

OREGON STATE BAR
WORKERS' COMPENSATION SECTION
ANNUAL REPORT – 2012

Activities and Accomplishments:

The section held its annual business meeting on May 11, 2012 at the Salishan Spa and Golf Resort at Gleneden Beach, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Dale C. Johnson.

New officers and executive committee members were elected for 2013-2014.

Seminars:

The section sponsored two seminars in 2012. The first, in conjunction with the annual business meeting, was held at Salishan on May 11 and May 12, 2012. The keynote speaker was Chief Judge of the Oregon Court of Appeals, the Honorable David V. Brewer. The seminar was approved for 8.00 general credits and 1.00 ethics credits and featured the Honorable Michael McShane, Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge, who spoke on evidence from a judge's perspective, medical experts Timothy Borman, D.O. (lumbar spine anatomy and pathology) and Gary D. Olbrich, M.D. (addictions and addictive behavior), and the Honorable Robert Wollheim, Judge of the Oregon Court of Appeals, who spoke on course and scope analysis.

The second seminar, the Bench/Bar Professionalism Forum, was held at the Oregon Gardens in Silverton, Oregon on November 9, 2012. The keynote speaker for the section's annual ethics seminar was former Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court, the Honorable Paul J. De Muniz. Other presenters included Scott Morrill, from the Oregon State Bar's General Counsel's office (ethics update) and John Casalino of the Multnomah County District Attorney's office (child abuse reporting). The seminar was approved for 1.75 ethics credits and 1.0 child abuse reporting credit.

Newsletters:

The section's New Technologies standing committee issued its Tech News Tuesday (subtitled: workers' compensation practice in a paperless environment), each month this year, edited by the committee's chairperson, executive committee member Robert Guarrasi. The newsletter provided section members with recent information from the Workers' Compensation Board and others on the topic of paperless practice, including updates on administrative rule changes and the board's web portal (ecomboard).

Budget:

Under the guidance of treasurer, Julie Masters, who will leave the executive committee at the end of this year after many years of excellent service, and with the proactive approaches of the Salishan Conference committee (Linda Conratt, chair, and Sally Anne Curey, past-chair), the section reversed the fund depletion trend of recent years: the section's expenses came in under budget this year. The incoming treasurer, Ronald Bohy, met with Julie Masters to assure a smooth transition and to formulate the budget for 2013. The executive committee approved the new budget and was able to renew its commitment to the Campaign for Equal Justice.

The executive committee decided not to seek an increase in section membership dues. The executive committee decided to survey the section membership at the Bench/Bar Forum in November to see if the membership would consider a small admission fee for the traditionally free ethics seminar, particularly if a child abuse reporting credit were included every three years.

Legislative Issues:

The section is not proposing any legislation in the next legislative session. The section's standing committees, particularly the Access to Justice Committee, chaired by William Repogle, who will complete his term in December, 2012, and the Legislative/Rules Committee, chaired by James Edmunson (section legislative contact) and Administrative Law Judge Nicholas Sencer, are looking at access to justice issues and substantive changes to the workers' compensation law that will be discussed by the executive committee in 2013, with possible referral to the Bar's Public Affairs Committee.

Matters considered / Matters pending:

A review of the accomplishments and goals of the executive committee's standing committees this year can be found on the section's website under the minutes for the executive committee meeting of November 9, 2012.

The executive committee met monthly except for the month of August. A final meeting for the year, to which newly appointed or elected members for 2013 were invited, will take place at the Bar's offices on December 14, 2012.

During the executive committee meetings, following reports by the chair and the treasurer, the committee liaisons reported to the committee about their standing committees' ongoing projects, progress, and goals for the coming year.

The mission statements of each committee are reflected in the minutes and were discussed in last year's annual report.

The executive committee exercised greater control over the activities of its standing committees this year. This was done to correct a perception that the standing committees were free to exercise their best judgment in all matters without accountability to, or ultimate approval by, the executive committee. While this change was necessary and appropriate, there have been disadvantages to taking more control, particularly when the creativity, expertise and energy of standing committees are restrained and projects are slowed down.

Even with this greater supervision, the standing committees were able to move forward in their missions and successfully met most goals for 2012. The committees will continue current projects in 2013 and are designing new ones as well.

Recommendations for 2013:

The goals for 2013 will include the planning and presentation of two excellent and informative seminars: at the Salishan Resort in May and at the Oregon Gardens in November. The other standing committees will continue their work promoting new technologies, providing means for greater access to justice, encouraging younger lawyers in the bar to develop a workers' compensation practice, evaluating current statutory and rule changes/suggested changes and meeting other needs of the section membership.

Other comments:

The executive committee recognizes and is grateful for the many contributions by its departing members: Treasurer Julie Masters, Past-Chair Matthew Fisher, and Member-at-large Douglas Rock.

Respectfully submitted: