



Final Entry

Meet AGA's Next National President—



Lisa Casias, CPA

When Lisa Casias, CPA, accepts the gavel as AGA's 61st National President at the culmination of this year's Professional Development Conference & Exposition in Orlando, she will cap a long career in federal financial management. Casias, 44, will also become AGA's fifth female National President. We asked her recently to tell us what AGA has meant to her career and to share some of her plans for the upcoming year.

Please tell the AGA members how your membership has affected your professional life.

AGA has had a positive impact on my professional life. Although the federal financial community works well together and provides many forums for cross-agency working groups, AGA provides excellent opportunities to engage with professionals I would not have met otherwise. I frequently pick up the phone to consult another AGA member on an issue or look for best practices. The Professional Development Conferences and training are excellent and have enhanced my ability to perform my job throughout the years.

AGA also provides its members with many forums to volunteer in a variety of capacities. As the past Washington D.C. Chapter president and as the National President-Elect, these roles have provided me the opportunity to enhance my professional skills and learn new ones. Looking back on my career, I regret not volunteering earlier as I believe that would have provided positive professional development experiences.

What do you see as AGA's greatest challenge and where do you think AGA can and should have the greatest impact?

The current economic conditions in the country are putting significant strains on our members and the profession as a whole. Two recent reports from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)—*The Federal Government's Long-Term Fiscal Outlook* and *State and Local Governments' Fiscal Outlook*—March 2010 Update—highlight that the federal, state and local government sectors face persistent and long-term fiscal pressures. The Association must continue to stay in tune with our members' needs as pressure increases to do more with less while ensuring that financial information is transparent to the public. The Association must react quickly to assist members in meeting the challenges of constantly evolving requirements. Over the past year, AGA has demonstrated this capability by providing educational events and forums on meeting the requirements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

We must also remain cognizant that many of our members face personal hardships with many state and local

governments placing their employees on furlough. The Association must continue to provide its members affordable access to services, such as the audio conferences that provide updates on current topics of interest at an extraordinary value.

Where do you plan to put the most emphasis in the coming year?

In the upcoming year, I plan to work closely with the National Executive Committee (NEC) in reviewing the organization's strategic plan, which was developed in 2003. With the changing economic times and evolution of financial management, it is an opportune time to revisit it and ensure that it meets the organization's needs. Throughout the process, we will reach out to our membership for input and provide updates on our progress. During the past few months, the NEC has also spent time reviewing the current performance measures of the Association. Although there are metrics for each of AGA's activities, we will continue to concentrate on developing additional outcome measures.

I believe there is a continued need to encourage intergovernmental relationships. I hope to personally become more engaged with the state and local members. Although my travel will be limited, I hope to be able to attend forums where I can meet many of the members outside the D.C. area.

How do you feel about being AGA's fifth female president?

This was the toughest question that was posed to me. In speaking with the AGA staff on how this question challenged me, I was forwarded an article that appeared in the Fall 1999 Journal celebrating AGA's 50 years. Read the article at www.agacgfm.org/about/history/downloads/ladypresidents.pdf. The article featured the four previous female presidents and detailed some of the obstacles that each of them faced both personally and in moving AGA ahead. As a Gen-Xer, I was fortunate to have entered into the work force out of college when gender was not an issue. The only limitations were the ones that I set for myself. I believe it is an honor to be nominated and chosen to serve as AGA's National President. I find myself extremely lucky that AGA has moved forward past many of the obstacles that these four and other previous National Presidents navigated the organization through—from financial disorder, floundering education programs and no clear vision for the future.

Tell us about your professional career and your AGA career.

My professional career began in New Jersey after graduating from Pace University in 1987. I joined the firm Ernst and Whinney in New Jersey as an auditor. In 1990, I relocated to Virginia and transferred to Ernst and Young as a senior auditor. A year later, as a result of the passage of the Chief Financial Officers Act, I was approached to join a newly formed financial statement team at the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Inspector General. For the past 18 years I have served in a variety of positions within the department in both the OIG and CFO organizations. I am currently the department's deputy chief financial officer and director for financial management. I look back on the past 18 years in the federal government and recognize how fortunate I am to be involved in an era with such sweeping changes in financial management.

I joined AGA early in my career, thanks to Pat Wensel, CGFM-Retired, from the Washington D.C. Chapter. With work and home activities I always thought that I would be too busy to volunteer at the chapter level. When approached to serve as the Washington D.C. Chapter president, I was at first hesitant. It turned out to be one of the best experiences in my career. I was able to meet so many people in other agencies that I would not have met through the normal course of business. The volunteers in the chapter have such enthusiasm, and their willingness to serve the chapter was unbelievable. My concerns about having too little time to spend on chap-

ter activities was unfounded due to the many volunteers who worked together to make things happen. I would encourage all AGA members to explore volunteer experiences within their chapter.

Serving as National President is an experience I am looking forward to. AGA plays a critical role in government financial management and accountability. The organization provides numerous benefits to its members and to furtherance of our profession. I believe that one of my fellow D.C. chapter officers put it best when discussing his desire to work on one of the NEC committees. When discussing our reasons for volunteering, John Lynskey, CGFM, former Washington D.C. Chapter treasurer and current Finance and Budget Committee member, provided the right words—he noted that many of us have been fortunate in our career paths and volunteering for AGA provides a forum to give back and advance the financial management community.

Tell us about your personal background and include any information you wish to share about your family.

I grew up in Dumont, NJ, and attended college at Pace University in Pleasantville, NY. After graduating, I backpacked around Europe before starting my job. I met my husband, Don, at the Trevii Fountain in Rome, Italy. We will be married 20 years this September. We have two wonderful boys, Michael, 17, and Matthew, 12. We are kept busy with all of their activities including football, soccer and band. Three dogs, Lobo, Elmo and Topper, complete the family. 🐾