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Message From the Chair

By Patti Perez

I'm sure that those of you who attended the "Tribute to Civil Rights Legends and Pioneers" presentation during our Section's Annual Meeting in October were as awed and inspired as I was. (See the article in this issue written by Phyllis Cheng for additional information about our honorees.) Our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) included many events throughout the year and culminated with a fabulous Annual Meeting that was highlighted by our "Legends and Pioneers" program, as well as a presentation by former California Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso. As a Latina employment attorney who, like many of you, works in the area of civil rights every day, I thank all of those pioneers who came before me for making my personal success possible and my work so interesting and satisfying.

Now that we have concluded our FEHA anniversary celebrations, it's time to start thinking ahead to the many other wonderful events we have in store for Section members. Our next major event will be the 2010 Annual Meeting on March 26-27 at the Disneyland Hotel. Though we have traditionally held our Annual Meeting in the Fall, in 2010 we are mixing things up a bit by moving the Annual Meeting to the Spring.

Following in the footsteps of the FEHA anniversary theme, the 2010 Annual Meeting will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the National Labor Relations Act. We will hear from a member of the National Labor Relations Board on Friday, March 26, and also have the honor of hosting Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, from the newly-opened law school at the University of California, Irvine, as our keynote speaker on Saturday, March 27th. In addition to celebrating the passage of the NLRA, the 2010 Annual Meeting will focus on two areas: practical lawyering skills and

networking.

We will kick off the event on Thursday, March 25th with a pre-conference session on developing successful rainmaking skills. Following the pre-conference event will be a cocktail reception to honor law students and new attorneys. (Of course, we hope that more experienced attorneys will attend too.) The rest of the program will include a variety of seminars aimed at sharpening practical skills, such as properly handling reductions in force, picking a winning jury, taking and defending depositions, conducting successful mediations and, of course, the ever-popular (half) yearly update.

In addition to fantastic educational programs, the Annual Meeting will include numerous networking opportunities. As is always true at our Section events, our programs will provide employment attorneys with a unique opportunity to mingle with plaintiff-side and defense-side attorneys, labor lawyers, judges and other neutrals, public and private sector attorneys, and in-house counsel. The meeting is being organized to promote even more networking than before. We will have two cocktail receptions, and provide networking opportunities during the two lunches and a breakfast on Saturday morning. Though all of these events will allow participants to mingle on their own, there also will be numerous activities aimed at providing some structure, to enable attorneys to more easily meet colleagues who practice in the same (or different) areas of employment law, who live in the same (or a different) part of the state, who work in similar (or different) sized firms, or who have similar or (different) experience levels. Whether you are looking to connect with a wage and hour specialist who does plaintiff-side work in Northern California, or an expert on leave laws who works at a small firm in Southern California, we will provide you

with the opportunity to find just that person. Why rely on social networking from your desk, when you can actually meet colleagues in person? These connections will increase your visibility among California's top employment lawyers, and provide you with opportunities to refer matters to other talented attorneys in the state.

Whether you join us for the keynote speakers, to attend fantastic educational programs, or to take advantage of the networking opportunities (or for all three reasons!), please mark your calendars now for what surely will be a great event!

In keeping with our goal in 2010 of providing more and better programs, we will follow our Annual Meeting with our always-successful Public Sector Conference in Sacramento on Friday, May 7th. As usual, the Conference will include presentations exploring the most relevant and cutting-edge topics facing public-sector attorneys.

In addition to our two annual meetings, we will expand the number of MCLE programs offered throughout the year. Taking advantage of our membership, which includes the best employment attorneys in the state, we will continue to offer live programs and webinars covering current developments in employment law, creative conflict resolution, and advanced issues on disability law, among many others. For the first time, we also will offer half-day and full-day seminars on topics ranging from unraveling the maze of leave laws to conducting workplace investigations, as well as mock trials covering the entire gamut of employment law issues.

I hope to see you at one of the many programs we'll offer throughout 2010! ☎