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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

It is an honor and a privilege to chair the National Conference of Bar Examiners this year. With the honor and privilege comes responsibility, and I am fortunate to be working with volunteers and staff who take the matters of steering the organization and meeting the needs of our constituency very seriously. No one undertakes the job of NCBE chair alone.

As many readers of this magazine know, NCBE is a nonprofit corporation that was founded in 1931 through seed money from the American Bar Foundation. The purpose of the organization has always been the betterment of licensing processes across the United States. We have endeavored to keep faith with those early visionaries throughout the years, and I am confident that they would approve of the dedication and direction they would observe were they still with us after the 80 years that have elapsed since NCBE drew its first breaths.

One of the strengths of the organization is the staff that has assembled in Madison. They are talented and service-oriented. They exist to support the efforts of bar admission agencies to deliver high-quality tests, to develop the use of new technologies, and to aid in the important work of assessing the character and fitness of today's candidates for licensure.

Another strength lies in the experience and diversity of the current Board of Trustees and the additional committee chairs who undertake the work of the Conference. All are volunteers. This year we welcome Michele Gavagni—Missy to her colleagues—as the newest member of the NCBE board. Missy brings extensive line experience as a bar admission administrator in Florida to the work that we do. She replaces the outgoing immediate past chair, Fred Yu of Colorado, a former chair of the Colorado board.

The balance of the current board consists of

- one sitting chief justice, Rebecca Berch of Arizona, and one former associate justice, Sam Hanson of Minnesota (both former bar examiners);

- three lawyers who currently chair their respective state boards: Mark Carlin of Washington DC, Bobby Chong of Hawaii, and Darryl Simpkins of New Jersey;
- four former chairs of their respective state boards: Judge Tom Bice of Iowa, Franklin Harrison of Florida, Rebecca Thiem of North Dakota, and me (a Californian);
- one lawyer who is the senior member of his board, Bryan Williams of New York; and
- one lawyer who is a bar admission administrator, Peg Corneille of Minnesota.



In addition, this year we have as committee chairs the current chair of the New York board, Diane Bosse, and former state board chairs Dave Boyd of Alabama, Jerry Hafter of Mississippi, Greg Murphy of Montana, and Beverly Tarpley of Texas. Judge Jequita Napoli, a former chair of the Oklahoma board, serves as our ABA delegate.

For 2010–2011, as with every NCBE year, we have an ambitious agenda. A key event is our annual Bar Admissions Conference. This year bar examiners and members of the state supreme courts will gather in San Francisco April 28 through May 1 for our signature educational event that usually brings together representatives from virtually every U.S. jurisdiction.

We will also be completing the transition that will bring all aspects of Multistate Bar Examination development and administration in-house effective with the February 2011 test administration.

Previously only test development had migrated in-house, and the NCBE staff is prepared for this next step. As significant as this event is for NCBE, it should appear as a seamless transition to the users of the test.

Finally, we expect to expand the embrace of the Uniform Bar Examination over this next year. In furtherance of that objective, staff and volunteers are responding to requests for information about the UBE from around the country. This month we hosted a regional gathering of representatives from the Mountain West and the Northwest to explain and promote the idea of a uniform basic test and to address issues concerning the ways in which state content can be treated in the context of UBE adoption.

One of the opportunities I have had as NCBE chair is to appoint the members of our many policy committees (see the 2010–2011 NCBE committee list on page 46). The organization depends on its robust committee structure to locate and grow the ideas for improvement that will lead to better lawyer licensure products and procedures in the future. To all of those who have agreed to serve, I offer heartfelt thanks. I hope through your service you will find the same satisfactions that I have found in being a part of this important and useful organization. 📧

Best regards to all.

Sincerely,

Philip M. Madden