

2013 National Conference of Women's Bar Associations
Women's Bar Leadership Summit: *Gender Equity: Moving the Bar Forward*
August 9, 2013
Bar Association of San Francisco
Notes Abstracted from Morning "Best Practices" Session
Compiled by Lindsay D'Andrea

Judge Marilyn Teeter of the **United States Immigration Court** spoke in support of the **National Association of Women Judges**. Judge Teeter stated that NAWJ is a great support organization and provided great mentorship when she transitioned from an EEOC judge to an immigration court judge. She added that you do not have to be a judge or a woman to join the organization. She said that it is a great organization for individuals interested in becoming judges.

Jennifer Lewin spoke on behalf of the **American Bar Association's Division for Bar Services**. Ms. Lewin stated that the **Division** collects information about trends and best practices from across the country and uses that information to assist members. The Division maintains a bank of sample policies, such as sample document retention policies and sample whistleblower policies. Further, the Division produces a publication called the *Bar Leader*, provides leadership training through its "Bar Leadership Institute," organizes trainings for boards, and offers consulting to bar associations in various areas, including facilitating strategic planning.

Jennifer Allen provided information about Milwaukee, Wisconsin-based **Association for Women Lawyers**. The Association hosts an event entitled "Get Your Gavel," which trains women on how to get appointed or elected to the bench. In addition to the nuts and bolts of applications, the program trains women on how to prepare for debates, how to deal with diverse personalities, and effective public speaking, to name a few.

Laura Sullivan of Munger Tolles Olson spoke in support of "**Food from the Bar**," which is a fundraising effort for local food banks. Law firms participate by donating funds, volunteering time or donating food. Ms. Sullivan urged individuals to get involved in their community's "Food from the Bar" event or organize one, if there is not an active group in their area.

Mira Mdivani shared information about the **Kansas Women Attorneys Association's** organizing efforts for Kansas City's "Food from the Bar" event. **Ms. Mdivani** stated that the Women Attorneys Association reached out to women's bar associations and specialty practice bar associations and raised a lot of money, food and good will in the community.

Misty Blair offered information about **Texas Women Lawyers'** efforts to engage female attorneys. **Ms. Blair** stated that **Texas Women Lawyers** reaches out to local women's bar associations, host CLE events which aim to balance practical legal skills training with information about diversity inclusiveness, organize women's breakfasts and plan various charity events.

Mary Jane Simon of the California Attorney General's Office shared information about **Women Lawyers of Alameda County**. **Ms. Simon** highlighted their success in getting 3 women on the bench last year. She also spoke about what a supportive and caring environment that the organization fosters.

Betsy Berkhemer-Credaire from the **National Association of Women Business Owners** recommended Anne Doyle's book, *Powering Up*. Ms. Berkemer-Credaire also discussed her own book, *Board Game*, which provides information about how women can get on corporate boards.

Sherrie Phillips spoke about events hosted by the **Alabama State Bar Association Women Lawyers Section**. The Women Lawyers Section visits major cities throughout Alabama and hosts events with diverse groups of lawyers, both in terms of demographics and practice areas. The events allow individuals to share their best practices with one another. Further, attendees can ask to be paired with a mentor and the organization will match them.

Athena Dixon discussed the **Association of Women Lawyers'** (of Kansas City) event "Pathways to the Bench." The event aims to get more women on appointment panels.

Cindi Hall Ouzts spoke about the **South Carolina Women Lawyers Association's** activities. **Ms. Hall Ouzts** described an event that they hosted in conjunction with the League of Women Voters to educate and urge legislators to appoint more women to the bench. Women Lawyers also hosted "Equal Pay Day" with the University of South Carolina Law School and the "Vision for Success" event which aims to get more women on boards. They also provide a scholarship for attendance at a diversity program at Furman University and are committed to mentorship. **Ms. Hall Ouzts** showed off the ladder pins that members of her organization wear to demonstrate their commitment to mentorship and leaving the "ladder down," for the next generation of women lawyers and leaders.

Laura Possesky from the **Women's Bar Association of DC** spoke about the organization's participation in the "Gender Equity Task Force Tool Kit" program. Further, she described the organization's initiative on the retention and advancement of women through their program, "Pathways to Success in a Changing Economy." **Ms. Possesky** also stated that the Women's Bar Association utilized the ABA Division for Bar Services' consulting assistance in formulating a new strategic plan.

Neda Mansoorian and **Kelly Robbins** shared information about **California Women Lawyers'** events throughout the year. **Ms. Mansoorian** discussed the annual conference, annual dinner and the organization's popular program, "So, You Want to be a Judge?" The program seeks to demystify the judicial application process. **Ms. Robbins** added that California Women Lawyers rates participants' judicial applications and passes that information along to the Governor's Appointments Secretary. The "So, You Want to be a Judge?" program is held throughout the state so individuals can attend in other cities, if they do not want their intentions to seek judicial office to be public.

Rachel Winkler and **Reda Hicks** provided information about the **Military Spouse JD Network**, which is a two-year old international bar association of military spouse attorneys. The Network's biggest initiative centers on advocating for licensing accommodations from state bars for military spouses. **Ms. Winkler** and **Ms. Hicks** explained that military spouse attorneys, the majority of which are women, face substantial licensing challenges which greatly affects their ability to obtain gainful employment. The Network has obtained licensing accommodations from 5 state bars. 13 more are currently pending and anticipated to pass.

Kathi Rastetter, president of **Oregon Women Lawyers** spoke about their committee to promote diversity on the bench. The Committee gathers information on judicial appointments and elections, disseminates vacancy information, and contacts and/or recruits qualified applicants. When an individual applies, the Committee assists the applicant through the process by organizing mock interviews, and providing training manuals. The organization also hosts a “Road to the Bench” discussion panel.

A representative from the **Bar Association of San Francisco’s Justice and Diversity Center** provided information about BASF’s “Diversity Pipeline” program. The program includes the “No Glass Ceiling Initiative,” “Bay Area Minority Law Student Scholarship,” mentorship support, and informational panels on advancing women in the law.

Capt. Ann Minami of the United States Navy **JAG Corps** briefly discussed the purpose of the JAG Corps and invited attendees to speak with her about what it is like to practice law in the military and what it is like to be a woman in the military. **Capt. Minami** informed the audience that the current Judge Advocate General, the head of the JAG Corps, is a woman and that 30% of JAG attorneys are women.

Shannon Stevenson spoke on behalf of the **Colorado Women’s Bar Association’s** Professional Advancement Committee. **Ms. Stevenson** stated that the Professional Advancement Committee gives out yearly awards of recognition and monitors all awards given throughout the legal community. The Committee ensures that qualified individuals, who may not otherwise be recognized, are nominated for awards. Further, the Committee monitors awards given to judges to ensure that individuals on the bench are properly recognized.

Andrea Kramer shared information regarding the work of the **Women’s Bar Association of Massachusetts**. She discussed the Association’s establishment of a task force on female genital mutilation, which is a growing issue in the US and abroad. **Ms. Kramer** also discussed the Association’s programs on reproductive rights, initiatives to attract more senior women to the Association, and hosting of a panel on Sheryl Sandberg’s book *Lean In*. In addition, she outlined the Association’s efforts to engage individuals working outside of the law, specifically in finance and medicine.