As I write this, I just completed a swing through the west, with stops in Pittsburgh and the Laurel Highlands, including an enjoyable presidents’ dinner with bar leaders in Bedford and neighboring counties. It is always a pleasure catching up with county bar leaders and swapping notes. We also reviewed legislative efforts and the new member benefits we are proud to offer. See the latest on the benefits and services available to PBA members in the supplement to this issue of the magazine.

Next it was off to the Chester County Bench-Bar Conference, which was a very nice event at a new venue. We have additional bar presidents’ dinners scheduled in the fall, so I may soon be in a town near you.

On Sept. 17 the PBA joined in the national “Celebrate the Constitution” event, this year marking the 225th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. More importantly, the event provided us lawyers and judges a wonderful opportunity to teach young people about the importance of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. One such program, titled “What it Says, What it Means,” was held at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, where thousands of students received free admission and toured the array of exhibits. PBA members and students from Hollidaysburg enjoyed speaking about the meaning of each of the articles of the Constitution and the various amendments.

I had the pleasure of summarizing the rights guaranteed under the First Amendment. Many thanks to the volunteer lawyers, as well as to PBA Pro Bono Coordinator David Trevaskis for pulling the program together and to PBA Education/Special Projects Coordinator Susan Etter for supporting our civics education and juvenile justice programs.

The PBA hosted a news conference in the Capitol Rotunda on Oct. 1 to promote public awareness concerning child abuse reporting. This important public education campaign, staged by the PBA’s Community and Public Relations and Children’s Rights committees, was supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Bar Trust. The news conference featured representatives from the committees and from the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and the state Department of Public Welfare’s Office of Children, Youth and Families. The PBA sponsored a toll-free hotline for citizens to use in requesting an informational brochure on how to report child abuse, with the brochure also posted on the PBA website. The PBA and local bar associations distributed thousands of these brochures advising citizens of the available resources for reporting child abuse.

I am pleased to report that 36 local bar associations partnered with the PBA on this important public-awareness initiative (child abuse reporting). In addition to the brochures, there were more than 150 newspaper notices placed in print media across the commonwealth, all in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association Foundation.

I had the honor of appearing on the Pennsylvania Cable Network’s “On the Issues” program … to discuss the many ways our members contribute their time and expertise to pro bono service across the commonwealth (and to speak) about the important work of the PBA Task Force on the Code of Judicial Conduct that will recommend various updates to the code.

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On a related note, I thank the hardworking members of the Pennsylvania Bar Insurance Fund and Trust who spend countless volunteer hours behind the scenes to ensure that the professional liability insurance products offered to members are the best available in the legal marketplace.

Kudos to the PBA Workers’ Compensation Law Section for an outstanding fall meeting in Hershey. The section leadership and planning committee developed an excellent lineup of programming. I also commend the section for the dedicated effort to secure and roll out to practitioners in the field the new Workers’ Compensation Law Specialty Certification program, by which certified applicants can communicate this credential to the public. The section’s Certification Committee has been hard at work developing the program, with the first exam expected to be given in March 2013.

Honorble mention to our PBA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Committee leadership for their initiative in urging that the governor proclaim the third Thursday in October as Conflict Resolution Day. In the spirit of Abraham Lincoln’s guidance for practicing lawyers to help their neighbors compromise their disputes amicably, the committee has helped to promote public awareness of the availability of lawyers as mediators and arbitrators and to urge creative, peaceful means of dispute resolution in families and in schools and other community settings.

I had the honor of appearing on the Pennsylvania Cable Network’s “On the Issues” program in September to discuss the many ways our members contribute their time and expertise to pro bono service across the commonwealth. I also spoke about the important work of the PBA Task Force on the Code of Judicial Conduct that will recommend various updates to the code. A majority of states have already updated their judicial codes to address ABA Model Rule amendments over the past decade or have review committees in place.

Finally, as this issue goes to press, I hope you enjoyed joining us at the PBA Diversity Summit in Pittsburgh on Oct. 26 or at the fall retreat of the PBA Commission on Women in the Profession in Hershey on Nov. 2-3. A lot of effort goes into planning these events, which provide first-rate programs combined with excellent networking opportunities.

Thomas G. Wilkinson Jr.
PBA President