

**2006-2007 SECTION ANNUAL REPORT  
STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN**

*Section Name:* Legal Assistant Section

*Mission Statement* The Legal Assistants Section of the State Bar of Michigan provides education, information and analysis about issues of concern through meetings, seminars, this site, public service programs, and publication of a newsletter. Membership in the Section is open to qualified legal assistants and to all members of the State Bar of Michigan. Statements made on behalf of the Section do not necessarily reflect the views of the State Bar of Michigan.

*Officers and Membership:*

*Chair:* Denise E. Gau (Royal Oak, MI)

*Council Members:*

Cheryl Nordarse, CLA, Vice Chair, (Lansing, MI)  
Jaxine Wintjen, CLA, Secretary, (Lansing, MI)  
Kathy Ann Blunck, Treasurer, (Traverse City)  
Ida Farhat, ACP, Council Member ('07), (Lansing, MI)  
Rebecca Opipari, Council Member ('07), (Bloomfield Hills, MI)  
Marianne B. Delaney, CP, Council Member ('07), (Dearborn, MI)  
Jeanne Nyhuis, Council Member ('07), (Holland, MI)  
Christianne Redmond, Council Member ('07), (Royal Oak, MI)  
Brian English, Council Member ('08), (Farmington Hills, MI)  
Vicki Voisin, ACP, Ex-Officio, (Charlevoix, MI)

*Committee Chairs:*

Membership: Kevin Gasiewski, CLAS, (Detroit, MI)  
Job Bank: Margaret Lucas Agius, CLAS, (Detroit, MI)  
Scholarship: Cheryl Nordarse, CLA, Vice Chair, (Lansing, MI)  
Public Relations: Linda Jevahirian, (Farmington Hills, MI)

*Commissioner Liaison:* Eric J. Pelton, Esq., Birmingham, MI

*Section Membership:* The Section has approximately 511 members

*2006-07 Council Meeting Schedule (date and location):*

September 15, 2006 at Lansing, MI  
November 18, 2006 at Lansing, MI  
January 20, 2007 Via telephone conference  
March 24, 2007 Via telephone conference  
May 3, 2007 at Frankenmuth, MI  
July 21, 2007 Via telephone conference

### 2006-2007 Section Activities (Events/Seminars):

**2006 Annual Meeting.** The Section held its annual meeting on September 15, 2006 at the Radisson Hotel in Ypsilanti. Following the business meeting, a presentation was given by Ms. Mary Dempsey-Knox of the Northville branch of the Michigan State Police Crime Lab talking about the forensics lab. Ms. Dempsey-Knox's topic was "CSI Ypsilanti": She explained to the group the things that the crime lab does to solve a crime.

**The Michigan Paralegal.** An Editorial Board has been established for the future planning of the Section's quarterly publication, *The Michigan Paralegal*. Issues published this year have featured many substantive articles of interest to the membership profiles of members of the Section with a focus on their areas of practice. *The Michigan Paralegal* endeavors to provide current news and information to all members.

**Michigan Bar Journal.** The Legal Assistant section solicited articles from its members and from other Legal Assistants/Paralegals to publish articles in the July 2007 Michigan Bar Journal which will be devoted to Legal Assistants/Paralegals.

**Annual Day of Education.** The Section held its annual education seminar at the Frankenmuth Inn in Frankenmuth, MI on May 4, 2007. Approximately 76 participants attended the seminar. The event began with a keynote address from Past Chair, Vicki Voisin, followed by a general session on E-Discovery in the Federal Courts by Carol Romej, Esq. and J. Stott Matthews (Spectrum Computer Forensics and Risk Management LLC). After a networking luncheon from Noon to 1:00 p.m., breakout sessions were in two tracks, a general litigation and labor litigation, were held from 1:00 p.m. until 4:15 p.m.

The labor litigation law track included presentations on Labor Law: Back to Basics presented by Stan Moore (Plunkett & Cooney) and Employment Law Smorgasbord presented by Terry Kasiborski (Butzel Long, P.C.)

The litigation track included presentations on Jury selection and trial consulting by Ruth Holmes of Pentec, Inc. and "Michigan Court Rules" presented by Mike Woodworth (Hubbard, Fox, Thomas, White & Bengtson, P.C.).

The day was preceded by an evening celebration which was a dinner at The Bavarian Inn with speaker Diane Buffalin "Winning without Arguing", was sponsored by LAAM (Legal Assistants Association of Michigan) commemorating Legal Assistant/Paralegal Day, which was declared by Governor Granholm as May 3, 2007.

**Member Communications.** The Section continues its efforts to improve communications with members and provide networking opportunities by utilizing the Listserv created through the State Bar and Chardnet. An announcements list is used to provide important Section information and other relevant news to members. Each member of the Section who has provided an email address is subscribed to this list. Members have the option to unsubscribe. A general list is available to members who wish to subscribe and is used as a means of

networking and a way to communicate regarding issues related to the paralegal profession.

**The Web Page.** The Section's web page continues to serve as an excellent means of communication with members. The web site provides up to date information on Council activities, important news and Section events.

**Public Relations.** The public relations committee has made significant efforts to promote the Section and the legal assistant profession. The committee has written press releases, coordinated with the media to promote events, and has developed strategies for utilizing Section activities to raise awareness of the Section and the profession.

**Scholarships.** The Section will, once again, present a scholarship to legal assistant Students at the annual meeting in September of 2007. Thanks to a generous donation from LAAM (Legal Assistant Association of Michigan), the Section was able to give \$4,000.00 in Scholarships in September 2006. The winners of \$1,000.00 each were Stephanie Bisard, Maria Kelley, Jolanta Nemanis, and Tiffany E. Shipp.

**Job Bank.** The Section continues to operate an Internet job bank that is free to employers and job seekers. The job bank is accessible via the Section's web page and is available to members and non-members. As of April 30, 2007, there were more than 7 job postings and other related information.

**Policy Manual.** In an effort to clarify its policies and procedures, the Council has continued to work through the year to develop a policy manual. This will be an on-going process, with the end result offering guidance to future officers and Council members.

**Legal Assistant/Paralegal.** An ad hoc committee was appointed to study steps necessary for the addition of the term "paralegal" to the name of the Section. This issue continues to be important to Section members and the Council has pledged to work with the State Bar to find a resolution. We will be presenting this issue for a vote to the members at the Annual Meeting in September 2007.

**Leadership Training/Seminars.** The Section continues to provide opportunities for Council members to attend leadership seminars, as well as the annual seminars of the national associations for legal assistants. Council members will attend the State Bar Leadership Forum at Boyne Mountain, Boyne Falls in May and the annual convention of the National Association of Legal Assistants in New Orleans, LA in July 2007.

**Pro Bono Champion Award.** The Council will recognize paralegals that have made significant contributions of pro bono services at the Section's Annual Meeting.

**Member Involvement.** Efforts to increase participation among members include an overall initiative by Council members to invite members to become involved in committee work. Additionally, the listserv and *The Michigan Paralegal* are used to emphasize to members how involvement with the Section can enhance one's career and enrich one's professional life.

**2007 Annual Meeting.** Plans for the 2007 annual meeting are currently in the planning stages. This event will be held on September 27 and 28, 2007 at the DeVos Place in Grand Rapids. Elections and installation of officers and Council members for 2007-08 will be held. In addition, we will be partnering with ICLE on the two days of seminars that are planned. We will be allowing our members a scholarship to defray the cost of the seminar.

***Resources Provided by the State Bar of Michigan***

Printing/Publishing and mailing of the Michigan Paralegal. Printing and mailing of the "Save the Date" postcards and the brochure for the Day of Education.

***Future Goals and Activities:***

Vendor/Networking Event the evening before our Day of Education on Thursday, May 1, 2008, along with the Day of Education on Friday, May 2, 2008.

***Chair/Co-Chair Contact Information:***

***Chair:*** Denise E. Gau, Butzel Long, P.C., 150 West Jefferson, #100, Detroit, MI 48226-4454, (313) 983-7402, gau@butzel.com

***Vice Chair:*** Cheryl Nodarse, CLA, Hubbard Fox Thomas White & Bengston PC, 5801 West Michigan, PO Box 80857, Lansing, MI 48908-0857, (517) 886-7130, cnodarse@hubbardlaw.com

Respectfully submitted,

Denise E. Gau  
Chair 2006/2007