ANNUAL REPORT



2009

A Message From IMLA's President

It has been good to be IMLA's Queen. This has been a year of change and opportunities for a new direction for this organization. One of the things I am most proud of, and thankful for, was the opportunity to provide our members with a new approach to Board membership, encouraging and fostering future leaders for IMLA. These bylaw amendments will be presented to the membership for a vote at the Miami Conference's business meeting.

I want to acknowledge the hard work of the committee members who served on IMLA committees this year, with a special recognition of the **Board Restructure Committee** and the **Legal Advocacy Committee**. Because of the hard work of the Board Restructure Committee, under the able leadership of **Steve Smith** of Dublin, Ohio, and **Art Pertile** of Stafford, Texas, the membership will be presented with a major shift in how our Board members are elected, aimed at inspiring greater participation in the IMLA leadership. All of the members of the Board Restructure Committee agreed to serve when I asked, and for that I will be eternally grateful. Whether the membership decides to amend the bylaws or not, we have at least brought the issue to the forefront for debate.

The Legal Advocacy Committee's mission and membership remain close to my heart – I served as its Chair for ten years and I know how much work and attention this takes. Because of their diligence, IMLA actively participated in key cases at the Supreme Court, starting with the landmark case of *Pleasant Grove City v. Summum*, and including *Pearson v. Callahan*, *Van de Kamp v. Goldstein, Ricci v. DeStefano*, and others. Thanks to **Sheryl King Benford** for serving as the Committee Chair, and to all the Committee members for your hard work and daily dedication – you will get a higher place in heaven. IMLA Vision 2020 is a Committee that should continue to discuss, debate, and inquire into how we can provide our members with the best services possible. I intend to volunteer for this group and help as much as I can.

While serving as IMLA's President-Queen may appear to be easy, it is only because of the efficient and dedicated IMLA staff – all seven of them: **Veronica Kleffner, Sophia Stadnyk, Rhonda Jackson, Trina Shropshire-Paschal, Devala Janardan,** and **Mary Vlach**. Never before have I encountered a staff of so few who do so much with so little. We may not say it often enough, but we are so thankful for all the work that you all do for IMLA. **Chuck Thompson** proved to be a wise counsel to me this year and, while we may not have agreed on everything, we always ended up in the same place: doing, together, what we thought was best for this organization. **Veronica Kleffner** – the heart and soul of IMLA – saved me more times than I can count. As long as she remains an integral part of this organization, I will sleep better knowing that all is right with the world.

Every step I took was also made easier in knowing that IMLA's First Vice President, **DeWitt ("Mac") McCarley**, had my back. The changes proposed this year began in the presidency of **Bob White**. Bob, Mac, and I had discussed what needed to be brought forward that we knew would take more than one year to complete, and agreed on the process. Without their constant support and encouragement, we would not have come as far as we have this year.

The Top 50 City Summit, the new "stand-alone" programs on Construction Law and Code Enforcement, the teleconferences, and the specialized list-serves, all owe their beginning to the ideas of Chuck Thompson and his never-ending goal of making our services more relevant to our members.

I particularly want to give a shout-out to my comadres in Miami – **Julie Bru**, the City Attorney, and **Maria Chiaro**, the Deputy City Attorney, for all of their hard work in making **IMLA's 74th Annual Conference** everything this President could hope for.



I am humbled and honored to have served as your President this year. I promise you I will continue to work to promote and support this premier local government lawyers association.

Mil gracias,

Susan C. Rocha
IMLA President
(City Attorney, Cibolo, Texas)