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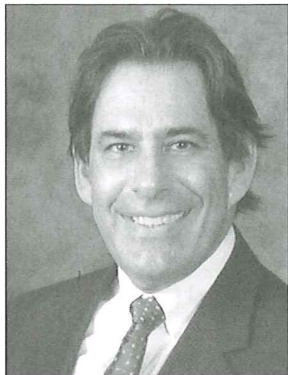
Crystal Ball Issue

Illustration: Chad Crowe

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

The Future of Our Forum

By Steven B. Lesser



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If you want something you've never had, then you've got to do something you've never done.

—Thomas Jefferson

As we move into the fall, cranes are in the air, the economy is on the upswing, and the Forum's pursuit of "Building the Best Construction Lawyers" ascends to new heights. At the Annual Meeting of the American Bar Association in Boston,

the ABA's leadership approved a request to change our name to "The Forum on Construction Law," a name that more closely aligns us with who we are—the largest construction lawyer organization in the world. This is a distinction earned by the Forum through its quest to provide superior education through cutting-edge programs, scholarly publications, and the ongoing commitment of people who care about the future of construction law. As we move forward, our charge is to reach out to young construction lawyers, promote diversity, and continue to present practical and worthwhile programs to our members.

Recruiting young construction lawyers begins at our Fall Meeting in Chicago, entitled "Bulldozers, Cranes & Claims: Challenges of Rebuilding the Construction Industry." Kicking off the meeting is "The Construction Lawyer Practicum for New Construction Lawyers," led by former Forum Chair Robbie MacPherson; Stephen Hess, editor of *The Construction Lawyer*; along with former Governing Committee Member Kerry Kester. These talented Forum leaders will guide young lawyers through a training session geared to educating them on the nation's top construction cases, a primer on construction contracts, and a panel discussion about career opportunities in construction law.

The Forum cares about diversity. Industry commentators have recently noted the rise of women's participation in management of major construction, design, and law firms. Recognizing the need for tailored programming to

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meet the needs of female construction lawyers, the Forum, in conjunction with the ABA Section of Dispute Resolution, will present at the Fall Meeting "Of Course You Can! Advanced Negotiation Skills for Women," taught by former Cornerstone Recipient Ava J. Abramowitz, who teaches these skills at The George Washington University Law School.

The Forum also recognizes that much can be learned from other industries outside of the practice of law. Our Fall Program diversity speaker is Kat Cole, who rose through the ranks from retail clerk to Hooters waitress to become president of Cinnabon, Inc. As a leader and author in change management, Kat Cole will inspire attendees to drive innovation, overcome obstacles, and be the best at what they do.

Upcoming programs will address the latest construction trends, ethical dilemmas, emerging technology, and insurance products. Valuable insights will be shared on how the construction lawyer successfully maneuvered clients from survival mode in a lousy economy to prosperity. Along the way we have seen defaults, break ups among our team members, reorganizations, bankruptcies, and natural disasters that have decimated projects only to spur on a wave of insurance claims. We have seen a shift from private to public construction, and back again. Programming dealing with these issues has never been more essential to our future as construction lawyers. Past years have generated little case law for guidance on these issues, as most cases travel through alternative dispute resolution such as arbitration, dispute resolution boards, and mediation as opposed to the court system. With scarce case law to guide us, we turn to high-energy, experienced construction lawyers to speak at our programs and share their stories on how they maneuvered through these daunting challenges and survived to talk about them.

The Midwinter Meeting in Scottsdale and Annual Meeting in Boca Raton will continue to provide practical advice for the contemporary construction lawyer. Learn new ways to tear apart the CPM expert; drafting disasters that keep you up at night; how to litigate the \$200,000 case; preparing legal bills your client will pay; how to excel as in-house counsel; the use of prebid risk assessments to achieve success; and more. All attendees will be provided with a checklist of program takeaways at each session. The checklists will be available through QR (Quick Recognition) codes distributed to everyone for viewing on their smartphone or tablet device both during and after each session.

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COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

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None of these initiatives could be possible without the dedicated support of Forum leadership. We are fortunate to have leaders that welcome change, generate new ideas, and devise ways to bring future value to our membership. As Thomas Jefferson once famously said: *If you want something you've never had, then you've got to do something you've never done!*

Many thanks to Will Hill, our chair of Marketing, for all his efforts in rolling out the name change and new logo; Wendy Venoit, our Membership chair, who has tirelessly run our campaign for new members and was recognized by the ABA for her efforts; Kristine Kubes, our chair of SPEC, who enthusiastically gives new meaning to distance learning products to better educate our members and give them the value that is essential to their livelihood; Cary Wright, our Technology chair, who worked around the clock to bring the Forum current in providing QR codes and a Forum app to best serve our members; Aaron Silberman, our Publications chair, who ensures that our publications continue to provide scholarly content commensurate with our reputation as the leading resource for written materials for

construction lawyers; Chris Montez, our Diversity chair, who constantly seeks to recruit new diverse members to the Forum and provide blockbuster diversity programs at each of our meetings; and, finally, Kerry Kester, our chair of the Division Chairs Committee, who safeguards and presides over our 14 active divisions, which continue to serve as the foundation of our success.

Personal thanks to our Governing Committee, division chairs, and our Chair-Elect Harper Heckman for their valuable input and tireless dedication to this Forum. And special gratitude to Past Forum Chairs Andy Ness and Terry Brookie, who have guided the Forum in its quest to achieve continued success in promoting people, programs, and publications to make a difference in construction law.

This is an exciting time for the Forum. And, if you are not yet in the mix, I encourage you to jump in with both feet. Active participation in the Forum will make you a better construction lawyer with the unique opportunity to network with colleagues from throughout the world, forge personal relationships, develop business, provide opportunities to publish, speak at national events, and enhance your reputation.

At the Forum on Construction Law, we are building the best construction lawyers. Be part of the Forum, take an active role, and blow the roof off your construction career! 🏗️