

Message from the Chair: Our ComFed DNA

I'm writing this on Father's Day 2019. The Spring Meeting is behind us, and our June reorganization meeting and my term as Chair of the Federal Litigation Section is ahead of us. In thinking about what I wanted to write as my first "Message from the Chair" for our *Newsletter*, it struck me that while Father's Day has become a marketing opportunity for DNA testing kits, we members of ComFed have no need for testing; our DNA is on display in our cadre of Former Chairs. I capitalize those words because being a Former Chair of ComFed is clearly a continuing position for almost everyone who has served as a Chair of the Section. They are among our most active Section members, and their advice and wisdom is actively sought by the current officer corps.



Laurel R. Kretzing

In addition to planning the June reorganization meeting, the Chair is charged with planning the Former Chairs dinner, something I had never heard of before I became Vice-Chair. The purpose of the dinner is not to celebrate the elevation of a new Chair but to give the Former Chairs an opportunity to give the new Chair their guidance and thoughts on future initiatives for the Section. In planning this year's dinner, I noted that Robert N. Holtzman, with whom I have had the privilege to serve as Chair Elect, was our 30th Chair and is now our 30th Former Chair. In addition to Robert, the vast majority of Former Chairs regularly attend our Former Chairs dinner. That's a lot of collective wisdom from some of the most talented litigators and judges in the country, and I hope I can absorb it all. But I know that if I can't take all that advice in at one time, these leaders will be around to share their thoughts with me over the coming year. I know this because I know them. Although their terms have ended, the Former Chairs have continued to be involved in the Section in one way or the other. Some regularly attend the Executive Committee meetings and the Annual and Spring Meetings, and some chair Section committees, regularly organize CLE presentations, appear as panelists on our CLE programs, or take part in our signature programs, such as Smooth Moves, the Women's Initiative Task Force, the Shira A. Scheindlin Award, and the Kaye Scholarship Program, or our mock trial program, Taking the Lead. This continued active involvement of our former leaders demonstrates the commitment they all share in making this Section a leader in the quest for diversity and the place to be to learn about and participate in the development of the broad array of topics that are encompassed by commercial and federal litigation. I'm very grateful for the continuing commitment of our Former Chairs.

However, as grateful as I am for the Former Chairs' continuing involvement, an organization can only grow and evolve and continue with the active participation of new, younger members. The need to reach out to and nurture younger lawyers has been an issue that Section leadership has been addressing for some time. Former Chair Mitch Katz was fond of saying that his job was to build the forts where Mark Berman and other Chairs that came before him planted the flags of new programming for the Section. He did this by institutionalizing and putting a structure behind the programs so that they last from year to year, and Robert Holtzman continued that mission. I'm hoping to build the fort where Robert and all the Chairs that came before him planted the flag of reaching out to younger people, by creating a new

Young Lawyers Committee within the Section. This new Committee will be a space within our Section for younger lawyers to network and develop programming and ways of communicating with each other which are meaningful to them. I'm hopeful the Young Lawyers Committee will not only be a forum for young lawyers to interact with each other but a gateway to a broader participation and a pathway to leadership in the Section as a whole. The most important thing we can do as a Section is to pass on our DNA, which is embedded in excellence in the legal profession, to the next generation of leaders so that our mission can continue for another 30 years and beyond.

Looking forward to the events for the upcoming year, I am privileged to announce that the Shira A. Scheindlin Award for Excellence in the Courtroom and the Honorable Judith S. Kaye Commercial and Federal Litigation Scholarship will once again be presented in the Ceremonial Courtroom of the Southern District of New York at 500 Pearl Street on the evening of November 13, 2019. This is always a moving event as we honor outstanding veteran female litigators and award up and coming female litigators. I look forward to meeting the 2019 awardees who, I am sure, will all be very talented. I also look forward to our Annual Meeting on January 29, 2020, during Bar week, and our Spring Meeting at the Otesaga Resort in Cooperstown, New York, from May 1 through May 3, 2020.

Lots more programming is being planned throughout the upcoming year, so please stay tuned.

Laurel R. Kretzing