ACS elections are strange things, and perhaps most elections are, to some extent. Members are asked, even begged, to choose between candidates whom they probably do not know personally and whom they likely could not pick out from a very small crowd. Some of those members, most of them in fact, simply ignore the election, whereas others just flip a coin or, if time permits, pore through the written materials that have been provided by the candidates. The comments below are intended for this latter group, those of you who have taken the time and opportunity to get to know the candidates better. In particular, I want to introduce myself to those of you who exercised your right to ignore past elections. (Hey, it’s okay; I’m not bitter.)

Having served as the District V Director for nearly six years, I think I understand what it takes to be an effective member of the ACS Board of Directors. First, one needs a broad view of the ACS. I was fortunate, having served on the Committee on Membership Affairs, the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws, the Society Committee on Budget and Finance, and the Program Review Advisory Group prior to joining the Board. I also had held nearly all the offices in my Local Section and had been a Local Section Councilor and later a Division Councilor. Accordingly, because I had a good understanding of the structure, programs, and finances of the ACS, I was not saddled with the steep learning curve confronting someone not having those opportunities. I like to think that having been selected to lead three significant task forces/working groups as well as one of the Board standing committees during my initial term indicates that I was able to contribute immediately to the work of the Board. I also like to think, because my Board colleagues selected me to chair the Board in 2018, that the confidence placed in me initially was warranted.

You may find my next observation surprising, though. I have learned that a Board member often must suppress his or her inherent tendency to think, well, like a chemist. I know that this comment seems odd, even silly, but what I mean is this. Those of us with a passion for and devotion to the chemical sciences are problem solvers by nature; we barely can restrain ourselves any time we have the opportunity to leap in and suggest solutions or improvements. But the proper role of an ACS Director does not involve solving all the particular problems that arise from time to time in various programs—we have plenty of committees populated by dedicated volunteers who are charged with that responsibility. A Director’s role instead is to define strategy and determine policy for the Society as a whole and to work effectively with governance and management to see that those strategies and policies are implemented. I confess it took a little while to make the leap from problem-solver to strategist, but I think my contributions to the Board have been greater having done so.

So, what are my passions when it comes to ACS? I reviewed several of my interests in the “official” campaign statement, a link to which you can find back on my web page. Focusing in that statement on only a few issues reflects my awareness that ACS, although a large and multifaceted organization, has finite human and financial resources and thus cannot possibly be everything to everybody. Nor are we the only game in town. It behooves us, then, to concentrate much of our effort on those things that we do very well and/or uniquely and to leverage the talents of our dedicated volunteers and professional staff to tackle issues collectively that might seem intractable otherwise. Some efforts, such as public policy advocacy, will require more than just activity on the part of our staff in Washington if we are to have an appreciable impact. I believe, though, that we can devise and support strategies aimed at better equipping our members to accept expanded local advocacy roles.

AND NOW the shameless pitch for your vote for which you have been waiting. Your vote in an ACS election really DOES matter. In 2012, I won election to the Board by a majority of five (yes, FIVE, count ’em, FIVE) votes. I would be pleased and honored to receive your vote in the 2018 election. BUT, ultimately the important thing is that you vote. Doing so is your right as a member, and I urge you to exercise that right.