Message from the chair

By Robert J. Shea

For those of you who have not been tracking your Pennsylvania Bar Association calendar, the next Committee/Section Day is May 10. The Government Lawyers Committee will meet at 9:15 a.m. For planning purposes you need to note that we are going to be in Lancaster at the Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square. I recognize that since many of our members are Harrisburg-based, the change in venue may pose logistical difficulties for some folks, but hopefully we can still muster a good turnout. The early morning time slot was picked with the thought that it will be less disruptive for those of you who need to build your attendance at the meeting into your schedule for the rest of the work day.

This Committee/Section Day will mark the conclusion of my tenure as the chair of the Government Lawyers Committee. It has been a most enjoyable, if at times challenging, three years. I want to thank our Executive Board, subcommittees and all of our other members who have been involved in the committee’s activities for your efforts and support over this time. Likewise, my thanks to Mike Shatto, our PBA liaison, for all of his hard work on behalf of the committee – not to mention his abundant good humor and patience. Thanks, too, to the rest of the PBA’s wonderful staff whose efforts make what we do possible.

The Government Lawyers Committee is a wonderful organization. We add value, both to the PBA and the community at large. I pledge my continued support and involvement and I hope you will too.

Hatfield-Wise named 2011 Government Lawyer of the Year

Joyce Hatfield-Wise, solicitor for Washington County Children and Youth Services, received the 2011 Government Lawyer of the Year Award by the Pennsylvania Bar Association Government Lawyers Committee.

The award, presented to Hatfield-Wise during a Nov. 17 ceremony at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg East, honors a government lawyer who has made a significant singular contribution or has dedicated his or her career to outstanding service to the profession for the benefit of the public or a government entity.

Hatfield-Wise has served as solicitor for Washington County Children and Youth Services since 1998.

In 2004, Hatfield-Wise was a co-founder of the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Solicitors Association, which now has approximately 60 county children welfare agency members and more than 100 solicitor members. She is the current president of the organization.

Hatfield-Wise recently worked to secure a Federal Criminal Justice Act grant of more than $200,000 for the ChildFirst Pennsylvania program, which will provide forensic interview training to prosecutors, law enforcement officials, child welfare caseworkers, prosecutors, child protective attorneys, medical personnel and mandated reporters of abuse who provide investigating professionals with essential information about child abuse. ChildFirst

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Subcommittee report

Professional Development Subcommittee

The Professional Development Subcommittee (chaired by Jayne Blake and Jerry Mackarevich) assists in arranging guest speakers for committee meetings and lunch and learns on a variety of topics and panel discussions at Pennsylvania law schools to present graduates who might be considering government practice with an insider perspective. This spring, presentations will be held at the University of Pittsburgh, Widener School of Law-Harrisburg Campus, Villanova Law School and Temple University. The subcommittee is always interested in any graduates of the law schools who might be interested in participating in a presentation. The attendance at the panel discussions has been very good.

Government Lawyer of the Year

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Pennsylvania seeks to become the lead program to train first responders investigating child abuse incidents. Pennsylvania is the 18th state to launch a ChildFirst program.

Hatfield-Wise is a longtime member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association Children’s Rights Committee, which studies child-related issues, monitors and makes recommendations regarding legislation that affects the interests of children, and develops programs that educate lawyers about effective advocacy for children. Hatfield-Wise served as the group’s chairperson from 2004 through 2006.
Pa. general counsel speaks to government lawyers

New commonwealth General Counsel Stephen Aichele admits that he did not know what to expect when he accepted the job as Gov. Tom Corbett’s top lawyer as well as the head of a firm of over 500 lawyers. He had previously worked in private practice at a large Philadelphia law firm, primarily in real estate, bond development and as a managing partner. He told the Government Lawyers Committee at the PBA’s Committee/Section Day meeting in November that he had had “varied experiences with government lawyers” during his career. Upon arriving, Aichele found “a terrific wellspring of talent and an organization designed to accomplish the governor’s mission.” He found challenges unique to the public sector, as well, such as two death warrants that had to be dealt with during his first two days on the job.

Aichele encouraged government lawyers to be excited about what they do, whether their area of focus is narrow or broad. His goals for the Office of General Counsel can be summarized by three E’s: excellence, energy and enthusiasm, which means striving for excellence in terms of trying to be the best; being energetic and at the top of your game; and having enthusiasm that is infectious and conveys itself to others. “Enthusiasm moves toward energy and excellence.” The opposite of any of those traits will be apparent to others as well.

Aichele is “thrilled with the participation of government lawyers in disaster relief as well as pro bono projects.” He noted that the participation of government lawyers in bar association activities is “vital.” Such participation “helps shape the perception of government lawyers to outside lawyers.” One particular area in that regard is Continuing Legal Education programs sponsored by the Pennsylvania Bar Institute, through which government lawyers can help train outside lawyers on dealing with governmental agencies. Aichele added, “I hear only good things about this organization Office of General Counsel.”

Commonwealth General Counsel Stephen Aichele addresses the Government Lawyers Committee in November.
Annual holiday reception a success

The Government Lawyers Committee, with the Administrative Law Section, hosted its annual holiday reception on Dec. 13, 2011, at the headquarters of the Pennsylvania Bar Association. This year’s event was highly successful, with approximately 60 members in attendance, including many judges of the Commonwealth Court. As is the tradition at the GLC/ALS Holiday Reception, canned food donations were solicited from our membership for the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. This year, representatives of the Food Bank were on hand to thank the GLC/ALS for the donation, as well as to share in a festive evening.
PBA government lawyers ‘Lend A Hand’

Just before Thanksgiving, members of the PBA Government Lawyers Committee (GLC) rolled up their sleeves and teamed with a Camp Hill-based nonprofit organization to help flood victims in central Pennsylvania.

The GLC members worked with Lend A Hand, an organization founded in 1989 as a local disaster response and assistance program. Lend A Hand has been responding to natural disasters throughout the country since its inception, assisting people suffering extraordinary hardship as the result of natural disasters. Lend A Hand’s work is made possible entirely through the generosity of volunteers who are willing to actively help the uninsured and the underinsured to recover their homes from the damage of wind, water and fire.

Help was needed in the fall of 2011, when Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee dumped between 6 and 16 inches of rain across central Pennsylvania. As a result, about 4,000 homes suffered extensive water damage. Lend A Hand responded by suspending its national missions and focusing its attention in central Pennsylvania. Crews worked to remove water, mud and debris from basements and living rooms.

The GLC group joined Lend A Hand in its quest to help a Lebanon-area family recover their flood-damaged home. The work was intense, but the rewards great. The family was immensely appreciative of the efforts.

Lend A Hand also assists with reconstruction of damaged homes and is currently working on local homes. Due to the volume of requests for assistance, Lend A Hand expects to continue working in central Pennsylvania area over the next year or two. The GLC plans to form another group of volunteers in the spring to assist on a reconstruction project. If you would like to participate, please send an email to Carol Mowery at camowery@pa.gov or to Jon Koltash at jokoltash@pa.gov.

To learn more about Lend A Hand, visit www.lendahand.net.
In the spotlight

Speaking Engagements

Gerard M. Mackarevich, deputy chief counsel to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry’s Unemployment Compensation Board of Review Division, co-instructed a breakout session on unemployment compensation practice during the Employment Law Institute-West continuing legal education program sponsored by the Pennsylvania Bar Institute in November in Pittsburgh. With John C. Artz of Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart PC, Mackarevich presented “What You Need to Know About UC Referee Hearings.” The pair will repeat the presentation in Philadelphia on April 19-20 at Employment Law Institute-East.

Elections/Appointments

Susan Hensel, director of licensing for the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board, was elected president of the International Association of Gaming Regulators (IAGR). IAGR is an organization of more than 180 gaming regulators from gaming jurisdictions around the world who communicate on a continuing basis in an effort to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of gaming regulation. The association also convenes an annual conference.

Jessie L. Smith, formerly special deputy secretary for dog law enforcement at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, has rejoined the Office of Attorney General, where she is a senior deputy attorney general in the health care section. Last fall, Smith obtained federal certification and funding for a USDA agricultural mediation program for Pennsylvania. Smith serves as the unit county governor on the Pennsylvania Bar Association Board of Governors, one of two government attorneys on this 26-member board, and the vice chair of the PBA Diversity Team.

Jonathan W. Kunkel, assistant counsel to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, has been appointed president-elect of the Dauphin County Bar Association. He will assume the role in January 2013. Kunkel recently acted as the course planning chair and a faculty member for the Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s program titled, “Administrative Litigation for the General Practitioner.”

Miscellaneous

Teresa Lazo, assistant counsel with the Department of State, is teaching a three-credit animal law course at Penn State University/Dickinson School of Law during the Spring 2012 semester. Lazo serves the department as counsel to the State Board of Veterinary Medicine and State Board of Medicine.

Do you have ‘In the spotlight’ news?

Send your news of recent appointments, honors, speaking engagements — and family news — to Carol Mowery at camowery@state.pa.us, or submit your news via a quick click on the “Newsletters” page of the Government Lawyers Committee Web site at www.pabar.org/public/committees/govtlaw/pubs/newsletters.asp.

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