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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The Conference's fiscal year has come to a close, and we have undergone another change in board leadership. This is my last letter as chair. I am capably succeeded by Phil Madden, with his many years of experience on the California Committee of Bar Examiners and on the National Conference board. His executive committee team of Becky Thiem and Franklin Harrison will guide the Conference well. My thanks to them and the other board members for making this an interesting and rewarding year.

Thanks also to Erica Moeser and the great NCBE staff. One of the major benefits of spending a year as chair is the opportunity to see firsthand the staff in action, assisting the drafting committees, facilitating the policy committees, continuing high-quality and effective research, organizing training and educational events, responding to the many needs of the jurisdictions, publishing thought-provoking articles in the *Bar Examiner*, exploring new and better technological solutions to common issues, and tending to the business side of this organization. The staff is remarkably dedicated, creative, and responsive.

When I wrote my first letter back in November, I predicted continued momentum on several fronts. The various committees have been active, from guiding the development and improvement of NCBE testing products, to exploring issues of diversity, to grappling with the implications of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Each of the committees has been very productive. My thanks to the chairs and committee members for their commitment to improving the process of bar admissions.

This indeed was a year of momentum for the Uniform Bar Exam. We saw Missouri take the lead in implementation, with the development of court rules that can be used as a model for those who follow. We saw the excitement in a regional meeting of contiguous jurisdictions in the Northeast and are looking ahead to a meeting of jurisdictions from the Northwest and Mountain States. We saw great interest from law schools and their faculties. Of course, the major benefits will be conferred on the law students—our

future bar examinees. Right now, their focus may be elsewhere, as they open each succeeding door to achieve their legal education, but when they reach the final gateway into the profession, they will be very pleased with the work that has been done on their behalf to streamline bar admissions and enhance the portability of their licenses. Those benefits are well described by Dean Veryl Miles in this issue of the *Bar Examiner*, and we thank her for her interest in and support of the UBE. We can happily report that the Supreme Court of North Dakota has become the second adoptee of the UBE, and we expect that many more will follow. In many ways, this project provides the same excitement that our predecessors experienced years ago when the Multistate Bar Exam was first developed and introduced to the jurisdictions. It gradually became the “gold standard” for bar examinations.

Because this transition will be so significant, we have been fortunate to be able to enlist a field of veterans in bar admissions to help us think through the implications. Two former chairs of the National Conference (Greg Murphy and Diane Bosse) and one former president of the Conference of Chief Justices (Hon. Gerald W. VandeWalle) serve on the Special Committee for the Uniform Bar Exam, and six former National Conference chairs (Diane Bosse, David Boyd, Ike Berkman, Jerry Hafter, Greg Murphy, and Fred Yu) serve on the Conference’s Long Range Planning Committee, tasked with thinking through the changes in infrastructure that will best enable this transition. We are grateful for their willingness to be called back into service.

This year’s Annual Bar Admissions Conference in Austin, Texas, identified the full range of challenges we face, such as globalization, new and inno-



vative threats to test security, potential changes in law school accreditation, and continuing issues with character and fitness investigations. Our hope is that the National Conference can continue to be a dependable resource to the jurisdictions, keeping a step ahead of the trends to be able to offer guidance and opportunities to share solutions to the issues they have in common.

Our year has ended with the NCBE/CBAA Annual Meeting in Duluth. This is a town with a rich history, tied to iron mining and timber harvesting. It resides on the largest body of fresh water in the world, Lake Superior. It has been a melting pot for generations of immigrant workers. I enjoyed seeing some of you there.

For those of you who were not in Duluth and did not experience the Minnesotan communication system, let me simply say that the key is to realize that indirection and avoidance of commitment are the primary values of Minnesota talk. You should know that “not too bad” is our form of high praise, “that’s interesting” is severe criticism, and “some guys wouldn’t do it that way” is an urgent warning. And the phrase “you bet” can be used to fill almost any kind of awkward silence. On the legal front, it has been said that in Minnesota, the statement “Well, I don’t know, maybe” is sufficiently definite to form a binding contract. So, for those of you who have yet to make your way to Minnesota, you have been forewarned. 📧

Best regards to all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Hanson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sam Hanson