



Update and General Selection Criteria

By Sam David Knight

Background and Mission

The Alabama State Bar Board of Bar Commissioners initiated the Alabama State Bar Leadership Forum in 2005. The mission of the Leadership Forum is to: (a) form a pool of lawyers from which the Alabama State Bar, state and local governmental entities, local bar associations and community organizations can draw upon for leadership and service; (b) build a core of practicing lawyers to become leaders with respect to ethics and professionalism, resulting in raising the overall ethical and professional standards of lawyers in the community; and (c) raise the level of awareness of lawyers as to the purpose, operation and benefits of the Alabama State Bar.

With five years of graduates, the Leadership Forum continues not only to meet, but exceed its mission. The overwhelming response of the 144 former graduates about their Leadership Forum experience includes praise for the program and enthusiasm about relationships fostered during the forum. Leadership Forum alumni include a member of the state house of representatives, bar commissioners, local bar association presidents, candidates for public office, judges, a pastor, former military officers, a mayor, and leaders within our state bar organizations, specialty bars and sections.

2009 Leadership Forum (Class 5)

The fifth class of the Alabama State Bar Leadership Forum graduated May 14, 2009 and attended a banquet at the Summit Club in Birmingham. Alabama State Bar **President Mark White** presided. Following an invocation by Class 5 member **Christopher Allan Mixon**, President White introduced U.W. **Clemon**, retired chief federal judge of the Northern District of Alabama and now a member of the firm White, Arnold & Dowd PC, as the guest speaker. **Kimberly Till Powell**, a member of Class 3 of the Leadership Forum and co-chair of the 2008 and 2009 Leadership forums, provided inspirational comments on behalf of the 2009 Steering Committee. President White, assisted by **President-Elect Designate Alyce M. Spruell** and **Edward M. Patterson, assistant executive director and director of the Leadership Forum**, presented each graduate with a certificate and a compass commemorating their participation in the forum. **Freedom Court Reporting** gave engraved paperweights to each of the graduates. Class 5 graduates **Patrick C. Finnegan** and **Maricia D. Bennekin-Woodham** shared their inspired reflections on the Leadership Forum. Ed Patterson was honored with a gift from Class 5 for his com-



mitment to the Leadership Forum and his service to the Alabama State Bar. **Marie Updike**, assistant to Ed Patterson, was also honored with a gift from Class 5 for her extraordinary administrative skills.

Also in attendance at the graduation were ASB Past President **William N. Clark**, in whose term the Leadership Forum was approved by the Board of Bar Commissioners; **Jack Neal**, president of the Birmingham Bar Association, and his wife, Carolyn Neal; **Samuel Franklin** of Lightfoot, Franklin & White; **Greg Burge**, ASB commissioner from Circuit 10; **Phillip McCallum**, ASB commissioner from Circuit 10; **Joseph Fawal**, ASB commissioner from Circuit 10, and his wife, Susie Fawal; **James R. Pratt**, ASB commissioner from Circuit 10; **Robert E. Moorer**, ASB commissioner from Circuit 10, and his wife, Carol Ann Moorer; **Richard J. R. Raleigh, Jr.** (Class 1), ASB commissioner from Circuit 23; **Mike and Mickey Turner**, sponsors from Freedom Court Reporting; **Patrick Sheehan**, videographer from Freedom Court Reporting; and **Sam David Knight** (Class 4), 2009 Leadership Forum Selection Committee chair. Other Leadership Forum alumni in attendance included **John A. Earnhardt** (Class 1); **Kelly T. Lee** (Class 1) and ASB commissioner at large; **John A. Smyth, III** (Class 1); **Robert E. Battle** (Class 2); **Brannon J. Buck** (Class 2); **Wyndall A. Ivey** (Class 2); **Laura G. Chain** (Class 3); **R. Brent Irby** (Class 3); **John England, III** (Class 4); **Sandi Gregory** (Class 4); **Robert Lockwood** (Class 4); and **Tom Warburton** (Class 4).

Selection Process and Criteria

The 2010 Steering Committee is already actively involved in planning for Class 6. The Leadership Forum will continue to honor its mission through an evolving and expanded program designed to introduce participants to leadership opportunities throughout the state in the legal profession, education, business and industry, and social services, as well as in the access to justice arena.

Each year, the Selection Committee seeks to draw a broad and representative class of 30 members from throughout the qualified Alabama State Bar membership. Those suggested by the Selection

Committee are then reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Alabama State Bar, and the final selection is made and approved by the Board of Bar Commissioners. Applicants do not require a nomination in order to submit their application. One letter of substantial recommendation must be attached to the application.

If you have been a member of the Alabama State Bar for more than five years, but no more than 15, please consider applying to become a member of the Alabama State Bar's 2010 Leadership Forum. Following receipt of all applications, the Selection Committee, appointed by the president of the state bar and comprised of Leadership Forum alumni, reviews the applications for the following criteria in making the initial selection decisions, with special emphasis upon the first two criteria:

1. Demonstrated leadership ability based on past accomplishments and current engagements;
2. An understanding of the importance of servant leadership as demonstrated in the applicant's narrative;
3. Previous application to the Leadership Forum;
4. Practice diversity (criminal, civil, governmental and corporate);
5. Geographic diversity; and
6. Racial and gender diversity.

Class 5 alumni of the Leadership Forum are listed on the next page if you wish to contact one of them concerning their experience. To download and print an application to the 2010 program, go to www.alabar.org/members/leadership-update.cfm. ▲▼▲



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COMMENTS FROM CLASS 5 ALUMNI

Maricia D. Bennekin-Woodham

This has been an opportunity to meet persons from different practice areas and from different parts of the state. As a member of Class 5 of the Leadership Forum, I have learned an appreciation of the challenges that face different parts of our state. I truly want to become more involved in the education arena and join a bar committee. I can see how my classmates and I can work together to make a positive impact within the bar and our respective communities.

J. Eric Brisendine

I have been told that true leadership is the willingness to be a servant. The Leadership Forum has inspired me to contact my local economic development board to volunteer my time and services. I do not know what I can do to bring new jobs to our area, but I am willing to serve and try.

Paul A. Clark

As participants in this year's class, we have seen the great strides that Alabama has made in recent years, we have met and learned from the leaders within this state who have made these accomplishments possible and we have each been exposed to the depth and breadth of the issues which still confront our state.

Brandon K. Falls

There really is no comparable program on a statewide level that brings together this range of speakers and topics. The class taught me that Alabama is not so far behind the nation as the media would lead us to believe, and demonstrated effective ways of moving us into the future. The leadership classes, in particular, helped me focus the energy I expend in my work and direct the leaders in my office about how to do the same.

Patrick C. Finnegan

My participation in the Leadership Forum made plain to me that the Alabama State Bar has a vision for the legal profession that extends far beyond the confines of the legal system. Class 5 has heard some of Alabama's most important and accomplished leaders address the wide spectrum of major challenges that Alabama faces. All of this has been very inspiring and has certainly prompted me to redouble my efforts to be involved in helping Alabama move forward.

Richard M. Gaal

What a great privilege to have met so many good lawyers who are also good people. In addition to friendship, I have gained insight into the great strides Alabama has made in recent years to improve the welfare of its people. The leaders who spoke (from the public and private sectors) were genuinely dedicated to serving the people rather than promoting themselves—that was refreshing—but I also learned that there is much work to do. In areas of poverty, education and rural-city decline, there is a yearning for more leadership.