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A publication of the General Practice Section
of the New York State Bar Association

Message from the Past Chair



Zachary Abella

One Tuesday morning last January, I sat in the back of the Nassau Hall Room at the New York Hilton and allowed myself a little bit of a smile. In front of me were row upon row of members of the General Practice Section, listening attentively. These were our colleagues from all over the State, who had descended on New York to participate in our Section's Annual

Meeting. We will have spring and/or fall meetings again and when we do, they will be tremendous, but until then, it is only the meeting in Midtown Manhattan that brings us together as a Section. As I spoke with members, I also noted the cities on their lapels: Bayside, Syracuse, Saratoga Springs, Rochester, etc. It was a time for our membership to interact face-to-face, catch up, trade war stories, learn something, and,

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Message from the Chair

The General Practice Section is very excited about the upcoming year. We have an ambitious agenda that I think will enhance the value of your GP Section membership, help you in your daily practice, and effect positive changes in our communities.



Lewis Tesser

First, I am pleased to announce the creation of a local GP Section Chapter in your area! The Section's Executive Committee has voted to establish regional chapters based on Judicial Departments within New York State. Through these local chapters, meetings will be held in your area concerning matters that are important to you and your practice. You can make a difference in the practice of law in New York, network in meaningful ways to enhance your practice, serve your clients more effectively; and work to en-

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incidentally, marshal up some CLE credits. And, truth be told, that was really why I was smiling. Not the CLE credits themselves, but the caliber of speaker our organizers were able to get to attend. The speakers and panels our team put together this year were remarkable in both its scope and educational value. Moreover, they did not lack for a share of state legal “boldface.” Introduced and organized by Marty Minkowitz, appellate division judges from (almost) all four Departments were there, representing the entire state in a discussion of attorney discipline, or, as the topic was called, “Four Different Departments, Four Different Approaches.”

The nearly 99-minute panel flew by, aided ably by moderator J. Richard Supple, as the large crowd paid rapt attention to the interplay of Appellate Division judges from across the state: The Hon. Luis A. Gonzalez, Presiding Justice, First Department, the Hon. Mark C. Dillon of the Second Department and the Hon. Karen K. Peters, the Presiding Justice in the Third Department. But for inclement weather in Western New York, the Hon. Eugene M. Fahey, of the Fourth Department was to have been on the panel as well (the Fourth was ably represented by Anthony Gigliotti, principal counsel for the Grievance Committee in the Fifth District). Together with Hofstra Law professor Roy Simon, the lively, crowded session breezed by. In something of a coup, the *New York Law Journal* sent a journalist who picked up on what I also thought was the most fascinating discussion of an entirely captivating discussion: the role of oral argument, or the lack thereof. Justice Dillon said that oral arguments in attorney discipline matters would throw a “monkey wrench” in how the court handled other matters, while Justice Peters opined that she loved seeing and hearing from people. “The more they speak, the more I learn,” she told the Meeting, “and that affects my decision.” You likely already knew that every Department has its own procedures and customs, but to hear the different Departments interact and engage with the audience (there were many pointed questions) was rewarding.

Though it was the centerpiece of our Annual Meeting, it was bookended by host Bill DaSilva’s always informative whirl around the latest legal developments from all corners of the world of general practice, and David Rosen’s brisk CPLR Update. It was a perfect encapsulation of everything the Section does best—engaging with issues of concern to our members, hewing fastidiously to a statewide focus, and doing it in a way that is not only informative, but engaging as well.

This is my last Chair’s message. By the time you read this, I will have long since moved on to less green pastures, and the face you’ll see in the next issue will be that of Lewis Tesser. Twelve months is an awfully brief time in which to be the Chair of any group. It may be the lifespan of a brine shrimp, but for me, it’s felt like the blink of an eye. Once you get acclimatized to the role and the responsibilities, you’re rounding the corner and heading for home. I’m certain that’s probably by design. Being Chair of the General Section is an inherently collaborative process—one is constantly working with one’s predecessor and successor to ensure continuity. I am proud of what I think has been achieved this past year. Membership has increased, particularly among younger lawyers and those in Central and Western New York. I’m delighted we have been able to broaden the reach of our Section’s membership, and I am certain that success will be carried forward in the months and years ahead. We hosted a great CLE on attorney liens and fee arbitration in Midtown Manhattan last fall, which was incredibly well received. And, of course, the abovementioned Annual Meeting, which was superb. Could we have done more? Of course, and I’ll have the next few years to contemplate roads not taken and ideas not pursued. But I am very proud of what we did do and what we were able to accomplish.

I, like many of you, have spent the past few years evangelizing for the General Practice Section. How it’s the potpourri of State Bar sections, representing not only the interests of solo and small firm practitioners but, by extension, also keeping *all* lawyers abreast of the areas in which they might practice, which is almost all of them. From real estate to immigration, tax to intellectual property, estates to matrimonial law, the General Practice Section represents the needs of lawyers who have clients with the widest variety of needs. It has been an honor to be able to serve at the fore of this remarkable Section, and I envy the individuals who will appear in this space in the coming years. I, and they, serve the interest of a wonderful, brilliant community of the finest legal minds in New York.

Zachary J. Abella