

YOUNG LAWYERS

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THREE PRIMARY GOALS FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR OF THE YLS

As my term as chairperson for the West Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Committee begins, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself, announce my goals for the coming year and make you aware of the many projects in which the Young Lawyers Section (YLS) is involved.

I am a native of Morgantown, West Virginia and received my law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law in 2007. After graduation, I began working for Steptoe & Johnson PLLC as a litigation associate and spent the first six years of practice in the Martinsburg office. I transferred to the Charleston office in June of 2013. While in Martinsburg, I served as the District 16 Representative to the YLS Executive Committee (EC) and in May of 2012 I was elected to the secretary position. I trans-

itioned to the vice chair of the EC the following May, and my term as chairperson officially began on May 9, 2014.

I have three primary goals for the EC in the upcoming year: (1) continue and strengthen each of our existing programs; (2) complete several projects on which the Executive Committee has been working; and (3) expand the services that the YLS provides to its members.

The YLS currently has nine subcommittees assigned to specific programs covering a wide range of topics. Some of these programs are already up and running, and others are in still in the planning phase. The projects associated with these subcommittees are the focus of the first two goals. The third goal is focused on new initiatives of special interest to young lawyers.

Goal Number 1

There are several important YLS-sponsored programs that are presently in operation. One example is the Bridge-the-Gap Program. This is a mandatory course that new lawyers must complete following their admission to the West Virginia Bar. In the past, the Bridge-the-Gap Program was composed of a fixed curriculum. Over the years, the YLS has expanded the topics offered in this program so that new lawyers can tailor the curriculum to their interests. Another example is the Practice Handbook program. The Practice Handbook is composed of 39 chapters relating to both the procedural and substantive aspects of West Virginia law. The YLS is responsible for identifying new topics for inclusion in the Practice Handbook and authors to both write new chapters and periodi-

cally update existing chapters. A third example is the Lunch Time Lecture Series Program. This program provides young lawyers with an opportunity to present a legal topic of their choosing to students at the WVU College of Law. These lectures are offered at various times throughout the academic year. The YLS also has a subcommittee dedicated to social media. If you have not already done so, be sure to visit the YLS website at www.wvyoung-lawyers.com. Also, be sure to check out the “West Virginia Young Lawyer Section” Facebook page and follow us on Twitter.

In the coming year, the YLS EC will work to strengthen these programs and others by ensuring that they are relevant, accurate, up-to-date, helpful and easy to use.

Goal Number 2

In addition to the programs that are discussed above, the YLS is working on several projects that are still in the planning stages. One such project is Wills for Heroes. The Wills for Heroes project is designed to provide law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services personnel with free basic estate planning documents such as wills and powers of attorney. This project has been in the planning stages for several years due to various logistical issues but due to the hard work and persistence of several members of the YLS EC, I am hopeful that we will be in a position to hold a test run of the project in the coming months and have it up and running statewide by this time next year. Another project nearing completion is the Mentorship Program. Some young lawyers will be fortunate enough to go into practice with seasoned attorneys who are willing to take on a mentorship role. However, other young lawyers may hang their own shingle or find that the other lawyers with whom they practice are simply too busy to be a mentor. In order to provide young lawyers with a mentorship resource, the YLS EC has devised a web-based mentor-

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ship program. Once the computer programming is complete, each member of the State Bar will receive a mentorship questionnaire by email. Those that wish to participate in the mentorship program will provide certain information including their name, address and areas of practice in which they are willing to serve as mentors. The results of these questionnaires will be loaded into a searchable computer database. Once the database is online, young lawyers seeking mentorship will be able to search the database for mentors based on numerous factors such as topic area, geographical location and years of practice.

Goal Number 3

The third goal is to expand the services that the YLS provides to its members. One way to achieve this goal is to increase the YLS’s involvement with the American Bar Association’s Young Lawyer Affiliate Program. That program is composed of over 300 young lawyer associations from around the world. Participation in the ABA’s Young Lawyer Affiliate Program will enable the YLS to improve the services it already provides, identify new services geared toward young lawyers and provide young lawyer organizations from around the United States with insight into our own programs. Another area for potential expansion is the YLS’s presence at the WVU College of Law and the Appalachian School of Law. While there are some existing on-campus programs (such as the Lunch Time Lecture Series), a broader presence on these campuses will benefit law students and increase awareness of the YLS’s programs and initiatives.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our immediate Past-Chairperson Jacqueline Sikora for her leadership, dedication and hard work in the past year, and I look forward to working with the YLS EC to accomplish the goals outlined above in the coming year. **WVWL**