PREFACE

Thanking Those Who Made It Happen

Daniel D. Stier

This symposium issue of the Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics is devoted to the convening of the national public health law conference, Practical Approaches to Critical Challenges, on October 10-12, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference was co-sponsored by the Network for Public Health Law and the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics (ASLME) with generous support provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, de Beaumont Foundation, California Endowment, and Healthcare Georgia Foundation.

With the support of those organizations and the dedicated efforts of the individuals mentioned below, the conference focused on building effective interactions between attorneys and public health practitioners in order to:

• examine practical legal approaches to address priority public health issues;
• learn about helpful public health law resources and evidence-based research;
• discuss public health legal questions and answers; and
• build partnerships to accomplish public health objectives and foster innovation.

The success of the conference in meeting its goals is revealed in results of an online participant post-satisfaction survey administered by the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice. Included among the key findings:

• This was the first public health law conference for most respondents. Conference participants included public health officials, practitioners, attorneys, students, advocates, or other interested persons representing state and local health departments and law offices, CDC and other federal agencies, colleges and universities, community-based or nonprofit organizations, healthcare providers, tribes, and the private sector.
• 91% of respondents rated the overall conference as excellent or very good.
• Over 90% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the conference addressed all four of its goals.
• 92% of respondents thought that the conference provided a great deal or sufficient amount of practical information.
• The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that all of the plenary and concurrent sessions were applicable to their work and that presenters were knowledgeable about the subject matter.

Daniel D. Stier, J.D., is the National Coordinating Center Director of the Network for Public Health Law, a national initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to build the field of public health law. He is a veteran attorney and administrator with decades of experience at state and federal levels. Mr. Stier previously served as a Senior Public Health Analyst with CDC’s Public Health Law Program. He worked closely with state public health officials and attorneys, guided by the Program’s mission “to advance the public’s health through law.” Before joining CDC, Mr. Stier had a long and varied career in Wisconsin state government, including service as Chief Legal Counsel with the Department of Health and Family Services, Assistant Attorney General in the Department of Justice, and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. He is a member of the State Bars of Wisconsin and Georgia, and is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin Law School.
Conference success is attributable to the efforts of an outstanding planning committee. I join the committee in thanking the two plenary speakers for excellent presentations. The conference was opened with an inspirational call to action from Dr. Bill Foege (former CDC Director and world-wide public health leader for decades) to use law and policy to confront the critical health disparities caused by poverty in this country and throughout the world. On the second day of the conference, participants were informed and entertained at lunch by New York Times reporter Alan Schwarz’s presentation on his Pulitzer Prize-nominated work on sports concussions and consequent implementation of laws and policies to address this still emerging public health issue.

The committee and I also express our deep appreciation to the outstanding session leaders who chose and coordinated the efforts of exceptional presenters for 32 breakout sessions organized into six tracks: (1) Prevention and Promotion at the Community Level; (2) Changes and Challenges to Public Health Legal Infrastructure; (3) Challenges to Public Health Authority; (4) Skills Building/Competencies; (5) Protection and Security; and (6) Data Collection, Use and Storage.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to each of the planning committee members: Susan Allan, Director, Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, Marice Ashe, Executive Director, ChangeLab Solutions, Eric Blank, Senior Director, Public Health Systems, Association of Public Health Laboratories, Doug Blanke, Director, Public Health Law Center, John Bloom, Director, Public Health Law Partnership, Jim Blumenstock, Chief Program Officer for Public Health Practice, ASTHO, Scott Burris, Director, Public Health Law Research Program, Denise Chrysler, Director, Network Mid-States Region, Kathleen Hoke Dachille, Director, Network Eastern Region, Marie Fallon, Chief Executive Officer, NALBOH, Marty Fenstersheib, Santa Clara County, CA Health Officer and Public Health Medical Director and NACCHO Representative, Caroline Fichtenberg, Director, Center for Public Health Policy, Division of Health Policy and Practice, APHA, James Hodge, Director, Network Western Region, Chris Hoke, Chief, Office of Regulatory and Legal Affairs, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Peter Jacobson, Professor of Health Law and Policy, University of Michigan School of Public Health, Nancy Kaufman, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Consultant, Melvin A. Kohn, Oregon State Health Officer and ASTHO Member Representative, Jill Krueger, Senior Attorney, Network National Coordinating Center, Stacy Leeds, University of Arkansas School of Law Dean and Professor, Tribal Judge, Cherokee Nation Citizen, Wilfredo Lopez, CDC Public Health Law Consultant and General Counsel Emeritus to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Gene Matthews, Director, Network Southeastern Region, Angie McGowan, Senior Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Jean O’Connor, Deputy Director, Public Health Division, Oregon Health Authority, Shannon O’Fallon, Senior Assistant Attorney General, Oregon Department of Justice, Jim Pearson, Director, Consolidated Laboratories for the Commonwealth of Virginia, Matthew Penn, Director, CDC Public Health Law Program, Prabhu Ponkshe, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Consultant, Monte Ransom, Director, Community Public Health Preparedness Initiative, CDC Public Health Law Program, and Malia Villegas, Director, Policy Research Center, National Congress of American Indians.

I also want to specially thank Katie Johnson, ASLME Conference Director, Ted Hutchinson, ASLME Executive Director and Publications Director, Sara Rohde, Network Program Manager, Shelly Talcott, former Network Marketing & Communications Director, and Shelly’s successor, Ann Phi-Wendt for their stellar contributions to the conference’s success. Finally, I offer heartfelt appreciation to the authors who contributed to this special JLME issue, plenary and breakout session presenters, session leaders for their organizational and leadership contributions, Gene Matthews, Rick Hogan, and Wendy Parmet for an informative and entertaining Year in Review plenary session, the Public Health Law Research program for its compelling Critical Opportunities plenary session, and the entire staff at the Network’s National Coordinating Center and the Regional Centers for pitching in at all stages of planning, organizing, and staging the conference, and for their assistance in reviewing and editing manuscripts for this special issue.

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