IMLA

THE MUNICIPAL LAWYER MAGAZINE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012

THE JOURNAL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAW

Title VII and the Workplace Romance

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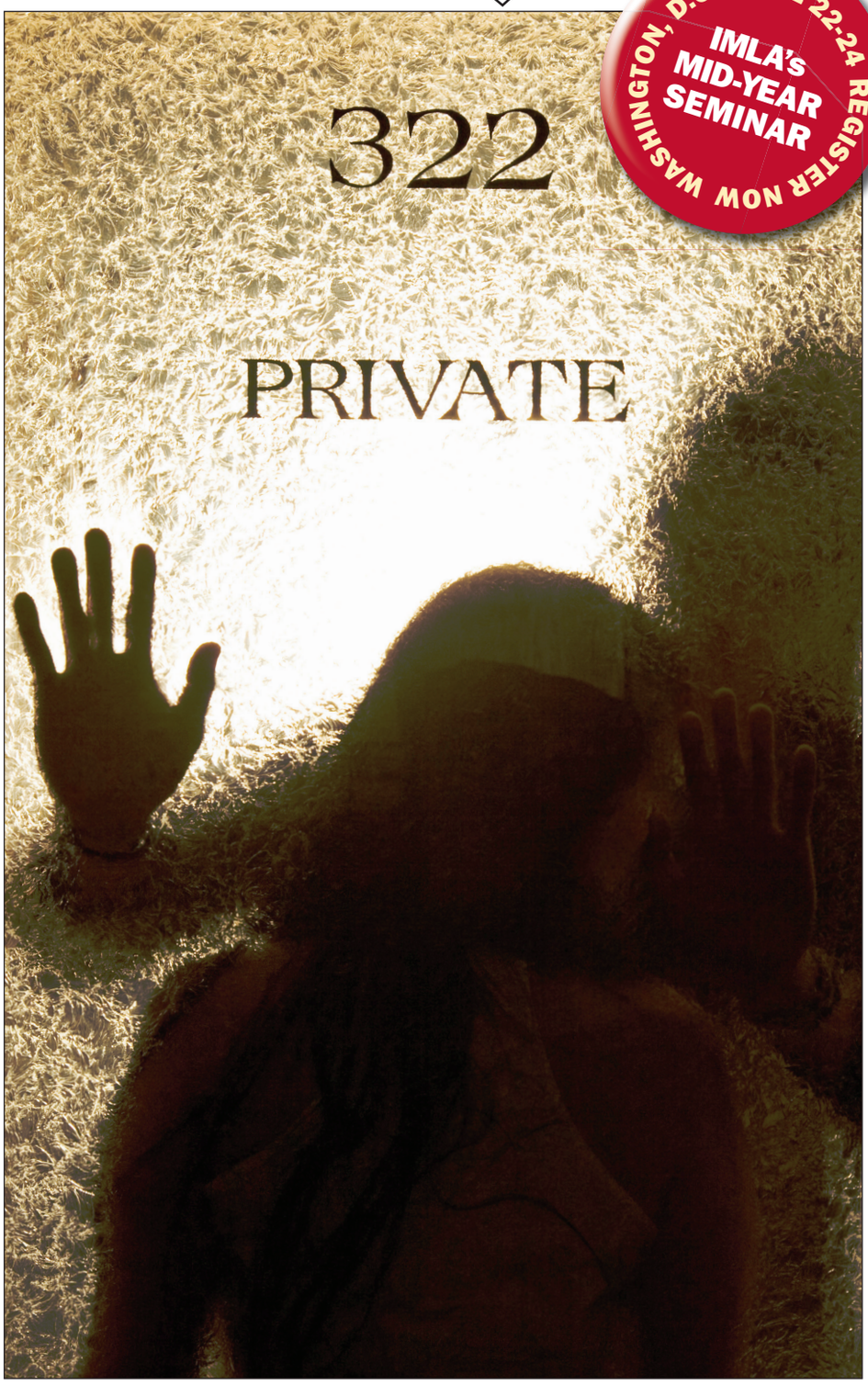

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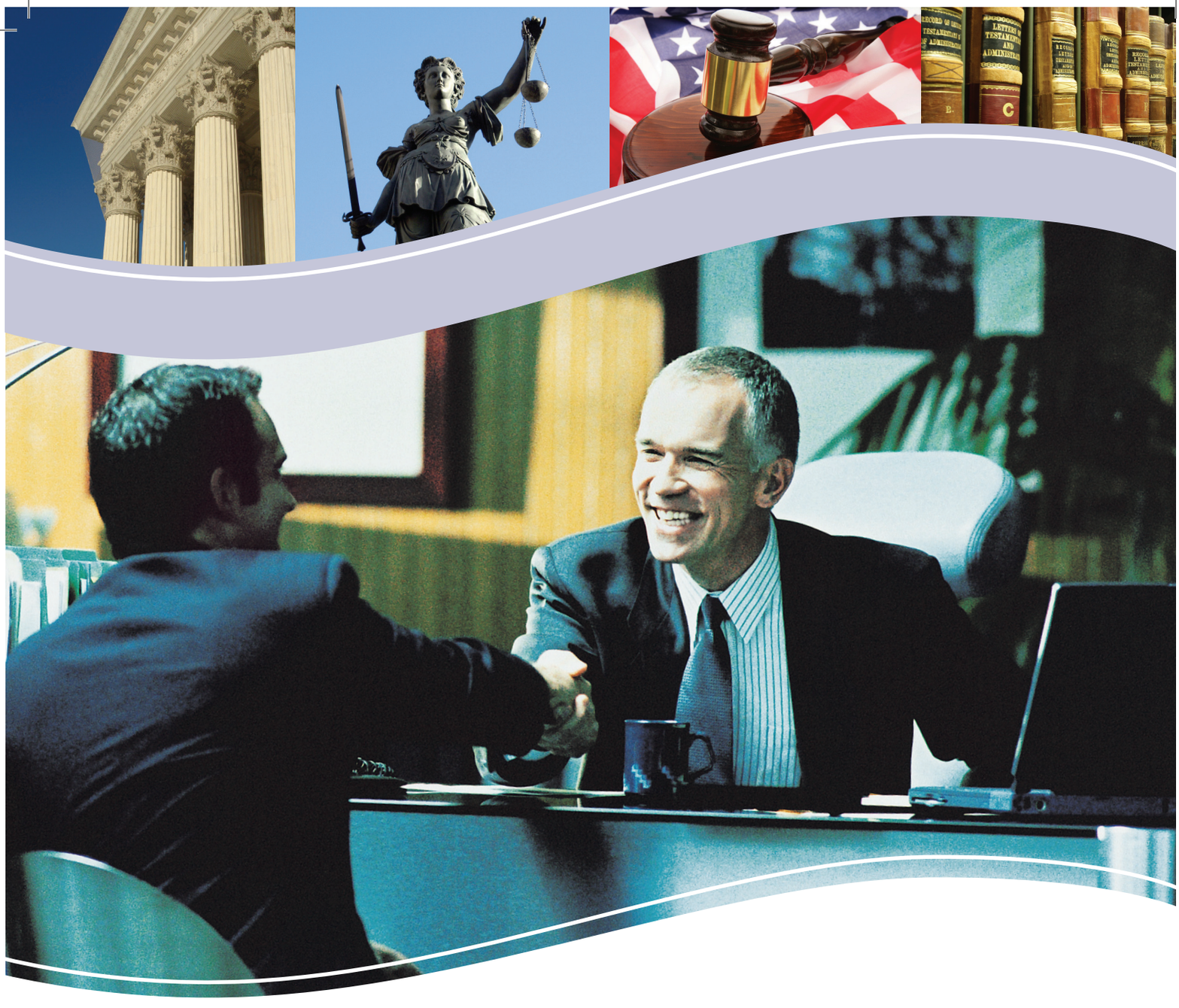

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Municipal Lawyer

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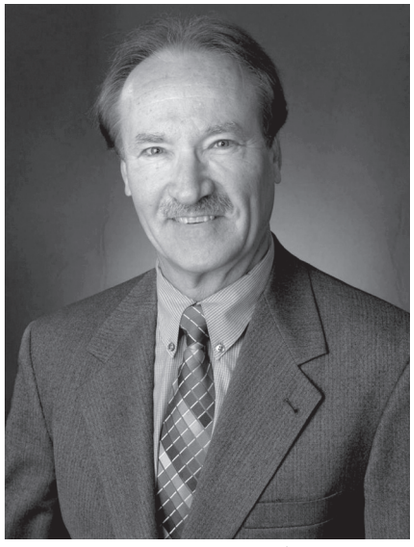
It's *Your* IMLA



By Jay Doegey, IMLA President

When I began my legal career, as a new Assistant City Attorney in Corpus Christi, Texas, the then City Attorney, Bruce Aycock, frequently talked about the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers (NIMLO) and what a marvelous resource it was for city attorneys. A few years later, in 1984, Bruce allowed me to attend my first NIMLO annual conference, held in the City of Fort Worth. I was pleased by the quality of the program, but I was struck by the age and lack of diversity of the attendees. Once I became a regular attendee, it also appeared to me that the organization was clique-ish: the officers, Board, and committees seemed to be a small circle of members who appeared to control everything. However, to my surprise, in the early 1990s I was appointed to the Strategic Plan Committee. While serving on that Committee, I began to learn a lot more about this organization and its members, and I started participating actively in some of the Sections. Eventually, I became the Chair of the Ethics Section, and in 2003 (on my third try), I was selected to the IMLA Board of Directors.

Over the years, NIMLO evolved into the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA), especially after it held its 1992 conference in Edmonton, Alberta. This was the first time in recent years that its annual conference was held in another country.

IMLA's leaders have been responsive to the wishes of the membership and continued to stress making the organization even more inclusive. Committees, Sections and (most recently) the manner of selection of the Board of Directors were realigned to encourage more member participation.

The organization that Charles Rhyne founded in 1935 was becoming more diverse as America and the legal profession changed. Its membership became much more diverse in age, gender, ethnicity, and nationality. More complex organizational strategies were undertaken by its Executive Directors (Benjamin Brown, Henry Underhill, and Chuck Thompson), and its Presidents. IMLA's leaders have been responsive to the wishes of the membership and continued to stress making the organization even more inclusive. Committees, Sections and (most recently) the manner of selection of the Board of Directors were realigned to encourage even more member participation. Term limits for Board membership were established: it no longer required a decade of Board membership to succeed to the presidency.

We Want You to Participate

Last September, on becoming IMLA's new President and addressing the membership, I said that I wanted to continue to encourage relatively new members to become even more involved in IMLA by serving on our committees. I also sought to aggressively recruit our Canadian members to serve on these committees as well. Our committees are now hard at work trying to send a clear message –*"This is your organization. Please volunteer to serve. Your participation is valuable."*

Your Participation is Valuable

Here are some things you can do that can provide immense value from your IMLA membership and participation, for yourself and others:

- If you are interested in learning or speaking about particular municipal law topics, let IMLA know when you fill out your Conference or Seminar evaluations (or just send us an e-mail). Volunteer to be a speaker. Volunteer to be on the Program Planning Committee. Join a Section. Write an article for the *Municipal Lawyer* magazine.
- If you want to recognize a member of your municipal law office, a lawyer in another law office, or if you are a client and want to recognize an outside attorney that does a great job in handling your city's cases, nominate that person for an IMLA award through IMLA's Awards Committee.
- If you are interested in municipal law advocacy, volunteer to write an *amicus* brief. Recommend a worthy case for consideration to the IMLA Legal Advocacy Committee. Volunteer to be on the Legal Advocacy Committee. Write an article for the *Municipal Lawyer* on noteworthy cases. Join IMLA's Litigation Section.
- If you want to motivate and challenge yourself or an assistant city attorney in your office, or you want to increase professionalism and credibility to your office in the eyes of your governing body and community, apply for IMLA Local Government Fellows certification.

- If you want to be selected to serve on the IMLA Board of Directors, do several of the above: volunteer to be a Section Chair, a State Chair or Regional Vice President, and especially, become an IMLA Local Government Fellow. Take advantage of all of the networking opportunities these offer. (See my article on the value of networking in the November/December 2011 issue of *Municipal Lawyer*.)

It's your IMLA. It's only by participating that you can truly reap the valuable benefits that IMLA membership offers. Your Board officers and Board members (listed on page 3), as well as the IMLA staff (including Executive Director Chuck Thompson) look forward to hearing from you, and hopefully seeing and talking to you at the upcoming IMLA Mid-Year Seminar in Washington, D.C., April 22-24, and at IMLA's Annual Conference in Austin, Texas, October 21-24. ML

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Our readers include local government attorneys, attorneys in private practice who represent local governments, city and county professional staff, organizations with interests or ties to local governments, providers of services to and for local governments, library patrons, and others.

To Write for the Magazine Submissions are welcomed and encouraged. If you are interested in writing, please contact the **Editor, Sophia Stadnyk, at sstadnyk@imla.org** with a short paragraph describing your topic, and including your contact information.

Our magazine publishes bi-monthly, and feature articles are required to be between 2,800 and 3,300 words long, in total. Each article submitted is subject to review by IMLA staff, and IMLA reserves the right to edit all articles (for style, clarity, length, etc.). Articles cannot be used for commercial solicitations or to sell products or services. Submitting a proposal does not guarantee the opportunity to write for the magazine.

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IMLA MEMBER RECEIVES PRO BONO AWARD



The South Carolina Bar awarded its 2012 Pro Bono Award to IMLA member **Bradford T. Cunningham**, among others, for his contributions to meeting the civil legal needs of citizens who cannot afford the services of an attorney. Mr. Cunningham, the attorney for the Town of Lexington, has been a pro bono volunteer since 2004, averaging six or more pro bono cases per year. As attorney for the Town of Lexington, he also accepts pro bono cases on a walk-in basis, drafting wills and powers of attorney and handling real estate and probate issues. The award recipients were recognized at the Bar Foundation Gala on Saturday, January 21, 2012. In addition to the award, Mr. Cunningham received $500 from the state bar, which he donated to the Lexington Police Department's "Adopt-A-Cop" Program. (see photo, right). The Town's Mayor, Randy Halfacre, also presented Mr. Cunningham with a proclamation recognizing him for his outstanding service as an employee and to the Lexington Community. Congratulations!



Photo/Jennifer Dowden

