EDITOR'S NOTE



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Celebrating the Rule of Law

The digital version of this May-June 2019 *Municipal Lawyer* is reaching you on May 1—Law Day, as our OP-ED writer notes. In addition to practicing law—an attribute we share with millions of lawyers worldwide--IMLA members can celebrate a more immediate link to Law Day: it was instituted 60 years ago by our founder Charles Rhyne.

If an abundance of lawyers correlates to greater justice, then our society should be more just than ever. In 1900, there were 114,000 lawyers in America for a population of 76 million. Since then, our nation's population has more than quadrupled, to 325 million—but our lawyer cohort has multiplied twelve-fold. Today there are nearly 1.4 million active practitioners in the United States and Canada, with more than 350,000 lawyers in New York and California alone.

Many of us might assume that the US is the most litigious, most over-lawyered culture on the globe. That is not entirely accurate. On a per-capita basis, Israel has twice as many lawyers as the US—about one per 140 persons. Germans and Swedes are more likely to be involved in legal actions than Americans, again on a per capita basis. And India has the most lawyers in the world, with a number estimated to exceed 1.5 million (although in fairness, a *Times of India* article in 2017 discussed efforts by the nation's bar associations and judges to curb the number of unlicensed persons roaming court houses and posing as attorneys—believed to be as many as 45% of India's ostensible lawyer population).

Regardless, today we take the opportunity to reaffirm the seminal role that laws, fairly derived and evenly applied, play in our democracy, recognizing that not all legal institutions and courtrooms around the world are animated by equality or fairness. The primary subject matter of this *ML*—section 1983 litigation—illustrates the equipoise that our legislatures and courts have sought to achieve, first providing a vehicle to redress governmental wrongs and then recognizing the need for defensive mechanisms. As each article in this issue manifests, IMLA members are active participants in a system which, while not always perfect, aspires to transparency and is grounded in a steadfast respect for the rule of law.

Happy Law Day to our IMLA colleagues.

Best regards-

Erich Eiselt

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