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## [ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ]



As most of you know by now, our governor just signed into law a bill that includes the most comprehensive changes to our profession, and to the lives of land owners in New York State, since our colony was first formed. Known as the Land Surveyors' Modernization Act, it promises to change forever the way we work as stewards of boundary information for the millions of properties in the State.

The most important aspect of the bill is a change from transferring property by deeds to transferring by title. The State will create a land registry to manage all title interests. The bill allows this registry to be managed by private entities.

To accomplish this initiative, the bill requires that every property in the State be retraced within the next 20 years. All retracement info will be stored digitally in a single large GIS database that will include all metadata (deeds, maps, found evidence, boundary line agreements, etc.). This data will be publicly accessible to all, at no charge to the user.

Cost recovery for this massive effort will come from a large federal loan, to be paid back from land transfer fees that will be collected by the State. Recovery rate is expected to exceed 120% of costs.

So how does this affect our profession? Well, we will have a ton of work to do over the next 20 years so we'd better get started. The bill has some changes that directly affect our practice. First, every new surveyor that comes into the profession will have to have a 4 year degree in Land Surveying. Every licensed land surveyor will be required to be an expert in geodesy. Geology courses will also be required, to gain a keen understanding of the movement of the earth's tectonic plates and how those movements affect property location.

Effective January 1st of this coming year, all land surveyors, including current licensees, will be required to show proof that they own at least two GPS units capable of receiving signals from GNSS, Glonass, and Galileo. We will also have to pass tests demonstrating knowledge of the 2022 datum. Lastly, we will each need a special certification to be eligible to update the State's Land Registry. Without all of these credentials, you won't be allowed to make maps in New York State. With them, you will become part of a large coordinated effort that will be working to bring boundary determination and management into the current millennium.

Another requirement of the new bill that came in to play at the last moment is the concept of "virtual monumentation". The State anticipates that, before the mapping work is completed, survey-grade positioning will be ubiquitous in consumer products such as cell phones, including under full canopy. Since all boundary lines will be freely available in the cloud, property owners will be able to walk their lines using augmented reality apps that project the boundary locations onto the ground as they move about.

There are many more far-reaching aspects of this bill than I can report on at this time but here's the most important one. None of what you just read is true. I'm saving what I wrote here so I can publish something similar in a few years.

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Right now, we're still doing things pretty much the way they've been done for the last couple of centuries. Sure, we can measure faster and more precisely, but our clients don't get any better picture of what they own than their ancestors did. We still pretty much survey one property or block at a time, even though we now have the capability and digital capacity to manage it all as one large dataset.

Pie in the sky you say? Well, FIG started a committee to explore this in 1994. The concept was called Cadastre 2014 because they hoped to have accomplished their goals by then. Switzerland has done just that. They've mapped the entire country, about a third the size of New York, and they have about 400 private surveyors who are licensed to manage and contribute to the database.

A small group of surveyors from the United States, including my partner Christine Gayron and me, will be going to Switzerland this month, by invitation from the Swisstopo Bureau, to learn how they accomplished what they did. We are excited to learn how they managed this in just 20 years. We'll report back what we learn.

I have an alternate press release already written, should things not work out as I described earlier. It goes something like this:

"Google, Apple, and Microsoft made a joint announcement today, standing next to the governor and other representatives of the state of New York, that they have entered the title insurance and land surveying industries. Using New York State as their pilot program, they will scan every deed in every County records office, then locate every property mark they can find using a new technology they've developed that is similar to their Street View vehicles. All data will be made freely available to the public. Title insurance policies will cost approximately one tenth of current rates. The boundary determination will be signed by a California man who just got his license in New York State and is very excited to be working with the team. The project is expected to take one year to complete. Retracement surveys will no longer be necessary. An app will be provided to allow homeowners to design and submit their own subdivisions."

I'm holding on to both versions of the press release. Let's see how it goes.

Greg de Bruin, LS, PE  
NYSAPLS

## NYSAPLS job postings online – NEW POSTINGS ADDED ONLINE!

Are you looking for a surveying job, or looking to hire someone new? Are you interested in buying a land surveying business, or have one you wish to sell? Check out the newest job listings and classifieds in the Career Center found on our website, [www.nysapls.org](http://www.nysapls.org).

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