

Minnesota State Bar Association
"Executive Director's" Report to the Assembly
September 2009

As many of you know, Tim Groshens is taking a well-deserved sabbatical leave; he will return to work on October 13. During his absence, his responsibilities are primarily being handled by Nancy Mischel and Denise Plachecki. This issue of the Executive Director's report was written by the staff noted.

I. Finances

by Tim Giving

As of August 26, we are in the process of completing our annual audit for fiscal year 2008-09. We are projecting we will end the year with a \$61,000 operating deficit which is much lower than the \$353,000 deficit that was approved at the beginning of the year. We worked to lower our deficit because the economic downturn reduced our reserve levels at a much faster rate than we projected at the beginning of the year. With the reduced deficit and the stabilization of the economy we are within the 25-30% reserve range established by the Assembly and we should be able to maintain this level unless there is additional economic turmoil.

Approved operating deficit for the fiscal year 2008-09	Operating deficit projected for the end of the fiscal year, June 2009	Approved operating deficit for the 2009-10 fiscal year.
(\$353,000)	(\$61,000)	(\$32,000)

II. Membership

by Margaret Dean

We are well into the retention phase of our membership cycle. We have sent three dues invoices to unpaid members and will send two more before we suspend delinquent members at the end of October.

We entered the retention phase with some concern about the possible impact on membership renewal of the economic downturn, anticipating that some members would respond to challenging economic conditions by choosing to drop membership for the 2009-10 fiscal year. So far, we have not experienced the drop that we anticipated might occur. However, we are continuing to closely monitor the renewal payments and now assume that if we experience any significant drops they will occur after final invoices have been sent.

We are keeping a list of attorney members who tell us they cannot afford to pay dues at all this year. We currently have nine members on that list. The Membership Committee is discussing how best to demonstrate the MSBA's commitment to its members through a possible dues waiver program. We also are monitoring the number of attorney members who are renewing in the "under \$35,000" income category and have seen an increase. As of August 18, that number is 576 for 3.5% of attorney members, compared to 435 members for 2.7% at the same point in time last year.

As of August 21, 85% of billed attorney members have paid their dues, an increase of 1% over the same point in time last year. Also compared to the same point in time last year, the number of attorney members is 2.1% ahead and the total number of members is 1.3% ahead.

III. New Assembly Members

by Joni Fenner

The new 2009-2010 Assembly members are listed below. Please take time during the September Assembly meeting or Bar Leader Conference to welcome them.

Assembly Members and Affiliation	Assembly Members and Affiliation
David Aafedt, Administrative Law Rep	Richard Little, Real Property Voting Rep
David Ahlvers, Assembly Council Member	Daniel McGrath, Civil Litigation Voting Rep
Lacee Anderson, Assembly Council Member	John Merkle, Employee Benefits Voting Rep
Thomas Anderson III, Immigration Voting Rep	Cara Neville, ABA Delegate Rep
Miguel Azar, Computer Law Voting Rep	Matthew Nielsen, District 17 Voting Rep

Jennifer Bishop, Business Law Voting Rep	Richard Ohlenberg, Criminal Law Voting Rep
Mark Bloomquist, Construction Law Voting Rep	Ellis Olkon, District 04 (HCBA) Voting Rep
Molly Borg, MN Women Lawyers Voting Rep	Tami Peterson, Family Law
Joe Bruckner, Antitrust Law Voting Rep	Julie Plumitis, MN Lavender Bar Voting Rep
Christine Cassellius, District 01 Voting Rep	Kristi Riley, District 21 Voting Rep
Frederick Dawe, International Business Voting Rep	Murray Sagsveen, Health Law Voting Rep
Kalene Engel, District 03 Voting Rep	Michael Schechter, Corporate Counsel
Cassandra Fortin, Assembly Council Member	Lenor Scheffler, MN American Indian Bar Voting Rep
Melisa Franzen, MN Hispanic Bar Voting Rep	John Schulz, ADR Assembly Rep
David Graham, Food & Drug	Mary Shearen, Probate & Trust Voting Rep
Brian Grogan, Communications Voting Rep	Eric Sherburne, Bankruptcy Voting Rep
Laura Hage, Animal Law	Stephen Smith, MABL Voting Rep
Adam Heaton, General Practice Voting Rep	Susan Smith, Children and the Law
John Hennen, District 19 Voting Rep	James Song, NAPABA Voting Rep
James Johnson, Public Utilities	Susan Stephan, Art & Entertainment
Charles Knapp, Labor & Employment Voting Rep	Patricia Trask, District 15 Voting Rep
Bricker Lavik, District 04 (HCBA) Voting Rep	Katie Trotzky, District 01 Voting Rep
Jeannine Lee, Federal Bar Voting Rep	Regan Waller, MBWLN Voting Rep
Allison Leppert, Tax Law Voting Rep	Ken White, District 06 Voting Rep
Neil Nelson, District 16 Voting Rep	

IV. Online Services Update

by Greg Luce

practicelaw.org practicelaw is set to launch a completely new site on September 9, 2009, with increased functionality, more features, and an easier to use navigation system. With the launch we will also be adding more than 100 new forms, most in the family law and civil litigation areas. Marketing the new site has begun, with banner ads on the MSBA home page and on the 'old' practicelaw home page;

Renewals for **mndocs**, the MSBA's document assembly system, are going well. We have sold 834 licenses since its launch last year, and 157 of those are either new licenses purchased or renewals since July 1, 2009, when annual renewals began. In addition, we will be training approximately 100 paralegal students at Inver Hills Community College on the system, with the idea that they will take that knowledge and skill with them when they move into paralegal positions.

The redesign of **Legal News Digest** has been well received and it has also resulted in increased open and click thru rates. Each issue is distributed to 12,500 members, about 1/3 of which open the e-mail and about 15% of which click thru to featured stories.

mnfindalawyer now has approximately 483 panelists, and recent changes to search engine optimization features has significantly increased public traffic to the site, with about 3,800 visits to the site each month.

V. Nine Days in June

by Joni Fenner

This new convention format will be inaugurated in June of 2010. *Nine Days in June* will consist of full-day CLEs held in judicial districts throughout Minnesota and will conclude with a state-wide event hosted in the metro area. *Nine Days* will offer members many of the same benefits that the traditional MSBA convention has provided -- an opportunity to improve legal knowledge; network and develop contacts; honor colleagues who have excelled in their contributions to the legal community; and enhance professional skills. The change is that all of these opportunities will be offered closer to home.

Confirmed dates as of August 25, 2009 are:

- June 10 – First Judicial District
- June 16 – Fifth Judicial District
- June 17 – Sixth Judicial District
- June 18 – Eighth Judicial District

- June 22 – Third Judicial District
- June 23 – Tenth Judicial District
- June 24 – Statewide Event in the Metro

VI. Report on Other Programs

by Nancy Mischel

Pro Bono Week is October 25 -31, 2009. Please visit http://www.projusticemn.org/volunteer_week/ for a list of the events.

The MSBA has a new Diversity Planning Task Force chaired by Phil Duran. The purpose of the Task Force is to assess the MSBA's numerous diversity-related projects, as well as the internal infrastructure that delivers them, and advise the Assembly whether changes to the projects or structure should be made in order to ensure that the MSBA remains an effective leader for diversity within the Minnesota legal community.

The MSBA hosted a Minority Bar Summit on July 21 that was very well attended. Members expressed an interest in meeting quarterly.

The MN Board of Legal Certification is meeting September 11 to review the MSBA's application to become a certified agency in the area of Criminal Law.