

Chris Palermo

For a complete description of my experience, qualifications, past positions, and goals, please visit my website at <https://www.chris4alnad.com/>

What NMRA and Its Members Need from the Next ALNAD

NMRA is surging into a bright future. Our strong President has attracted incredibly talented and energetic department chairs and officers and undertaken significant new projects, many of which have greatly increased NMRA's online and electronic communication. The relentless energy of those people has given us a first-class digital magazine, improvements in marketing like extensive use of social media, and greatly increased member outreach. While youthful energy, drive, and ambition are strong drivers for NMRA's future growth, the organization also benefits from having a steady hand at the BOD level.

I am that steady hand. Having a long professional services career, I deeply understand the importance of attentive, perceptive, and timely service to clients—like our NMRA members. Having advised numerous Fortune 500 companies, I bring a level of experience to the BOD that only a few others have had. NMRA is a corporation with a multimillion-dollar budget, employees, international reach, critical standards activities, and liaisons with many groups. NMRA is too important not to have members of the BOD with real-world business experience. Knowing and having experience advising CEOs, CFOs, and CMOs is essential. The BOD's role is in policy definition, policy modification, and oversight of officer, department, and committee activities. The BOD's role is to define where to go while standing by as officers, departments, and committees use their expertise to take us there. My background is well-suited to these management activities.

Maintaining geographical and cultural balance in the BOD is also important. While NMRA has international reach, its members are overwhelmingly American. Based on member geography alone, NMRA's BOD should have an American majority. Yet if my opponent is elected, the geographic makeup of the BOD would comprise four US residents and five from outside the US. I suggest that given the international makeup of our other Board members, the ALNAD position should be an American seat. I am the American candidate.

Personal Background

I have served as ALNAD since 2021 and have made significant policy contributions as detailed below. I was President, Pacific Coast Region of NMRA from 2019-2021, and earlier served as its Secretary. I led pandemic-era programs and meetings; oversaw four dynamic Divisions; and led meetings and policy. From 2017-2021, I was NMRA Trademark & IP Counsel, and advised the Board of Directors and General Counsel on numerous intellectual property and governance issues.

I'm age 59 and live in Austin, Texas. I grew up in the Silicon Valley area of California. After graduating high school, I earned a B.A. in Communication Arts, emphasizing TV directing and screenwriting, from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, in 1986. I also studied computer science, having learned programming around 1978. I continued freelance computer programming into the 1990s. I earned a law degree from the University of California, San Francisco, in 1989.

From 1989 to 1995, I worked as a lawyer in private firms in Washington, D.C., Pasadena, and Silicon Valley. From 1995-1997, I passed an interview with Steve Jobs and his General Counsel

and joined NeXT Software, Inc. as its second lawyer. Apple bought NeXT in early 1997, and I decided to return to a private law firm. For the 30+ years of my legal career, I've focused on patent procurement, trademark acquisition and enforcement, copyright, and related matters in intellectual property law. Today, I'm a partner in the Austin office of Baker Botts, L.L.P., one of the top 50 law firms in the US. Companies I represent or have represented include Netflix, Priceline, OpenTable, Booking Holdings, Cisco Systems, Coupa Software, Grammarly, and PagerDuty.

I began model railroading with an N-scale set in 1976. My fifth layout, a 15' x 15' representation of the mid-1950s Southern Pacific in the San Joaquin Valley, is half done. The layout is HO, but I also appreciate O and narrow gauge. I subscribe to RMC, Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette, and the NMRA Magazine. I participate actively in the Model Railroad Hobbyist Forum and the NMRA Interchange. I hold three AP Certificates and I am working on my fourth.

Goals for My Next Term

- Introduce a Board-sponsored YOUNG RAILROAD MODELER FELLOWSHIP (YRMF) providing three qualified young modelers aged 18 to 30 with all-expenses-paid NMRA membership, attendance at our national convention, mentorship, and other resources for a one-year period, supported by tax-deductible member and industry contributions
- Advocate for a national, executive-level, full-time, paid Membership Director with no member dues increase, the position targeting new member recruitment--as well as new forms of marketing and advertising to drive member growth
- Implement and execute professional leadership training coursework for all NMRA officers, department chairs, and Board members to improve the professional posture and leadership skills of all concerned--thus building better leaders for the future
- Define a modernized National Convention Template to set the expectations of NMRA leadership and NMRA members for the structure of national conventions after 2025
- Selected updates to the Achievement Program
- Drive forward a comprehensive update of NMRA's website using a professional outside contractor

Achievements of My Present Term

- Defined the YOUNG RAIL MODELERS FELLOWSHIP described above (under BOD consideration)
- Defined a new set of [NMRA Leadership Principles](#) that all NMRA Leaders are expected to observe
- Spearheaded a \$100,000 increase in NMRA's annual budget to fund new marketing contractors and substantial new activities with no increase in member dues; one of the BOD's most vocal supporters of increasing marketing and member recruitment funding
- Continuous review and questioning of NMRA's budget and CFO reports--often the only voice to question line items
- Opposed a dues increase to fund the digital magazine, advocating instead that all members should receive the digital magazine included in basic dues with any incremental costs funded from NMRA cash on hand
- Joined the NMRA Investment Committee to provide a fresh view on NMRA stock and fund investments
- Expanded the Division retention activity matching fund from \$50 to \$200 match per division per year, resulting in a sharp uptick in usage

- Strong, regular questioning in BOD meetings of leadership and committee reports and decisions
- Participated in over 20 monthly executive working group meetings to advance projects
- Wrote and published articles on Region-Division directors and officers' insurance and about the retention matching fund
- Attended all national conventions from 2017 to 2023 and multiple region conventions
- Arranged new leadership of the Howell Day Museum Committee to manage the exhibit at the California State Railroad Museum and assisted in transition from the prior exhibit leader

NMRA has dramatically improved many member services in recent years. The hobby and NMRA are in a Golden Age. But we can always do more. NMRA's BOD is vital to define and modify policy based on a vision of the future that is bold, optimistic, and achievable. I respectfully request your vote for a second term.