

Section Reports

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ADMINISTRATIVE AND PUBLIC LAW

Gaines F. West, II chair

NEWSLETTER — The *Administrative and Public Law Newsletter* is published twice-yearly: fall and spring. The newsletter provides information about bar and section activities affecting or of interest to section members, including case updates and state agency updates.

WEBSITE (www.io.com/adminlaw) — The website provides a wide variety of articles, laws, case summaries, and other timely and topical information concerning the Administrative Procedure Act and other acts important to section members.

PUBLIC SERVICE — The pro bono subcommittee actively seeks and encourages section members to provide pro bono services. Additionally, council members voted a \$2,500 contribution to the Texas Legal Services Center.

MEMBER SERVICE — This fall, the section will conduct its first moot court competition for administrative law to foster understanding of and interest in administrative and public law.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

John P. Palmer, chair

NEWSLETTER — *Alternative Resolutions*, the ADR Section newsletter, is published quarterly. Regular features include discussion of ethical dilemmas in ADR, case law and legislation updates, book reviews, a calendar or upcoming ADR events and training around the state, and articles regarding ADR techniques.

WEBSITE (www.TexasADR.org) — The section website contains information such as the ADR Act, the ADR Section's ethical guidelines, articles, legislative and caselaw updates, abbreviated minutes of the ADR council meetings, the section's committee structure, and ADR and law links.

PUBLIC SERVICE — This year, the section published and distributed more than

nificant pro bono contribution by a section member in an area of service, with the recipient to be recognized at the annual section meeting. Other projects include the development of a curriculum and course book for educating non-family law attorneys about pro bono family law matters, and the implementation of pro bono family law legal clinics at every Texas law school to be staffed by section members who will work with third-year students as pro bono sponsors helping them handle family law cases.

The section has developed a family law seminar in what has been hailed as an innovative approach to increasing pro bono participation. The half-day seminar is tuition-free; however, each registrant is required to commit to accepting one pro bono case. The section pays for the conference facilities and for the printing costs. Family law specialists from across the state travel at their own expense to participate as speakers. These are family law lawyers, section members, and section council members who are committed to improving the delivery of family law pro bono services. The program debuted in 1997 and was presented this fiscal year in Odessa, Amarillo, Abilene, and Weslaco.

Perhaps the most innovative concept of the section pro bono project is the Partners Program, aimed at high school students and designed to educate them on domestic violence and teach them life skills and relationship-coping skills. Teenagers frequently marry to escape abusive or violent environments or seek parenthood in hopes of having one person that can give them unconditional love. Relationships entered for these purposes all too soon encounter problems related to money, jealousy, child rearing, and disagreements which can escalate into domestic violence. The Partners Program is preventative in nature. Developed by the American Bar Association Family Law Section, it involves the presentation of interactive classroom instruction through both videotaped and live-scripted individual participation, all facilitated by a local family law attorney or judge. The section purchased six sets of the ABA videotapes for pilot projects in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and El Paso. Section members in these cities have implemented the project. The section is eager to expand the program to more cities and is investigating the possibility of preparing a videotape which presents the Texas law portion for use in those areas where there are no local practitioners or judges to serve as facilitators.

MEMBER SERVICE — In addition to the quarterly newsletter and the website, the section has been at work on other publications. The most recent revision of the *Texas Family Law Practice Manual* should be available for distribution soon. This past year, the section compiled the *Checklist Manual*, its first internally-published book. The concept for this book emerged at meetings of the Texas Family Law Practice Manual Committee. The initial printing of 500 premiered at the Advanced Family Law Course in August and was sold out by

Wednesday of that week. Having received orders for additional books, a second printing has been completed.

Another publication is being developed by a multi-disciplined committee tasked with recommending guidelines for the qualification and admission of psychological testing and testimony, social studies, real estate appraisers, business evaluators, and tracing experts, all of which are common in family law proceedings. This committee includes family law litigators, judges, and mental health professionals.

The section has learned there is no mechanism for providing newly-appointed associate judges with any sort of judicial education or training. Because of the gap between the programming provided by the Texas Center for the Judiciary and the State Bar, these non-elected judges are not allowed to participate in the College for New Judges, nor are they provided a copy of the customary bench book. Yet these dedicated individuals hear a tremendous number of family law cases. The section has designed a program which will run as a parallel session during the 1998 Advanced Family Law Course. The curriculum focuses on such issues as judicial ethics, dealing with the media, and dealing with pro se litigants. The full cost of the program is borne by the section.

The member services committee continues to analyze new and improved ways for the section to address and meet the needs of the membership while encouraging interaction in all areas by the membership with elected officers of the section.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Jeff Skarda and David Cunningham, co-chairs

NEWSLETTER — *The Texas Forum* is published twice a year. It is a law review devoted to civil rights edited by students at the University of Texas School of Law.

WEBSITE — The section's website is www.labnet.com/aclutx/

PUBLIC SERVICE — The section responds to letters from prisoners and amnesty organizers. Many members volunteer with the ACLU and similar organizations. Others take criminal appointments. The section writes resolutions for the State Bar

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Annual Meeting, and is considering a proposal to issue a call for papers for the educational meeting at the State Bar Annual Meeting and another proposal to post local police misconduct opinions on the website. It also supported the establishment of the State Bar Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification Section.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW

Mark A. Shank, chair

NEWSLETTER — The *Labor and Employment Law Section Newsletter* is published four or five times per year. It provides a comprehensive description of state and federal cases of interest to labor and employment law practitioners. In addition, it contains a column by the chair and other information of interest to the section members.

WEBSITE (www.laborlaw.org) — The site contains information to aid section members in their daily practices. Specifically, information includes: officers and council members, bylaws, CLE notices, the section newsletter, and helpful sites.

PUBLIC SERVICE — The pro bono committee sponsors the

attendance of legal aid attorneys at the Annual Employment Law Update, Basics of Employment Law, and State Bar of Texas Advanced Employment Law courses. It also donates materials from section-sponsored courses to pro bono legal providers and awards \$5,000-\$10,000 in grants annually to organizations providing services, legal and otherwise, to the poor.

Each year, the section holds a scholarship competition among student authors of labor and employment articles published or to be published in law reviews of Texas law schools. The winning author receives a scholarship and is honored at the annual meeting.

MEMBER SERVICE — The Annual Update is a seminar usually held in March of each year which provides a full day of CLE very inexpensively. The seminar updates recent developments in the major areas of labor and employment law.

The Nuts and Bolts Seminar is held each fall and provides basic, entry level information to relatively novice practitioners.

The section has a meeting and seminar each year at the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting. This year the section sponsored a demonstration seminar involving cross-examinations in a sexual harassment case. Judge Grady Jolly of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals was the luncheon speaker.

New State Bar Section Formed

THE STATE BAR **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification Issues Section** aims to promote the understanding of law affecting the rights, responsibilities, and needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered-identified people, as well as persons living with HIV, and provide a common meeting ground for Texas lawyers interested in addressing the legal problems of these people.

In his presentation to the State Bar Board of Directors regarding the new section, chair **Mitchell Katine** explained that the section will focus on legal issues, not on political and advocacy issues. Katine noted that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on cases involving sexual orientation and gender identification issues in each of its last three terms. In addition, said Katine, state courts, legislatures, and local governmental bodies are considering issues relating to people with HIV and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered-identified people.

The new section held its organizational meeting at the State Bar Annual Meeting in June, and will have its first members' meeting on Saturday, Sept. 19 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Texas Law Center in Austin. For more information, call Mitchell Katine at (713)981-9595.

LEGAL ASSISTANTS DIVISION

Wendi A. Rogers, chair

NEWSLETTER — The section's newsletter, *Texas Paralegal Journal*, is published quarterly. *TPJ, Etc.*, is published three times a year.

WEBSITE — The section's website address is www.LAD.org

PUBLIC SERVICE — "Legally Speaking" is a television program geared toward the layperson. The program is hosted by Lisa Sprinkle, an El Paso paralegal, and features attorneys and judiciary who specialize in several different areas of law. The program airs three times a week on an El Paso Cable Access channel and covers 30 different topics. These programs are available for purchase on videotape. Several local associations have purchased these tapes for donation to local libraries and civic organizations.

At this year's State Bar Annual Meeting, the section awarded the Second Annual Pro Bono Merit Award. This award recognizes one legal assistant/paralegal each year who has demonstrated a commitment to pro bono service.

The LAD and the State Bar Standing Committee on Legal Assistants will co-sponsor the Pro Bono Partners Program, which is a program to encourage development of local teams of attorneys and legal assistants committed to the delivery of pro bono legal services. The program will be administered through Texas Lawyers Care and was kicked off at this year's State Bar Annual Meeting.

MEMBER SERVICE — This year, the Legal Assistants Division sponsored advanced seminars in the areas of personal