

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 159, No. 209

Membership has its privileges

McCormick takes helm of local FBA chapter where bench, bar learn together

BY PATRICIA MANSON
Law Bulletin staff writer

Talk to Margaret H. McCormick about reasons to join the Federal Bar Association's Chicago chapter, and she'll mention an advantage that lawyers in many other groups don't enjoy.

"It is the principal bar association that has a big representation of the federal judiciary," she said.

The presence of judges — district, bankruptcy and magistrate judges as well as administrative law judges with government agencies — allows federal practitioners to form collegial relationships with members of the bench, she said.

Another benefit of belonging to the FBA's Chicago chapter, which has more than 400 members, is the chance for lawyers in private practice to network with attorneys who work for the federal government.

"So if you're in federal practice, it's a great opportunity," she said. "You get to know your local government lawyers and judges."

McCormick intends to encourage these bonds between members of the bench and bar during her yearlong term as chapter president. She also wants the chapter to continue to offer programs on substantive law.

Programs that "cross-pollinate" different areas of the law, she said, reflect the real-world challenges that lawyers and their clients face. For example, the chapter sponsored a program this week on the enforcement of immigration law in the workplace.

In addition to the recently enacted Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act,

matters considered in various panel discussions have included criminal law, corporate practices, labor relations and tax law. Panels featured lawyers, business people, academics, government officials and others from around the country.

McCormick hopes such programs will help to keep the Chicago chapter strong.

"I would really like to focus on making the organization relevant to current members and attracting new members," she said.

In addition to McCormick, officers of the Chicago chapter include Mark E. Furlane of Drinker, Biddle & Reath LLP, first vice president; and U.S. District Judge Matthew F. Kennelly, second vice president.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Sheri H. Mecklenburg serves as the chapter's secretary, and Jordan P. Vick of Seyfarth, Shaw LLP is its treasurer.

McCormick succeeded George Jackson III of Polsinelli P.C. as chapter president last week.

During his term, Jackson worked to increase the size and visibility of the chapter. He said he benefited from the efforts of his predecessors, who set the Chicago chapter on the path to becoming "one of the premier chapters" of the FBA.

The Chicago chapter now offers a larger number of monthly programs than any other chapter, Jackson said.

The chapter fell under the spotlight of the national FBA at its 2013 meeting, where Chief U.S. District Judge Ruben Castillo was the "clear star," Jackson said.

"The fact that our chapter is so well governed and has such wonderful participation by the judges," Jackson said, "bodes well for us having a powerful



Margaret H. McCormick of Minsky, McCormick & Hallagan P.C. accepts the gavel from George Jackson III of Polsinelli P.C. as she assumes the presidency of the Federal Bar Association's Chicago chapter during the group's annual installation luncheon last week. *Ben Speckmann*

presence on the national level in the Federal Bar Association."

And McCormick will add to that presence, Jackson said.

"The groundswell of energy that our chapter has generated will continue on with my successor, Peggy McCormick, who brings a wealth of wonderful ideas and an unbridled clarity to the office of the presidency," he said.

McCormick, 62, grew up on the Northwest Side of Chicago as the second of 12 children.

Her late mother, Kay Hallagan, earned a master's degree in social work after her children were born. She went to work for Marillac Social Center, where McCormick's sister, Maureen Hallagan, is now executive director.

McCormick's father, Terry Hallagan, established Hallagan Business Machines in 1961. Another one of McCormick's sisters, Joan Hallagan, now owns the company.

McCormick earned an undergraduate degree in English in

1973 at Loyola University Chicago and a law degree in 1977 at DePaul University College of Law.

She then decided to take an intensive course in Spanish — "It was really work avoidance," she said — in Spain.

Before leaving the United States, McCormick got some travel tips from Joan H. Lefkow, who is now a federal trial court judge, and her late husband, attorney Michael F. Lefkow.

The Lefkows urged another acquaintance to introduce himself to McCormick when he went to Spain a month later.

Steven D. McCormick of Kirkland & Ellis LLP did, and the couple married after returning to the United States. The McCormicks have four children.

Kevin Paul McCormick is a trial attorney at Winston & Strawn LLP.

Marjorie Filice has just graduated from Northwestern University School of Law and started work for Jones, Day. Her husband, Pat Filice, has joined

Katten, Muchin, Rosenman LLP.

Another daughter, Luo Yao McCormick, is an actuary with Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Another son, Daniel McCormick, graduated from Fordham University last year and works at his mother's firm while he's considering law school.

After she returned from Spain, McCormick joined what is now the Heartland Alliance's National Immigrant Justice Center. She represented immigrants in deportation

proceedings.

After a couple of years, McCormick and her brother, James Hallagan, formed their own law firm. In 1986, they merged the firm with one founded by the late Joseph Minsky.

Minsky, McCormick & Hallagan P.C., focuses exclusively on immigration matters. Both McCormick and her brother initially represented individuals in such cases, but McCormick eventually began taking on

employment matters for companies that want to hire foreign nationals.

McCormick has taught immigration law at Loyola University School of Law since 1986.

She served as the national president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association from 1997 to 1998. The bar group has more than 10,000 members.

From 1999 to 2003, McCormick headed the board of

directors of the American Immigration Law Foundation.

The foundation was established to educate the public about immigration law and policy and to advance fairness and due process for immigrants.

McCormick said she hopes more immigration lawyers — and other federal practitioners — will join the FBA's Chicago chapter.

"It really is a terrific organization," she said.