



2022–2023
NCRA CANDIDATE
QUESTIONNAIRE *Due*
date: February 17, 2023

Please type your responses after each question. Your completed questionnaire should be emailed to Laura Butler at lbutler@ncra.org by **February 17, 2023**. Please include your name on each page of the questionnaire.

NCRA’s Nominating Committee may use your answers within this questionnaire and information provided in your curriculum vitae to reduce the number of candidates under consideration for an interview with the committee. Please provide as much detail as possible when responding. The answers to your questionnaire are confidential and are for the Nominating Committee’s eyes only. However, if there is more than one candidate for an open position, all responses pertaining to that position will be published to the NCRA website. The questionnaires will be removed immediately after the election.

Please attach a comprehensive résumé and/or CV with your questionnaire, along with three letters of reference from within or outside of the profession. Please note that Board policy states that, even though individual Board members are encouraged to submit names of highly qualified persons for consideration as possible candidates for the Board of Directors, Board members shall limit submissions to the name of the potential candidate only. As such, letters of endorsement or reference letters from Board members cannot be accepted.

Questionnaires and supplemental information such as letters of reference received after the deadline will not be accepted. Please note that reference letters are to be sent by the candidates with their questionnaire. Reference letters may be from non-members.

I. SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. What do you seek to contribute to NCRA by way of your Board service, both personally and professionally?

Being in a variety of leadership positions and volunteering has taught me to assess and listen from others within an organization's perspective, and to make decisions that align with the Mission, Vision and Core Values which supports the strategic plan.

NCRA 2.0 has exhibited to its members good governance, fiscal leadership, and not only have reacted to immediate threats but also planned for the future. NCRA's Mission, Vision and Core Values is evident in the board's actions. My contributions to the process could include the following:

- Asking tough questions and being an active listener
- Have experienced and executed the process that once a board decision has been made, to drive the actions required with 100% commitment and public support
- Ability to analyze when immediate action is required, how those decisions impact all sectors of our organization, and how any actions will bolster or threaten the future of NCRA.
- Team player: A good team has diversity in backgrounds and opinions. The best teams align themselves with the mission of the organization they represent and are united in one voice when actions are made and strategies are in place
- Industry specific: All shared knowledge is for the benefit of the profession. I can contribute the perspective from 25-plus years in the industry as a court reporter and captioner, and one that assesses and onboards captioners, client interactions on why they choose human captioners over AI, in addition to the state of the captioning industry, our strengths and threats.
 - a. What motivated you to pursue this position? Why do you want to be on this Board?
 - To be involved in securing the stenographer's future of instant speech-to-text across all industries, judicial, entertainment, and so much more. The machine hasn't changed, but other industries are evolving and including instant speech-to-text solutions at no charge. We must continue to embrace our niche, using our steno technology and educating others on the importance of humans behind speech-to-text. Humans vs AI systems are miles apart. We are accurate, dependable, and secure.
 - advocating and educating others on the Gold Standard of Guardians of the Record
 - The last two years I was asked by colleagues to participate in the NCRA nomination process, but the timing was not right due to commitments and priorities. I'm now able to confidently commit to Board responsibility.

b. What is your understanding of the time and financial commitment of the position for which you are applying?

- NCRA Board of Director meetings three times a year
- Annual Convention
- possibly Leadership and Boot Camps
- NCRA rep assignments to state affiliates
- board liaison to committees
- active on listserv or other ways the NCRA Board communicates
- Monetary impact is hours not worked while attending any of the above
- Volunteering time and the financial implications are not a cost, but a responsibility. I could never give back more than I have gained from the career of steno.

c. How do you feel NCRA board service will be different from state service? (Governance/Implementation)

State service often is a volunteer board, where you are both held responsible for the policies and fiduciary duties, but also doing all the work to get 'er done! NCRA's board governance is policy driven with an eye toward the future, taking into account all members' steno niche, location and anything that may impact them. NCRA's CEO leads a staff that aid our subject-knowledge experts to get the information to our membership in a timely manner with actionable steps to take ensuring stenography is known to be the Cadillac in speech-to-text transcription and educating others on our wonderful profession.

d. Why is now the best time for you?

Last March I completed my service to the Ohio Court Reporters Association, working at all levels in the organization, student liaison, director, and the executive leadership. For four years I have been a member of the Captioning Committee, Chairing the last two. The stenography profession is facing a tidal wave of challenges and we need engaged members on the Board.

My family and colleagues are aware of the time and financial commitment to serve on the NCRA Board of Directors, and are 100% supportive.

2. How does NCRA Board service play a role in shaping your professional aspirations within the next five years? Ten years?

Decisions are made at Board level that are for the greater good of the entire field. Personal aspirations should not play a role in board service.

Every day, no matter if you are a participant, an observer, or a leader, one should always increase their base knowledge. I foresee an increase in knowledge or improved skills in some of the following ways:

- Improved focused listening skills
- Higher level of empathy
- Appreciation for other's areas of expertise and places of strength
- Improvement in public speaking
- Problem solving and decision making strategies
- Serving with others should always bring valued relationships. We are people first, who all have speedy fingers in common!

3. What are your interests and activities outside of the court reporting/captioning environment? Do you see any of these interests and/or activities as an asset to NCRA?

My favority personal activity is being a cheerleader for my family and loved ones. At this stage in life, my nonprofessional resume reads as band groupie, ultra-marathon support team, drama enthusiast supporting the thespians in my life. I'm not allowed to shout encouragement during fencing, chess and pickleball tournaments, but it's been said I sweat just as much as those I'm cheering for. I will lift others up and cheer them on enthusiastically! Pushing others down or shaming is not an option.

I love the outdoors and balance is important to keep all the balls in the air while juggling life. I hike, climb, ski, and participate in Ninja Flying School. When we gather five generations for shooting trap or my crew are on a motorcycle ride, my smile couldn't get bigger. I'm usually reading a book for either book club or studies through our church. I enjoy watercolors, and the gifts I make are done with a lot of love, but little talent.

I'm a life-long learner, and always am asking why something is being done, can we improve efficiency, recognizing importance of tradition and sometimes - like our keyboard layout - it can't get any better. Knowledge is power.

I can be a participant or a chief. I thrive in the tug and pull of wrestling with tough ideas and charting a course. Rolling up my sleeves and getting dirty, making an immediate impact or generational pivots of a situation brings great joy. Time is valuable, and no matter the activity, I'll be all in. You'll never get today again, choose how you spend it wisely.

4. Are there any proven strategies you employ to confront challenges in your personal and/or professional life? Do you have other potential strategies on which you are working?

Pause, Assess, Prioritize. Most challenges can make people feel a decision needs to be made quickly, but unless it's a survivor moment, there really is time to breath. I like to stop, gather my thoughts, leave no questions unanswered, consult with others, make decisions and take actions to tackle the challenge. A favorite quote, "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things that you think you could not do before." – Rahm Emanuel

I am working on empathy. Tough questions can sometimes come across as interrogatory or could be perceived by the person being questioned that they did/think something wrong. A focus for me is remembering relationships are at the center of why the tough questions are being asked, and to adapt my approach when asking. I am taking a variety of in-person and online workshops this year with the American Business Association and GiANT to improve in communicating and strategical decision making.

All of us lead in some area of our lives, and we can be more successful when the team is aware of the purpose and the plan.

5. Do you have a personal or professional relationship with any existing NCRA Board member that could contribute to a positive working environment or create a potential conflict? If so, please explain.

A Board often reflects the executive leadership. We have a great board. I know some more than others, and know of no personal conflicts.

6. How do you use social media and how often do you use social media?

I am an observer of social media. I usually post educational content, share family smiles, and encourage others. I do not post subjective opinions or negative comments.

Recently I've been tasked to create educational content on disability accommodations that will launch in July.

a. With which social media platforms are you engaged?

LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. YouTube is my preferred learning platform for everything from changing my motorcycle oil to knitting, mastering handstands, and creating balloon animals.

7. What is your familiarity with the NCRA Constitution and Bylaws?

I know where to access them and have read them.

When a board follows bylaws and procedures, chaos can be avoided. Robert's Rules are imperative for membership organizations.

II. ACHIEVEMENT IN LEADERSHIP

1. What comes to mind when you think of the ideal NCRA Officer and Director?

Trustworthy, reliable, forward-thinking visionaries, leading both the offense and defensive teams, in promoting our profession to others, recruiting future steno stars, and dedicated to protecting the interests of NCRA and our members.

Officers and Directors are responsible to our members, and must serve honestly and ethically in all fiscal and professional issues that need addressed.

A leader puts aside personal advancement and accolades for the greater good of NCRA.

When a leadership team is humble, the membership is served. A humble person can listen to others, resolve issues and become united in Mission.

2. What strengths would you bring (or continue to bring) to the NCRA Board?

The attributes listed about on an ideal Officer or Director are grounded in my personal and professional life.

I champion due diligence and efficient systems. Outside-the-box thinking grounded in facts keeps me flexible, efficient, and able to scale solutions to key problems.

3. What specific leadership skills do you possess that qualify you for the position you seek?

- Transparency and confidentiality skills are vital when leading.
- Supporting team members, always with an eye to help others be the best version of themselves, especially when tough conversations are being debated.
- You not only get my volunteering efforts, but my family will be NCRA's loudest cheerleaders in the bargain. A family core value is we are contributors not takers. When a family member has a passion or are volunteering in some way, others jump in on their strengths, HR, social media, and plans of action to help one another succeed in their goals

4. Indicate your most significant contributions to NCRA, your state, or other professional organizations. What led to the program or initiative being successful or unsuccessful?

Friends of the Library: 20 years ago we started efforts in a new library building. Our small town faced unique challenges in numbers and evidence was required of why a new library was warranted. It took 20 years, but we broke ground this year. Sow your seeds, the crop may be the next season or years from now.

The Special Olympics has held a special place in my heart for 30+ years, and I have been a cheerer, hugger, and gopher. When I was a certified basketball official (NASO), I would coordinate basketball officiating for Special Olympic tournaments. Our family works on a yearly auction to send our local athletes to national and international competitions. Each activity has taught me new lessons about myself and others, but ones I'll highlight are active listening and empathy, and knowing there are many roads to get to the same destination. Engaging volunteers can be hard, but once they come to the party, most become repeat volunteers.

As a school board member, our board went from a board of chaos to applying Policy Governance, allowing our superintendent to do his job vs putting out fires. We strategized, defined our Mission, Vision and Core Values, and every policy and decisions reflected those. During a turbulent time of personalities and finances, we were able to use our core documents as our guide in making decisions and answering tough questions from our membership. Our school was in the black with increased enrollment when I completed my board service, two years of which as president, after six years.

Decisions sometimes were made that were not rolled out properly to the staff to implement. This experience was vital in teaching me how to communicate the "why" often and in multiple ways, taking the time to make sure that those executing the decisions from the board were prepared and equipped to succeed.

The Ohio Court Reporters Association: I love my state association! Many of my professional mentors hail from OCRA leadership, and this is where I learned to be an active participant and encouraged my love of life-long learning. We are a team, and everyone contributes.

The feeling of job well done came two years after OCRA hosted a Veteran's History Project. A WWII vet family sent me a thank you note, sharing the family's appreciation of hearing the patriarch's stories recorded through the VHP. They played the video created by our CLVS volunteer and had the transcript to pass around at his wake. HOW COOL IS THAT?!

During COVID, captioners and court reporters had major impacts, and it felt like things were changing every day. I relied on my colleagues (fondly referred to as my steno sisters) to provide their expertise in researching our Ohio notary laws, and they relied on our state captioners (captionin' cousins) to provide knowledge about our captioning studio must-haves to enhance reporters' new remote work experience.

I have mentored and sponsored students at both state and national level, presenting in-person and online webinars and hosted casual Q&A sessions. I love hosting Cavs Game Nights, taking students from the prep of a game, pre- and post-game interviews, and what it looks like to caption on broadcast, in-stadium, and working with scopists for immediate-delivery of verbatim interviews for the media.

Mentoring colleagues who transferred their skills into captioning is one of my proudest career accomplishments. Witnessing the success of a colleague who you had a brief moment in time to counsel or encourage, there's no greater professional achievement.

My steno machine has taken me around the world and has given me opportunities I didn't even know to dream for. The stenographic profession has provided flexibility that is unique. I will share my love of steno wherever and whenever I can.

The National Court Reporters Association: At the 2012 National Convention I was challenged by Sue Terry when she was asked why she was still involved and gave so much of her time to NCRA, she responded, "I can never give back what this profession has given me." I agree 100% and have actively volunteered since 2012 on a variety of committees, serving beside subject-knowledge experts with some of the best people I know.

As a beginner captioner, Pat Graves has an inspiration. The knowledge she was willing to share for the betterment of our entire industry amazed me. A thriving business owner, vibrant mom and wife, active volunteer for not only professional associations but personal passion projects - a Wonder Woman! The way Pat spoke with conviction on the way the captioning industry should be seamless in quality and best practices for consumers inspired my captioning committee service.

The committee work and opportunities NCRA has provided through dialogue, conventions and Boot Camp make me a better professional and person. I love that our captioning committee works in so many segments of our industry, respectfully having debates and exchanges of approaches with integrity and professionalism. Boot Camp was a pivotal training point for me, and I often end discussions with "the ask."

III. THE FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION AND NCRA

1. In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges facing:
 - a. the profession and why?

Artificial Intelligence, Digital Reporters, and Digital Audio Recording. Decisionmakers who care only about the cost of services and don't understand how vital it is to have a Human Guardian of the Record are jeopardizing outcomes of judicial proceedings and communication access.

We need more volunteers within our national and state organizations. Professional development in business and marketing would be helpful in advocating and recruitment efforts.

More graduates. I love the A to Z program. Now let us see where students are succeeding and graduating from and why.

b. NCRA and why?

What would you like to see NCRA do to address those challenges?

The NCRA Strong Task Force has taken AI, DR, and DAR on! We need more volunteers, experts, and consumers on this task force.

The importance of a human stenographer cannot be overstated. We are the Guardians of the Record, protecting and preserving the spoken word, the chain of custody in some cases, and communication access. We are trained and capable at making decisions to protect the spoken word, bound by our ethics.

NCRA must respond quickly whenever stenography, speech-to-text, accessibility, and captioning are in the news, both locally and nationally. Pre-developed statements should be approved by the board for our communication team to immediately respond. We cannot let others tell our story.

We need to shout the praises of our volunteers through social media and publications, both internally to NCRA, but more importantly to the broader community.

For new volunteers: Most people are just waiting to be asked to the party. Once they're there, let's teach them how to dance! Engage members that are subject-knowledge experts in articles and presentations.

Promote our schools, advocate within the College Credit+ community and home schoolers. Steno is the best kept secret, and we need to promote it regularly. The flexibility of our profession and the lifestyle it allows one to lead alone should cause a waiting list at our schools.

Strategic Alliances: We have to quit preaching to the choir. Our members know they are amazingly skilled. Let us tell the world. In captioning, less than 30% of people utilizing captions are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. We need to align ourselves with production companies, brain-injury associations, other-abled learning organizations, any and all that serve Persons with Disabilities.

2. Of the programs or services in which NCRA is currently engaged, which do you think are most important to the profession's future? What are your suggestions for new programs, enhancing current programs, or discontinuing current programs?

Most Important: Strong Task Force, Governmental Relations, and Membership services and committee, Technology Committee

Suggestions: PR/Outreach/Creative Content Committee: Board approved, pre-scripted material to immediately respond to any news source or media that references court reporting, protecting the record, speech-to-text, and communication accessibility

More volunteers: Be initiative-taking inviting members to contribute and share their wealth of knowledge

CRC Certification: Make test more relevant to performing a captioning assignment, similar to the retired RT Administrators assessment

Leadership training and marketing: have subject-knowledge experts teach our members on opportunities and SWOT analysis of their local markets

Marketing: for recruitment and telling our story.

Often we let others own the narrative of court reporting and captioning and come in on the defense.

Recruiting: Our steno machines offer an amazing career, and people don't know enough to view it as a career pathway.

3. What thoughts do you have, if any, on the current Board makeup and whether it adequately represents the career options that comprise NCRA membership? Are there ways that NCRA can improve upon addressing the needs of each group?

The board should have knowledge of all sectors and know who the subject-knowledge experts are throughout our organization. We need leaders looking to the future of stenography and where opportunities lay in all sectors.

4. What would be your response if a member asked you if NCRA should consider opening its membership and why?

The board of a member-service organization executes the will of the members within the Constitution, Bylaws, Mission, Vision, and Core Values.

5. NCRA bought a lottery ticket and won. What would you allocate the winnings to?

- Financial Investment to secure our financial future
- Government Relations
- Marketing and Promotion both for recruitment and educating those outside our industry on human-created captioning and the role stenography plays in protecting the spoken word
- Conduct study in a graduate program on comprehension differences between those that are provided accurate, quality captions and those that are not
- Create a program that enhances our stenography skills in business, similar to an internship. 225 is just the first step to a successful career

6. There are 13 Board Core Values. The following three values have been selected for your comments and input. Please express what each means to you, its importance to Board service, and how you have put these values into play in your professional life.

a. Transparency/Trust

Transparency is vital in maintaining trust. You can lose trust so easily by not being transparent, and it's difficult to get back. Transparency is easy when things are going well, and in hard times when you communicate honestly, frequently, and in different methods trust is maintained.

b. Mutual respect

Mutual respect and emotional intelligence is vital in team leadership. Robert's Rules of Order when followed correctly supports mutual respect, especially when there are differences of opinions and moving a decision forward.

c. Member-driven

Our membership drives decisions at board level. Members need to be represented, a place to collectively tackle challenges, and NCRA should always offer opportunities for professional development. Members always have a seat at the table.

7. What elements of the NCRA Strategic Plan do you view as most important to the profession's future? How important is it to adhere to the strategic plan as created?

The most important part of implementing the Strategic Plan is equipping our leaders and volunteers with the know-how and resources to accomplish the short-term objectives. Those in responsibility of implementation should collaborate with one another, sharing resources and energy, to achieve the goals.

The Strategic Plan is a dynamic document that will guide the leaders and organization. It is important to be flexible. Some ideas:

- Our strategic plan is only a year old. We need to equip the sectors with knowledge to complete their priorities.
- At the NCRA convention mini-SWOT sessions should be done yearly with sector groups, inviting new voices to participate, to have a comprehensive understanding of the variety of steno industries.
- Membership value surveys should be conducted regularly.

8. What is your vision of the profession five years from now, and what role do you see NCRA playing in that vision?

2028 and Beyond: Our technology will continue to improve, but the steno machine layout will be the same. As we embrace our software and ergonomics, how fast will our fingers go?! We will use technology to further enhance our capabilities. We are the Gold Standard in capturing the spoken word.

The National Court Reporters Association will attract members, identify our innovators, and share with one another resources and marketing for the benefit of the whole.

In a perfect world, accessibility will be forefront of minds when serving consumers, and a human stenographer is the number one choice in providing equal access. When courtrooms and public spaces are designed, communication access is at the foundation of the design and not an afterthought.

Name/Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly D. Linkowski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and "L".

Date:

2/13/2023

SUBMIT TO NCRA

Please save and send via email to Laura Butler at lbutler@ncra.org.