

DIALOGUE

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From the Chair...

By Lora Livingston

Commission on Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts

Three years ago I began my tenure as Chair of the Commission and today it quickly comes to an end. When I began my term, the economy was in decline and with it came a down turn in interest rates. At the time, it seemed the situation could not get worse, but as we are all painfully aware, the recession and record low interest rates persist.

Over these years, the Commission and the IOLTA community have shown exemplary resilience and have risen to become leaders in the national collaboration of the access to justice movement. This work was readily seen at the Equal Justice Conference and Access to Justice (ATJ) Chairs Meeting in Jacksonville, Florida this May. There I had the opportunity to take part in several programs. I joined a distinguished panel including Jim Sandman, Don Saunders, Robert Stein and Ann Carmichael on hot topics affecting legal aid. I led a break out discussion among ATJ leaders from various states and, with Bev Groudine, facilitated a table talk highlighting issues facing IOLTA today.

At the Access to Justice Chairs Meeting, many members of the IOLTA community, including Jon Asher, Jane Curran, Bob LeClair, Betty Balli Torres and Lonnie Powers, led break out sessions and table talks. They discussed important issues such as economic impact studies, fund raising, access to justice programs in their regions, and how to engage members of the bar in these important issues. Additionally, many more from our community attended to learn and find ways to bring access to justice issues to the forefront in their states.

In considering the future of IOLTA and the Commission, there are undeniable challenges ahead. In December, the amendment to Dodd Frank granting unlimited FDIC insurance to IOLTA accounts is scheduled to sunset and IOLTA programs throughout the country continue to face record low income as the need for legal services grows. At the same time, an exciting project is underway. The Commission and National Association of IOLTA Programs, along with U.S. and Canadian IOLTA programs are collaborating on a video chronicling the history of IOLTA.

With this work at hand, Penina Leiber has been appointed Chair of the Commission for the coming year. Penina has shown a commitment to access to justice issues and advancing IOLTA. I offer her my sincerest congratulations and am confident she will be an effective leader.

The Commission bids farewell to members Darrell Jordan and Arley Harrel. Darrell served for two years and in that time he co-chaired the Meetings Committee and was a member of the Technical Assistance Committee. Arley served for one year and participated on the Communications and Banking Committees. I am grateful for their time and service to the Commission and wish them the very best in their future endeavors.

Finally, I would like to thank Tamaara Piquion, LaVernis Hall and Susan Updike for all that they do and offer a special note of gratitude to Bev Groudine for her tireless effort and commitment to the work of the Commission.



I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as Chair and to have worked with so many in the IOLTA community who inspire me with their ongoing dedication to advancing equal access to justice.

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