

Dispute Resolution Section

Annual Report 2021-2022 Dispute Resolution Section of the Alabama State Bar

The Dispute Resolution Section of the Alabama State Bar had another successful year despite the pandemic! Collaborating with other Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) entities helped to ensure our members were given opportunities to hone their ADR skills. We chose topics that were relevant and timely.

Our section continued our collaboration with the Alabama Center for Dispute Resolution in providing free training to our members. We co-sponsored 11 events with 846 attendees for 859 hours of continuing legal education credits.

Our first event was held during the Alabama State Bar during July 2021 on “Access to Justice and Mediation.” We were pleased to have Judge Martha Reeves Cook, Jon Lewis, R. Boyd Miller and Eileen Harris speak on the many pro bono mediation activities taking place across the state.

In support of the American Bar Association’s Mediation events for October 2021 we covered a wide array of ADR topics which included:

- 1) “Private Judging in Alabama: A Primer” with Judges Julie Palmer, David Jordan and Lang Floyd.
- 2) “Alabama Department of Labor Worker’s Compensation Ombuds Program” with Jon Lewis, Patrick Pendleton, Robert Thomas and Theodore Roose.
- 3) “Virtual Mediation Tips for Lawyers and Mediators” with attorney/mediators Harold Stephens and Cooper Shattuck.

We continued our work with the ASB Pro Bono Task Force and presented two one-hour webinars on “Pro Bono Mediation Opportunities in Alabama” with Eileen Harris presenting during March 2022.

We supported President Taze Shepard’s “**ADR Month**” theme during April 2022 with three one-hour continuing legal education events.

- 1) Our first program continued introducing Alabama’s lawyers and neutrals to the Collaborative Practice of Law. We offered a one-hour webinar on “The Importance of Empathy in Mediation” presented by the Birmingham Collaborative Law Alliance and Cumberland School of Law. We were delighted to have Virginia Miller, Frances Nolan, Emily Bonds Davey, and Lynn D. Hogewood as our presenters. Feedback was extremely positive.
- 2) Our second one-hour CLE event was on “ADR Trends in Alabama” and was presented by Hon. Brent Craig, Jimmy Walter and Eileen Harris. We learned about the initiatives from the court with Online Traffic Resolution and Online Small Claims Court Dispute Resolution – both pilot programs being spearheaded by Judge Craig from Morgan County.

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- 3) Our third program was on “Arbitration Best Practices in Alabama.” We are grateful to the experienced arbitrators who shared their insights – R. Brooke Lawson, Jon Lewis and Cooper Shattuck.

Additionally, in support of “**ADR Month**” we conducted our first-ever spotlight on neutrals. Members of the Dispute Resolution Section and others answered the following questions which were shared on the Alabama State Bar’s Facebook page:

1. What motivated you to become a mediator, arbitrator and/or private judge?
2. What is rewarding about serving as a neutral?
3. How can ADR help litigants?
4. Anything else you think is pertinent.

Neutrals spotlighted included: Felicia Long, Scott Donaldson, Rod Max, Judge Martha Reeves Cook, Cooper Shattuck, Alan Lasseter, Bryan Wallace, Lang Floyd, Jon Lewis and Shawn Cole. This endeavor exposed members of the Alabama State Bar to ADR in a positive light.

The last event sponsored by the Dispute Resolution Section was held during the 145th Annual State Bar Meeting on June 23, 2022 with a panel of experienced attorney/mediators. Joan-Marie Sullivan, Allen Schreiber, Jon Lewis and Bruce Rogers shared their wisdom on “Mediation Mistakes: What Every Mediator and Attorney Should Avoid.” Their no-nonsense practical suggestions were well received by attendees.

Our Section also continued our collaboration with the American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Section as a collaborating entity. This collaboration affords our members registration discounts for ABA Dispute Resolution Conferences such as the ABA Dispute Resolution Section Annual meeting. Our members do not need to be members of the ABA to enjoy this benefit.

Last, but certainly not least, our Section is supporting the community outreach and education efforts of the Alabama Supreme Court. Our Section has been participating in a curriculum review for the *Resolve2Solve* program which will launch during the fall of 2022. This four-week program will involve trained volunteers who will work with 6th graders in Tuscaloosa, Birmingham and Montgomery to help them learn conflict resolution, communication and problem-solving skills. We are excited about this project. We are also exploring developing an introductory course for colleges as an outreach event to encourage the use of conflict resolution alternatives to litigation.

It is important for our Executive Council to understand how we can better meet the needs of our members. So, we surveyed members earlier this year (2022) to help guide our activities for 2022 – 2023. Members were asked:

1. How long have you been a member of the Alabama State Bar Dispute Resolution Section?
2. Why did you join the Dispute Resolution Section?
3. What is important to you about your membership?

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4. What idea(s) do you have to improve the section membership experience for our members?
5. What continuing education topics would you like to learn more about?
6. What Section Committees are you interested in serving on? (e.g., Continuing Education Standing Committee, Public Outreach Standing Committee and/or Publications Standing Committee)
7. How can we (Section) help you with your ADR practice?

Feedback from the survey was shared with our Executive Council and is helping to shape our programs and activities for 2022-2023.

Our Section membership is healthy with 176 members and we are on a solid financial footing.

The Dispute Resolution Section continues to strive to enhance the membership experience of our members by providing them with the tools and resources to help them be more successful. *The 2021 edition of ADR Procedures in Alabama with Mediation Model, 5th edition, was mailed to all members of the Dispute Resolution Section.*

I consider it an honor to have served as the Chair of the Dispute Resolution Section this term and to have worked with our Executive Council: Thomas Corbett (Vice Chair), Jon Lewis (Treasurer), Allen Schreiber (Secretary), Shawn Cole (Member at Large), Alison Herlihy (Member at Large), and Frances Nolan (Member at Large). I wish to express my appreciation to Terri Lovell, Executive Director of the Alabama State Bar, and her staff for their support of the Dispute Resolution Section. Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to President Taze Sheppard for his leadership and vision this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Harris, Chair, Dispute Resolution Section
2021-2022