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Bio & Policy Statement from A Nominee for First Vice President Board of Governors 2016-2017



Keith BRADSHER

Affiliation: The New York Times

The Foreign Correspondents' Club plays a vital role for foreign correspondents and local journalists in Hong Kong. The club's lunches and dinners offer a valuable chance for reporters and editors to hear from newsmakers from all over the world. Our diplomatic, associate and corporate members benefit as much as correspondents and journalists from our many events.

I want to maintain our club as the best journalistic institution it can be, in addition to a great place for a drink or a meal. The most important role of the first vice president is to oversee our ambitious lineup of lunch and dinner speakers, as the convener of the professional committee. I have been very active as the co-convener of the committee in recent years, editing many of the fliers, inviting guests and hosting meals. I would like to formalize my role now on the committee by running for first vice president, a role that I have filled on three previous boards, but not in the last several years.

In addition to leading the professional committee, I would like to play an ongoing role in maintaining the affordability of the club at a time of sharply rising costs. The club's two main sources of revenue, monthly subscriptions and food/beverage, are roughly equal – think of them as two buckets of water from which we draw equally. If we leave monthly dues unchanged then food and beverage prices have to rise, and vice versa.

Adding a monthly minimum spend would not help much unless we raise food and beverage prices. The club's current margins on food and beverage are thin. So having people buy more food and drinks is of limited benefit in covering our increased rent. Existing overcrowding in the main bar also means that weekday spending there at lunch time or in the evening might not quality for the minimum spend. The minimum spend would need to provide an incentive for members to use underutilized resources like the main dining room and Bert's. This would be hard to administer.

There are no easy answers on the budget issues facing the club, which is why Neil Western wisely organized the town hall to discuss the pending questions. But I would like to participate in the discussions at board meetings.

Please elect me as first vice president.

Keith Bradsher is the Hong Kong bureau chief of The New York Times, and its senior writer for Asia economics and business news.