News from the Chair

Carol N. Park-Conroy, Chair

This, my last column, as Section chair, is devoted mostly to saying “thank you.” Of course, the year has flown by—indeed, it seems as if I just finished writing my first column. That was as chair-elect, an honor now belonging to Mark Colley. I encourage you to read his column as the 2012–2013 incoming chair because our focus should be on the Section’s future. And, the future looks bright in Mark’s capable hands.

One quick comment about the future. The Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on August 4-6, 2012, is just around the corner. If you have not yet registered for the meeting, all you need do is take a peek at the educational program to be convinced your time and money will be well spent by attending. Program cochairs Gerry Doyle, Elizabeth Grant, and Heather Weiner have done an amazing job of putting together one of the strongest Annual Meeting programs ever. They deserve special recognition and many thanks for their exceptional efforts.

This brings me nicely to the theme of this column. I begin by extending my sincere gratitude and thanks to my fellow officers for their leadership this year, Mark Colley, Sharon Larkin, Stu Nibley, and Dave Ehrhart. Each of the officers has special responsibilities, the execution of which is imperative to the successful work of the Section. They have fulfilled their leadership responsibilities with distinction. Thanks also to each of the council members for their many contributions. What a privilege it has been for me to work with such a dedicated group of professionals; and my experience in this regard has not been unique. Over the years, we have been remarkably fortunate to have officers and council members who willingly devote much time and talent to the Section.

The contributions of our committees are also significant. In fact, hardly a week passes by without a committee meeting or program addressing timely procurement issues. I have written before lauding their excellent work. With the incoming chair, there will be some committee leadership changes. This is the perfect time for you to take a look at the Section’s new and much improved website, decide which committees are relevant to your particular area of practice, and to become an active committee member. Remember, you can attend committee meetings in person or by telephone. Special thanks to Greg Bingham, Dan Chudd, and Sharon Larkin, working in conjunction with (continued on page 31)
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the new Technology and Electronic Communications Committee, for their work on the website. And, while it is always dangerous to single out people for special recognition, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Susan Ebner (Acquisition Reform & Emerging Issues), Stu Nibley (Bid Protest), Kara Sacilotto (Regulatory Coordinating), Aaron Silberman (Construction), and Annejannette Heckman Pickens and David Bodenheimer (Cybersecurity, Privacy and Data Protection) for their outstanding contributions.

We also had the good fortune this year to have volunteers working on a number of new Section publications. Michael Mutek and his task force from academia, government, industry, law firms, and professional associations completed Services Contracting Best Practices: A Guide to Successful Services Contracting in time to provide copies to Dan Gordon before his departure from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy. Copies of the guide will be made available electronically to government officials upon request and otherwise in hard copy for sale. Candida Steel and her task force are nearly finished with another publication, Practicing Before the Federal Boards of Contract Appeals, which was initially published in 2002 for pro se litigants and will be available electronically, without charge. Thank you, Michael and Candy, and all of the volunteers who have worked with you in preparing these excellent publications.

There are three more very important people I want to include in this column of thanks. First is my husband Coleman Conroy who has always wholeheartedly supported my professional endeavors and especially my participation in the Public Contract Law Section, despite the fact Section activities have taken me away from home on many weekends. Coleman attended an impressive number of Section meetings with me and enjoys personal friendships with a number of our Section members. Next is Paul Williams, the chairman of the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals where I serve as an administrative judge. I am grateful to Chairman Williams for his strong support of my participation in the Section over the years and particularly so during my tenure as Section chair. Thank you, Coleman, and thank you, Paul.

And finally, of course, is our Section director, Marilyn Neforas. What an amazing woman she is. I simply cannot overstate how important Marilyn is to our Section. She manages everything from coordinating our educational programs and council meetings and helping us work successfully within the larger ABA structure to taking care of every detail relating to the Section’s policies and procedures. She really is the glue that holds our Section together. Thank you, Marilyn, for all that you have done to help me as chair and for all that you have done for the Section during your years as our Section director.

In closing, I want to share with you my one great regret—which is that I did not become more involved in the Section earlier and did not seek office sooner. With that on my mind, I have a few words of wisdom. No matter whether you are a lawyer in government, private practice, or industry, I encourage you to take every opportunity to become active in the Section, work on a committee and serve as a committee chair or vice chair, put your name in the mix for the council and think seriously about serving as an officer. You may wonder whether it is worth the time and effort. My answer is definitely “yes.” You will be well rewarded personally and professionally.

Finally, I wish Mark Colley all the very best in the coming year. He has a wonderful year ahead of him as the Section’s next chair. We have shared many good moments together during our time as Section officers and I am grateful for his friendship and support.

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commitment to advance our objectives. Every committee needs to develop a plan for attracting new members, and give thought to committee leadership succession, and how to create opportunities for young professionals to grow and advance. Each committee should implement a program for outreach to government practitioners involved in its subject area. Committees also need to give special emphasis to content development, in the form of programs, best practices guides, white papers, and comments on legislative and regulatory proposals. And we need even more emphasis on finding ways to multiply the value of that information through creative and vigorous dissemination, such as on the Section’s web page and by video/web casting. Every committee cochair and vice chair needs to be engaged and tasked to execute some aspect of a robust agenda. Committee leaders should expect a discussion on this game plan following the Section’s Annual Meeting and throughout the coming year.

Finally, I cannot close without mentioning the importance of our State & Local Division and our Section members whose practice is concentrated in this area. Each area I’ve mentioned for emphasis—education, membership, and committee work—applies with special force to this Division. The Section’s state and local procurement endeavors have shown encouraging renewed vigor during recent years, with excellent programs and publications. The challenge this year will be to continue and build on those successes, and to take maximum advantage of the very positive relationships being built with other entities devoted to this area, such as the National Association of State Procurement Officials.

There is much to do. I’m looking forward to a busy and exciting year, and hope you are as well.