.
- We should keep in mind what is going well and what can be improved.
- NELAP is based on the "peer evaluation" model which is the industry standard. We need to educate others on this.
- A2LA has a model for complaint resolution that we should look into.
- The EPA regions think there should be someone in charge of the NELAP Board. This is a misunderstanding about roles and responsibilities.
- Maybe we can have peer evaluation with input from the outside. We need a way to check to see if the ABs are implementing the program correctly.
- If state programs are as bad as EPA thinks they are, then EPA needs to be looking at revoking primacy in DW programs.
- The standards address denying and revoking accreditation, but they do not address suspension. TNI should develop an SOP to discuss how to do suspension, revocation and denial of accreditation. LASC should take the lead and assign to the AB committee.
- De-accreditation of labs is not communicated among ABs. Need to develop a better way to do this.
- TNI should do follow up surveys on assessments. A form should be developed that could be returned to TNI. FL and KS have examples. It might be a problem for states like MN that have unions for state employees. Might be OK if questions directed to the program rather than the individual. Also if TNI is doing it, it could be OK. Survey could be anonymous with the option to include a name if respondent wants to be contacted.

5. Newsletter

Judy Duncan will be editor for the next newsletter to be published around April 1. Ideas for newsletter articles included:

- Report from Chicago
- Review of LOD-LOQ draft documents
- Plan for DC meeting
- AB survey on PT frequency
- SLAG CDoC paper
- TNI re-alignment
- NEFAP

- Coming attractions on website

6. Other

Judy Duncan stated that she saw several upcoming opportunities for the Advocacy committee. First, they will be active on the roll out of the new standards and could use this as an opportunity for outreach to non-NELAP states. The new standards will also provide opportunities to contact EPA program offices and lab associations and re-introduce ourselves.

7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be February 4, 2010, at 12 Noon CDT. The agenda will include:

- Follow up from Chicago meeting
- Report on EPA/TNI relations workgroup
- Next newsletter

Attachment 1

#	LastName	FirstName	Stakeholder Group	Present	Term
1	Autry	Lara	Other	Y	1
2	Coats	Kevin	Other	N	2
3	Conlon	Pat	Other	N	3
4	Craig	Carl	Other	N	2
6	Bradley	Lynn	Other	Y	1
7	Duncan	Judy	AB	Y	1
8	Jackson	Kenneth	Other	N	2
9	Shields	Aurora	AB	Y	3
10	Wyatt	Susan	AB	Y	1
11	Eaton	Andy	Lab	N	1
12	English	Zonetta	Lab	Y	2
13	Perry	Michael	Lab	N	3
14	Hogg	Paula	Lab	Y	1
15	Ward	Gary	Lab	N	2
16	Wichman	Michael	Lab	N	3
17	Schantz	Leonard	Small Lab Advocate	Y	
18	Parr	Jerry	ED	Y	
19	Batterton	Carol	PA	Y	
			ASSOCIATE MEMBERS		
	McCracken	Kirstin	Lab	N	
	Morgan	Judy	Lab	Y	