PRESIDENT'S LETTER



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Acting Locally and Learning Globally

As I write this, I've just finished watching the Closing Ceremonies for the Winter Olympics. The 2022 Winter Paralympic Games will follow soon, starting on March 4. Both of these gatherings showcase remarkable athletes from all around the world.

I don't know about you, but I always enjoy having the opportunity to watch competitors from so many different countries participating in so many different sports. And new events are added every year—for example, this year included "freestyle ski big air" for men and women. Like most of us, my everyday routine doesn't typically include a view from the incredible elevations reached by those big-air skiiers, or such a world-wide perspective, with information about so many other countries in front of me all at once. The Olympics and Paralympics provide an opportunity for a horizon-broadening perspective that comes around every two years.

As local government lawyers, our professional perspective is naturally focused more locally, on the clients and issues that immediately surround us. And especially in these pandemic-related times, it is easy to get even more locally focused on those concerns. But in reality, our ethical duties promote going beyond that purely local perspective. Model Rule 1.1 of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Responsibility imposes a duty of competent representation, which "requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation."

We know that trends in the law arise from a variety of sources. Some start in one locality or region and then move to other geographic areas. Others originate in larger population centers and then extend outward, moving to smaller communities. Still others arise from actions of the national government, with a ripple effect down to the states and provinces, and to local governments. The Commentary on Model Rule 1.1 highlights that "a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice."

IMLA provides us with terrific opportunities to identify and learn about trends in law affecting our local government clients. IMLA helps us expand our knowledge and skills beyond our local perspective through a variety of offerings, such as: Articles in this magazine. Weekly case updates by email. On-line webinars and meetings. Working Groups and listservs. And more.

And this year, IMLA will be back with its two largest events, providing programs in a hybrid format, so you can choose to attend in person or electronically. The April Mid-Year Seminar will be in person in Washington, D.C., with presentations available on a virtual platform. The October Annual Conference will be in person in Portland, Oregon and will also include a virtual attendance option. And it includes Canada Day too. This learning will broaden our horizons, not only through the content of the programs but also through networking with our counterparts around the U.S. and Canada.

IMLA also offers an international perspective. The IMLA International Committee is working on plans for IMLA's International Comparative Law Program in Seville, Spain, to be held in September 2022, with details to be announced soon. Previous comparative law programs by the International Committee have taken members to extremely interesting locales, presenting the opportunity to more fully understand the many versions of governance practiced around the world. These include Berlin (2018), Jerusalem (2018), Havana (2016), and Prague (2011).

In addition to organizing its own international comparative law events, IMLA members participate with other groups that conduct comparative law programs around the world. One such session took place in Kyiv and Lviv, Ukraine (2013). We keep participants in those two cities in our thoughts in light of recent events there.

This ambitious program of learning and networking would not be possible without the dedicated contributions of so many people, including the volunteer speakers on all programs and seminars, leaders of our subject matter Sections, the working groups that identify topics of interest and importance, members of the International Committee and our able IMLA staff.

The results of all of these efforts are always terrific. All of this brings me back around to the reason the International Municipal Lawyers Association does all these things:

"Our mission is to serve local government lawyers and to advance the interests of local government law locally, nationally, and internationally."

We look forward to seeing you and learning with you in the months ahead, both at home and abroad. And don't forget to bring a colleague!