

Andrea Davis

From: Family Law Section Leadership [ncaj@ncaj.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2011 10:57 AM
To: Andrea Davis
Subject: What's Up with the Family Law Section?



April 2011

CALL TO ACTION: NCAJ NEEDS YOUR ASSISTANCE!

NC's House budget leaders have rolled out their budget recommendations. **The House budget subcommittees will be voting on these recommendations in the afternoon on Wednesday, April 20.** Unlike Governor Purdue's proposed budget, the House budget cuts the 3/4 of a cent temporary sales tax. This means there is a lot less revenue and a lot deeper cuts. Here are some notable cuts affecting NCAJ members and their clients:

- Cuts that put Drug Treatment Courts and Family Courts on financial life support. All recurring funds have been eliminated. In their place these courts are receiving one year's worth of funding and will undergo a "continuation review."
- Cutting indigent defense attorneys by an additional \$11.3 million - on top of previous cuts and a current funding shortfall. Hourly rate could decrease as much as \$25 an hour (currently \$75).
- Elimination of Sentencing Services, a program that helps judges identify the most appropriate correction resources for an individual.
- Elimination of NC LEAF, a program providing financial assistance to lawyers in public interest fields with student loans.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Your clients and you can contact the list of legislators, [linked here](#), and talk to them, using the talking points, [linked here](#), about how these cuts will negatively impact your clients.

There is no substitute for personal contact with your NC General Assembly representatives!

If you have questions or need additional information, contact Paula McGrann, Section Legislative Chair, at pkmcgrann@themcgrannlawfirm.com or Todd Barlow, NCAJ Political Affairs Counsel, at Todd@ncaj.com.

SECTION MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: MARCIA H. ARMSTRONG



For this issue of the Family Law Section e-newsletter, the spotlight is focused on Section member, **Marcia H. Armstrong**, who is a partner in the firm of *Armstrong & Armstrong, P.A.* in Smithfield. Marcia strictly practices family law and concentrates in the specific areas of equitable distribution and support issues. Marcia was admitted to practice in 1983 after receiving her bachelor's degree in 1980 from Salem College and her J.D. degree from Wake Forest University in 1983.

In 1989, Marcia was certified by the NC State Bar as a specialist in Family Law. Marcia has been a member of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers since 1993 and is the president-elect of the NC Chapter. She is the State Bar Councilor for Judicial District 11B. She is certified as an arbitrator by AAML and as a Superior Court and Family Financial Mediator by the North Carolina Dispute Resolution Commission. Marcia has been listed as one of the "Super Lawyers" since 2006, "The Best Lawyers in America" since 1994 and is a

member of the Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers.

Marcia has answered a few questions regarding her practice and experience, growth and changes in the family law practice area. On behalf of all Section members, Section leadership sincerely thanks **Marcia** for her terrific contribution to this newsletter and her overall wonderful efforts in the family law practice area!

1) What was your first family law court hearing?

My first court appearance in domestic court was probably for an absolute divorce. My first contested hearing was child custody.

2) What was your most rewarding law hearing?

I do not have one case that stands out as the most rewarding. It is always rewarding when I am able to help a parent see his or her child or to receive much-needed financial assistance. I do recall defending a father wrongfully accused of sexually molesting his son. He ultimately obtained custody of his son, who was later diagnosed with colitis which was the cause of his rectal bleeding and not abuse from his father. Years later the father contacted me and told me his son graduated from UVA Law School.

3) What did you learn most from mentoring lawyers when you started?

How to treat clients and colleagues with respect and that being successful requires a lot of hard work.

4) What advice would you share with a new family law attorney now?

Practicing family law can be very rewarding, but can take a toll on you if you do not learn quickly not to shoulder the burdens of your clients. You should be kind, caring and sensitive, but understand and accept that you cannot always "fix" the problems.

5) How has the profession changed?

Alternative dispute resolution has evolved since I started practicing in 1983 which is a good thing. A dependent spouse can receive spousal support without proving fault on the part of the supporting spouse which is also a good thing. Fathers are getting custody more and joint custody is more prevalent. I see more females practicing family law. Equitable distribution cases can be very complex and intellectually challenging.

6) What client affected you the most, and why?

I have many clients that have affected me and that I think of often. Recently, I represented a woman who has a very serious bi-polar illness. She attempted suicide while I was representing her. However, today she is doing well but struggles to maintain stability. We have stayed in touch since her case was resolved. I hope I made a difference in her life.

7) What challenges will the family law bar face in the near future?

There seems to be more new lawyers going into practice on their own as a result of the bad economy. We "seasoned" family lawyers need to do a better job at mentoring these new lawyers in order to ensure they are handling the stress of a domestic practice and are effectively and competently representing their clients. I am also concerned about the future of family courts and programs such as custody mediation with the budget issues facing the State.

8) What injustice in the profession makes you get out of bed in the morning?

In spite of all of the stress associated with the practice of family law, I have to say that it has been rewarding for me to have helped a lot of people through a very difficult time in their lives.

Marcia Armstrong can be contacted at Marcia@ArmstrongLawyers.com or (919) 934-1575.

GET INVOLVED IN THE CAREER OF A NEW ATTORNEY – VOLUNTEER AS A NCAJ MENTOR!

In anticipation of a new and eager bunch of new admittees to the North Carolina Bar from the February Bar exam, **NCAJ needs a pool of NCAJ members statewide, in all practice areas, participating as mentors** for these new admittees as they join NCAJ!

Being a NCAJ mentor is very fulfilling! As a NCAJ mentor, you have the opportunity to share your expertise and knowledge with a new attorney and to shape that new attorney's future career.

NCAJ mentors are NCAJ members who have practiced more than ten years or who participate on the NCAJ Board of Governors. Every effort is made to pair a mentor with a new attorney who shares the same practice area and lives in the same town or geographic region. Contact AndreaD@ncaj.com to volunteer as a mentor today!

IT'S STILL NOT TOO LATE TO VOLUNTEER FOR SECTION LEADERSHIP

Based on your nominations, Section Chair, **Deb Halvorsen** and Section Chair-Elect, **Sheryl Friedrichs** are putting the finishing touches on the Section leadership roster for 2011-12, however it's still not too late to nominate yourself or another Section member to participate in leadership.

Participating in Section leadership is very satisfying and fun. Section leaders have the opportunity to shape a Section agenda in all aspects of NCAJ; to network and form working relationships with other NCAJ members statewide; and to have a voice with NCAJ leadership. If you are interested in participating Family Law Section leadership, contact AndreaD@ncaj.com.

CONVENTION 2011: ONLINE REGISTRATION OPEN!!

June 18-22, 2011
Hilton Riverside
Wilmington

Online registration is NOW OPEN for Convention 2011 which will be held at the Hilton Riverside in historic downtown Wilmington on June 18-22!

Convention 2011 Program Co-Chairs, **Emily McNamara**, *Wilmington* and **Vernon Sumwalt**, *Charlotte* have planned a tremendous Convention for you!

Convention Highlights:

- *Keynote Speaker:* consumer advocate **Erin Brockovich**
- *Saturday's Luncheon Speaker:* North Carolina's own **Roger Smith**
- *Civil Masters in Advocacy Seminar:* Hone your skills at **Arguing Motions** (morning) and **An Introduction to Reptilian Trial Advocacy from the Founders** (afternoon)
- *Criminal Masters in Advocacy Seminar:* **Hit & Runs: Fast-Paced Multi-Subject Hot Button Topics for the Everyday Practitioner**
- *Summer Conference for Paralegals:* Get a full year's CPE credit!

Of specific interest to Family Law Section Members:

- *Family Law Update* - **Eddie Greene**
- *Women's Caucus Luncheon*
- *Family Law Section Meeting*
- *287(g) and Secure Communities: Think Immigration Policy Doesn't Affect Your Clients? Think Again.* - **Marty Rosenbluth**
- *How to Develop a Brand That Sells* - **Neal Anderson**

[Click here](#) for a Convention Brochure.

[Click here](#) to register for the Criminal Masters, Civil Masters and/or Convention.

[Click here](#) to register for the Summer Conference for Paralegals.

WAIT! You've registered...Make your room reservation NOW! NCAJ has reserved room blocks at the following locations. *Be sure to mention the NC Advocates for Justice for discounted rates!*

- **Hilton Riverside** - \$159/night - 910.763.5900 (*Both river view and city view rooms available.*)
- **Best Western Coastline** - \$129/night - 910.763.2800 or 800.617.7732 (*All river view rooms, less than two blocks from the Hilton.*)
- **Riverview Suites** - \$159/night - 910.772.9988 (*One-bedroom condos, all river view, one-half block from Hilton.*)
- **Shell Island Resort** - \$199/night - 910.256.8696 or 800.689.6765 (*In Wrightsville Beach, oceanfront one-bedroom condos.*)

Wrightsville Beach is a 20-minute drive from downtown Wilmington. For those who wish to rent beach cottages, NCAJ recommends the following realtors:

- **Intracoastal Rental** - 800.533.1840 or 910.256.4503 - www.intracoastalrealty.com
- **Bryant Real Estate** - 800.322.3764 or 910.256.3764 - www.bryantrealestate.com

UPCOMING CLE – SAVE THE DATE!

Save the Date for these awesome & informative upcoming family law CLEs that your Section leadership is putting together just for you!

September 30, 2011, *Family Law How To's*, Sheraton Four Seasons, Greensboro

February 16, 2012, *Family Law - Discovery*, Forsyth County Courthouse, Winston-Salem

Interested in Other CLE Topics?

[Click here](#) for the full schedule of upcoming live educational seminars and video replays.

A HOW-TO...NCAJ'S LISTSERVS

NCAJ's listservs are tremendous resources that provide a wealth of information to listserv members on a 24/7 basis, at the office, at home, on your hand-held or anywhere in between! NCAJ's listservs give you access to advice from members statewide willing to answer those vexing questions that come up from time to time. In court and need a quick answer? Want to strategize next steps in your case? Need a legal form and don't have it handy? Post a email message to one of NCAJ's 23 listservs and get an immediate response from members statewide.

Using any of NCAJ's listservs is EASY -- [click here](#) for a handy listserv FAQ.

NCAJ's listservs are only as secure as NCAJ members make them -- [click here](#) to review the NCAJ Listserv Protocol.

LISTSERV TIPS

- To set-up your listserv account, contact AndreaD@ncaj.com -- a NCAJ member can not set-up his/her listserv account directly with Trialsmith.
- Once subscribed to a NCAJ listserv, read the Welcome message that is emailed to you from the NCAJ listserv -- it contains a bunch of great information for you regarding that specific NCAJ listserv.
- Please DO NOT forward any NCAJ listserv messages - this only further enhances the security and integrity of NCAJ's listservs.
- Please contact Robyn@ncaj.com PRIOR to making a post promoting a non-NCAJ CLE on any NCAJ listserv.
- If you would like to search the NCAJ listserv archives housed on the Trialsmith website, www.trialsmith.com, you first need to setup your username and password with Trialsmith (your NCAJ username and password are not necessarily the username and password you will use on the Trialsmith website).

To set-up a username and password to search the NCAJ listserv archive on the Trialsmith website:

- o Go to www.trialsmith.com
- o Click on Join in the upper right corner
- o Choose Subscribe Now from the drop-down menu
- o Choose North Carolina Advocates for Justice from the drop-down menu
- o Click on View Plans
- o Choose the Basic Plan (\$0.00 for 12 months)
- o Click Continue at the bottom of the page
- o Click I Agree to the License Agreement
- o Enter your contact information and choose your username and password
- o Click Continue. Trialsmith vets all access requests so please allow 1 hour for Trialsmith to research and approve your request.

Attention: Family Law Section Members...Not participating in one of the best benefits of your Family Law Section membership? What are you waiting for? Take full advantage of this invaluable resource by contacting AndreaD@ncaj.com to set-up your Section listserv account.

INTRODUCING NCAJ'S VETERANS' AFFAIRS LISTSERV – JOIN TODAY!

NCAJ has created a listserv especially for NCAJ members who do work in the Veterans' Affairs area. The Veterans' Affairs listserv is free of charge to NCAJ members and a membership list for those participating in the Veterans' Affairs listserv can be found on the Members' Homepage, members.ncaj.com. To participate, contact AndreaD@ncaj.com to set-up your Veterans' Affairs listserv account.

2010-11 FAMILY LAW SECTION OFFICERS

Chair: [Deb Halvorsen](#) (Winston-Salem)

Vice Chair & Ethics Chair: [Sheryl Friedrichs](#) (Raleigh)

Secretary: [Sheryl Friedrichs](#) (Raleigh)

Immediate Past Chair: [Jeanne Ford](#) (Cary)

CLE Chair: [Ruth Bradshaw](#) (Winston-Salem)

Communications Co-Chair: [Lauren Hinzey](#) (Raleigh)

Communications Co-Chair: [Sundee Stephenson](#) (Morehead City)

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Legislative Chair: [Paula McGrann](#) (Raleigh)

Membership Co-Chair: [Matthew Myers](#) (Charlotte)

Membership Co-Chair: [Judy Tseng](#) (Raleigh)

NLD Section Liaison: [Karen Jackson](#) (Greensboro)

Publications Chair: [Jeanne Ford](#) (Cary)

If you wish to contribute content to this e-newsletter or have ideas for enhancing the e-newsletter, contact AndreaD@ncaj.com.

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1312 Annapolis Drive | P.O. Box 10918 | Raleigh 27605

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