



# Society of Biblical Literature

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Letter to All Members

10 February 2010

Dear SBL Members,

In the coming months, you will hear of the requirement that we formulate new policies and procedures regarding the administration of regions. We want you to anticipate these changes, especially since they are driven from outside the organization. On behalf of Council we also confirm to you SBL's commitment to advance biblical, religious, theological, archaeological, and trans-disciplinary scholarship at the regional level.

Recent changes in fiscal laws and regulations, not to mention the enforcement of them, directly affect all non-profit organizations, such as SBL and every learned society in America. They require adjustments in the legal and fiduciary relationships of regions. The informal relationships we have maintained since the mid-1930s were, in most cases, imprecise; after all, the goal of regions was to meet together to talk and forward scholarship and not to establish bureaucracies. We have had a more informal set of relationships, but we are now required in every instance where the SBL name is used to have precise financial and governance policies and procedures. These relationships are being scrutinized with new diligence. No party, regional or otherwise, has done anything wrong; however, non-profits are now regulated with new precision by the federal government and the IRS. SBL's compliance to these new regulations and standards is tested through numerous methods but, in particular, through the annual filing of the form every non-profit must file (IRS Form 990).

There are challenges ahead, but they can be overcome. The changes can make the regional gatherings and organizations even more effective if we all approach this matter with careful, open, legally substantiated advice.

In light of this situation, the SBL Council has commissioned a Regions Task Force to explore the intricacies of the new laws, assess regions in view of the laws, and make recommendations to Council. Leaders of the SBL Regions Task Force are in conversation with their counterparts in AAR regional leadership so that the organizations might coordinate their efforts in this regard.

Your task force consists of the following members.

Jeannine Brown  
Bradley Chance  
Mark Hamilton  
Jeffrey Kuan

Diane Lipsett  
Kent Richards, *ex officio*  
John Strong, Chair

More information will be forthcoming over the coming months.

On behalf of Council and the Task Force,

Kent Harold Richards  
Executive Director  
Professor of Old Testament