March 18, 2020

Dear Friends,

I am writing to update you on the response of the Section of Dispute Resolution to the growing Coronavirus pandemic. Your health and safety are our primary concern. Given the declaration by the World Health Organization that the COVID-19 disease is a pandemic, the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control that meetings with 50 or more attendees scheduled for the next 8 weeks be cancelled (which includes when our Conference is scheduled), and the public health emergencies and meeting size limitations in Louisiana and New Orleans, we will not be holding our Spring Conference as planned in New Orleans. Rather, we will be taking our celebration online in a virtual format still to be determined. We regard this as an opportunity. We have within our membership globally recognized leaders in online dispute resolution and technology who generously are giving of their time and talent to help us explore how we might re-configure our wonderful content. We are also mindful of the importance of our coming together and the differences between a webinar or podcast and “being in the room where it happens.” To that end, we also are exploring how we might add “socially distant” opportunities for virtual networking and personal interactions.

As far as practical information, please cancel your airline, hotel and restaurant reservations as soon as possible. **You must cancel your own airline, room, and restaurant reservations or you will be charged**. Please let us know if you have any difficulties obtaining a refund.

As you know, our theme for this year is *Innovation, Improvisation, and Inspiration*. That has turned out to have been a very apt theme in ways we never anticipated. We will all as a Section be doing our level best to live up to that theme! From challenges come opportunities. We believe that we will all rise to this challenge and that we will gain new skills and competencies and be better for the experience.

We will continue to update you as details become available. We know the uncertainty has been challenging and appreciate your patience as we adapt to our changing world.

Our primary concern is for those who are ill or are facing other difficulties as a result of this new normal. We care about each one of you. We hope you will all stay safe and healthy.

Warm regards,

Joan