

**New York State Bar Association
Environmental Law Section
Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity**

Guidelines for Selecting Speakers for Section Programs

Thank you for agreeing to plan one of the Section's many quality programs. Your commitment to the program will ensure its substantive and logistical success. The Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity has prepared these Guidelines to ensure that the diversity goals established by the Section are considered in program planning. We ask that you implement these guidelines as you plan your program(s).

Background

The Section adopted a Diversity Plan in January 2004 and updated that Plan in October 2011. The plan states the Section's commitment to diversity:

The Environmental Law Section is committed to having a diverse membership so that those who participate in the Section's activities and the products of the Section's work will be enriched and enhanced by the different perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences of its members.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity identified a number of diversity "characteristics" within the Section's membership:

- Race and ethnicity
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Experience level
- Disability
- Public sector employment
- Not-for-profit sector employment
- Corporate counsel employment
- Geography
- Position within a firm or organization
- Practice area within environmental law

The Section has pledged to recruit new members, keeping in mind these various diversity characteristics. We believe that members are more comfortable in an organization that portrays the face of the profession as a whole – a face that is, in fact, diverse. Speaker selection is one means of reflecting that professional diversity.

Guidelines and Tips on Selecting Diverse Speakers

When selecting speakers, program chairs are requested to consider the Section's goal for diversity. While it might at times be difficult to identify speakers with diverse backgrounds, the effort will result in an enhanced experience for many of the attendees, as well as for the speakers. People of color, women, younger attorneys, and any other member of one of the above-listed categories feel included in an organization when they attend programs featuring attorneys like them.

Please use the following guidelines and tips in selecting speakers.

- The place to start is, of course, with the substance of the program. Who are logical and good speakers?
- Next, consider the face of a panel that you may be considering: is it diverse, particularly as to race, gender, area of practice, age, geography, or any other category?
- While you might be used to an established panel of speakers, do you know of some emerging talent in the area of law that is the focus of the program? The Section would like to provide speaking opportunities to a variety of practitioners. We recommend that you determine whether a candidate has spoken on any of the Section's programs in the preceding two-year period before inviting her or him to speak. If the person has spoken within that period, try your best to select a different speaker unless the expertise is so special that there is no other good choice of speaker.
- The Section officers are good resources for learning about speakers who might help fulfill the Section's diversity goals – because of the structure of ascension to the Section Chair position, each officer will serve four years before becoming Chair and will have knowledge of Section programs held through that period.
- Contact the Section's representatives on diversity issues, Joan Leary Matthews (joanm.leary@gmail.com) or John Greenthal (jgreenthal@nixonpeabody.com), who might be able to provide you with some helpful speaker suggestions.
- Contact the Co-Chairs of the CLE Committee. The current Co-Chairs are: Jim Periconi (jpericoni@periconi.com), Maureen Leary (Maureen.leary@ag.ny.gov), and Jim Rigano (jrigano@certilmanbalin.com).
- Contact the Section's Liaison to the Young Lawyers Section. The current Liaison is Rob Stout (rstout@woh.com).
- Contact other NYSBA Sections, law school professors (a number of whom are Section members), or other associations, including a minority bar association, a chapter of the Women's Bar Association of New York State, an environmental organization, or a professional organization, such as the Air and Waste Management Association.
- Ask other potential speakers for suggestions for other diverse speakers.
- When asking others for suggestions, be positive and mention your goal of adding diversity to a panel.
- If a person is not the best choice for a substantive speaker on a particular topic, consider asking that person to act as a moderator for a panel, and keep that person in mind as a speaker for a future program.

- Remember that the goal is to foster a spirit of inclusiveness in Section activities. Ask yourself whether your program, with the speakers you have in mind, will foster this spirit of inclusiveness and fairly represent the face of the profession and of Section membership.

The effort that you put into the selection of diverse speakers will enhance the Section's programs! Thank you for your service to the Section and your commitment to its goals.

Adopted by the Executive Committee of the Environmental Law Section on September 25, 2005 and amended by the Executive Committee on October 23, 2011.