



editorial

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A Foot in the Past... An Eye to the Future

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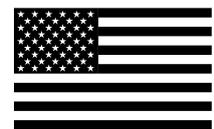
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A Perfect Storm

As I was assembling the material for this issue, I came to believe that because three of the articles are interrelated, they represent a perfect storm. First is Mike Pallamary's article about a two million dollar screw-up in Rhode Island. A civil engineer prepared a site plan, which included a note stating that the boundary lines conformed to the Class III survey standards—there are four classes—as adopted by the Rhode Island Board. Building permits were issued based on the site plan and it wasn't until the property was sold and a real survey was performed that the mistake was discovered. At first, the court ruled that the house couldn't be moved and would have to be torn down, but recent developments have opened that door. As a group, we've been warning the real estate industry that this was going to happen. But in a rush to lower costs, realtors, bankers and the title industry has marginalized our contribution to the point that these types of events will become more common.

The second article is a book review of a new book from the Esri Press, *Modernizing American Land Records: Order upon Chaos*. Written by five surveyors, the reviews run the gamut from supporting a new system of land records in our country to decrying the need and questioning the motives. In my opinion, GIS is a marvelous tool, but if we remove a property owner's rights by telling them where their corner is based on a coordinate, are we really serving and protecting society?

In the third article, Chad and Linda Erickson have identified something they see as dangerous development: an NCEES Model Law that allows essentially any experience—including construction surveying or GIS activities, but not necessarily boundary experience—to qualify someone to sit for the licensing exam. I checked with Curt Sumner, the executive director of NSPS, and he was unaware of any proposal by NCEES to water down the requirements, but we will continue to monitor this situation.

Chad and Linda have already written about the marginalization of our profession, and report that "in the September Idaho Society chapter meeting they attended, it was well understood by all that the experience requirement was being altered to exclude the boundary experience requirement. In fact it was a main point for selling the program, that such would allow new blood into our dying profession." Perhaps there are some who view the profession as dying. I suspect the many successful education programs across the country that are pumping out 2-year and 4-year graduates might beg to differ.

We recently met with a vice president of a major surveying equipment manufacturer, and he reminded us that ten years ago, we had a conversation about the death of surveying, and that ten years from now we will be having the same conversation. There are some unlicensed surveyors who see modern positioning devices as a natural progression that eliminates the need for boundary surveys. Other surveyors who are licensed—but don't practice boundary surveying—likewise question the need for boundary surveying as part of licensure. Certainly, the never-ending downturn might have contributed to this perception, but is it wise to open the floodgates to any and all who wish to hang out a shingle? The current downturn has driven way too many surveyors completely out of business. Hopefully, we can now get back to the business of building America. ■