Donald G. Featherstun,
Chair

I cannot believe it is already time to write my final column. This year has passed extremely quickly. Rather than recount the year, I thought I would explain why I volunteered for the position, and perhaps inspire a reader or two to get more involved. Besides, it is more important that you read Carol Park-Conroy’s column, as incoming chair, than that you read my column, because the future is more important than the past. I will try to keep this short.

Several years back, I had just come off the Council and was struggling to stay involved in the Section. Frankly, I considered dropping out. At the same time, however, my son was creating a club water polo team at the University of California in Santa Barbara, and my daughter decided to change high schools because she wanted to experience what it was like to move and make new friends. These efforts of both my children took courage and persistence. I am certain there were times when each of them wondered what they were doing. Nevertheless, they both achieved their goals by taking chances and getting involved. If they had the courage to get more involved, then why not me?

With the encouragement of Rob Schaefer, I put my name in the hat to be secretary of the Section. You are warned at the time that the leadership ladder is a four- to five-year commitment. I swallowed hard and said I wanted to do it. I cannot tell you how glad I am that I did. This last year had been one of the most enjoyable years of my professional life. I have had the privilege and the pleasure to work closely with some of the most dedicated people in our profession. I have learned more than I could have ever imagined, and I have made friendships that will last a lifetime.

So, if you are out there reading this and are on the fence, I challenge you to get more involved. I recently met with a high-ranking government official who told me he dropped out of the Section because all he did was read the Public Contract Law Journal. That discussion is partly a message to the Section that we need to get our members more involved, and partly an example of how the failure to get involved leads to one dropping out. I have found that the more you put into the Section, the more you get out of it. For me, the friendships I have made over the years working on projects stand out as the best part of the Section. Second, the amount of knowledge that is available to Section members is beyond description. If you want to keep up with the constant changes in our profession, this is a great place to do it. As

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I say, get involved, it will pay off.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard this year. Every officer, Council member, committee member, and Section member has provided so much support that I could go on for pages describing it all. Let me just say that it has been a privilege to work with you all. I will never forget all that you have done.

In particular, I would like to thank Carol Park-Conroy, Mark Colley, Sharon Larkin, and Dave Ehrhart, the officers. As Section chair, I learned to rely on their advice and counsel. More importantly, I believe I have made four close friends for life. I also want to thank my partners at Seyfarth Shaw LLP for supporting me over the last several years as I climbed the Section ladder from secretary to chair. I could not have done it without their support and patience.

I could not end this column without thanking my administrative assistant, Janine McDermott, for all of her efforts, from preparing all those welcoming letters to committee chairs to creating some 500 separate letters to promote the State and Local Procurement Symposium. She did all that on top of her daily routine of taking care of multiple insanely busy attorneys in our office. We have worked together for more than 15 years and I have always told her that if she gets a job somewhere else, let me know because I am going with her. If there was ever a year she could have left, this was it, but she stayed and I am eternally grateful.

I also need to thank my wife and family. Over the last 20-plus years, there have been quarterly weekends away from them as I pursued my passion for the Section. I could not have done that without their support and understanding. Also, as I noted above, my children provided me with the motivation to become the chair, and they continue to amaze me with their accomplishments and courage. My wife has supported me for more than 27 years now, and has been especially patient this last year as many weekends have evaporated into trips to the office to make up for time spent on Section business. Thanks, gang, never a dull moment.

Last, but not least, I must thank Marilyn Neforas. Until you are chair, you do not begin to understand how much she really does behind the scenes and how lucky the Section is to have her as our Section director. I will truly miss our almost daily phone calls as she kept me on my toes and focused on the basics. In addition, I will miss the late-night e-mails, well after close of business, that she sent on some important topic that I had forgotten. She is the anchor of our Section. She, in particular, is one of the reasons that I will never forget this year. It has been a privilege to work with someone who cares so much about her job and this Section.

My last formal note will be to wish Carol Park-Conroy all the best in her year as chair. She and I became friends when we served on the Council together. During that time, we talked about different ideas to make the Section better. I am not certain either of us realized that some day we would both be chair. We found that we thought alike and there is no one I would rather turn over the chair position to than Carol. I want all of you who supported me this last year to stay involved and do all you can to make Carol’s year as enjoyable as this last year has been for me. Thank you all, again. I hope you take up my challenge and get more involved. Maybe some day you can write a column like this one.

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vironmental Purchasing (NIGP). The Section remains committed to expanding the membership and activities of our State and Local Procurement Division.

All in all, the 2011–2012 term promises to be busy and exciting. I welcome your thoughts, comments, ideas, and suggestions throughout the year as we work together to achieve the Section’s goals and objectives. You can reach me at (703) 282-3392 or carolparkconroy@gmail.com.