

DAVID ROTHMAN

Nominated for Board Representative, West Region, he is running unopposed.

CAMPAIGN STATEMENT

I am honored to be nominated to serve as the West Regional Representative to the AWP Board. This part of the country is simmering with creative vitality and it would be a privilege to represent it on the board of AWP, one of the national organizations supporting the development of that vitality the most.

The various directions of my own career have surprised me, but I hope those experiences have prepared me well to serve AWP and its members. I set out to be a scholar, but art and chance conspired to complicate that goal long ago. I did wind up earning a PhD in English, but then throughout the 1990s and 2000s I blithely sailed that ship onto the rocks of poetry, working outside of higher education altogether as I continued to write. First, brash foolhardy luck led me to found and then direct what has now become a major independent performing arts festival in Colorado (The Crested Butte Music Festival) and also a small independent press (Conundrum, now an imprint of the Samizdat Group in Denver). I then spent six years serving as the third Headmaster of a co-ed day and boarding independent secondary school (Crested Butte Academy), overseeing its initial accreditation with the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). During that time I realized the obvious: everything that happens in education and the arts only happens because people work hard on the details to make it happen. I also discovered that I enjoy that kind of hard work, whether in management or in governance. I enjoy serving on boards and building them, overseeing the development of curricula, working on accreditation, creating and executing strategic plans, and admissions. I even (gasp) enjoy fund-raising, which I have come to understand is not the act of asking potential donors to give money, but rather, to the contrary, the process of giving them the opportunity to make a difference in the world by supporting a strong, mission-driven organization through their donations.

Even as I have returned to full-time teaching and writing in the last seven years, I have remained involved in curriculum development, administration and governance. At Western State College, where I direct the poetry concentration in our MFA, I designed the curriculum of the track and worked with our Director, Mark Todd, on our successful initial accreditation bid. I still consult with a number of non-profit boards, and have served on grant review panels at the state and national levels, including the NEH and the President's Council on the Arts and Humanities.

Finally, we all know the challenges writers and writing programs face today. Publishing and copyright law are in turmoil because of the pace of technological change. The teaching of K-12 literature and creative writing – the bedrock of our own programs – faces tremendous challenges, including pressure from accreditors to replace poetry, fiction and drama with more and more “informational text” (the quotation comes from the Common Core Standards, now adopted in 45 states, which aggressively *decrease* the percentage of literature as students advance through high

school until 12th grade students must read 70% informational text in English classes). The weak economy threatens arts programs at all levels and at all institutions with hiring and funding freezes if not cuts. If elected to the AWP board, I will do my part to address all of these challenges.

Good decisions come from experience; experience comes from bad decisions. I've already got my experience. Poetry is what matters most to me—both writing it and teaching it—but the greatest assets I can bring to the AWP board are these many years of in governance and management of non-profits. If I am elected to AWP I will work hard to make sure the organization serves all its members, and especially those of my own region, as they do their important work as writers, translators, editors, publishers and educators. I will also do my best to insure that AWP is the best possible public advocate it can be for creative writing and for literary education at all levels, meeting our current challenges forcefully and directly.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

David J. Rothman has two books of poetry in press: *Go Big* (Red Hen Press) and *Part of the Darkness* (Entasis), along with a book of essays about skiing, mountaineering and mountain towns, *Living the Life* (Conundrum). He has worked extensively both as a teacher and also outside of higher education as an arts and educational administrator. He is currently the director of the poetry concentration with an emphasis on versecraft in the new low-residency MFA program at Western State College of Colorado, and also teaches at the University of Colorado at Boulder and Lighthouse Writers Workshop in Denver. He co-Founded the Crested Butte Music Festival, was the founding editor and publisher of Conundrum Press, and served for six years as headmaster of Crested Butte Academy, an independent school. He is Immediate past president of the Robinson Jeffers Association and serves on a number of nonprofit boards in education and the arts. He has also served on a number of grant review panels for organizations such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the President's Council on the Arts and Humanities, the Colorado Council on the Arts, the Maryland State Arts Council, and many more, along with serving as a consultant to dozens of nonprofits on development, strategic planning and governance issues.

Rothman's previous volumes of poetry include *Dominion of Shadow*, *Beauty at Night* and *The Elephant's Chiropractor*, which was a Finalist for the Colorado Book Award, and he has edited an anthology *The Geography of Hope: Poets of Colorado's Western Slope*. He has been a Colorado Statewide judge for Poetry Out Loud and has served as Poet in the Schools in Chatfield (CO) Senior High School. He is also co-author, with the late Stanley Rothman and Stephen Powers, of a social science study, *Hollywood's America: Social and Political Themes in Motion Pictures*. He lives in Boulder with his wife and two rambunctious boys, and he is the pianist in a jazz trio with the unlikely name of "The Unassessable Outcomes."