

## **Important notice regarding the Annual Meeting Employment Center**

July 2, 2012

The labor contract for the workers at two hotels we plan to use at our 2012 Annual Meeting (the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place and the Hyatt Regency Chicago) has lapsed. As negotiations for a new agreement with the Hyatt are in process, the hotel workers' union, Unite Here, has urged a boycott of the Hyatt Regency hotels until a new contract is ratified.

The Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people, and we recognize that our members may choose which hotels they wish to use. At present we are continuing our arrangement with the Hyatt hotels – canceling the contract is financially prohibitive – but we have renegotiated and reduced our obligations to the Hyatt in response to the labor situation. In addition, we have scheduled most programs in the McCormick Convention Center. Our intent is to ensure that AAR and SBL members have alternatives to boycotted space.

These decisions may have an impact on activities related to the Employment Center – both for candidates and employers. Please take careful note of the following:

**Location:** The Employment Center will be located in the McCormick Center.

**Private Interview Rooms:** We had initially planned to use only the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place for private interview rooms. That plan has been modified. Employers will now have three options for interview rooms.

1. *Private interview rooms* will be available in the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place.

2. *Private interview rooms* will be available in another conference hotel, soon to be identified. Please note that these spaces will be in hotels at some distance from the McCormick Center, but will be along our shuttle route.

3. Interview space using the “pipe and drape” arrangement will be also available. While this space does not afford optimum privacy, employers may elect to use it because it will be conveniently located in the Employment Center.

**Matters of Conscience:** The SBL Council and the AAR Board of Directors formed a subcommittee to meet and discuss the implications of the boycott and our response to it. In regard to the Employment Center, the subcommittee was unanimous in its commitment to protect the rights of both employers and candidates to follow their conscience with respect to the boycott. Please note the following:

A **candidate** shall have the right to inform a potential employer that the candidate wishes to avoid a private interview in boycotted space. SBL and AAR stand ready to protect candidate’s rights and will offer them practical assistance in securing alternate interview spaces. We do not want a candidate’s conscience regarding the boycott to interfere in any manner with his or her opportunity to secure employment.

We urge **employers** to honor a candidate’s conscience with regard to the boycott. Though employers may elect to use private interview rooms in the Hyatt, we urge them to make alternative arrangements for candidates who feel strongly about the boycott.

We realize that these plans may complicate matters for users of our Employment Center. We ask your forbearance as we seek to protect our programs from undue disruption. As always, it is the expressed policy of our organizations not to sanction interviews in private sleeping rooms.

Our hope is that the union and the Hyatt are able to ratify a new contract well in advance of our Annual Meetings. We will keep the SBL and AAR members informed of any new developments.