

Women Leaders in the Senior Lawyers Division

Leadership opportunities for older women prevail in this ABA group

By Selma Moidel Smith

The Senior Lawyers Division (SLD) of the American Bar Association (ABA) offers important opportunities for women lawyers. Formed in 1985, the SLD comprises lawyers 55 years of age or more, whether retired or still in active practice.

Of particular interest to women lawyers is the SLD's policy of encouraging participation and leadership by women members.

A Diversity Committee was initiated in 1995 by Victor Futter of New York, then chair of the SLD, to bring more women lawyers into the work and rewards of the organization. The present SLD chair, John Pickering of Washington, D.C., has long been known for his sensitivity to women's issues and carries that conviction into the new year.

Several NAWL® members have risen to prominence in the Division:

The **Hon. Mary S. Parker** of Los Angeles served this past year as the first chair of the newly created Diversity Committee, and has now completed her term on the Division's governing Council. She is also serving a 2-year term as the NAWL® Delegate in the ABA House of Delegates.

Mary Pat Toups of California serves in multiple roles. As secretary of the SLD, she is one of four elected officers. In addition, she chairs the Pro Bono Committee and serves as vice chair of both the Legal Aid Assistance and Continuing Legal Education committees.

Clara Weiner Dworsky of Houston is the chair of the Social Security Law and Practice Committee, and writes a regular column on the subject for the SLD's quarterly magazine. She is also a former



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member of the Division's governing Council.

The **Hon. Mattie Belle Davis** of Florida, a NAWL® Past President, serves as vice chair of the Judiciary Committee, and has served several times on the Nominating Committee. NAWL® Past President **Virginia S. Mueller** of California serves as vice chair of the Diversity Committee.

NAWL® is further represented by members who serve on these and other SLD committees. Other women lawyers, outside of NAWL®, are also active in the Division.

Topics of ongoing concern to senior women lawyers figured prominently among the subjects covered in the SLD's first Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Conference held last year. These included: Elder Abuse, Advance Directives, Housing Options, Financial Aspects of Retirement Planning, Social Security, Pro Bono, Second Careers, Legal/Ethical issues of Suicide, Family Law

and Of Counsel.

Such interests, and many others, are reflected in the growing list of SLD committees, which currently total 36. Two quarterly publications are produced by committees of the Division: a newsletter, *Senior Lawyer*; and a magazine, *Experience*, which contains articles of special interest to lawyers at this stage of their careers and lives. Unique among the committees is the Travel and Leisure Committee that plans an active schedule of trips and cruises during the year.

The Senior Lawyers Division holds quarterly regional meetings open to all SLD members. Two of these meetings are held in conjunction with the Midyear and Annual meetings of the ABA. The SLD is seeking women lawyers who will serve as speakers on various topics at these joint meetings.

Parker points up a distinct advantage of membership in the Division. "Where too often women lawyers find themselves overlooked for advancement and recognition by reason of age, this organization welcomes them to its ranks and leadership." After 10 years of active participation in the SLD, she emphatically recommends this additional involvement to NAWL® members. *

Selma Moidel Smith is the first NAWL® liaison to the Senior Lawyers Division of the ABA. She is a past president of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, and a former NAWL® Regional Director for the Western States. She followed her three brothers into the practice of law in the family firm of Moidel, Moidel & Smith.