

Volume of Activity

To steal a line from an ad for hospitals, Amazing Things Are Happening Here Every Day. The City Bar's achievements – your achievements – are measured in both quantity and quality and they truly are nothing short of amazing.

To start with quantity -- We issued 191 reports in the past year. The issues ranged from comments on proposed rules for the Commercial Division to a brochure advising transgender patients of their health care rights to a 70 page report concerning the rights of young people with disabilities in guardianship proceedings which is going to be published in a CUNY Law Journal.

We conducted approximately 325 non-CLE programs and 120 CLE programs in the past year. I'm sure all of you have a sense of what the CLE programs entailed, but could I test you on whether you know that our non-CLE programs include mentoring circles in a variety of practice areas for small firm practitioners, a program on the art of schmoozing, or a panel on current issues in securitization – and thanks to the City Bar, I now know what securitization is, sort of.

We are in the middle of meeting with each committee chair as you know that we do each year and have met with 32 chairs so far this round. There's only a hundred plus to go.

All of these activities speak not only to quantity, but also to quality, but to give you a broader sense of the quality, let me address a few areas where our efforts have been focused.

Access to Justice

We continue to press for access to justice, in many different ways and in many different fora – which is definitely my favorite plural. Here’s a sampling:

- We continue to advocate for increases in funding for civil legal services at all levels of government. In NYC, we have been part of the effort to provide a right to counsel for people facing loss of their homes in NYC Housing Court. Though the City is providing some additional resources in this area and the City Council is showing an increased focus on the problem, a more comprehensive solution is needed. We believe providing counsel in these proceedings where tenants cannot afford a lawyer will be cost-effective for the City by reducing expenditures for maintaining the social safety net, such as homeless shelters.

- On the State level, we have been a consistent supporter of Chief Judge Lippman’s efforts to add up to \$100 million in civil legal services funding. We also have supported his pro bono efforts, including the requirement to report pro bono activities, the Pro Bono Scholars program, and facilitating pro bono for in-house counsel. The number of people handling matters in NY courts without a lawyer has dropped from 2.3 to 1.8 million people annually, but that’s still an enormous need not being met.

- On the federal level, we again joined with our colleagues at the State Bar and with bar associations around the country to urge increased funding for the Legal Services Corporation.

Closer to home, in our Monday Night Law program, 100 member volunteers provide half hour consultations to dozens of clients each week. The program and its

terrific director Russ Bleamer were honored with the Angelo Cometa Award from the New York State Bar Association.

JUSTICE CENTER

Of course, our City Bar Justice Center, under the terrific leadership of Lynn Kelly, continues to provide a broad range of pro bono programs, serving over 20,000 needy New Yorkers each year. Recently, the Justice Center started two new projects. In the Legal Assistance for the Self Represented program staff and volunteers provide limited legal services to self-represented litigants. These limited services are referred to as unbundled services and the clients come to this program after having been screened by our Legal Referral Service Hotline.

The services include limited advocacy and drafting assistance on cases such as uncontested divorces, child support, name change petitions, landlord/tenant issues such as demanding a lease renewal or filling out a Senior Citizen Rent Increase renewal form, debt collection, and employment law.

In the second new program, the Federal Pro Se Legal Assistance Project (FEDPRO), the Justice Center works with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York to staff an office in the courthouse with an experienced attorney to provide limited, unbundled legal assistance. The staff attorney conducts intake at the courthouse and makes follow-up appointments with pro se litigants. The goal is to create templates for pro se litigants to use in the most frequent federal pro se cases- civil rights and employment discrimination cases.

IMMIGRATION

The Justice Center also is ready to gear up quickly if President Obama's Executive Order that would allow millions of undocumented immigrants to legally remain in the country survives a court challenge.

Our Immigration and Nationality Law Committee has been at the forefront of such activities. It has been monitoring the increased detention of immigrant children and families arriving from Central America, and has been urging that the Obama Administration limit such detention and provide these individuals with due process..

We are supporting federal legislation that would provide a right to counsel in deportation proceedings for children and other vulnerable populations, such as the mentally ill. We also have been supporting funding efforts in this regard. The Committee asked National Economic Research Associates (NERA) to study the costs and benefits of providing legal representation generally in deportation proceedings, and the study found that the costs of providing such representation are balanced by the savings generated to government. Again, providing counsel to people in need is not only fair but economically wise.

We also have been seeking a fair shake for consumers in debt. Our Civil Court and Consumer Affairs Committees have been working for many years to protect consumers, almost all of whom are unrepresented, from predatory lending and debt collection practices. In the past year we were delighted to see that the NY court system has promulgated rules of the type we have advocated that would inject more fairness into that process.

Legislative

Under the tireless efforts of Maria Cilenti, we are ramping up our legislative activity, particularly in the State Legislature and City Council. In the past year we issued 93 reports on legislation. Two pieces of legislation we originally drafted in complex areas of law were passed. We achieved a sorely-needed modernization of Articles 1, 7 and 9 of the Uniform Commercial Code, and a clarification and harmonization of New York laws related to guide, hearing, and service dogs.

Our advocacy efforts were successful in adding 25 Family Court Judges, the most significant increase in decades. Also with regard to children and families, a half-dozen committees collaborated on a report to raise the age of criminal responsibility in NY from 16 to 18. Only NY and North Carolina have not raised the age. Raising the age would provide far better ways of treating juvenile offenders, removing them from the vicious cycle of crime and dependency that has worked such a hardship on many families and communities in this State.

Another major initiative this year involved ethics reform in New York. It was the City Bar, in a 2010 report, that made clear that requiring lawyer-legislators to disclose their clients, with limited exceptions, is not unethical. This led to limited disclosure of clients in the 2011 ethics reform legislation. After the indictment of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, we supported the effort to increase client disclosure for lawyer legislators that culminated in passage of additional reforms in this year's State budget.

International

The Association continues to project itself internationally on a broad scope, through the 16 committees that focus primarily on international affairs plus the many others that address those issues as part of their mandate.

We communicated with leaders of nations that were depriving lawyers and human rights activists of their due process rights. Among the countries we focused on were China including Hong Kong -- where our letter in support of dissidents was featured in the English-language South China Daily, Russia, Nigeria, Uganda, Swaziland and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We have hosted delegations or individuals from Bangladesh, China, Japan, Malaysia, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Spain seeking insights on how we deal with justice issues for application to their work back home.

We also held public programs on international topics ranging from climate change to migration in Europe to child soldiers to pandemic diseases.

Vance Center

Over the past year, I also have had the opportunity to observe and occasionally join in the exciting work of the Vance Center, headed by Alex Papachristou. As you know, The Vance Center is an international public interest law practice within the City Bar Fund that last year provided legal assistance to more than 100 human rights and environmental organizations worldwide. Its six lawyers leveraged their expertise with the pro bono participation of more than 500 lawyers from more than 150 law firms in 75

countries, usually led by this city's principal international law firms, represented on the Vance Center Committee.

Notable projects included a best-practices guide to protecting coral reefs in Latin America, and an initiative to secure marriage equality in Chile, and Mexico, an amicus brief in Spanish to the Supreme Court of Colombia about the right of same sex partners to adopt and another amicus brief in English to the U.S. Supreme Court on the marriage equality case now pending.

New Lawyers in a Changing Profession

Led by our Council on the Profession, we have been working to implement the landmark report of our Task Force on New Lawyers in a Changing Profession, issued under the tireless leadership of Carey Dunne in 2013. The report contained four main recommendations for implementation, and we are making progress in each.

This past year under the remarkable supervision of Martha Harris, we set up a New Lawyers Institute, which provided training, career guidance and mentoring to 84 law graduates from 9 NYC-area law schools, 7 of which were sponsors of the Institute. These grads benefited from substantial CLE and career development programming, including an inspirational speaker series. The highlight was a chance to meet and hear from Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor on May 7th. After this successful maiden voyage, we are planning next year's program.

The Council on the Profession pursued two recommendations. The first recommendation, to improve the bar exam, was underway when Chief Judge Lippman proposed that New York adopt the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE). The Council supported

this initiative and Council Chair Mark Morril testified and advocated for it before the committee established to study the issue. In his May 5th Law Day address, the Chief Judge announced New York would institute the UBE as of July 2016. He also announced a procedure for evaluating the exam's impact on different demographic groups, in a manner we had suggested.

The Council also pursued changing the ABA accreditation rule that prevents the granting of credit to students whose internships are paid. This effectively prevents law students from getting credit for working in private sector internships, even if the program meets rigorous academic requirements. We are urging the ABA's Council on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar to change the rule.

The final initiative is perhaps the most ambitious, to create a new entity, designed to be sustainable business model that would provide legal services to persons of modest means by employing properly trained and supervised new lawyers for two year fellowships.

In-house counsel initiative

Following up on an initiative I mentioned in my remarks at last year's Annual Meeting, I asked Association Vice President Nancy Loudon to help us address how to involve more effectively lawyers who work in-house and to stress the benefits of City Bar membership to this group, which is underrepresented here. We held a reception for in-house counsel this fall, tweaked our dues structure to reduce dues for in-house lawyers, and recently met with General Counsels in what I hope will be an ongoing effort to attract in-house members and to meet their needs.

Diversity and Inclusion

As you probably know, the City Bar Fund has a separate area devoted to diversity and inclusion in the profession which is headed by Gabrielle Brown. Its work includes increasing support to the law firms and companies that have signed on to the Statement of Diversity Principles, seeking diverse lawyers as speakers at City Bar events, and providing regular training for diversity professionals.

The City Bar has strengthened our relationships with the affinity bars in the City by meeting quarterly with their leaders and providing a discounted City Bar membership rate for members of affinity bars. The Diversity program has annual meetings of law firm Managing Partners and General Counsels to advise us on best practices for diverse and inclusive work environments. In short, the effort is constant to achieve the goal for both the City Bar and the profession as a whole to have membership and leadership that reflects our community.

LAP

I am pleased to report that our Lawyer Assistance Program, which helps hundreds of lawyers and their families each year with substance abuse and mental health issues, has received a five year grant from the Office of Court Administration to continue its work. This grant enables us to add a counselor to assist our wonderful program director, Eileen Travis.

Focus on Basic Law Practice

I promise that we haven't forgotten that we all are lawyers. Indeed, much of our committee work continues to focus on improving the practice of law. This past year, these efforts included:

- Comments on a wide range of federal and state court rules
- A report on categorical privilege logs
- A model form of non-disclosure agreement designed for merger transactions
- A model form of contract of sale for a condominium unit

To flag one additional item, in 2010 our Council on Judicial Administration proposed a state court rule dealing with redacting confidential personal information from court filings. After several years of advocacy and work by the Council and several of our committees, such a rule was finally adopted this year, tracking in good part our initial recommendations.

Ethics and Judiciary

Of course, our Professional Ethics Committee continues to operate our ethics hotline, which assists 20-30 New York lawyers a week who call for ethical advice regarding their own prospective conduct. The committee also issued several formal opinions, including on cutting edge topics such as virtual law offices and internet scams that got wide play in the legal media. And our Judiciary Committee reviewed the qualifications of 80 candidates for appointive or elective judicial office in New York City.

None of this would have been possible without the guidance of our executive committee under Elchi's great leadership or the hard work of our wonderful staff. I send my thanks to all of you and my special appreciation of Bret who is so skilled about everything here that it's hard to imagine that he's been in the job for only two years. And as for Alan – what can I say other than he embodies everything that is good about this place and the very best in our profession and that we will do everything to ensure that he doesn't fully escape us.

I am going to stop here because listing just this fraction of our activities is exhausting. But as you can see – in both quality and quantity – you as members of the City Bar – our fabulous staff who work with you – have done much that we all can be proud of. And best of all, I have no doubt that such amazing things will continue to happen here everyday.