

Biographies of Keynote Speaker, Presenter and Facilitators

Keynote Speaker

Paul Michael Hassett is a member and Managing Partner of the firm Brown & Kelly, LLP, of Buffalo, New York. He is a Past-President of the New York State Bar Association having assumed that office on June 1, 2000. He was President-Elect from 1999 to 2000, Eighth District Vice President of the Association from 1997 to 1999, a Member-at-Large of the Executive Committee from 1996 to 1997, and has served in the House of Delegates since 1990. He has served as Co-Chair of the President's Committee on Access to Justice and is a member of the Association's Finance Committee. He was Chair of the Commission on Providing Access to Legal Services for Middle Income Consumers and Vice-Chair of the Review Committee on the Profession and the Courts. He is a Past-Chair of the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders, having served as a member of the Executive Council from 1992 to 1998. He was Chair of the Special Committee to Improve Courthouse Facilities from 1994 to 1997. He is also a member of the Trusts and Estates Law Section, the Health Law Section, and has served on the Committee on Attorney Professionalism, the Special Committee on the Judiciary and the Task Force on the Profession where he chaired the Subcommittee on Disciplinary Issues. He is a Fellow of the New York Bar Foundation and a member of its Board of Directors.

Mr. Hassett is a Past-President of the Bar Association of Erie County and has held all four elected offices of that Association. He currently serves as Chairman of the Committee on Grievances and is a Member of the Finance Committee. He is a Past-President of the Erie County Bar Foundation and served as a member of its Board of Directors for nine years. He has also served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, the Aid to Indigent Prisoners Society and the Erie Institute of Law. He received the Lawyer of the Year Award from the BAEC in June 2000.

Mr. Hassett is a member of the Board of Governors of the Fee Dispute Resolution Program of the Office of Court Administration. He is a member of the Executive Council of the National Conference of Bar Presidents, a former President of the Metropolitan Bar Caucus, both ABA affiliate organizations, and a member of the Dean's Advisory Council of the University at Buffalo Law School. He is also a member of the American Bar Association and a delegate to its House of Delegates from the NYSBA.

Mr. Hassett is a native of Buffalo and was graduated from Canisius College (B.S. cum laude, 1962), and Georgetown University Law Center (LL. B., 1965) where he was associate editor of the *Georgetown Law Journal*. He served as a Captain in the United States Army from 1966 to 1968 and has been associated with Brown & Kelly, LLP and its predecessor firms since that time. His practice is concentrated in probate, estate and trust administration, and general business law.

Presenter

Cheryl M. Zalenski is Assistant Staff Counsel for the American Bar Association Center for Pro Bono. She joined the Center for Pro Bono in 1999 and currently manages the Center's Peer Consulting Project. Previously, she was Managing Attorney and Pro Bono Coordinator at Legal Services Organization of Southcentral Michigan in Battle Creek, Michigan. She graduated from Southern Methodist University School of Law in 1993 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bradley University. She is a member of the State Bar of Michigan and a licensed attorney in Michigan and Illinois.

Facilitators

Hon. Fern Fisher served as Deputy Director of Harlem Legal Services, Inc. and as an Assistant Attorney General of the New York State Department of Law. For four years, she provided pro bono legal services to Harlem-based community organizations as a project director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. In 1989, she was appointed a Judge of the Housing Part of the Civil Court, and later, in 1990, was elected to the Civil Court where she served as Deputy Supervising Judge. Justice Fisher was elected to the Supreme Court of the State of New York in 1993. After serving in both the City and the Matrimonial Parts of Supreme Court, she was appointed Administrative Judge of the Civil Court in December 1996.

Justice Fisher contributed the views from the Bench in *RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD-TENANT LAW IN NEW YORK*, a practice guide by Lawyers Cooperative Publishing. She served as the host of a series of television shows on housing issues for Crosswalks, a public service cable show. Justice Fisher was a founding member of the Metropolitan Black Bar Association and is a member of Judicial Friends (an affiliate of the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association), the Association of the Bar of the City of New York and the New York County Lawyers Association. Justice Fisher also served as the Chair of the Housing Court (Judges) Disciplinary Committee and Chair of the Anti-Bias Committee of the New York County Supreme Court. Judge Fisher and Rochelle Klempner co-authored the article *Unbundled Legal Services: Untying the Bundle in New York State* in the 29th volume of the *Fordham Urban Law Journal* (2002). She received her J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1978.

Hon. E. Jeannette Ogden was appointed to the Buffalo City Court by Mayor Anthony Masiello in June of 1995. Later that year, she was elected to serve a ten (10) year term on the City Court Bench. Prior to her appointment, Judge Ogden worked as a trial attorney for CIGNA Insurance Company defending corporations, school districts, hospitals and municipalities. She is a former Assistant District Attorney, a former Assistant County Attorney and operated her own private law practice.

Judge Ogden is a graduate of Buffalo Public Schools, she holds a B.S. Degree in Criminal Justice from Buffalo State College, and a Juris Doctorate Degree from the University of Buffalo School of Law where she currently serves as an Instructor of trial technique. She is also an Instructor in the Criminal Justice Department at Buffalo State College.

Judge Ogden is well-known for the pro bono work that she performed for many local churches and community based organizations such as the Women for Human Rights and Dignity, Inc., Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc., 1490 Enterprises, Inc. and the Community Action Information Center, Inc. Judge Ogden is a member of numerous organizations, including the Erie County Chapter of the Links, the NAACP and the Women's Group, Inc. She is also an active participant in several mentor programs where she serves as a mentor to students attending Buffalo Public Schools and students attending Erie Community College, Buffalo State College and U.B. Law School.

Her professional affiliations include memberships in the American Judges Association; the National Association of Woman Judges; the New York State, Erie County, Minority, and Women's Bar Associations, the Women Lawyers of WNY (Past-President) and the U.B. General and Law Alumni Associations (Treasurer). She presently serves on the Board of the Assigned Counsel Program, the Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics, the City of Buffalo Ethics Nominating Committee, the Gender and Racial Fairness Committee for the 8th Judicial District of the Court and the Buffalo Urban League Advisory Council.

Judge Ogden has received many awards and acknowledgments for her long standing community commitment including, but not limited to, the Minority Bar Association's Lawyer Service Award, the National Conference's Brother/Sisterhood Award in Law, the NAACP's Community Service Award, 1490's Black Achiever's Award and Buffalo State College's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Hon. Rose H. Sconiers, New York State Supreme Court Justice, is former Judge of the City Court of Buffalo; former Executive Attorney of The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc., former Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of Buffalo and a 1973 graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Law. She was admitted to the State Bar in 1974 and to the U.S. Federal District Court in 1975. In addition, she is admitted to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Justice Sconiers is an emeritus member of the University of Buffalo Council and a Past-President of the New York State Association of Council Members and College Trustees. She was appointed by the Chief Judge of New York State to the Commission on Fiduciary Appointments and is a former member of the Unified Court System Advisory Committee on Criminal Law and Procedure, and the Jury Project; she is also a member of the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission on Minorities. Justice Sconiers is Past-President of the University of Buffalo Law Alumni Association and a former member of the Board of Directors of the New York State Defenders Association.

Justice Sconiers is the President-Elect of the Association of Justices of the Supreme Court of the State of New York and Immediate Past Presiding Member of the Judicial Council of The New York State Bar Association.

Justice Sconiers is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Erie County Bar Foundation; a former member of the Erie County Bar Association Grievance Committee and Past Chairman of the Lawyer Referral Service Committee and Law Day Committee. She also served on the Bar's Special Committee to Study the Feasibility of Creating a Police Civilian Review Board for the Buffalo Police Department, Practice and Procedure in City Court Committee, Judiciary Committee and Ethics Committee.

Justice Sconiers is a Past-President of the Supreme Court Justice Association, Eighth Judicial District; Past-President of the Buffalo Chapter, National Bar Association; Past Chairperson, Friends of the School of Architecture and Environmental Design at SUNY; Past Vice-Chairperson, Women for Downtown; Past-President, Community Planning and Assistance Center for Western New York (CPAC); Past-President of the Erie County Chapter of the Links, Inc.; and Past Chairperson of the 13th Street Multi-Purpose Center, Inc., in Niagara Falls, New York. Justice Sconiers is a former member of the Board of Trustees of Children's Hospital, the Board of Trustees of St. Mary's Hospital for the Deaf and Board of Directors of the Buffalo Chapter, American Red Cross.

Justice Sconiers is married to attorney Lester G. Sconiers and the mother of a daughter, Lisa Rose, and a son, Lester, Jr.

Sharon Thomas is the Chief Clerk of Buffalo City Court and has worked in the court in various positions for 28 years. Ms. Thomas is certified by the New York State Office of Court Administration as an instructor in Cultural Diversity and Public Awareness Courses. She is also an Arbitration Commissioner for the County of Erie and a member of several working committees both in the Eighth Judicial District and statewide.

Ms. Thomas is a graduate of Daemen College with a degree in Business Administration Education.