

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division *The Affiliate*

Getting Active with the ABA YLD

Compiled By Jill Kastner

So you've been to or heard about great ABA YLD conferences, you get this fabulous newsletter, and you read about all of the great things the ABA YLD does. Now you're wondering, how do I get involved? Well, you're in luck. It's appointment season again—the time for young lawyers to apply for appointments to leadership positions with the ABA YLD. It's also time to learn about other ways to be active and take advantage of ABA YLD opportunities, such as getting published in *The Young Lawyer (TYL)*, *The Affiliate (TA)*, or via the 101 and 201 Practice Series.

Why Should I Get Involved with the ABA YLD?

Simply being an ABA member and using its various resources and programs is a great way to improve your skills as an attorney. But if you truly want to get the full benefit of your ABA membership, you need to take advantage of the opportunities only available if you become an active member of the ABA YLD.

“Young lawyers should be involved [with the ABA YLD] because it allows them a variety of opportunities,” said ABA YLD Chair-Elect David Wolfe. “You can gain expertise in your substantive area of law . . . and engage in public service and other issues about which you can be passionate. . . . It's about shaping the future of our profession and our community.”

According to David, serving with the ABA YLD has given him tremendous benefits and opportunities, such as serving on the Standing Committee for Judicial Independence. “It's helped me develop as a lawyer and a leader,” said David. “It's allowed me to give back to the community, such as the ‘Wills for Heroes’ project that we implemented in New Jersey.”

The ABA YLD is also a great way to get nationwide exposure. ABA YLD conferences and appointed positions allow you to network with young lawyers from across the country. Writing, whether for the 101 and 201 Practice Series, *TYL*, or *TA*, gets you published in a nationwide publication. Serving as the YLD Liaison to an ABA committee exposes you to national leaders in substantive areas. In other words, no matter what your goal, the ABA YLD has something for you.

Appointment to Leadership Positions

This year, over a hundred different ABA YLD positions will need to be filled. These include everything from the board of writers/editors that prepares this newsletter to the groups that run the public service and member service projects to the team that coordinates the ABA YLD conferences. There are also about forty liaison positions with the ABA's various sections, divisions, forums, commissions, and committees.

“If you want to get involved, you should apply for an appointment,” said David. “You don't need to have held a prior position.” Although the numbers vary greatly from year to year, generally well over a third of the positions are filled by young lawyers who have never held a leadership position before with the ABA YLD. In fact, “it is the exception that someone is in the same role for a second term,” said David. “We want new blood to help grow the organization.”

There are a wide variety of other positions. “For example, if you were on law review and like to write, you may want to get on the *TYL* Board or *The Affiliate*. If you are interested in diversity, you might apply for the Diversity Team.” Although Director-level positions will be given to lawyers with years of dedicated ABA YLD service, “if you aspire to that position, start at a lower-level appointment—as we all did—and work your way up.”

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

The Do's and Don'ts of Appointments

- Do talk to or e-mail people you know who've been involved with the ABA YLD.
- Do read through all of the ABA YLD's appointment information and follow the instructions.
- Do follow-up if you have further questions, such as by e-mailing people who have held the position previously or e-mail David about the position.
- Do check the box that you will consider any appointment if not given your top choices (you can always decline a specific appointment later with no hard feelings); And, most importantly,
- Don't get discouraged. Many more apply than there are positions—particularly for certain slots. If you don't get a slot for next year, there are still lots of ways to stay involved.

You can learn more about the appointment process and the many positions available by going to www.abanet.org/yld/appointments. The application deadline is February 15, 2010.