

Message from the Outgoing Chair

The start of the new year heralds new leadership for our Section. On January 16, at the Section's Annual Meeting at the New York Hilton Midtown in New York City, Robert M. Harper of Farrell Fritz, P.C., took the helm as our new Chair. Congratulations and clear sailing, Rob! Similarly, please join me in congratulating: Jill Choate Beier of Beier & Associates, PLLC, who is our new Chair-elect; Jennifer F. Hillman of Ruskin Moscou Faltischeck, P.C., who is our new Secretary; Laurence Keiser of Stern Keiser & Panke, who is our new Treasurer; as well as all of our new District Representatives, At Large, Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Without their leadership and dedication, our Section would be incalculably poorer and I am so very pleased to have this opportunity on behalf of all our members to wish them well and thank them for all of the excellent work they do.



Speaking of our recently concluded Annual Meeting, it was a real pleasure to see so many of you there—our Section's attendance was nearly 500 registrants! Chaired by Carl Merino of Day Pitney LLP, the CLE program this year centered on key issues impacting estate planning of cross-border clients. The Honorable John M. Czygier, Jr. was the keynote speaker at the meeting luncheon and delivered his remarks with his trademark wit and usual aplomb. Just prior to his remarks, I had the honor to bestow the Russell A. Taylor Award upon Judge Czygier. Not awarded since 2014, this recognition is bestowed upon a member who has served our Section with steadfast dedication and who

has significantly contributed to the excellence of the probate bar, a description which, of course, fits Judge Czygier to a T. It was a pleasure, too, to recognize Lisa Bataille, our Section's representative in the NYSBA, with an award thanking her for her unfailing loyalty and support throughout her many years of service to our Section.

On the legislative front, I am delighted to report that we achieved passage of two legislative proposals that our Section had advocated for in 2018. Congratulations to Lois Bladykas, who drafted and advocated for a proposal to amend EPTL 5-1.1-A(d)(1) to clarify the notification provisions of filed spousal election in the absence of a court-appointed fiduciary. And congratulations to Ilene Cooper and Rob Harper, who originated and championed a proposal to amend EPTL 11-1.7 to prohibit *inter vivos* trustees from having exoneration clauses for failure to exercise reasonable care, similar to the prohibition for testamentary trustees. Also, heaps of thanks are due to Georgiana Slade and Katie Lynagh, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Section's Legislation Committee, Jill Beier; Chair-elect of the Section, and Kevin Kerwin, NYSBA legislative liaison, for their advocacy and work with the legislature and Governor's staff to ensure legislative victory for our Section's proposals. The past year was a busy one for our Committees and 2019 is shaping up to be the same, with well over a dozen legislative proposals being advocated by our Section.

Finally, it has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as Chair of our wonderful Section this past year. Here's to a productive and happy year ahead for all our members. Excelsior!

Natalia Murphy

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