

**American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division**  
*The Affiliate*

**Bench and Bar Meet and Greets: New Hampshire New Lawyers Meet the Judiciary**

*By Rebecca Cross*

In early December 2009, dozens of new attorneys from the New Hampshire Bar planned to mingle with members of all levels of the New Hampshire state and federal judiciaries at the New Hampshire Bar Association New Lawyers Committee's (NHBA NLC) annual "Bench and Bar Meet and Greet" event in Concord. Unfortunately, this year's event was postponed when a major snowstorm hit the New England area on December 9. Event organizers rescheduled the event for late winter/early spring.

New Hampshire lawyer and ABA YLD District Representative for New Hampshire and Massachusetts Jonathan Eck has participated in the Bench and Bar Meet and Greet for the past three years, and helped plan the event for the past two years.

"This is a great networking event because it's one of those rare opportunities where a bunch of new lawyers are in a room together," Eck noted. "It's a great chance for newer attorneys to get to meet and visit with members of the bench in an informal setting." He noted that the event could easily be replicated in other states.

Newly sworn attorneys in New Hampshire, which is a mandatory bar membership state, are required to attend a two-day practical skills course that provides substantive training and CLE sessions. The Bench and Bar Meet and Greet routinely begins approximately fifteen minutes after one of the course days ends, in a conference room at the same location.

The NHBA NLC provides hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. All attorneys who have been admitted to the New Hampshire bar for less than three years are automatically invited, and members of the federal and state benches receive invitations as well. Members of the NHBA NLC and the Board of Governors are also invited. "The event is geared toward newer attorneys, so you're not competing with more senior attorneys for the judges' attention," Eck noted.

The event is a brainchild of Jennifer Parent, a member of the NHBA NLC and an ABA YLD alumna who submitted the initial application for an ABA YLD subgrant for the event in 2005. Now in its fifth year, the low cost event is now funded by the NHBA, for which Parent is the current Vice-President and recently was nominated to run for the position of President-Elect.

The NHBA NLC consists of approximately fifteen members who are appointed by the state bar's president. Currently headed by David Hiltz, the committee is tasked with coming up with events to serve New Hampshire's newer lawyers. Unlike most other states' ABA YLD affiliates, there is no age criteria for serving on New Hampshire's New Lawyers Committee, which can sometimes include senior law firm partners.

Eck, a litigator at Devine, Millimet & Branch, P.A., in Manchester, said there is always an excellent turnout at the event, which the judges see as an opportunity to meet some of the newer attorneys who come into their courts.

"There is a genuine interest on the part of the judges to visit with the newer attorneys," Eck said. The Chief Justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court and the Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Hampshire routinely give opening remarks. "People turn out from all corners of the state for the event," Eck noted. "People come from as far as the northern regions of New Hampshire."

Eck also emphasized that the event is ideal in that it requires minimal preparation. He noted that the members of the NLC attend the event, and some of the committee's members make phone calls to help ensure high attendance. A NHBA staff member coordinates food and drink details. Event organizers also write thank you notes to the judges, "which hopefully shows the judges that the support they give the event is greatly appreciated," according to Eck.

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