

First dues increase since 2003

Increasing dues is something no organization wants to do. Unfortunately, rising costs are a fact of life. At the AMA Executive Council meeting in May, the council members voted on and approved raising the dues and other fees beginning with the 2016 renewals. I want to inform our members of the rationale behind this decision.

This decision was not made lightly. We have been discussing raising dues for a year, and have spoken to many members to gain input. AMA's last dues increase was in 2003. Before that, it was 1997 when Open membership dues increased from \$42 to \$48.

Running an organization with 2016 needs on a 2003 revenue stream would restrict its effectiveness. The AMA's role and responsibilities have changed dramatically in that time. We have had to spend more than \$1 million on government relations to keep model aviation free of onerous restrictions and regulations.

We have recently hired a public relations firm to help promote model aviation in the media and to limit bad press caused by irresponsible operations by nonmembers. Both have also been effective. Neither of these expenses existed in 2003 and they will likely increase in the years ahead.

If you have been following AMA's press releases, you know that model aviation for the hobbyist is alive and well. So far, our issues with the FAA and its rulings have been worked out.

When we started, we had limited input with the FAA. Today we meet with the organization's top people who listen to and respect our opinions, which ultimately will allow us to prevail. We had no

influence in Congress at the start, and yet we found a way to get a federal law passed.

The public relations firm has been able to quickly and effectively address drone issues such as those that occurred at the White House. News outlets have expanded on the plight of the hobby model aviator in light of the news created by some of the drone incidents. We are even working with the public relations firm to reach out to new drone purchasers in order to educate them about safe operation. We hope that education will be more effective than regulation.

In 2003, we did little by way of marketing and today we have a marketing department, as well as plans that are moving us forward. Our publications were strictly print in 2003. Since then we have launched *Park Pilot*, redesigned *Model Aviation*, and offer both in digital format. We have digitized the *Model Aviation* archives. Our website is significantly better than what it was and more member-friendly.

The AMA Education department is light-years ahead of where it was five years ago. The National Model Aviation Museum is being revamped and improved and will have a much greater online presence.

The Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems

Memberships	CURRENT	2016
Open Full	\$58	\$75
Senior Citizen	\$48	\$65
Open Extra	\$30	\$38
Affiliate	\$28	\$36
Park Pilot.....	\$29.95	\$38.50
Three-Month Trial.....	\$19.95	\$19.95
Life	\$1,500	\$1,500
Additional Fees		
Club fee.....	\$30	\$40
Club insurance.....	\$60	\$80
Contest sanctions	\$20	\$25
CD fees	\$20	\$25
Sanction insurance	\$20	\$25
FAI license.....	\$75	\$100
Camping Fees		
No services primitive	\$5	\$10
No services RV	\$5	\$10
Electric service	\$17	\$25
Water, electric, and sewage hookup..	\$20	\$35

International (AUVSI) came to us wanting to partner in our mutual efforts concerning governmental regulations.

The EAA wants to learn how we structure our organization and how we communicate with our members, and is interested in partnering in membership drives.

It has been 13 years since a dues increase was last implemented and the AMA has done much to find alternative sources of income and to reduce expenses. Dave Mathewson and the AMA staff have done a tremendous job of reducing expenses and running efficiently. I have implemented several procedures that have saved the AMA money.

Both *Model Aviation* and *Park Pilot* are profitable publications. In fact, we are facing a problem of potentially having to pay taxes on the advertising revenue from these publications. Although this is a good problem to have, it is still a drawback.

Many of you who have visited the International Aeromodeling Center may have noticed crops growing in the open fields. We receive income for these crops, which helps offset operating costs of the facility in Muncie, Indiana.

We paid off our debt of many years and reduced our potential income tax burden.

After more than eight years of decline, membership has grown and reached an all-time high in 2014. So why a dues increase now?

As I noted, our previous dues increases were in 1997 and again in 2003. This would have put another one in 2008, but

that didn't happen. The economy was horrible at that time. Model aviation is a discretionary expense, and many were struggling to make ends meet.

Today's economy is much better. More people are working, consumer confidence is up, and the gross domestic product is improving.

The increase of the Open membership from \$58 to \$75 is an inflationary adjustment. In fact, by the time it is implemented, it will be less than an inflationary adjustment. In the grand scheme of things, it amounts to \$17 per year or \$1.42 a month—less than the cost of a cup of bad coffee.

For anyone on a fixed income, any increase is significant. From 2003 to today, Social Security has increased by 30% or slightly more than the dues increase.

The increase is not intended to place a huge burden on any one modeler. The result of the increase will allow the AMA to continue to effectively champion modelers.

Other dues and fees were increased as well. The accompanying chart shows everything affected. In most cases, either an inflationary adjustment was made or a discount from the Open membership was retained. For example, the Senior membership category was, and still is, \$10 less than an Open membership.

Thank you for your understanding, and I look forward to seeing you at the flying field. 🛩️

—Keith Sessions
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Presented by the AMA Foundation

national **model AVIATION DAY**
CELEBRATE MODEL FLYING, FRIENDSHIP, AND FUN!
THE ACADEMY OF MODEL AERONAUTICS FOUNDATION

08.15
2015

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