**EC Chair Report to Section Members, October 30, 2020**

By ALJ Bruce D. Smith, Chair, Executive Committee

I begin this report by offering the Section’s warm congratulations to JULIE MASTERS, this year’s recipient of the Professionalism Award. Everyone who had the privilege of working with Julie understands how much she deserves this singular honor. Congratulations Julie!

When Oregon’s first Workers’ Compensation Law took effect on July 1, 1914 Oregon loggers, construction workers, farm hands, factory workers and countless others doing hazardous work faced many challenges. Among them was the difficulty of obtaining just compensation for disabling injuries, often requiring costly and protracted litigation against their employer. Before that month was over World War I had broken out in Europe, and would soon disrupt the lives of many Oregon workers and their families. By the time that war was over the Spanish flu was raging across Europe, and would cause millions of deaths worldwide, including as many as 675,000 in the United States.[[1]](#footnote-1) Over a century later we live in an age which has produced new challenges and uncertainties for Oregon workers, introducing such phrases as “the gig economy,” “social distancing,” and “essential worker.” As of October 1, 2020, Oregon workers live in a time when a diagnosis of COVID-19 disease may be presumed to have been contracted at work.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Perhaps the only safe prediction that we can make for 2021 and beyond is that claims for work related injury and disease will present employers and workers with fresh challenges for keeping the workforce safe and productive. New words and phrases will enlarge the lexicon of workers’ compensation law. Labor and management will continue to look to the workers’ compensation bar for the timely, just, and impartial resolution of their disputes through hearings and mediations. This work will be carried out by you and your Workers’ Compensation Section.

I have listed below all of the Section’s standing committees, with the names of current committee members, and a brief description of the purpose and function of each committee. These are the people who have dedicated hundreds of hours of their time and talent this year to the work of supporting Oregon workers’ compensation attorneys. They deserve your thanks.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2020 MEMBERS: ALJ Bruce Smith (Chair), Jovanna Patrick (Chair-Elect), Allison Lesh (Secretary), Linda Conratt (Treasurer), Kate Caldwell (Immediate Past Chair), Spencer Aldrich, Joe Di Bartolomeo, Martin Fisher, Chris Frost, Phil Garrow, Colin Hackett, Heather Holt, Vincci Lam, ALJ Mark Mills, ALJ Jenny Ogawa, Carrie Wipplinger.

The Executive Committee meets monthly to hear reports of the subcommittee liaisons, review current financial reports from our Treasurer Linda Conratt, plan for future events and take any action the Committee deems necessary to carrying out the work of the Section.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE: Jovanna Patrick (Chair/EC Liaison), Kevin Anderson, Melissa Douglas, Rebecca Fey, ALJ Jackie Jacobson, Dale Johnson, Spencer Kelly, Allison Lesh, Elyse Lopez, Sydney Montanaro, Michael Orlando, Steve Schoenfeld, ALJ Bruce Smith, ALJ Holly Somers, Allyson Swecker, Matthew U’Ren, Carrie Wipplinger.

The mission of the Access to Justice Committee is to increase access to justice for injured workers, promote diversity in the Workers’ Compensation Section, educate Section members about the diversity of the clients they serve, and look for ways to remove barriers to justice in the Workers’ Compensation system.

BENCH-BAR COMMITTEE: Katie Krametbauer (Chair), Vincci Lam (EC Liaison), Carlotta Alverson, Spencer Aldrich, Kevin Barrett, Craig Miller, Sydney Montanaro, and ALJ Holly Somers.

The mission of the Bench Bar/Professionalism Committee is to promote professionalism among the members of the Section by sponsoring the annual Bench Bar Forum, along with occasional seminars and programs on timely topics, which afford an opportunity for education and discussion. This year’s Bench-Bar Forum was cancelled due to the coronavirus restrictions.

GOING FORWARD COMMITTEE: Steve Schoenfeld (Co-Chair), Larry Schucht (Co-Chair), Spencer Aldrich (EC Liaison), Krishna Balasubramani, Sarah Garrett, Rob Guarrasi, ALJ Jackie Jacobson.

The Going Forward Committee is dedicated to promoting the practice of Workers’ Compensation Law in Oregon, by reaching out to law students and recently admitted members of the Oregon State Bar. This Committee generally sponsors one or more joint social events with the Young Attorneys group, although social distancing restrictions due to the coronavirus have prevented an in-person event this year.

LEGISLATION & RULES COMMITTEE: Ben Debney (Chair), Chris Frost (EC Liaison), ALJ Duff Bloom, Phil Garrow, Elyse Lopez, Keith Semple, ALJ Geoff Wren.

The Legislative and Rules Committee monitors pending legislation and rule proposals, and advises the Executive Committee concerning their potential impact on injured workers, insurers and self-insured employers, and affected agencies. When appropriate this Committee recommends legislation or rule changes for action by the Section.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Phil Garrow (Chair/EC Liaison), Martin Fisher, ALJ Jill Riechers.

The Nominating Committee reviews and nominates candidates for service on the Workers’ Compensation Section Executive Committee.

PROFESSIONALISM AWARD COMMITTEE: Kate Caldwell (Chair/EC Liaison), Jenny Ogawa, John Oswald.

The Professionalism Award Committee reviews nominations from Section members for the Professionalism Award, which is presented annually by the Executive Committee to the Section member who demonstrates commitment to the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, integrity, and a willing adherence to the highest ethical standards, while making outstanding contributions to the Section and its members.

SALISHAN/ANNUAL MEETING COMMITTEE: Board Member Sally Curey (Co-chair), Holly Ansari (Co-chair), Spencer Aldridge, Ron Atwood, Spencer Kelly, Rob Kinney, John Oswald, ALJ Geoff Wren, John Oswald; and ALJ Jenny Ogawa (EC Liaison).

The goal of the Salishan CLE Committee is to deliver quality CLE content for Section members, focusing on topics relevant to the practice of Workers’ Compensation Law in Oregon.

SPECIAL THANKS TO SALISHAN 2020 PLANNING COMMITTEE: Spencer Aldrich, Carlotta Alverson, Holly Ansari, Ronald Atwood, Nicholas Cordes, Sally Curey, Spencer Kelly, Robert Kinney, John Oswald, and Geoffrey Wren.

The Salishan 2020 Planning Committee deserves special recognition this year for having successfully managed to reschedule the annual meeting and CLE program in a safe and accessible format. They made it look easy, but I assure you that it was anything but easy. Our masks must stay in place for now, but hats off to this year’s Salishan Planning Committee!

The work of this Section could not be accomplished without the valuable assistance of Oregon State Bar Liaison Christine Ford, who attends the monthly meetings of the Executive Committee, and provides timely, helpful direction concerning the Section’s business. Bar Member Services Specialist Natalie Batiste has also been particularly instrumental this year in helping the Section negotiate the challenges of taking the Section’s CLE program virtual, and moving its Annual Business Meeting online. I also want to acknowledge SAIF attorney Skylar Hall, who faithfully manages the Section’s website, and keeps members informed on the activities of the Section.

I am proud to sign this report on behalf of this hard-working team. Without these dedicated professionals there would be no Workers’ Compensation Section. Please thank them personally when you see them, and find out how you might be able to join them in 2021. This is *your* Section – we are counting on you to get involved.

Sincerely,

Bruce D Smith

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\_War\_I (Last edited October 4, 2020.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See *New Temporary Rule* **OAR 436-060-0141 –** **Claims for COVID-19 or Exposure to SARS-Co V-2** (effective Oct. 1, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)