

BLUEGRASS BULLETIN

Fall 2026 Newsletter

PRESIDENT LETTER

I can hardly believe it's already fall—often regarded as the best time of year! It bridges the summertime and the holidays with its mild temperatures, fall break trips, colorful leaves, cozy bonfires, pumpkins, and, of course, football. Maybe we should all try to spend some more time outside this fall before the winter weather sneaks up on us.

Our Fall Forum activities in downtown Louisville on October 9th and 10th were a tremendous success! I have to give a huge thanks to Mike Penick, Chad Cutsinger, Amanda Murphy-Sanders, and Orie Dobson for their hard work in ensuring everything ran smoothly. We also want to extend our gratitude to the corporate sponsors who made this incredible Fall Forum possible — thanks so much!

Make sure to visit our chapter website at irwa25.org for the latest updates, including details about upcoming events such as our chapter board meetings. And don't forget to register in advance for our Christmas Party at the Brown Hotel on Friday, December 12. It's a wonderful way to observe the season with your friends in Chapter 25 as we celebrate another successful year together.

In closing, I want to take a moment to honor the memory of our close friend and colleague, Michael Douglas "Pastor Doug" Grant, who passed away on August 20th. His experience, knowledge, passion, and laughter will be deeply missed in our chapter. Please keep his family and loved ones in your thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,

Jamey Cash
Chapter 25 President

Purpose

We improve people's quality of life through infrastructure development.

Mission

We empower professionals by elevating ethics, learning, and a standard of excellence within the global infrastructure real estate community.

www.irwa25.org
www.irwaonline.org
www.irwaregion5.org

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In Loving

MEMORY OF

Reverend Michael "Douglas" Grant

1965 – 2026



Reverend Michael "Douglas" Grant, 61, passed away after a sudden illness on August 20, 2026. He had a bachelor's degree in Biology from Eastern Kentucky University, and a Master's of Divinity degree from the Lexington Theological Seminary.

Doug was a devoted member of Bluegrass Chapter 25, having served on the board as treasurer, vice president, president and international director. He was a scholarship recipient of the RWIEF scholarship programs, using the assistance to become a candidate for the SR/WA. He also went through PEAK training, having passed and becoming an instructor for IRWA 600 level courses.

Doug was an appraiser in the firm of William D. Otto Spence Real Estate, having worked with Otto for more than ten years. Doug and Otto's friendship was a very special bond; many people referring to them as "The Odd Couple" given how well they worked together. He also previously served as the national Environmental Committee Chair, and helped to review and instruct some of the new 4-hour courses created for the course catalogs. One thing about Doug: he loved to stay busy!

Doug cherished the IRWA, giving it everything he had. He attended forums, chapter meetings, seminars, and the national IRWACons, having recently attended both Virginia Beach and Omaha. While Doug was very opinionated, he always spoke with a passion thinking about not only the members of his chapter, but all chapters and regions. He wanted the best for the members of IRWA and other organizations that he was a member of, all while that he was also pastoring Shining Light Christian Church of Jeffersontown, Kentucky. The members of Kentucky Chapter 25, the friends of Region Five, and all of those who were touched by his presence will wholeheartedly miss Doug's smile, his advisements, his friendship, and his love. Rest easy, friend.

2026 REGION FIVE FALL FORUM

2026 Region Five Fall Forum Hosted in Louisville: Business Report
By Mike Penick, SR/WA, International Director

The 2026 Region Five Fall Forum hosted by our chapter was held at The Galt House in Downtown Louisville on Saturday, October 10th. The total attendance for the business meeting was 37 people. Chapter 25 was represented by me, Orie Dobson, SR/WA, Jamey Cash, Amanda Murphy-Sanders, and Chad Cutsinger, SR/WA. We started the meeting by doing a moment of silence in memory of our friend and chapter/region representative, Doug Grant.

Throughout the forum, we talked about various issues, including the overall state of the association. Jaime Rose-Tieu, Member Services Manager, discussed the membership renewal period now beginning, updating strategies to enhance membership engagement to promote organizational value, and the importance of chapters utilizing their incentives (CHIPS). We were joined online by Marcus Boyd, SR/WA and Carroll McCracken, SR/WA, both of who are declaring their intentions to run for the IEC Office of Secretary in Calgary 2027 and discussed their credentials. Marcus also discussed the update to IRWA's Strategic Plan for 2027-2028.

Congratulations to Kristina Breeding, SR/WA, who was elected to Region Five as Secretary Treasurer. She was installed by Peggy Barnes, SR/WA and Region One representative. After Tina was sworn in, she talked about how our region needs to start applying for more awards to be presented at IRWACon.

Gail Morton, SR/WA (chair) and David Griffith, SR/WA (vice-chair) discussed the voting delegates for each chapter; the region bylaws clearly say that each chapter gets a total of three votes, regardless of how many people attend the forum. For example, if Jonny Garner is both President and International Director of Chapter 88, he would have two votes by virtue of his position. Gail mentioned that with Tina now being elected to Sec/Tres, that creates an opening for an INEC position, and she's reached out to Travis Carmack, SR/WA of Kentucky Chapter 25 to gauge interest. Gail also discussed the possibility of increasing region dues, which have been the same for 20 years. We then talked about the various committees and work going on within IRWA. We had a Teams meeting with Rakshan Marzerei, IRWA's CFO, who discussed the financial health of IRWA and projections for the upcoming year.

Cyndi Whelpley, SR/WA, IEC President-Elect, spoke about the task force updates, the new member outreach program, and an update to the Calgary Conference. Lastly, Ron Barker, SR/WA, gave an update on RWIEF, CRWIEF, financial support for courses, scholarships, and awards. The next forums are: Spring 2027, West Virginia; Fall 2027, Michigan; and Spring 2028 in Western Pennsylvania.

Special thanks to Jamey Cash, Amanda Murphy-Sanders, and Chad Cutsinger for helping plan and setup the Fall Forum here in Louisville. It was a great success!

FALL FORUM PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

Fall Forum Pictures





FALL FORUM PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS





THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



KYTC RELOCATION ASSISTANCE: YEAR IN REVIEW

Relocation Assistance provided by KYTC; a Year in Review

By Sarah Orange

An unfortunate consequence of highway improvement projects is that they can make it necessary for a small number of families, businesses, and other non-residential occupants to move themselves or their personal property from areas needed to improve the safety and convenience of our highway system. To address the needs of displaced people KYTC provides the services of Relocation Assistance agents to provide advisory assistance, explain potential payment eligibility and requirements, and to facilitate payments made to ensure people are treated humanely and do not suffer unnecessarily as a result of their displacement.

From July 1st of 2025 through June 30th of 2026 the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Department of Highways facilitated a total of 257 Relocation Assistance payments. These payments were generated for a total of 110 parcels. All of these relocation assistance parcels and payments originated from 40 highway projects.

The total number of Residential relocations came in at 42. Non-residential displacements totaled 18, and 50 moves were conducted for personal property only.

Congratulations and thank you to all the Relocation Assistance Agents that made this successful year possible. And thank you to Tony Moore, Relocation Assistance Branch Manager, for compiling this data to share.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY

The Next Generation of Right-of-Way

Recruitment, mentorship and succession planning must become an industry priority

William "Bill" Phelps, WRP Land Consulting | Industry Perspective

Every right-of-way professional knows that infrastructure projects depend on more than engineering plans and capital budgets. They depend on people who can earn a landowner's trust, resolve difficult negotiations and navigate the realities of property acquisition. Yet one of the industry's most consequential questions is not about the next project. It is about who will negotiate it.

Recruiting and preparing the next generation of right-of-way agents should be a priority for consulting firms, utilities, project owners and professional associations. The experience that makes a senior agent effective cannot be transferred in a handbook or a single training course. Without deliberate succession planning, decades of practical knowledge could walk out the door as seasoned professionals retire.

A workforce challenge worth measuring

The International Right of Way Association (IRWA) reports more than 7,500 members across 15 countries, but membership is not a census of everyone working in land acquisition. As a point of comparison—not a ROW-specific statistic—Bureau of Labor Statistics data places the median age of real estate brokers and sales agents at approximately 50, compared with 42 for employed workers overall. When you think about walking the halls at the IRWA National Convention, these numbers prove to be correct. The IRWA Young Leaders Council reported 78% of membership is over 40 and only 3.4% are between 25-30 years old.

Recruitment must begin before the job posting

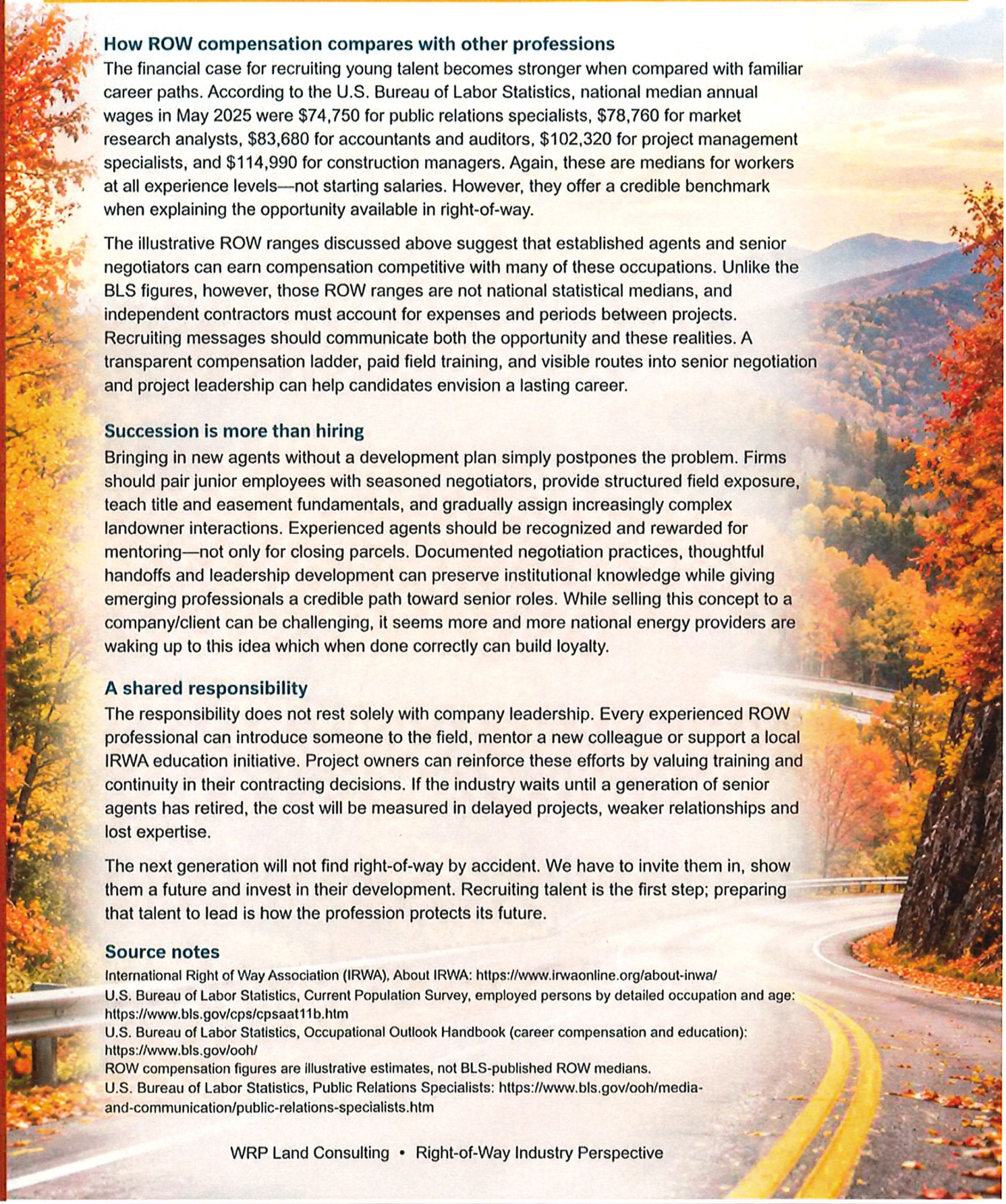
To open what we all know, most young people never hear about right-of-way as a career. To change this, the industry should build consistent recruiting relationships with universities, community colleges and trade schools, particularly programs in real estate, agriculture, business, surveying, construction and energy. IRWA chapters and employers can make the profession visible through classroom visits, job-shadowing days, paid internships and entry-level acquisition roles. Just as important, recruiters should explain what agents actually do: solve problems, work with landowners and help deliver essential infrastructure.

Make the career proposition clear

Compensation is part of the story. Several sources report Illustrative ROW earnings may range from approximately $45,000–$65,000 for entry-level agents to $100,000–$140,000 for experienced senior negotiators; independent contractors may bill more but face business expenses and gaps between assignments. For context, BLS (Bureau of Labor Statics) occupational data show that established professions such as accounting, project management and construction management offer competitive compensation, often with a bachelor's degree as the typical entry requirement. ROW employers should communicate both the potential to advance through experience and the realities of travel, project cycles and contract work.

WRP Land Consulting • Right-of-Way Industry Perspective

THE NEXT GENERATION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY



How ROW compensation compares with other professions

The financial case for recruiting young talent becomes stronger when compared with familiar career paths. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, national median annual wages in May 2025 were $74,750 for public relations specialists, $78,760 for market research analysts, $83,680 for accountants and auditors, $102,320 for project management specialists, and $114,990 for construction managers. Again, these are medians for workers at all experience levels—not starting salaries. However, they offer a credible benchmark when explaining the opportunity available in right-of-way.

The illustrative ROW ranges discussed above suggest that established agents and senior negotiators can earn compensation competitive with many of these occupations. Unlike the BLS figures, however, those ROW ranges are not national statistical medians, and independent contractors must account for expenses and periods between projects. Recruiting messages should communicate both the opportunity and these realities. A transparent compensation ladder, paid field training, and visible routes into senior negotiation and project leadership can help candidates envision a lasting career.

Succession is more than hiring

Bringing in new agents without a development plan simply postpones the problem. Firms should pair junior employees with seasoned negotiators, provide structured field exposure, teach title and easement fundamentals, and gradually assign increasingly complex landowner interactions. Experienced agents should be recognized and rewarded for mentoring—not only for closing parcels. Documented negotiation practices, thoughtful handoffs and leadership development can preserve institutional knowledge while giving emerging professionals a credible path toward senior roles. While selling this concept to a company/client can be challenging, it seems more and more national energy providers are waking up to this idea which when done correctly can build loyalty.

A shared responsibility

The responsibility does not rest solely with company leadership. Every experienced ROW professional can introduce someone to the field, mentor a new colleague or support a local IRWA education initiative. Project owners can reinforce these efforts by valuing training and continuity in their contracting decisions. If the industry waits until a generation of senior agents has retired, the cost will be measured in delayed projects, weaker relationships and lost expertise.

The next generation will not find right-of-way by accident. We have to invite them in, show them a future and invest in their development. Recruiting talent is the first step; preparing that talent to lead is how the profession protects its future.

Source notes

International Right of Way Association (IRWA), About IRWA: https://www.irwaonline.org/about-inwa/
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, employed persons by detailed occupation and age: https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11b.htm
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook (career compensation and education): https://www.bls.gov/ooh/
ROW compensation figures are illustrative estimates, not BLS-published ROW medians.
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Public Relations Specialists: https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/public-relations-specialists.htm

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INDUSTRY SOURCES & REFERENCES

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Market Research Analysts:
https://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/market-research-analysts.htm

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Accountants and Auditors:
https://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/accountants-and-auditors.htm

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Project Management Specialists:
https://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/project-management-specialists.htm

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Construction Managers:
https://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/construction-managers.htm



67th Annual Bluegrass Chapter 25

CHRISTMAS PARTY

THE BROWN HOTEL
LOUISVILLE

6:30 P.M., SATURDAY DECEMBER 12, 2026

$30 advance, $50 at the door

RSVP: hunterstuartappr@gmail.com

RSVP by Friday December 4

Room block: (502) 583-1234

International Right-Of Way Association

Include flyer when paying by mail

Name: _____

Guests: _____

Attention: Kari Stockdale,
2365 Harrodsburg Rd, STE B400,
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Electronic payments:

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