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SBA Notes:

A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Kevin Bress, SBA President

Each year every lawyer in the country has the opportunity to accept a standing invitation to be part of the largest congregation of attorneys ever assembled. This year, Atlanta was the site, and as in every year, the American Bar Association was the sponsor. The annual convention's activities spanned a two-week period in late July and included the usual committee meetings, special instructive sessions, election of officers and an address by President Reagan. While most of the business was conducted in Atlanta's Hilton Hotel and the Hyatt Regency, a significant amount of activity transpired at the less-elegant Ladha Hotel.

The Ladha was the headquarters for the Law Student Division of the American Bar Association (ABA/LSD). Like the "Senior Bar", the Student Division conducted committee meetings and passed resolutions. Much energy was expended writing and compiling the resolutions which were contained in a 150-page booklet.

The passage of these resolutions by the voting student delegates merely served as an initial step in formulating an official position held by that body. The full assembly of the "Senior Bar" would have to ratify any resolution before public dissemination of that view by the Bar.

The student delegates, including Brian Frank from the University of Baltimore School of Law, found themselves considering such issues as whether the Student Bar should oppose the allowance of tax credits to parents of children who attend non-public schools, or whether the Federal government should be urged to adopt legislation to prohibit sex discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. Each delegate apparently had solicited the views of their respective schools before representing their student body at a national level. While this was not necessarily the rule, delegates appeared to conscientiously attend the sessions and make well-reasoned arguments at the general meetings.

But not all attendees of the convention were in Atlanta strictly for ABA business. Yet a third convention, also in the Ladha, and comprised of only Student Bar Association presidents, was conducting its annual national meeting. While still in its infant stage of development the National Student Bar Association (NSBA) has quickly gained the respect and recognition of law schools across the nation and

the American Bar Association.

NSBA was created less than a decade ago to promote the constant flow of information and ideas among the Student Bar Associations of the nation's law schools. The organization has amassed a membership equalling nearly one-third of the 164 law schools in this country. Its 1982-83 president, Barney Lovelace from Alabama's Cumberland School of Law, has added another dimension of cohesiveness by serving as a non-voting member on the ABA/LSD Board of Governors.

Each NSBA member left the convention with a 200-page *President's Reference Manual*, which all recipients agreed was the most beneficial aspect of the meeting. In addition to the sections in the manual which concerned organizing an SBA, listing all law schools and their addresses, NSBA reproduced the results of a 122-question national survey in which a 25% response rate was recorded.

The questions were answered by the Student Bar presidents from schools exhibiting the following profile: typically private with between 500-700 students and accredited by both the ABA and the AALS. Despite the observation that the University of Baltimore did not generally fit into this profile, it did closely resemble other schools with respect to the following:

- 1) The Student Bar is funded by an activity fee;
- 2) Students have a representative at the faculty meetings and on faculty committees;
- 3) Students have been sanctioned or dismissed because of honor code violations, and they were prosecuted by students;
- 4) Law Review students receive academic credit;
- 5) The library is not open 24 hours-a-day;
- 6) The library has between 50,000 and 200,000 volumes;
- 7) Most semester courses have only a single exam, no mid-terms;
- 8) Grading is done anonymously by professors; and
- 9) Old examinations are available prior to the final exam.

The survey results did indicate some areas of conformity among schools, but the University of Baltimore, for better or for worse, fell within the minority. Some

examples follow:

- 1) The results of faculty evaluations are made available to the students in 58% of the responding schools. Baltimore's faculty evaluation is prepared by the administration, and its results are used for promotion and tenure purposes, the students are not privy to the cumulative data;
- 2) Sixty-four percent of the schools report that their libraries have extended hours during the examination periods. Baltimore's does not;
- 3) In a series of questions regarding the grading of final exams, the following statistics were revealed: 88% of the schools require their faculty to grade exams by a certain date, and of them 82% must complete the process in less than six weeks. Most of the schools acknowledged that late grading is a problem. A handful of schools withhold a faculty member's salary as a sanction for late grading, while others will note the tardiness in the personnel file. A majority of the schools have no sanctions;
- 4) Three-quarters of the institutions indicate that some or all of the best final exams are made available to students. At Baltimore this is a rarity;
- 5) As a final item, 78% of the respondents have established an alumni office for the law school separate from the main university's. Baltimore has one office with the law school represented by a vice-president chairing an executive committee.

Baltimore's Student Bar Association will establish a "Referendum Board" this term which will address these and other issues to see if they are of significant concern to students. Students should not feel inhibited to work with the SBA to investigate an area of concern and follow it through to the faculty and administrative level.

The national convention revealed that the most productive and meaningful exchanges may occur with the smallest and least publicized bodies, such as NSBA. Hopefully Baltimore students would like to become a meaningful body and participate in the process to effect positive changes for the benefit of all.