

Should the Appellate Section's Leadership Track be Changed?

by Susan W. Fox, Chair-Elect

It takes about 10 years of intense work to become Chair of the Appellate Practice Section. I calculate my estimate of 10 years by assuming three years at the committee level, two as Editor of *The Record* or CLE Chair, then five years in the officer track. I became Chair-Elect a little faster than this because I came on the Executive Council as Editor of *The Record*, and then advanced into the officer group because of a vacancy created by Raoul Cantero's appointment to the Supreme Court of Florida.

In my opinion, there are several problems with this long track. It makes our Executive Council and officer group too stagnant. New people sometimes find it hard to get involved and then perceive a steep mountain to climb before they have any opportunity for leadership. This may dampen motivation to get involved.

The upper ranks of the track are also problematic. By the time one

becomes Chair, the desire has often peaked and burned out. Ten years is a long time to maintain an intense level of dedication to a bar organization.

I hope I can say (without hurting our founder's feelings) that the current track appears to have been structured to allow each of the founders a chance to be Chair. This has served its purpose.

At a Section retreat three years ago, I proposed that the current office of Vice-Chair be eliminated, or that Secretary and Treasurer be combined, or possibly both, in order to reduce the length of the track. The hardest working positions in the Section are editor of *The Record* and CLE Chair. The Website Chair can be an intense position as well. I believe a workable solution might be to elevate these positions to vice chair status and treat them as the feeder positions for the officer track.

The problem with a change like this

is, of course, ousting people who are in the track and who have worked very hard to achieve their positions. Therefore, I offered at the 2003 retreat, to have my position eliminated to make this possible. A leadership committee has been studying this proposal for three years and will bring it to a head at our Section retreat on May 12-14 at Hutchinson Island Marriott Beach Resort & Marina. To make this change, the bylaws will have to be amended.

Please give some thought to this important issue and bring your ideas to the retreat. Remember, the ultimate goal is to promote the health of the Section and of appellate practice generally. This requires a balance between maintaining stable leadership and encouraging fresh blood with new ideas. If you are unable to attend the retreat, please feel free to email me at susanfox@flappeal.com and I will pass your comments on to the working group.