

# YOUNG LAWYERS

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## IT HAS BEEN A BUSY YEAR FOR THE YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION

I am often asked, “What does the Young Lawyers Executive Committee do?” The short answer is, “A lot.” In this, my final article as YLS Executive Committee Chairman, I want to let the Bar know what the Young Lawyers Section is and what it does for its members and the public.

To be considered a “young lawyer,” a member must be in practice in West Virginia for less than ten (10) years. The YLS Executive Committee consists of elected young lawyer representatives from sixteen (16) Districts from around the State. These geographic districts are the same as the ones used by the WV State Bar Board of Governors. Like the Board of Governors, each member is elected to a three (3) year term with one-third of the mem-

bers rotating off each year. Also, like the Board of Governors, an officer is elected by the Executive Committee after his or her three-year term expires. That individual progresses from Secretary to Vice Chair and then Chairperson in successive years. The Committee meets in person as a full Board four (4) times a year. Additionally, its subcommittees meet regularly to discuss and work on various projects and issues. The YLS Chairperson is also a member of the Board of Governors, the West Virginia Law Institute and the West Virginia College of Law Visiting Committee, and as such the position could be considered a full-time job.

My favorite project the YLS Committee has worked on this year is the Wills for Heroes program. This is a public service

whereby YLS Executive Committee members draft simple wills, medical powers of attorney and durable powers of attorney for first responders. First responders, such as fire fighters and police officers, may put their lives on the line every day. Unfortunately, statistics show many do not have wills or any form of estate planning. The Wills for Heroes Program, headed by YLS members Chris Gardill and Steve Connolly, will provide these first responders with wills and other simple estate planning documents absolutely free.

This year the YLS Executive Committee has continued to publish and offer for free the *WV Practice Handbook*. The Handbook consists of thirty-six (36) chapters on areas of the law such as Medical Malpractice,

HIPAA and Appellate Procedure. This is a great service offered to the public and is absolutely free. The Handbook can be downloaded by anyone from the YLS Web site, <http://www.wvyounglawyers.com>.

We have also provided seminars to students at the WVU College of Law. These seminars have been and will continue to be free to attend. Actually, not only are the seminars free, attendees also receive lunch. The seminars do not cover esoteric issues but instead are devoted to the practical “nuts and bolts” of practicing law – in other words, topics that are often not found on a law school examination. YLS members Monte Williams, Tonya Hatfield and David Hart have been instrumental in putting these programs together.

The YLS Executive Committee has also been active in determining who will be awarded the next State Bar legal research contract. During our last meeting, the Committee heard presentations from Casemaker (the Bar’s current legal research provider) and Fastcase, another provider. After hearing each presentation, and examining the pros and cons of each program, the Committee voted unanimously to change providers to Fastcase. This recommendation was taken to the Board of Governors who unanimously concurred with the YLS Executive Committee’s recommendation. I can state unequivocally that the Bar will be very

pleased with the new legal research engine that will be provided to the membership later this year. To continue with the theme of this article, this excellent legal research tool will be absolutely free to all active Bar members.

Other issues recently considered by the Committee include funding and possibly renaming the 5K race sponsored by the Student Bar Association at the WVU College of Law, which provides funding for senior legal aid. We are also considering additional sources of funding (without raising bar dues) for WVU College of Law scholarships, a Lawyer Assistance Program and Legal Aid. The Committee also has brought awareness to the serious problems associated with the State’s funding of court-appointed lawyers for the indigent. The members of the Committee also recently donated their own money to pay for two children to attend a 4H summer camp.

Of course, this is by no means an exhaustive list of all the projects and issues currently being tackled by the YLS Executive Committee, but I do hope this article helps answer the question, “What does the Young Lawyers Executive Committee do?”

*I would like to thank Andrea, Alex and Will, as well as my law partners, for their support during this busy time.* **WVL**



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