



**Laurel Scott**

**For Elected BOG Member**

### **What the Board of Governors Needs**

The most effective Board of Governors will be the one filled with individuals who are not only qualified, but also who are able to provide the BOG with a spectrum of ideas and experience. It should have not only people who represent different parts of the country, but also attorneys of all ages doing all practice areas and who possess a variety of unique personal qualities. The members of BOG should have varied experience individually performing the services that AILA endeavors to provide: some members should have extensive experience with AILA committee work, some with extensive mentoring work, some with extensive work breaking ground in immigration law, etc. I believe I will be good for BOG not only because of the experience and dedication that make me similar to the other candidates, but also because of the personal qualities that make me different.

### **Ability to Break New Ground**

When I first started my practice in 2003, very little information was available regarding filing I-601 applications at the consulates abroad, either in regard to procedure or how the cases should substantively be presented. Yet the number of people wishing to apply for an I-601 abroad was increasing as fewer people each year were eligible for relief under INA §245(i). I determined that there was a need that wasn't being adequately met and that I would learn how to meet that need. Doing so required a tremendous amount of proactive investigative work as I had to contact each consulate and CIS office as situations arose in order to learn what the specific procedures were at that office. I had to rapidly ascertain which local rules and policies were supported by laws and regulations and which ones needed to be diplomatically challenged, as it became apparent that many consulates were also simply unsure of the lawful procedures. And I had to accept a fair amount of risk in venturing into the unknown. As I gained knowledge, I shared it openly with the immigration attorney community. I posted information on AILA's message board and elsewhere on the internet, wrote articles, spoke at numerous AILA events, and took emails and calls from individual attorneys. Eventually I was called to serve on AILA's Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Committee because of my knowledge in this area. This account of my experience is useful in determining whether to vote for me not only because it describes my area of expertise, but because it indicates that I have qualities that will be valuable in the future. Getting into foreign-filed waivers when very little was known about them shows that I am proactive and gutsy, both of which can be useful to BOG. The Board of Governors needs people like me who are willing and able to try something new, unknown, difficult and even a little risky.

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Laurel also endorses Allen Orr and Cory Caouette for BOG.

## **Focus on Mentoring**

I have always shared information openly with other attorneys. Not only do I provide information when asked, but I also actively post new, useful information when I get it. I do this for several reasons. First, I want the clients to be well-represented, whether they are my clients or someone else's, and I mean that sincerely. Second, when immigration attorneys all have the best information, we as a whole better uphold the dignity of the profession both in front of the government and in front of our clients, increasing the level of respect each of us should expect. Third, what goes around comes around: when we all openly provide information to each other, I also benefit from others' experience, making me a better attorney as well. These are the reasons why for the past several years, I have taken 3-5 calls and emails from other immigration attorneys each week, every week. This is in addition to the questions I have answered on AILA's Message Center. When it comes to mentoring, I not only talk the talk, I walk the walk, and it's been a pleasure. I love the collegial atmosphere of cooperation and I've enjoyed contributing to our collective knowledge. I will bring this focus on mentoring to BOG, reinforcing AILA's mentoring tradition.

## **Use of the Internet**

Prior to going to law school, I spent some time writing web pages for a living. When I got into immigration law, I brought my internet savvy into my practice. I've been successful in conducting long-distance representations and disseminating information on the internet. We can expect the internet to play a critical role in the movement for immigration reform. It will benefit BOG to have members who are adept at using the internet to its fullest potential.

## **On the Horizon**

While I do not believe immigration reform will come to a vote in 2010, it is quite likely that it will occur during the next three years, which is the term of the office I'm running for. AILA can and should play an instrumental role in educating Congress, the President, the Press and the public on the current state of immigration law, things that have been tried in the past, and what changes will best benefit the country and the interests of justice in the future. While diplomacy is important, we need to be prepared to be proactive and gutsy when the situation calls for it. AILA has a huge challenge in funneling and directing all the varied ideas and expertise of our members so that we can be consistent in our positions and so that our positions are actually representative of the sentiments of our members. Smart use of the internet will be essential in meeting this challenge. We may also need to assist individual experts in our membership in the ways to deal with the Press and provide testimony or information to Congress. If and when reform arrives, we will need to digest and disseminate information and mentoring to our membership as expeditiously as possible so that our members can best assist immigrants under new laws and procedures. If reform does not occur in the next year or so, we must find the best ways to continue to communicate to the Executive Branch under the Obama administration that there are many things the President can do without a change in law from Congress. I believe the President sees the need for reform, but I also believe he is grossly underutilizing his authority. We can and should be pushing him to make stronger, faster changes through Executive powers. I am ready, willing and able to contribute my attributes to these efforts.

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