

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

Young Lawyers Invade the House of the Mouse

By Jill M. Kastner

We shot at aliens, danced with Homer and Marge Simpson, and debated substantial issues about immigration reform and collaborative law. It was quite the adventure at the ABA YLD meeting during the ABA Midyear Meeting in Orlando, Florida. On the first Thursday and Friday of February, young lawyers from all over the nation and abroad descended on Florida, many with their families, to enjoy the meeting and to make a vacation of Orlando's many attractions.

The meeting began as many do, with a "First Timer's Orientation and Welcome Reception," at which young lawyers networked in a fun social setting. Delegates didn't have far to go as the reception was held at the beautiful Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort—the conference hotel. Many later went out to the nearby boardwalk to see the sights. Others went to the karaoke bar at the hotel to show off their *American Idol* talents—or to enjoy the show. Fortunately, Simon Cowell was not in attendance to let many of the singers know they should not quit their day jobs.

Friday morning was full of great CLEs and soft skill training programs on such topics as business law, appellate brief writing, negotiation skills, e-discovery, immigration law, and pointers for partners. As always, there was the fun speed networking session and a great program on how young lawyers could become more involved in leadership opportunities with the ABA YLD.

Bar Leaders and Young Lawyers: Partnering Together to Shape the Future of the Profession

On Friday afternoon, YLD affiliate leaders also had the opportunity to network with big bar leaders at a roundtable discussion on the future of the bar. Young lawyer leaders met with bar leaders from their regions to discuss what bar associations could and should do to encourage the active participation of young lawyers.

Too often, there is a divide between new lawyer groups and their big bars. Many young lawyers feel disconnected from the bar association and believe they do not have a say in the organization because only more senior attorneys hold leadership positions. This roundtable program was a great opportunity to address ways to bridge that gap and promote the inclusion of young lawyers in big bar leadership.

The ABA YLD Affiliate Assistance Team plans to continue these important programs at upcoming conferences and meetings.

Letting Lose with Homer and Marge

The traditional Friday Night Gala was anything but traditional. Instead of the formal sit-down dinner, dance, and band typical of ABA YLD conferences, we went to Universal Studios. Dressed casually, delegates enjoyed a buffet dinner and rides on "The Simpsons" and "Men in Black" attractions. For those who need to dance at every conference, there was a DJ and a bigger-than-life Bart, Lisa, Marge, and Homer Simpson with whom to dance the night away.

Getting Down to Business

On Saturday, February 6, 2010, the ABA YLD Assembly met to discuss and vote on relevant matters affecting young lawyers. Four contested resolutions were debated during the meeting.

1YL: The Assembly voted down a resolution urging Congress to enact laws to provide for Start-Up Visas to foreign citizens who form bona fide businesses in the United States. Opponents argued that provisions already in immigration law favor business owners and that further laws to promote visas for the wealthy and well-educated were not the top priority of immigration reform.

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2YL: The Assembly voted in favor of a resolution urging Congress to amend the Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP Extension Act of 2007 to create a safe-harbor provision from civil penalties when relying on verified responses of a claimant. Proponents argued that the current law created too much liability for insurance carriers and their lawyers if the claimants lied to them about being a Medicare recipient. Also, settlements and insurance checks would be delayed if insurers first had to independently verify Medicare payments.

111C: The Assembly voted to urge the ABA to oppose the Uniform Collaborative Law Act.

177B: The Assembly approved the recommendation for the new ABA dues structure beginning in the 2010–2011 fiscal year. Under the new fees structure, many members' dues will go down, including government and public interest attorneys. The hope is that the ABA will be able to retain more members, particularly more young lawyers, by lowering fees.

This Is Not the End

For most delegates, the Assembly was the final event of the Midyear Meeting. Many flew back home or joined expectant family at one of Orlando's many resorts. But for those who stuck around and didn't have little minions demanding that mommy or daddy take them on the teacup ride, there was still plenty to do.

After Assembly, former ABA YLD leaders who have aged out of the Division, known as the YLD Fellows, hold their own board meeting. After that meeting, the Fellows join up with current YLD members and leaders for the traditional "Fellows Debate." Two former ABA YLD leaders match up against two current ABA YLD leaders for a verbal smack-down. The debate isn't meant to be political or policy driven—but is all about how many laughs the debaters can get. A funny topic is made up, and the lawyers match wits to determine whose humor reigns supreme.

As a 35-year-old about to age out of the ABA YLD, my loyalties are shifting to the Fellows as the "winner" of the debate. But you young folks are free to cheer for the current ABA YLD leaders.

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