

**STATE BAR OF NEW MEXICO
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION
REPORT FOR PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2006 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2006**

During the period covered by this Report, the Committee held regular meetings on January 25, March 22, July 19 and September 20, 2006. An average of nine people attended the meetings, and approximately nine members actively participated in one or more projects of the Committee.

During the period covered by this report, the Committee engaged in the following projects:

1. **Ask Pat column:** This is a column that appears as a regular feature in the *New Mexico Bar Bulletin*. It is a question and answer format and covers matters and issues of particular concern to women attorneys. Questions and comments in response to articles are also solicited from the Bar. Committee members published several Ask Pat columns during 2006.
2. **Gender Neutral Language:** The Committee continued its effort in proposing changes to New Mexico's gender neutral statute, NMSA 1978, § 12-2A-5. With the assistance of Senator Diane Snyder, the Committee was able to get a Senate Memorial unanimously passed during the first legislative session of the year containing language in substantially the same form previously prepared by the Committee and approved by the Board of Bar Commissioners. The Committee additionally worked with Justice Miner to implement amendments to the Court Rules & Procedures to be gender neutral when possible. The Committee will continue its efforts towards formal legislative change. These actions are being pursued at no cost to the State Bar.
3. **Family Leave Survey:** The Committee conducted a survey, which was approved of by the Board of State Bar Commissioners, in order to learn what types of leave policies are in place across different segments of practice, what types of policies are significant to practitioners (depending on factors such as age, experience and type of practice), how firms/organizations might improve their policies in this area, and how New Mexico compares to other jurisdictions.

Results from the survey suggested the importance of family leave policies in connection with attorney employment decisions, such as whether to accept an offer of employment or search for other employment. The Survey's 168 respondents represented a fairly broad cross section of the legal profession in terms of age, years in practice, practice type and firm/organization size. A majority of the respondents (53.5%) indicated that a firm or organization's family leave policies were a very important factor in connection with employment decisions. A significant number of respondents (44.8%) identified the issue of family leave policies as somewhat important to their employment related decisions, and only 12.3% of respondents identified the issue as not important. The Survey indicated firms/organizations most commonly address the need for family leave among attorneys (whether for the birth or adoption of a child or for the illness of a family member) through annual, sick and unpaid leave. Although a fair number of respondents reported the availability of options such as flex/comp time and part-time employment for

family leave purposes, relatively few respondents identified telecommuting as an option offered by their firm/organization.

Some of the Survey's most interesting results appeared in response to Question No. 32, which asked how the respondent's firm/organization could improve the manner in which it handles leave requirements. One of the most prevalent suggestions was the need for written policies on the subject. Other respondents propose the need for more flexible policies, offering options for part-time employment and telecommuting. In this connection one respondent noted: "Our organization gets far more behind in work and energy by hiring and training a new employee for a mother or father that leaves than it would for offering the experienced person part-time status and/or telecommuting." As might be expected, however, the comments also indicated that the size of a firm/organization may have a significant pact on its family leave policies. On one end of the spectrum, a respondent commented: "We are very flexible due to the size of the firm and its structure. A good attorney will be someone we want to work with to keep on board." At the other end, another respondent aptly noted: "There is no such thing as family leave for those who are self employed."

In response to the 2006 Family Leave Policy Survey, the Committee plans to develop prototypes of family leave policies, and to address issues raised by various respondents in future Ask Pat columns.

4. **Support Group Meetings for Lawyers Who Are Parents:** During 2006, the Committee held a meeting of its support group for lawyers who are parents on August 24, 2006. The event was attended by Paul Melendres, Patty Galindo, Liz Garcia, Claire Dickson, Sandy Gomez and Jane Wishner. Based on the meeting, a regular series of meetings with a specific topic related to managing a legal career and successful parenting tips was found to be the most likely the preferred format for future meetings.
5. **Statewide Committee Award:** The Committee developed draft language for an award recognizing a New Mexico practitioner for outstanding contributions to women's legal issues, which it intends to finalize during 2007 for approval by the Board of Bar Commissioners so that the first award can be given in 2007.
6. **Law School Clinic Efforts:** The Committee continued to explore ways to increase law school student involvement in the Committee and serving the needs of female law students.

Respectfully submitted effective December 31, 2006,

Patricia Galindo, Co-Chair

Suzanne Odom, Co-Chair