

GDLA Fall 2007 Board Meeting Highlights
Barnsley Gardens, Adairsville, GA
October 27, 2007

Submitted by James E. Singer, executive vice president, GDLA and redacted by Steve Milano, executive director

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. on Saturday October 27, 2007 at Barnsley Gardens. Board members present were Sally Akins, Joe Chambliss, Evelyn Fletcher, Salty Forbes, Johnny Foster, Warner Fox, Ted Freeman, Mel Haas, Bubba Hughes, Joe Jagor, Steve Kyle, Walter McClelland, Paul McKinley, Matt Miffed, David Nelson, Lynn Roberson, Jimmy Singer, Grant Smith and Bob Travis, with executive director Steve Milano attending.

President Travis began with the introduction of the special guests Ed Livingston, executive director of the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association, Will Ellis (who also appeared at a portion of the Executive Committee Planning Meeting in August), co-chair of the GDLA Younger Lawyers section and Brian Moore, chair of the GDLA's Insurance Coverage substantive law committee (SLC). President Travis thanked Alabama and Florida for their hospitality of the Georgia Defense Lawyers this year.

A Motion was made to approve the minutes for the spring Board meeting, annual business meeting and executive committee retreat of August 18, 2007, and passed unanimously. The treasurer's report was given by Jimmy Singer in the absence of Staten Bitting. The Association is financially healthy.

A motion was made to change the name of the membership committee to the admissions committee. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. Salty Forbes then gave the admissions report. Forty-two (42) applicants who sought membership since the last Board meeting were recommended by the admissions committee. All 42 were unanimously accepted.

President Travis also issued a formal proclamation thanking Kim Jarboe, Salty's assistant, on behalf of the Board, and the Association, for her assistance and hard work over these many years in the membership/admissions area of the association.

Lynn Roberson reported on both diversity and membership. On membership generally, she recommended that chairs of the SLCs contact each person when they join the Association and designate an area of practice or interest. She recommended that the chairs and vice-chairs of the SLCs also identify persons with the willingness to work on their committees for succession, to ensure not only new leadership for each committee, but also a progressive leadership where a person goes from active on a committee to vice-Chair, and then vice-chair to chair. In addition, a motion was made and passed that the Board authorize up to \$500.00, in the form of a gift certificate, for the SLC that recruits the most new members to the GDLA.

On diversity, it was agreed that an effort should be made for a diversification of speakers and faculty at both the Trial Academy and the Annual Meeting and at each function of the Association. The Board was requested to identify diverse defense lawyers and to specifically invite them to join the GDLA. The Association also agreed to solicit potentially diverse members by contacting the minority bar associations to provide information about the GDLA, and to attempt to identify individuals within those bar associations who do primarily defense work who may deem membership in the Association a value to their practice.

Will Ellis and Joe Jager then gave the younger lawyers section report. Will has set up a Younger Lawyers blast e-mail, which is now being used. There are eighty-five (85) members within the area known as Younger Lawyer membership (in practice five years or less). A report was given on the YL cocktail reception held two weeks earlier. Though it was a success, it was limited to YLs who were already members. Jo Jagor indicated she viewed this as a mistake as it tends to exclude those who may

have an interest in learning about the Association. It was agreed in the future more non-members would be invited. A recommendation was made that something for the YLs also be included as part of the Annual Meeting.

Brian Moore then reported on the Insurance Coverage SLC. He expressed that being at the Board meeting was beneficial to his work on the committee and he highly recommended it for other chairs. He is making efforts to increase the activity of his committee members, including providing articles for both the newsletter and the annual law journal.

Bob Travis and Johnny Foster reported, in Bruce Welch's absence, on the annual, meeting of DRI, with emphasis on the meetings held for state legal defense organizations (SLDO), of which GDLA is one. It was noted that SLCs are an excellent way for members of the association to stay in touch with each other and also for the association to be of relevance and benefit to members. Efforts will be made to modify the GDLA Web site so that blast e-mails can be forwarded just to individuals within the various SLCs. President Travis thanked Johnny Foster for his outstanding work in revitalizing the SLCs during his presidency, and continuing as chair of the SLC Steering Committee with David Whitworth and Lynn Roberson.

Walter McClelland reported on the Judicial Relations committee. For some reason the GDLA had been dropped off the list of those entities invited to provide input on candidates prior to the Governor receiving the short list. Efforts have been made to remedy that and now the association is back on. Doug Stewart of Gainesville is the Chair of that Committee, but as he is a non-Board member; Walter agreed to work with him on that committee to provide perspective from the Board. It was also agreed and approved by the Board that in the future, because members of the association practice throughout the state, that once a list of candidates is made available to the association, a blast e-mail will be forwarded to all members to provide input and/or comments to the Judicial Relations committee for determination in preparing a response from the Association, or providing information to the Judicial Nominations committee.

Steve Kyle gave a report on future meetings. The Winter Board Meeting will be at the Phoenix Biltmore, February 9, 2008, following immediately after the DRI product liability meeting at that same venue. The spring Board meeting will be in late March and will be in association with the judicial reception in Atlanta. A date will be determined and advertised as soon as possible. The annual meeting is June 12 through June 15, 2008 at Ponte Vedra. The fall Board meeting will likely be at Reynolds Plantation in October, 2008.

Jimmy Singer provided a report on the program for the Annual meeting at Ponte Vedra in June, 2008. Currently slated to speak are Rick Page on marketing, Angela Abel on voir dire both Friday, and Shawn Carter, a nationally known speaker and Harvard Law graduate on ethics and professionalism, and Judge Doris Downs, Chief Judge of the Atlanta Judicial Circuit, Fulton County, who will speak on case management Saturday. Judge Downs will also meet privately in an informal breakout session with the younger lawyers present. Steve Kyle reported the association is trying something new this year and there will not be a band, but instead we will have dinner and entertainment in the form of a legal comedian.

Typically every third year the Annual meeting is held at an exotic location. The Board extended approval to Steve Kyle to begin negotiations for the possibility of holding the Annual meeting in 2009 at the Four Seasons in Exuma, Bahamas. Discussion was also had on future Annual meetings, and whether we go to Ponte Vedra every other year, as opposed to once every three years. No decision was made. It was agreed we will wait to determine the turnout of the 2008 Annual Meeting, to determine whether Ponte Vedra as a venue should be on an every other year rotation.

It was agreed that plans need to be made as soon as possible for warm weather for the February, 2009 Winter Board Meeting, but instructions were given to Steve Kyle to attempt to negotiate a reasonable location with reasonable airfare, convenient air, and hopefully room rates for the Board Meeting which are not excessive.

Sally Akin is in charge of preparing an updated charge book. She has solicited charges from the various SLCs. She also will be forwarding an e-mail to the association for individual members to provide particular charges on areas that have been successfully used. No date has yet been set for the charge books to be published, but it is a work in progress hopefully to be published this fiscal year.

Mel Haas reported on sponsorship for the new year. One sponsor has indicated that they wish the association to endorse them and to provide a direct link to their Web site and to allow a copy of the members e-mail list. After much discussion, the Board reiterated its long held position that the association can not be seen to endorse any particular sponsor over another, nor grant exclusivity to any sponsor. Likewise, we do not feel it appropriate to be sharing the e-mail addresses, though the Board could and would forward information from a sponsor to the association members. Mel was charged with negotiating with the sponsors to determine what additional value the association can provide to the sponsors.

Johnny Foster reported on the DRI state and local defense organization breakout at the DRI Annual Meeting. There are a number of issues facing judges throughout the nation that affect the quality, impartiality and efficiency of the judiciary. These include, but are not limited to compensation, security and a general sense of attack by the public and media on the office of the judiciary. As lawyers and as an association we can and need to do our part to counter negative concerns about the judiciary generally. Many of the things that can help and which were discussed at the DRI meeting are matters already being done by our association.

There was no new business discussed. President Travis did raise the topic for the future of the possibility of a name change in light of incorrect perceptions of our Association as expressed by some members of the bar and public. He appointed a sub-committee of Salty Forbes, Matt Moffett, and Jimmy Singer to report at the next meeting whether a name change should be considered, and if so, the reasons. The Board was also asked to think about whether we change the number of individuals the association sends to the DRI Annual Meeting. This will also be discussed at the winter Board meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.