

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Michael K. Gruber

It would be an understatement to say that things have changed since our last newsletter. It seems certain that the outcomes of the recent elections will have a profound impact on the entire legal profession.

On a Federal level, we have been fortunate in the last four years to have a Secretary of Labor who has been sympathetic toward protecting the rights of injured workers. As most of you are aware, the Department of Labor recently issued a report entitled "Does The Workers Compensation System Fulfill Its Obligations To Injured Workers?" After a thorough review of the factors contributing to the "race to the bottom", the report concluded that workers compensation systems are not designed to meet the needs of injured workers and that there "is cause for alarm". The study called for additional federal research into state workers compensation systems. Although our prospects for federal assistance have been significantly reduced, we must continue to work with members of Congress to ensure that the new administration and new Secretary of Labor continue to recognize the federal governments' interest in promoting state and federal workers compensation systems which adequately protect injured workers.

Locally, we are facing greater challenges than ever. 25 states now have Republicans in control of both the executive and legislative branches of their governments. Traditionally this type of single party control has been followed closely by "business friendly" legislative measures. I urge all WILG members not to wait for the introduction of such legislation to start marshalling forces within their states to oppose workers compensation reform, and I promise that WILG will be there to lend any assistance we can in your state.

Given the current state of our political landscape, your WILG membership is more important than ever. The strength of our organization is directly tied to the dedication and passion of our members. I have no doubt that we, both as an organization and individually, are strong enough to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of those who are injured at work.