

May 5, 2011

Dear AILA Member:

I am writing to ask for your vote in this year's AILA BOG Election. For those who do not know me, I want to provide a little background. I emigrated to the U.S. in the late 1970s and have been an immigration attorney since 1992, an AILA member since 1996 and have served on BOG as a Chapter Chair and then Member at Large since 2003. My practice encompasses almost all aspects of immigration law although I principally focus on business, naturalization and family. I am running for re-election because I am committed to AILA. I believe what we do makes a difference in people's lives even if that is sometimes hard to remember given the current climate of set backs and attacks on our clients and our profession.

CHRISTOPHER ANDERS  
DAGMAR BUTTE  
TILMAN HASCHE\*  
JAMES L. LANF  
GRETEL M. NESS†  
RICHARD J. PARKER\*

### SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

I have served AILA since 1996 when I was my Chapter's Advocacy Chair. I moved from there to various positions until I became Chapter Chair in 2003. Since 1999, I have also been a member of the AILA NW Regional Conference Committee which I chaired in 2007. I served for 11 years as my Chapter's USCIS District Liaison and I was one of the founders of my Chapter's now annual fund raiser and achievement award event where every *year* we raise substantial funds for non-profit immigration legal assistance agencies. In 2009 I was honored to actually win that award myself. In addition I have written for and spoken at AILA conferences every year and taught at the AIC Litigation Institute.

\* Admitted in  
Oregon and  
Washington

† Admitted in  
Oregon and  
New York

<http://www.pbl.net>

In 2010-2011, in addition to serving on the BOG (I missed only 1 meeting since 2003), I decided to emulate Ado Annie in "Oklahoma" and be the girl who can't say no. I am currently Chair of the USCIS SCOPS Committee, Co-chair of the USCIS HQ Policy Committee, one of the 2011 Annual Conference Co-chairs, a member of the Physician Committee and the Publications Editorial Review Board. I also served as an Associate Editor of AILA's forthcoming Waivers Book, am a member of the Kazarian, L-1 and Legislative Task Forces and have spoken at and written for the Annual, Fall, and Mid-Year conferences and am speaking at the Spring Conference. Previously, I chaired the now defunct Detention/Removal Committee and served on committees for Publications, Strategic Planning, ED Transition, CIS General Counsel, CIS Headquarters, Due Process, Chapter Chair Orientations and other Conferences.

### STRENGTHS

Generally, I think my greatest strengths are my ability to build good working relationships with almost anyone, to understand their agendas and to address them in a respectful manner that benefits AILA. I have tried to bring the BOG an open mind, hard work, intelligence, and boundless energy. I pledge to keep doing that if I am re-elected. More specifically, I am always an actively contributing member of every committee even when I am the chair. I believe that is

how you lead. It is the only way to earn and maintain the respect of your peers and the people whom you hope to influence through your work. I love my AILA work and always try to lead by example and develop timely and effective materials that the AILA staff and leadership who need them can use immediately. Often these projects have been both short notice and extremely time sensitive, but because I believe that when you are committed to a cause you make time for its needs, this has never felt like a hardship and always been a privilege.

### **CHALLENGES FOR AILA AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM**

I believe one of our biggest challenges is how we are perceived on the outside – what does John Q. Public think – and I previously advocated that we **work harder to deliver our message to outlets other than traditional liberal news media.**” As I see it in 2011, we have made incredible strides but many members are not even aware of all of the marvelous tools AILA has developed to make it easier to interact with the media. I would like to include more regular media tools postings on InfoNet and other AILA information sharing venues to keep media outreach in the forefront of members’ minds. I also think we could do more to reach out to women’s magazines and other non-news media outlets that build public sentiment in a way that newspapers do not. Only through favorable public sentiment can we hope to move legislators who do not support reasonable reform out of fear they will not be re-elected.

Another great challenge that derives out of the previous challenge is how we are seen by Congress and I want to **develop more meaningful and extensive partnerships between members of Congress and specific individual AILA members acting on behalf of AILA.** The changes wrought by the last election present a real opportunity here. We are the technocrats and are better placed than anyone to help members of Congress navigate the legal ramifications as opposed to the emotions of the immigration debate. I do this with our Oregon delegation and I know many AILA members do the same, but I want to develop a Legislator Buddy System within AILA to spread these kinds of efforts throughout the country and throughout the year. In addition, I want to continue what I have been doing via a task force led by Greg Chen – review legislative proposals and develop explanations as to why certain language does or does not work, what the likely consequences (intended and unintended) of certain choices are, etc. CIR looks like it will not happen in the near future but I think AILA has an opportunity to be proactive in this context and we need to continue to work this area even if no major bill is pending.

Since there appears to be very little traction in terms of reform and extrajudicial denials are increasing, I seek a way to **better track litigation efforts of our members** because a more uniform approach to issues that impact more than just the individual case will strengthen our positions and our practices. I propose to do this as part of the newly approved Litigation Section. AILA could designate someone for each Chapter to have a reporting function rather than the *ad hoc* way the information is gathered and distributed at present. This would allow more interaction and, hopefully, improved results.

Another great challenge is liaison. I have always stressed **working to keep good or improve bad relationships with the government**. I recognize this is becoming more and more difficult but I am not deterred. USCIS sees fraud around every corner, has turned the “culture of no” into a “culture of not only no but hell no”, and is curtailing access and interaction by centralizing almost all parts of its operations. DOL to a lesser extent has done the same. ICE and CBP increasingly focus on the law enforcement components of their mission at least in part because of outside pressures. All of this has had a corrosive effect on both us and them and somehow we have become one another’s “enemy” when nothing could be further from the truth. We need to get back to showing how our goals and those of the government in implementing the law are actually compatible. I am constantly looking for ways to communicate that in my liaison activities. I am not sure the various large stakeholder calls are the best way to do this because they have a certain one-way-mirror quality that maintains distance which impedes true collaboration. Therefore, I intend to pour my energy into direct liaison through AILA.

After 7 years on BOG, I am still fired with the enthusiasm and optimism that causes me to be among the first to stick up my hand when a volunteer is needed but I also have a “big picture” view of what AILA can do in the long term. I see nothing but opportunity even though Congress has ground to a halt with anything except enforcement measures. Coverage of horrors visited on U.S. families and businesses as a result of ever more insane and unreasonable immigration laws is steady news. The resurrection of raids and other workplace enforcement makes the issue real to folks who had previously seen it as something that was somebody else’s problem. Industry groups and chambers of commerce are focused on immigration as a vehicle for growth. People are impatient with Congress for its failure to reform our immigration system into a workable system that encourages compliance. Given all that, if we give the pendulum a good push we can make it swing back in our direction and here are some ways to “push”:

1. **Identify the audience.** The homemaker moved by the tale of a deported widow is a very different target from the bureaucrat with a case load completion goal, the Federal Judge who sees DHS encroaching on his prerogatives or the Congresswoman who must balance the needs of competing constituencies.
2. **Truly listen to the point of view of the other person or group.** We often formulate our responses before the message has been fully delivered. This is understandable but it is not productive because the debate stays stuck in the same interminable loop. For every restrictionist who will never listen there is someone who might be inclined to agree with them whose mind could be changed if we identify why the restrictionist’s point of view is attractive to that person and neutralize that reason.
3. **Clearly present our position without implied or direct judgment of the other person if their position is contrary.** There are those with whom this will never work but a great many people follow the simplistic views advocated by our opponents from fear and a lack of understanding. We can overcome both through clear explanations.

**4. Once the target audience understands our position and we understand their motivations it is time to persuade.** Find the points of intersection between our objectives and their concerns and propose something that furthers both.

I do not believe we can afford to ignore anyone who has taken an interest in immigration – whether they agree or disagree with us. If they agree then we have to figure out how to make them write a check, a letter or an email, pick up the phone, talk to their friends and acquaintances and work with us to end policies that hurt people and business and do nothing to make us safer or more secure. If they disagree, then we have to really listen, figure out why they see the same facts so differently and craft responses that neutralize their voice so they cannot poison others or, in the less intransigent cases, bring them closer to our point of view.

#### **IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES AND RELEVANCE**

This is an area where I think our annual plan and the strategic plan developed previously are headed in the right direction and I simply pledge my support to them. We are nothing without our members! Given the financial pressures they face in this declining economy, we must ensure that AILA is first with the news and the practice tip, that we deliver our services in a cost effective and timely manner, and that the members always get value for their investment in AILA. We governance junkies are sort of rare birds and it is easy to forget most of our 11,000 members just want to be able to do their job and help their clients in the best way possible. We need to support publications, CLE programs and other efforts to aid our members in the toughest times they have ever faced. We also need to buoy members' spirits through community building with our message boards and other activities so the proto-typical sole practitioner knows she is not alone when she cannot sleep at 1 am for fear that a typo will cost her client his right to remain in the U.S. AILA is a community and I will continue to work toward the best interests of this community as a member of AILA's BOG and I thank you for your vote!

Very truly yours,

  
Dagmar Butte