

LOUISIANA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

11:30 a.m. • January 21, 2014
Louisiana Bar Center, New Orleans

Participants:

In Person:

Derrick Edwards
Franchesca Hamilton-Acker
Chauntis T. Jenkins
Kelly McNeil Legier
Michael R. Robinson
Hon. Max. N. Tobias

Video Conference & Phone:

Paul S. Balanon
Christopher B. Hebert
Comm'r Quintillis K. Lawrence
Luis A. Leitzelar
V. Elaine Patin
J. Larry Shea

The meeting was called to order at 11:40 a.m., with Co-Chair Chauntis Jenkins presiding over the meeting. Co-Chair Luis Leitzelar was present.

I. HOUSEKEEPING

- A. Judge Max Tobias moved and Christopher Hebert seconded to approve the minutes from the August 20, 2013 meeting. The motion passed without objection.
- B. Minority Involvement Section Task Force. The new officers for the LSBA Minority Involvement Section were elected and installed on December 12th. They are as follows: Demarcus Gordon (chair); Cashauna Hill (vice-chair); Ray Augustin (secretary); April Davenport (treasurer); and Sharonda Williams (immediate past chair).
- C. MCCA Diversity Academy. The event occurred November 15th. It was well-attended with about 50 attorneys participated the Academy. Judge Tobias added that the reception at Phelps Dunbar was well attended by about 35 people.

II. DIVERSITY COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Conclave & Workshops

Conclave. Mr. Leitzelar reported on the status of the 2014 Diversity Conclave preparation. The Seventh Annual Conclave on Diversity in the Legal Profession is scheduled for March 21, 2014, at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel (2 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA 70140). This year's theme is "Inclusive Professionalism: Harnessing the Power of Our Differences." The program agenda with speakers and presentations descriptions was disseminated before the meeting. Dr. Arin Reeves confirmed last week as the keynote speaker, and Vernā Myers is confirmed as the workshop facilitator. The program includes four morning breakout sessions and both professionalism and ethics hours are available. The program has already been approved for 7.50 CLE hours.

Workshop. Ms. Legier reported on the other workshops. The LSBA provided over 30 presentations within local and specialty bar associations' existing CLE programs

as well as several LSBA CLEs. A Roundtable Discussion occurred at the Louisiana Bar Center on December 13th. A free diversity CLE, titled “The Complexity of Professionalism in a World of Difference,” will occur during the LSBA Midyear meeting; Dianne Mouton-Allen will facilitate the discussion with Dr. Stuart. Ms. Legier is scheduling a *Train the LSBA Diversity Facilitator* training in Shreveport. This will be scheduled in conjunction with a Roundtable Discussion that is being planned for Shreveport with President-Elect Larry Shea’s law firm. Further, the Louisiana Judicial College allowed two presentations during its Judicial College last week. Ms. Legier also noted that Mr. Shea is committed to having a diversity keynote speaker during the 2014 LSBA Summer School/Annual Meeting. Mr. Shea added that Former ABA President Robert Grey (the first African American ABA president) is confirmed to speak during the LSBA Annual Meeting regarding the anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. Other diversity-related presentations are also being planned for the annual meeting and summer school.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Chauntis Jenkins and Luis Leitzelar will write a letter to the LSBA CLE Committee Chairs offering diversity/inclusion topics for future LSBA CLEs and stressing the importance of ensuring that diverse speakers are included in major LSBA CLE events.

B. Disabilities Outreach

Ms. Jenkins raised questions regarding the planning of the 2014 Disabilities Summit. The group discussed pros and cons regarding hosting the program in Baton Rouge. The consensus was to host the program on October 23, 2014, in New Orleans and to attempt a Baton Rouge program in 2015. The group discussed the need for developing outreach to children with disabilities to get them to attend the Disabilities Summit.

- **ACTION ITEMS:** Derrick Edwards will contact schools regarding possible participation by children with disabilities. Ms. Legier will contact the U.S. Attorney’s office about using their office again for the 2014 Summit. Ms. Hamilton-Acker will forward contact information regarding an LSBA Children’s Committee member who works with issues concerning children with disabilities.

C. Diversity Communications

Ms. Jenkins provided a report regarding the stalled diversity video project. The group discussed options to renew this project. The consensus was that the Committee should identify a person with video editing expertise to assist with this project. Ms. Jenkins also reported that the disabilities bookmarks are in development.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Derrick Edwards and Elaine Patin will solicit estimates from communication/video professionals who might be able to assist with the video project. Ms. Legier will follow up with a new LSBA member, who has a family member or friend who might be able to assist with the project.

D. Diversity Awards

Franchesca Hamilton-Acker gave the report for the subcommittee. No new nominations for the Human Rights and Trailblazer Awards have been submitted. Ms.

Legier added that the Conclave Subcommittee has recommended that the Southwest Louisiana Bar Association receive the Guardian Award recognition because of its responsiveness to invitations to have diversity/inclusion presentations within its CLE programs. The group discussed efforts to alert the local and specialty bars about the award as well as ideas for disseminating information for the Guardian Award. The group also brainstormed possible Trailblazer and Human Rights award recipients. Judge Tobias noted that Mark Moreau, who is dying of cancer, might be a good nominee. Judge Tobias moved and Ms. Hamilton-Acker seconded to extend all the award deadlines to February 7, 2014. The motion passed without objection.

- **ACTION ITEMS:** Ms. Legier will arrange for an email communication to be disseminated directly to the local and specialty bar associations regarding the Guardian Award and to ask LSBA President Richard Leefe to make an announcement during the LSBA Midyear Meeting about the awards.

E. Outreach to Law Firms & Courts

Mr. Quintillis Lawrence gave the report for the subcommittee. We have approximately 313 signatories across the state. That figure reflects 133 law firms/offices; 23 courts; 106 individual judges; 44 individual attorneys; 2 corporate counsel; and 5 bar associations. LSBA President Richard Leefe has agreed to execute the letter with several corporate counsel. The subcommittee also is developing a diversity/inclusion toolkit of resources modeled after the one available on the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) website. The subcommittee is exploring a suggestion from Dennis Kelly regarding legal collaborations with businesses in Haiti that could promote a deeper understanding of diversity for participating attorneys. An exploration conference call is scheduled for February 4th. Judge Tobias added that he sent 300 letters in November to individual judges who had not executed the Statement. About 15 judges executed the Statement in response to the letter. Judge Tobias noted that several judges had a problem with the Statement because of the terminology within the Statement regarding “business” and because some thought it was unnecessary because judges are already “fair and impartial.” Judge Tobias suggested that another judge may receive a better response if he/she sent a letter to the judges next year encouraging them to execute the Statement. He has been advocating for diversity for so long that his message may no longer be effective. The group discussed revisiting with the Louisiana Supreme Court the issue of having the Court execute the LSBA Statement of Diversity Principles. The group discussed timing issues. No resolution was reached.

F. Integration

Ms. Jenkins noted that a new chair is needed for this subcommittee. She reported that the proposed reporting forms for the LSBA Committees and Sections were included in the meeting materials for the November 6th meeting. The group discussed concerns from Larry Shea that revisions to the Section’s reporting form might require approval by the LSBA House of Delegates. This issue was tabled to give members an opportunity to review the proposed forms and submit comments.

- **ACTION ITEMS:** Ms. Legier will investigate the required procedure for revising the reporting forms. Committee members should review the proposed forms and email proposed changes by February 15th. Anyone interested in serving as chair of this committee should contact Kelly Legier immediately.

G. Pipeline

Ms. Legier gave the subcommittee's report. The 2014 program will occur June 9 – 27, 2014. Information about the program has been disseminated to the high schools and an online application has been created. The three-week program is essentially the same as last year. Invitations will be disseminated soon for speakers and field trips. A \$6,250 grant from the Louisiana Bar Foundation will cover the expenses of the student stipends for 25 students. Additionally, the LSBA will co-host with Loyola's and Tulane's Black Law Student Associations a two-day workshop at the Loyola Law School on two Saturdays (February 1st and 15th). The online application has been established, and information is being disseminated to the colleges and universities in the area. The program, which is the same as last year's program, will have the same format and presenters. Kaplan has again donated a \$1,600 scholarship for the program; students who attend both days of the program are eligible for the drawing for the scholarship.

H. LGBT

Paul Balanon gave the report of the subcommittee. The subcommittee is exploring pro bono entities that provide LGBT services. The goal is to make the information available on those entities' websites. The group is also working on an initiative to engage LGBT law students with a networking reception. A law firm (Robein, Urann, Spencer, Picard & Cangemi APLC) has already agreed to sponsor the reception for \$500. Paul Balanon moved and Judge Tobias seconded to host a reception on April 10th from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The motion passed without objection. The subcommittee is also making plans to host another LGBT CLE.

I. Job Fair

Mr. Leitzelar gave the report for the committee. LSBA Minority Involvement Section is having its first general body meeting with its new officers on February 4th. Details regarding the Symposium/Fair will be developed at that time. The 2014 Symposium/Fair is scheduled to occur at Southern; however, Southern has not sent proposed dates. The planning committee is awaiting a date in August 2014. The MIS Internship Fair will occur virtually again this year.

J. Community Outreach

Ms. Jenkins reported that a subcommittee chair is needed. Comm'r Lawrence volunteered, and it was moved and seconded that Chris Hebert be appointed co-chair of this subcommittee. The motion passed. A subcommittee meeting will be scheduled to explore the pending walk/run proposal as well as other community outreach initiatives.

K. LSBA Outreach

Ms. Legier reported on the New Admittee welcoming activities that have occurred since the last meeting: New Orleans (11/14) and Lafayette (1/10). The Baton Rouge (1/29) and Lake Charles (1/30) events are planned next week.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Brunch Honoring first 100 women lawyers.** New Orleans Bar Association Brunch for Barristers event on March 20, 2014, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Ms. Jenkins explained the event and requested that the LSBA provide a financial donation as well as co-host the event. Judge Tobias moved and Ms. Hamilton-Acker seconded to co-host the event. In the event that the LSBA leadership must approve this co-hosting role, then the Committee recommends that the LSBA leadership approve this co-hosting role.

B. **Collaborative Outreach to Haiti.** Ms. Jenkins reiterated that Dennis Kelly has proposed an initiative that the Outreach to Law Firms and Courts Subcommittee is exploring. A subcommittee meeting with Dennis Kelly is scheduled for February 4th.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Jenkins solicited announcements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at approximately 1:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


