

Happy St. Patrick's Day! March is always a busy month at WILG, and I thought I would use this President's Message to keep everyone up to date on our activities.

Our first Northwest Regional Convention was held in Whitefish, Montana at the beginning of March. This was an amazing conference and I would like to thank chairs Tom Murphy, Aime Peters and George Santini for organizing this wonderful event. The program at the conference included presentations on a wide variety of topics including Workplace Safety Taskforces, AMA Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Workers Comp Attorneys. In addition to learning about current issues affecting injured workers, attendees also got to network with their colleagues in an absolutely beautiful setting. In between our CLE programs WILG members were able to ski, snowmobile, snowshoe and drive dogsleds. The feedback we have received regarding this event has been tremendous. It was refreshing to see a number of new faces in attendance at the conference and hope that everyone who attended will continue to be active WILG members.

Unfortunately, there was one troubling note to our otherwise successful Northwest Convention. Vahan Ishkanian, an attorney who practices in British Columbia, was scheduled to speak about the pros and cons of the Canadian Workers Compensation system and what American practitioners could learn from that system. Mr. Ishkanian was born in Egypt. A few days prior to our conference, Mr. Ishkanian advised us he was canceling his appearance. He noted multiple instances of Muslims and academics being stopped at the United States borders and being subject to lengthy interrogations due to the newly implemented travel ban. Mr. Ishkanian was, understandably, unwilling to risk himself and his family facing similar questioning. This was a disturbing sequence of events and reinforces why we as attorneys need to remain vigilant in our protections of all basic rights.

Immediately following the Northwest Regional Convention, WILG's Annual Longshore Conference was held in New Orleans. Again, thanks to our CLE chairs for this program Art Brewster and Jeffrey Winter. The Longshore Conference continues to grow and we certainly expect that trend to continue in the future under our President Elect Aime Peters.

On St. Patrick's Day WILG is hosting a dinner in Phoenix in conjunction with the College of Workers Compensation Lawyers and the American Bar Association's Workers Compensation Midwinter Seminar. I would like to congratulate all of our members who have been chosen for the prestigious honor of being inducted as Fellows of the College of Workers Compensation Lawyers. WILG's representation in the College continues to grow and is further evidence of the quality of our membership.

Finally, our third Southwest Regional Conference will be held on March 26-27. After two years in Nashville, this year's conference will be held in Atlanta. In addition to a great educational program featuring presentations by medical professionals, defense attorneys and academics, WILG is having a reception at the Center for Civil and Human Rights. There is still time to register and attend this event!

There are plenty of opportunities to become more involved with WILG. These regional conferences are a great way to meet attorneys who share your passion for protecting the rights of injured workers and to have some fun while doing so. I'm looking forward to seeing old friends and new faces in Atlanta next weekend.