

Region V Meeting : May 14-15, 2011

By: Laurie S. Noyes, RP®

On May 14 and 15, 2011, Corinne Deering, RP® and I attended the Region V Meeting held in Clifton Park, New York. In attendance were representatives from the following paralegal organizations throughout Region V: Central Connecticut Paralegal Association, Connecticut Association of Paralegals, New Haven County Association of Paralegals, Central Massachusetts Paralegal Association, Massachusetts Paralegal Association, Inc., Western Mass Paralegal Association, Paralegal Association of New Hampshire, Capital District Paralegal Association, New York City Paralegal Association, Paralegal Association of Rochester, and the Rhode Island Paralegal Association.

The meeting started out with a recap of NFPA's Winter Board Meeting held in February 2011. There was much discussion related to the appointment and election of coordinator positions within NFPA, and how those elections are handled by the NFPA Board. Several of the associations expressed concern that the associations were not receiving enough information about the candidates for coordinator positions, and how the election process worked within the NFPA Board. Beth Bialis, our Region V Director, agreed to undertake a review of the procedures and rules relating to NFPA elections and nominations, and indicated she would report back to the organizations within Region V with her findings.

Also discussed at the NFPA Winter Board meeting were possible goals and directives for the upcoming year. NFPA has several goals that it would like to accomplish this year, including: (1) getting the convention resolutions out to members within 15 days after the convention is held so the membership knows exactly what resolutions were passed at the convention, (2) announcing award winners via live email blast right from the convention as they are announced, and (3) a revamping of the NFPA website.

With respect to the revamping of the NFPA website, the process has already begun. Cheryl Corning is spearheading the website committee, and joined us at the Region V Meeting to share with us the mock-up of the new NFPA website. The goal of the new NFPA website is to make information more accessible to its membership, and to allow for more transparency of the organization as a whole – which is a continued goal of the NFPA Board.

The new Paralegal CORE Competency Exam being offered the NFPA is set to roll out on November 1. Pilot testing for the exam takes place on June 11, 2011 in various sites around the country. To date, a total of 224 people have signed up to sit for the pilot test on June 11 at 12 sites across the country. Upon successful completion of the examination, these paralegals will receive the CRP designation through NFPA.

A portion of the Region V meeting was related to regulation of the paralegal profession, and the various steps being taken by member organizations toward registration and/or certification in their districts. The Empire State Alliance, which includes several member

organizations from the State of New York, is currently working on a regulation bill that would potentially appoint the New York Department of Education as its regulating body. The Education Department in New York is supportive of paralegal regulation in New York, despite the lack of support from the New York State Bar Association.

Much of the second day of the meeting was focused on ideas for increasing membership in our local organizations, and sharing of strategies for same by the individual associations. Each association discussed the types of annual meeting that they hold in order to elect their association's officers and directors, and whether or not they include continuing legal education as part of their annual meeting. Many associations hold their annual meeting as a dinner event only, with no CLEs being offered. It was very interesting to hear how other associations are working to increase membership, as well as membership participation in association sponsored events. It seems that the VPO, as an organization, has already undertaken many of these types of events, and we are well on our way to an active and involved membership – compared to some other organizations who are really struggling to get attendance at their annual meetings or other events.

Finally, NFPA currently has several open positions that will be coming up for election at the annual convention, to be held in Minnesota this year from October 13-16, 2011. The positions include: Vice President and Director of Membership, Vice President and Director of Marketing, Vice President and Director of Professional Development, and Vice President and Director of Finance.

Overall, Corinne and I felt the meeting was productive, and we came back with several ideas for increasing membership, creating a list serve for the membership, and revising the current membership application. We are currently working with the new VPO Board to get some of these ideas put into action, and we hope to share them with you in the very near future.