

NFPA Annual Convention 2011 Recap

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The NFPA Annual Convention & Policy Meeting was held from October 13 through October 16, 2011 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. As NFPA Primary Representative, I attended the convention on behalf of the VPO. The convention consists of the following events: Thursday is continuing legal education day with various seminars held throughout the course of the day; Friday consists of all day region meetings, and Saturday and Sunday are the policy meeting.

Minnesota Paralegal Association (“MPA”) did an excellent job of scheduling over 24 seminar choices for the day. I attended four CLE sessions on the following topics: the pros and cons of social media sites for paralegals; recent amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure; hot topics in attorney-client privilege issues; and effective use of trial technology and software. Each of the presentations was concise, informative and topically relevant.

On Wednesday evening, I observed the NFPA Board Meeting which is open to all delegates – something I had never had the opportunity to observe before. The opportunity to attend the NFPA Board meeting was extremely informative, and truly prepared me for the upcoming policy meeting. I realized that during the Board Meeting, the Board takes up the administrative and policy agenda topics that have been presented by the members for the convention. The only agenda topics that are not brought up at the Board Meeting are those agenda topics that would result in amendments to the bylaws. This year’s agenda topics were mostly administrative in nature, and therefore were presented to the Board for placement on the consent calendar. If the Board votes in favor of an agenda topic, it is placed on the consent calendar as approved. If the Board votes against an agenda topic, it is placed on the consent calendar as not approved.

Then, at the policy meeting, if the delegates were to adopt the consent calendar in its entirety, those agenda items that were approved would become resolutions without ever being brought to the policy meeting floor and voted on by the delegates. Likewise, if the delegates adopt the consent calendar as presented, those agenda topics that were not approved by the Board would die, and would also not be brought to the policy meeting floor for a vote. In order to remove items from the consent calendar, the delegates must move for an agenda topic to be brought to the policy floor discussion. If the delegates do not vote to approve its removal from the consent calendar – none of the agenda topics would ever come to the floor. Then, the only agenda items left for discussion at the policy meeting would be those agenda items that would affect NFPA’s bylaws.

Eventually, there were four resolutions passed by the delegates at the Policy meeting. Resolution 11-01 amended NFPA Procedures, Section 22.5, to include language which would allow the Convention Host Association to make a recommendation to the NFPA Board as to what charity it would like to collection donations for during the convention. Despite the amendment, the decision on the charity ultimately rests with the Board.

Resolution 11-02 amended the bylaws to allow individual sustaining members (with the exception of vendors) to fill coordinator or committee positions within NFA. The only two positions that this does not affect are the ABA Approval Commission Representative and the Education Coordinator, who are elected by the delegate assembly.

Resolution 11-03 amends the nomination procedure for the ABA Approval Commission Representative to make the procedure consistent with the ABA's current practice for appointment of representatives to the Commission.

Resolution 11-04 amended Section 14.3 of the NFPA Bylaws to require that the financial records of NFPA shall be audited every three years by an independent auditor rather than every two years, as was previously the standard.

In addition, elections were held at Policy meeting for those NFPA Board positions that were up for re-election. Those included all Region Director positions since Region Directors are appointed for one-year terms only. The following is a summary of the elections, awards, and scholarships that were presented at the Convention:

- Michael Wallace, RP®, winner of the 2011 PACE® Ambassador Award
- RoxAnn Mack, winner of the 2011 Individual Pro Bono Award
- Cleveland Association of Paralegals, winner of the 2011 Association Pro Bono Award
- Mary K. Hanson, winner of the 2011 Thomson Reuters/NFPA Scholarship (\$3000)
- Austin Brian Prendergast, winner of the 2011 Thomson Reuters/NFPA Scholarship (\$2000)
- Mariela Evora Cawthon, winner of the 2011 Paralegal of the Year Award
- Colette A. Lemke, winner of the 2011 Outstanding Local Leader Award
- Michel Boerder, winner of the 2011 William R. Robie Award
- Melissa Marquez Leslie, newly elected NFPA Vice President & Director of Marketing
- Theresa Prater, RP®, re-elected NFPA Vice President & Director of Profession Development
- Jessica Swedenhjelm, RP®, Pa.C.P., elected NFPA Vice President & Director of Membership
- Karen Santagata, RP®, re-elected Treasurer & Director of Finance
- Theda Yandell, RP®, re-elected NFPA Director, Region I
- Cindy Welch, RP®, re-elected NFPA Director, Region II
- Cherylann Shearer, re-elected NFPA Director, Region III
- Valerie Dolan, RP®, Pa.C.P., re-elected NFPA Director, Region IV
- Beth Bialis, re-elected NFPA Director, Region V

In addition to the CLE Day on Thursday, and Region Meeting day on Friday, the 2011 Pro Bono Conference was also held at the Convention, on Friday, October 14. The Conference included presentations by paralegals working on pro bono projects across the

country, as well as information on how to start or enhance our own association's pro bono efforts. I was not able to attend the pro bono conference because I had to attend as the representative at the Region V Meeting on Friday, as well as attend a presentation by the NFPA Strategic Planning Committee because I am a member. However, all the feedback from the pro bono conference attendees was excellent, and overall those who attended that portion felt it was a great success.

The Region V Meeting held on Friday focused on reviewing the agenda topics, both those that had been placed on the consent calendar. In addition, Region I had asked to meet with Region V to exchange ideas about sustaining and growing membership and individual association's efforts to improve their membership and member benefits. During the meeting, I shared the details of our new VPO Activism Rewards Program with the other associations, and many of the local associations loved the idea of implementing a similar type of program for their own association.

Overall, the Convention was a great success, and MPA did an excellent job of hosting and organizing the 2011 Convention.