

Dear local CAMFT Chapter Members,

We on your local SGV Board have amassed the following three documents to give you a better sense of what has taken place as a result of the recent Bylaw changes vote. Some may have thought the recent vote routine and inconsequential. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Part 1 compares the old and new Sec. III of the Bylaws, describing the purpose of the Association. Red text is the new bylaws, the strikethrough the old. Part 2 is a summary of the overall changes that have taken place as a result of the recent Bylaw changes. Part 3 describes an Ethics complaint filed against CAMFT by two supporters. Included at the end of Part 3 is a link to a newly formed Yahoo Group list, "Save CAMFT" with the express purpose of uniting to undo these bylaw changes and maintain CAMFT as an organization by and for Marriage and Family Therapists.

**Part 1**

I did some text work with Article III of former Bylaws, corresponding to Section 3 of new Bylaws--the section setting forth the objectives and purposes of the Association. It looks like this:

OLD BYLAWS	NEW BYLAWS (passed June 2013)
	[Note the removal of the term "marriage and family therapy/therapist"!!] My bold added.
The objectives of this Association shall be:	The specific purpose of this corporation is the advancement of <b>mental health professionals</b> as follows:
To advance marriage and family therapy as an art, a science and a mental health profession.	Maintain and promote high standards of professionalism, competence, accountability, inclusiveness, and ethics.
To serve and represent the common professional and business interests of marriage and family therapists.	Advocate for the advancement of <b>mental health professionals</b> .
To set and maintain professional standards for marriage and family therapists.	Promote information regarding professional issues and services.
To advocate and work to achieve public and private policies for the advancement of family life.	Engage exemplary, visionary, accountable, dedicated, and ethical <b>individuals</b> as its leaders and administrators. [No requirement to be MFT's!]
To engage in such other lawful activities as is allowed by law and/or as is set forth in the Articles of Incorporation of this Association	Cultivate a participatory and growing membership.

As I stated in my last post, when you do this exercise, it becomes very clear why CAMFT did not do the traditional cross-out-old, show new in red type presentation on the Bylaws. It shows graphically the complete deletion of all mention of marriage and family therapists, and the transformation of the essential role of the Association.

Merrilee Nolan Gibson, Psy.D., LMFT

## Part 2

Most members are currently unaware of the following:

1. All references to LMFTs and marriage and family therapy in the "purposes" (of the organization) section of the Bylaws - the "laws" by which CAMFT operates - have been repealed.
2. No longer is CAMFT devoted to advancing marriage and family therapy as an art, a science, and a mental health profession. That provision has been repealed and there is no replacement section.
3. The requirement that LMFTs control CAMFT (by membership on the Board of Directors) has been eliminated. Now, because of the newly adopted Bylaws, there is no requirement that any LMFTs be on the Board of Directors of CAMFT.
4. CAMFT is no longer devoted to serving and representing the common professional and business interests of marriage and family therapists. That section has been repealed. Instead, advocacy will be for psychologists, LCSWs, professional counselors, psychiatrists, and for LMFTs. All are treated equally under the newly adopted Bylaws.
5. The name of the organization will soon change to remove reference to marriage and family therapists. A new name has been reserved (for a website) for the newly purposed organization.
6. The approximately \$6,000,000, accumulated over decades and held in reserve by CAMFT, which was a form of "insurance" or a "war chest" to protect our profession, is now available for the benefit of all mental health professionals.

These, and other shocking changes, are the result of the recent Bylaws vote. HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN? These changes were accomplished as the result of the intentional suppression and withholding of information from the members over a period of years and the production of an intentionally misleading Bylaws booklet. No information about these dramatic changes was shared with the membership prior to the Bylaws vote booklet being mailed (for a period of years), despite the many opportunities to do so in a variety of ways.

The Executive Summary of the Bylaws booklet states or gives the clear impression (multiple times) that the Bylaws need to be brought into compliance with "modern" California law, that the proposed Bylaws are an update or a modernization, or that some changes must be made in order to be compliant with the law. In fact, the Bylaws have been amended throughout the years, with much thought and as recently as June 2009, and the law does not require the changes proposed.

Without an informed and educated membership, the organization we all joined will be no more - and our profession will be seriously weakened. We cannot allow this to stand. Please share this with other members.

### Part 3

An Ethics Complaint with the CAMFT Ethics Committee was filed on June 18th. In it, it was alleged that one or more of the current/former Board members may have violated one or more ethics codes including, but not limited to:

3. Professional Competence and Integrity: Marriage and family therapists maintain high standards of professional competence and integrity.

7. Responsibility to the Profession. Marriage and family therapists respect the rights and responsibilities of professional colleagues and participate in activities that advance the goals of the profession.

7.1 Accountable to Standards of Profession: Marriage and family therapists remain accountable to the standards of the profession when acting as members or employees of organizations.

The basis of our allegation are the following facts:

1. There was no prior information about this intended change in focus presented to the membership in the Therapist, email blasts, chapter presentations, in the minutes of the Board meetings, or otherwise – over the past five years. Even as recent as this year, the following was published for the members in the March/April 2013 issue of the Therapist regarding the proposed Bylaws, when they must have already known that the very nature and purpose of the organization was being transformed: "The Board discussed the report from the Bylaws Committee and provided direction on several phrases and procedures. In light of the age of the original bylaws, the Board accepted the Committee's recommendation to have outside counsel draft new, modern bylaws that incorporate the policies and content as revised by the Bylaws Committee. The Board will review the new bylaws in March 2013. The membership will ultimately vote on these bylaws."

2. The Board memo included in the Bylaws voter pamphlet characterized the vote as an "update" and "modernization." It was also implied in that memo that the Bylaws had not been updated since 1964. It was not disclosed that the Bylaws have been periodically updated, with much thought, throughout the years, most recently in June of 2009. The memo played down the significance of the changes being proposed, when in fact the changes were monumental.

3. The Bylaws voter pamphlet did not contain any strike-outs in context so the voter could not easily see the major changes that were being proposed. As long as we can recall, every Bylaws vote in the past was conducted in this way so that members could readily see the changes being proposed.

4. The Executive Summary is what most members read to get the essence of what is being proposed. Rather than spelling out the exact nature of the change in the purposes of the organization, they characterize the proposed changes as a "modernization" and "modification" to reflect the spirit and goals of the strategic plan. What is a "modernization" of our purpose? Stripping us of our organization - as we know it? There is nowhere in the Executive Summary that explicitly states that the organization will no longer be exclusively controlled by MFTs. In fact, there is no mention of any requirement for any MFT's being on the board. This misleading language and failure to disclose the true intent is another indication that there was a deliberate attempt to deceive or keep the members in the dark.

5. The Board invokes the phrase "full compliance with modern California law" and similar references (multiple times) as reasons for the change in the Bylaws. Through this language, it seems as if the Board is attempting to persuade the members (not familiar with the intricacies of the law) to vote in favor of the Bylaws. Who is going to vote for CAMFT to not be in compliance with "modern" law? But what if the legal information is not true? And there is evidence to believe that this is the case. Is this a result of incompetence or part of an effort to deceive and attempt to get the member to vote in a particular way?

6. The individuals named in this complaint, and others, wrote candidate statements expressing their

commitment to our profession when they ran for office. Not one of them, to the best of our knowledge, made any mention of their intention to change CAMFT from an organization solely advocating for and controlled by MFTs to one advocating for all California mental health professionals.

7. When the misleading nature of the Bylaws voter pamphlet was brought to the attention of the Board, and to these three members, they refused to stop the election or remedy the situation in any other way.

8. To illustrate just how misleading this whole process was, we have spoken with a number of members (including one or more former Presidents of CAMFT) who voted in support of the proposed (at the time) Bylaws because they believed that the changes were simply an "update" and "modernization." When they were educated about the consequential nature of their vote people expressed shock, dismay and felt that they had been duped.

We are hoping that the CAMFT Ethics Committee will conduct a thorough investigation of this process, and at the conclusion the membership be fully informed as to how our organization was taken from us from behind closed doors. It is our hope that this will also lead to the Board rescinding the current bylaws and reinstating the former bylaws immediately.

The vast majority of CAMFT membership does not know these facts. Please pass this information on to as many colleagues as possible!

To join the SAVE CAMFT discussion group, click on the following link: [http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Save\\_CAMFT/](http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Save_CAMFT/)