

Message from the Section Chair

By Seth H. Greenberg

I write this message, my first as Section Chair, in the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and the recent bloodshed in Las Vegas, the worst mass shooting in recent U.S. history. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those impacted by these events. Crises like these put the daily “chaos” of our lives in perspective and force us to prioritize what is most important. They also remind us of the value of organizations like our own, voluntary state bar associations that are committed to helping those in need and to contributing thoughtful analyses to the discourse on matters of public concern. Information about how you can assist in the hurricane relief effort can be found on NYSBA’s website homepage. Also accessible from the website is a 2013 report from State Bar’s Task Force on Gun Violence and a commitment by the Association to support bi-partisan legislation and other strategies for keeping guns out of the hands of violent people. The sympathy and support of NYSBA and its members for those most in need make me very proud of my involvement and re-energizes my commitment to the Association and this Section.

The Labor and Employment Law Section, now more than 40 years old and a membership of more than 2,000 strong, is, in my own non-biased assessment, the best and most accomplished Section in the entire Association. It

has become this way as the result of the dedication and hard work of scores of practitioners and neutrals in the field who have taken on leadership roles. I want to thank our entire Executive Committee for all that you do: to promote and maintain the practice of labor and employment law, to examine the possibilities of improvement and reform, to disseminate and exchange ideas, and to further the education of the Bar and the public, all central tenets of our mission. On behalf of everyone, I want to acknowledge and thank immediate past Section Chair Sharon Stiller and former Section Secretary Molly Thomas-Jensen for all of their work over the past year. Their contributions have only made our Section even more vibrant. I also want to welcome our new Secretary Monica Skanes and Chair-Elect



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Cara Greene, both of whom I have and will continue to work with closely for the benefit of the Section.

A few additional notes of appreciation are also in order, though by no means is this an exhaustive list of individuals to whom we owe a debt of gratitude—to Allan Bloom, outgoing Managing Editor of the *Journal*, for all of his time and effort in putting together many fantastic issues; to Colin Leonard and Laura Monaco, who have graciously agreed to take over for Allan as co-Managing Editors of our *Journal* (and who did a great job on this, their first issue); to our CLE Co-chairs Alyson Mathews, Robert Boreanaz, and Abigail Levy, who did another amazing job in planning our Fall Meeting; and to our unbelievable and awesome staff at NYSBA, with special shout-outs to Section Liaison Beth Gould and Meetings Representative Cathy Teeter, both of whom are integral to our operations.

There are so many things our Section does well—too many to list here. From CLE programs and webinars to diversity and leadership development, our Section has set the bar high and is often consulted for best practices and “how to” tips. As I have said many times before, I believe the strength of our Section lies within its committees which, through the outstanding leadership of our chairs, fulfill the Section’s mission and goals. During my term as Section Chair, I hope our Section’s value can be further enhanced by a renewed emphasis on committee work. Through our committees, we can continue to deliver great educational and networking programs, re-tool and re-energize our mentoring programs—both with new attorneys and with new arbitrators—and double our efforts in diversity and leadership development. I am hopeful we can also finally begin the planning process toward a trial/arbitration academy and take a more active role in advocating on issues and topics involving legislative and regulatory items. When we do all of these things, when our committee system is running well, Section membership will grow, become even more diverse, and we will be able to attract active labor and employment law practitioners to be our future leaders.

I encourage all Section members to join a committee, write an article for our *Journal*, speak at a CLE program, participate at a networking event, become a mentor, and help us weigh in on issues of importance. I hope you all enjoy reading this issue of the *Journal* and perhaps even learn something you may not have known previously. I look forward to seeing you all at a Section event soon. As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions concerning our Section. You can contact me at sgreenberg@gbglawoffice.com or (516) 570-4343.

2017 Fall Meeting Retrospective

Our Fall Meeting took place October 20-22, 2017, at The Sagamore in Bolton Landing, New York. The topics discussed were fascinating, the materials were substan-

tive, and the speakers offered invaluable insight into their subject areas. Mother Nature also played an important role, giving us beautiful weather that made the outdoor cocktail hour and our networking events (e.g. golf and a boat ride on Lake George) even more pleasurable. Our dinner speaker featured the Honorable Paul Feinman, the recently confirmed Associate Judge on New York’s Court of Appeals, who offered us insight into approaching appeals. Judge Feinman even attended portions of our educational program, offering compliments to our panelists for their grasp of the law and practice advice. We were also thrilled to have NYSBA’s President-Elect Michael Miller join us for the entire weekend, offering support for our Section’s programs and encouragement for the continued success of our many efforts and initiatives.

The educational component of our Friday program featured plenary sessions on Independent Contractors and the “Gig Economy—A Developing Story and Backlash Discrimination: National Original and Religious Discrimination in the Age of ISIS”. There were also breakout workshops covering topics involving arbitration, immigration, and retaliation. On Saturday, we were regaled by a panel presenting “You’re Fired? The Current and Future Status of Labor and Employment Law at the Federal, State and Local Levels Under the Trump Era”, and we were reminded about (and offered advice on) “Ethically Dealing with Difficult Clients”. The sessions were interactive and engaging.

We were also fortunate to have a number of first and second time attendees join us for the Fall Meeting, including several of our diversity fellows. Our Section’s Diversity Fellowship Program seeks to attract emerging leaders and increase the diversity of our Section’s membership. Each two-year fellow is encouraged to attend our meetings and participate in all Section activities. Fellowship grants include payment of Section dues, Fall and Annual Meeting registration fees, and certain lodging/travel expenses. Each fellow is also paired with a member of the Section’s Executive Committee who will act as a mentor, discussing leadership and professional opportunities among other issues important for encouraging the fellow’s future (and increased) participation in the Section. Our 2017-2019 Diversity Fellows are: Onya Brinson, Esq. (New York City Housing Authority); Jalise Burt, Esq. (U.S. Magistrate Judge Ronald Ellis, Southern District of New York); R. Alexander Cardenas, Esq. (U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of the Solicitor); and Nina Martinez, Esq. (New York Legal Assistance Group’s Employment Mediation Project).

I hope you can all join us at our Section’s Annual Meeting in New York City on January 26, 2018, and at our next Fall Meeting in Montreal, from October 12-14, 2018.

Seth H. Greenberg