

CONSUMER LAW SECTION 2003-2004 ANNUAL REPORT

Consumer Law Section is nearing its tenth anniversary. We were established with the stated goals of educating the bench, bar, and public on consumer issues, providing advice to legislators on consumer issues, and otherwise assisting in the effective practice of consumer law.

During the past year we have taken numerous steps toward those goals. We are enhancing our on-line presence. We are working toward creating an online database of consumer lawyers, indexed by speciality and geographic area, to make it easier for members of the public to find attorneys who have the appropriate interest and experience to help with the public's consumer law needs. Lawyers could also access the database to make appropriate referrals. We have also taken the first steps toward creating an online reference library of briefs and articles on Michigan consumer law issues to help further our goal of educating the bench and bar.

Legislatively, we have taken steps to educate key lawmakers regarding the problems with *Smith v. Globe*, a case that expands the exceptions to the consumer protection act to the point of making the act powerless to stop even clear wrongdoing. Although a bill was introduced in the Michigan legislature to fix the problem, that bill creates its own problems and is unlikely to pass in its current form. We are working on our own bill to help create a palatable fix to the problems created by *Smith v. Globe*. We are also seeking to reach out to other groups with similar interests and to the public in general. To help us more effectively communicate to the public, we will be learning more about the media by participating in the seminar being held by the Law and Media Committee at the State Bar of Michigan's annual meeting. We also will be awarding our annual Frank J. Kelly Consumer Advocacy Award at the annual meeting.

In addition, the Section continues to maintain a list serve allowing the rapid exchange of information and the sharing of expertise.

In short, this has been a year of creativity and growth for our Section. With the implementation of our online resources and expansion of our legislative liaisons we should be well positioned to promote the understanding of consumer law and further the effective practice of consumer law throughout the State of Michigan.

Submitted by: Steven E. Goren, Chair