AMS Fellows—A Modest Proposal

I do not wish to argue either for or against the AMS Fellows proposal. The program aims to reward excellence, and it will surely be passed on this third attempt, now that the required threshold has been lowered to a simple majority. I wish instead to present some modest proposals for enhancing the program.

First, AMS Fellows should be provided with a separate, express lane for registration at AMS meetings. The registration line of ordinary members can be long and slow-moving. Our Fellows’ time is valuable, and would be more productively employed either inside the meeting in the front-row seats, or conversing with other Fellows in the express lane.

Second, it can be embarrassing for ordinary members to realize (after the fact) that they were in the presence of a Fellow unknowingly and hence did not speak with sufficient deference. To reduce the possibility of such situations, which are awkward for all concerned, I propose that special gold-colored nametags be provided for Fellows at all AMS meetings and functions.

Third, I propose that the publishing operations of the Society be leveraged to increase the impact of the Fellows program. For example, MathSciNet could highlight papers written by Fellows, so that one could identify the papers most worthy of attention, when searching the literature. One might further suggest that AMS journals begin automatically accepting all papers submitted by Fellows, although perhaps that would not go far enough: active solicitation and pre-approval of manuscripts from Fellows should be encouraged.

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