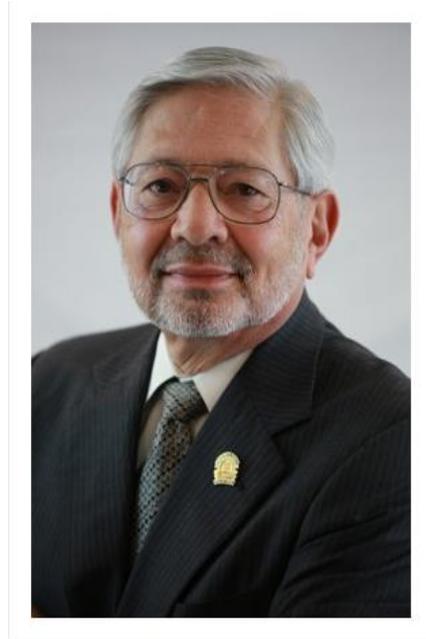


*The Role of the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification's Public Member - Al Suguitan, CAE, RCE*



My name is Al Suguitan. I have spent over 45 years working in the real estate industry as a real estate broker, office manager, educator, Commissioner of Real Estate for Illinois and a REALTOR association executive. Additionally, I retired from the US Army after 22 years of service.

Okay, so, you are wondering, what is this guy doing taking up valuable space in our publication? He knows nothing about the paraoptometrics that work in the optometry office. Well, that is partially true, but I am learning. I serve as the public member for the CPC (Commission on Paraoptometric Certification).

In the 1970s, newly elected Governor of California, Jerry Brown initiated the movement to expand and empower public membership at the state-level on professional and occupational licensing boards. Public members were encouraged to speak out and raise questions and concerns in areas that were, or are, in “the province” of the certified or licensed professions.

There was no accusation that the various professions were doing anything wrong, but the increase in specialization and expertise was seen as creating a profession of privilege and restriction. After several decades of development, public members have been accepted as advocates for the consumer.

Public members have a major role in certifying bodies that effect the credibility of the organization’s credentials. Public members serving on boards and commissions should do a variety of things. For example:

- represent the view of the consumer of the certificate’s services;
- advocate for the public interest;
- contribute a fresh, unbiased perspective, and
- help maintain an appropriate balance between the certifying organization’s dual purposes of protecting the public and advancing the interests of the profession.

Let’s look at this another way. You and your family members are consumers and when you visit a certified or licensed professional, you expect a high standard of care. The public member sits on the committee or commission to assure the profession adheres to its obligation to protect the public *and* advance the profession. Consumers have the expectation that “these” professionals are educated and trained.

The American Optometric Association’s Commission on Paraoptometric Certification is composed of outstanding professionals who are first-rate volunteers who are dedicated to their profession and the public, and it is my honor to sit with them.