

# Paralegal Focus

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Paralegal Focus is the quarterly newsletter of the Vermont Paralegal Organization.

Vermont Paralegal Organization is a Member of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA).

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## Editor's Message

*By Louise Reese*

Most of the summer passes between the second and third quarterly issues of *Paralegal Focus*. Summer may mean a time of rest or slowing down for many, but not for the VPO Board and Committees. We are busy getting ready for another convention, renewing our relationship with the VBA, lining up pro bono opportunities, recruiting new members, planning and coordinating future CLE opportunities, and more. You will read about some of these action items in this issue.

Our fearless leader had an idea for the Board members to share with the members why we do what we do on behalf of the VPO. First up, your President and Newsletter Editor! I hope our heartfelt statements will encourage you to get more involved and consider adding your experience, knowledge and ideas to our Board or committees. 2019 is a voting year and the organization can benefit from your talent and ideas. Please consider running for a board position or let the current Board know if you are interested in volunteering for a committee.

Ashley and Corinne have submitted a brief summary of what we can expect at the NFPA Convention in Seattle coming up in October.

Our new Pro Bono Chair, Cassandra Franklin, is providing us with a pro bono opportunity. Please review her article and contact her directly if interested.

Corinne continues to provide us with helpful hints on using Wild Apricot to access and maneuver through Forums. Please review her instructions in this issue and keep them handy.

## President's Message

By Lucia White, CP®

### Committee and Board Update

Please welcome VPO's new Pro Bono Committee chair, Cassandra Franklin. Cassandra is a Right of Way Agent with the State of Vermont and volunteers at the Transitional Care Coalition in Middlebury. You can expect to hear from her about opportunities for pro bono paralegal work around the state, including in this issue.

Also, I am sad to report that Diane Brown has stepped down as Finance Committee Chair and By-Laws Committee Chair. Diane has been dedicated to serving the Vermont Paralegal Organization for many years and in many roles, including as past President. She will be sorely missed as a leader of the organization but we will still see her around. Thank you, Diane, for your dedication to the VPO!

The Finance Committee is a Standing Committee of the VPO and the chair is a voting member of the Board, and must be a voting member of the VPO. The Finance Committee is charged with monitoring the expenses and income of the Board and assisting in preparation of the annual budget. The Pro Bono and By-Laws Committees are Special Committees. The chairs are not voting members of the Board. The Board hopes to review our By-Laws in March 2019. We are looking for new chairs for both the Finance and By-Laws Committees.

If you are interested in helping with the Finance Committee, By-Laws Committee, or any other committee of the VPO, please contact me at [president@vtparalegal.org](mailto:president@vtparalegal.org).

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Emily Flores, Paralegal  
Cheng Cohen LLP

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## Why I volunteer for the VPO

By Lucia White, CP®

In November 2013, I was living outside of Austin, Texas and my husband was interviewing for a job in Burlington. We came to town for a second interview and I was thinking that if we were going to move here, I had to figure out how hard it would be for me to find a paralegal job. How often were there openings? Where were some of the places I could apply? I didn't know anyone. I did a little research and found the Vermont Paralegal Organization.

I sent an email to the general information email address and didn't expect to hear back, or at least not before Ken's interview. I was pleasantly surprised when Corinne Deering got in touch with me very quickly and offered to sit down and chat with me while I was in town. Corinne, as you can come to expect, was very helpful in telling me about the paralegal profession in Burlington and about the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA). I was impressed by the personal touch of the VPO and by Corinne's willingness to help a complete stranger get acclimated to a new environment.

Shortly after returning to Texas from that visit, I applied to be a member of the VPO. I don't know if I'm the only member the VPO ever had in Texas, but I wouldn't be surprised if I was. After joining the VPO, I saw many benefits—job postings, newsletters, impressive trainings, networking, etc. I later became secretary of the VPO. It was then that I really got to see the Board in action. What you may not know is the level of commitment the Board has to promoting the highest standards of excellence in paralegal profession. They do this statewide and nationally through NFPA. They are committed to education in the field and to helping paralegals network to help each other out. They have a can-do attitude, as displayed by an organization of our size in a state of our size putting on an excellent national convention. If this Board can achieve all that, I want to be a part of that! And to top it all off, they are a lot of fun!

We have hard jobs. But the VPO is there to help us accomplish our goals. Who could ask for more?

# Member News

**As of September 4, 2018, we have 75 members: 58 voting; 13 associate; 1 student; 1 sustaining corporate; and 2 sustaining individuals.**



## Probate Law Updates

By Sara Boyden, CP®

During the 2018 Legislative session, S. 29 was officially passed by both the Vermont House and Vermont Senate with changes becoming effective July 1, 2018.

There were a lot of changes to probate law, some minor, others more substantive. Please refer to <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2018/Docs/ACTS/ACT195/ACT195%20As%20Enacted.pdf> if you practice in this area for more detailed explanations.

Here are some of the changes:

- The addition of Self-Proving Wills.
- Further clarity for the elective share and the written waiver of spousal rights by the surviving spouse.
- The claim period when not filing the notice to creditors decreased to one (1) year.
- The time for filing an inventory increased to 60 days.
- There is also an option for interested parties to affirm to the court that they are satisfied with the administration of the estate and waive the final accounting by the fiduciary, upon satisfaction of certain conditions.
- There is now an option for a waiver of administration.



## NFPA News

*By Ashley LaRose, RP® and Corinne Deering, RP®  
NFPA Secondary and Primary Representatives*

The big news is that our very own Corinne Deering, RP® has been nominated for NFPA's Outstanding Local Leader Award. The Outstanding Local Leader Award recognizes one individual for their contributions to his or her local association, and without a doubt, Corinne is deserving of this award. She often works tireless hours behind the scenes to keep the VPO running like a well-oiled machine. Corinne has spent countless hours working on the VPO's revamped website (check it out at [vtparalegal.org](http://vtparalegal.org)), has attended more NFPA Conventions, Region V Meetings, and Board Meetings than she can remember at this point, and just two years ago, with the help of a few brave souls, organized and successfully hosted the 2016 NFPA Annual Convention. Corinne will not ask for it, but she deserves every praise and accolade she can get by being nominated, and we all wish her the best of luck in winning this award.

Down to the nitty-gritty. NFPA's 2018 Annual Convention is right around the corner. We are fortunate to have VPO Board Members Corinne Deering, RP®, Lucia White, CP, and Louise Reese attending the Convention this year. Corinne and Lucia will be attending as Vermont representatives. They will represent your voice on a national level, and as we have done in the past, we will provide you with the proposed Agenda Topics for the Convention and ask that you provide your thoughtful opinions, so that we can make decisions based on the direction which the VPO membership would like to see the paralegal profession take. NFPA, like the VPO, is a membership-driven organizational body, so your thoughts can be what direct the future of the organizations and profession. This year we will be posting the Agenda Topics to the Members Only Forum on our website, so log in and let us know your thoughts. We are anxiously awaiting the posting of the agenda topics on the NFPA discussion boards. We have heard that there are at least 14 possible topics with the potential for more to be introduced at convention as "late" topics. It will certainly be an interesting policy meeting with this many proposed topics!

With another NFPA Convention on the horizon that also means another election for our NFPA Board of Directors. Candidates for the Board of Directors must be voting members in good standing in their voting member association.

Below are the Board of Directors nominations as they stand:

President:

- Ronell D. Badua, current Region I Director
- Nita Serrano, RP®, current Vice President & Director of Paralegal Certification

Vice President & Director of Positions & Issues:

- Lori Boris, RP®, MnCP, current Vice President & Director of Positions & Issues

Vice President & Director of Paralegal Certification:

- Linda Odermott, RP, OCP
- Lisa Vessels, CP, RP, FRP, current Board Advisor

Secretary & Director of Operations:

- Mianne Besser, current Region II Director
- Brenna Dickey, RP
- Jessica Kubiak, OSBA Certified Paralegal, RP

Region Directors:

- Region I – Brenda Cothary
- Region II – Ed Schneider, F.Inst.Pa.
- Region III – Lori Wagner, IRP, RP
- Region IV – Becky Reedy
- Region V – Josie Estes

NFPA is still awaiting nominations for the Education Coordinator position, which is an elected 3-year non-Board position term. The Education Coordinator will be Co-Chair of the Education Committee with the ABA Approval Commission Representative and should have the following qualifications:

1. Possess a four-year degree from an accredited college or university;
2. Possess a background in paralegal education, i.e. teaching experience within a paralegal program or service on an advisory board for a paralegal program;
3. Demonstrate articulate, professional, assertive and imaginative skills and abilities;
4. Be well-versed in NFPA history and policy;
5. Make the commitment to support NFPA's ABA Approval Commission Representative; and
6. Possess the ability to travel to conventions, conferences and other activities required by and affecting the duties and responsibilities of Education Coordinator.

Corinne and I continue to attend the monthly telephonic NFPA Board Meetings. The most recent of which were July 13 and August 21, 2018. A few items of interest are:

- NFPA has developed a review schedule for its Code of Ethics, the first revisions of which will be submitted to Delegates at the 2019 Annual Convention.
- The NFPA Board is updating its Policies and Procedures to change the monthly meeting agenda availability for the membership to 7 days prior to the meeting as opposed to the original 30 days prior to the meeting, which was unrealistic with the monthly Board Meeting schedule.
- NFPA has sent a letter to the American Bar Association requesting that they remove the term “legal assistant” from their definition of paralegal. This was done with the hopes of reducing the confusion of legal secretarial work with substantive legal work that is completed by paralegals.
- NFPA is looking into better technological opportunities to more effectively communicate with its membership, as there have been a couple of monthly board meetings that were hampered due to attendees’ inability to hear what was being discussed. NFPA is also looking to find an alternative for the Discussion Boards to increase communication among the membership.
- The PACE® and PCCE® exam fees and study manual fees will be increasing effective January 2019 and January 2020, respectively. For members, the PACE test will increase to \$325 and the PCCE® test will increase to \$275. The study manuals will cost \$125 plus \$15 shipping and handling.
- NFPA is going to be working with Affinity to revamp and revive its discounts program, so keep an eye out for that.
- NFPA is considering eliminating the grace period for payment of dues prior to initiating penalties and interest for unpaid dues.
- NFPA is updating and revising their “NFPA: What It’s All About” document on the website.
- NFPA is working on updating and streamlining the procedures regarding Awards and Scholarships.

Besides the NFPA Annual Convention in Seattle, we can also look forward to the 2019 Joint Conference being held in Denver, Colorado. The Joint Conference will take place April 26-28<sup>th</sup> at the Hampton Inn & Homewood Suites in Downtown Denver. The Rocky Mountain Paralegal Association was able to lock in room rates at \$169/night including a free hot buffet breakfast. While the VPO has been unable to attend Joint Conference in the last couple of years, it is a wonderful conference that highlights Leadership, Regulation and Paralegal Certification. Like many paralegal gatherings, attendees get formal education and informational seminars, but Joint Conference also offers the chance to share professional ideas and network with paralegals from across the country.

Last, but not least, don't forget to check out weekly updates on your News You Can Use from NFPA, and, of course, we will be providing a comprehensive rundown on Convention in our next newsletter.

## News Introduction to Cassandra L. Franklin

*Pro Bono Committee Chair*



*At the office in Montpelier, Vermont*



*Little Sis Graduation in Reno, Nevada*

### ***Thank You VPO!***

I feel very honored to be a part of the Vermont Paralegal Organization, and I am very excited to Chair the Pro Bono Committee as we move forward.

Please feel free to reach out to me with opportunities, networking, and events. As we lay the framework for our pro bono outreach, we are open to your suggestions.



## ***A Brief Introduction***

Currently, I work for The State of Vermont Agency of Transportation. I draft and develop legal documents related to the State's acquisition and/or sales of real property.

I also work for a community outreach and transitional care program in Addison County. The program assists families struggling with poverty, drug addiction, homelessness and other barriers preventing family stability.

I am passionately dedicated to the mission represented by this Committee. It is my hope that we will effectively and collaboratively establish a strong community of Paralegals and Attorneys working together to facilitate increased access to the Judiciary, particularly by those who are unable to afford proper representation. Together, we will make a difference in the lives of others.

## ***Pro Bono Committee***

We have some very exciting opportunities for VPO members to assist in the lives of Vermonters throughout the State while gaining valuable experience working with the Legal Services Law Line of Vermont.

The Law Line operates a 1800 help line offering limited legal advice and direction for Vermonters with questions and legal concerns. The call center is staffed throughout the week at the main office in Burlington. This office is currently fielding a large call volume. Paralegals who are interested in answering calls, returning calls, and performing research related to a variety of legal matters should contact me to express interest. We are evaluating the level of VPO member interest before we set a firm schedule.

Additionally, the Law Line coordinates, staffs, trains, and recruits volunteers to provide legal assistance to defendants on rent escrow day in a total of four counties in Vermont. Volunteer lawyers are matched with pro se litigants who need assistance, under a limited appearance (for the day only). Paralegals who are interested in serving as a pro bono/volunteer clinic coordinator should contact me to express interest. There are available opportunities in Rutland, Burlington, Middlebury, and Montpelier. The clinic coordinator would assist in matching the client with an available attorney, and performing brief, same day intakes.

I can be reached at [cassandra.franklin00@gmail.com](mailto:cassandra.franklin00@gmail.com) or at 802-398-5512 or for general questions, you can contact the VPO Board at [info@vtparalegal.org](mailto:info@vtparalegal.org).

## Why I volunteer for the VPO

*By Louise C. Reese*

I am not sure how clearly I can put into words why I volunteer for the VPO; it comes from deep inside. The roles that I have taken on over the years (member since 1998) were the result of a passionate desire to help build a network for legal support staff so that we could always find someone who “had our back.” I have met a lot of people over the years, and not just within our own organization, and have always felt the love and support of those in the same profession. If I had never joined the VPO when I was a student member, I would not have made as many connections as I did, which allowed me to gain confidence and grow in the profession I came to love. I was fortunate to work with some strong paralegals at Dinse, Knapp & McAndrew while I was a file clerk and attending Paralegal Studies classes at Champlain College. I started to attend VPO events, and upon getting my degree and becoming a voting member, I was encouraged to get more involved with the VPO. I soon took on the role as Membership Chair, and had that position for about six years. During that period, I worked hard to retain existing members and recruit new members. That position allowed me the opportunity to come into contact with paralegals from across the state, and to develop a support network of my own.

I also took on roles as the Employment Opportunities Chair (formerly Job Bank), assisted with the newsletter, and then later was voted in as President, and also became the Newsletter Editor. For over 10 years, I have worked with Carie Tarte to plan and coordinate CLE events, including the annual meeting which transitioned from a dinner social event to a day of mini-seminars in 2008. As challenging as it is to plan the annual meetings, I remain passionate about identifying potential topics, and then potential presenters, to give legal support staff from across the state the best possible educational opportunity at an affordable price. In addition to providing CLE opportunities, the annual meeting allows me to stay in contact with paralegals from other counties, including those who may work in other areas of the law. For example, early on in my role as Membership Chair, I coordinated a presentation on the VPO with fellow member Penny Hannigan before then Woodbury College students on a Saturday. We answered a lot of questions, and I formed a friendship with Penny that has lasted more than a decade. Penny and I don't work in the same legal field, but Penny is always ready to help out with any event in the Montpelier area, and was a panel member some years ago with other VPO members and their attorneys at a VBA event discussing the best way to work with a paralegal. It is these bonds that keep me motivated and passionate about the VPO.

As a member of the VPO, I have built up a support system over the years that include paralegals from other firms who I can contact when I encounter something new and need some help digging in, or making contact with the appropriate vendor. I consider this benefit of being a VPO member one of the most valuable. Not only does it help me in my work life, but getting together for the occasional lunch or after work is good for sanity and the soul. Laughter, which always lowers my stress level, is a guarantee with my legal buddies, and a must have.

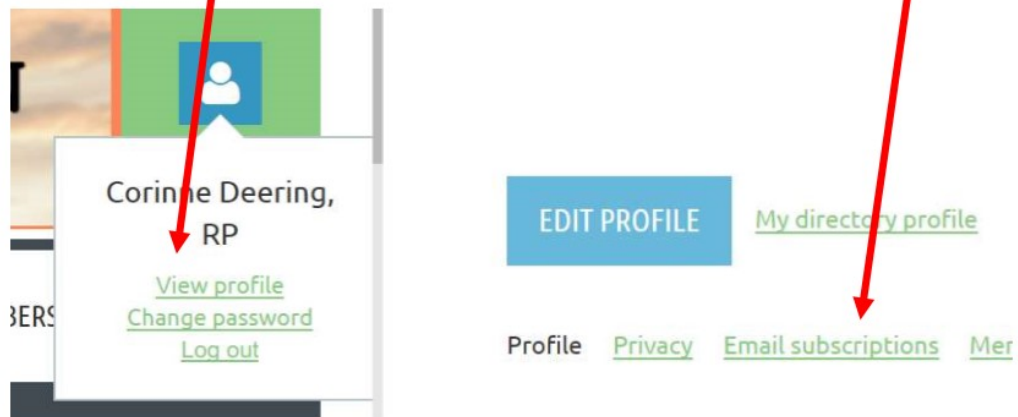
I also believe that we can learn a great deal from each other. If someone is starting out in this profession with little experience on legal procedure, for example, being able to easily connect with someone else who has several years of experience can prove to be invaluable. I have been working as a paralegal for over 18 years, and I still seek out the assistance of my colleagues from other firms when I encounter something new. When you are a member of the VPO, you are never alone! (Perhaps the best reason to join.)

Website / Wild Apricot Tips  
 By Corinne Deering, RP®

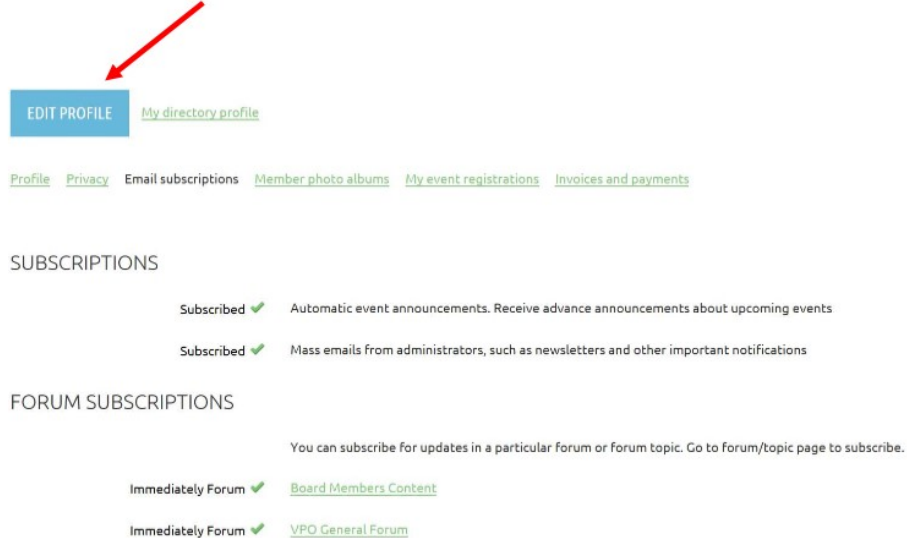
For those of you who have subscribed to the VPO General Forum and the Members-Only Forum, which I hope is ALL of you, here is a tip for changing the frequency of receipt of emails from the Forums.

If you have already subscribed to the Forum but missed the option to change your notifications setting, this is what you can do to change your settings:

- 1) Login to the website;
- 2) Click on the little blue/white person to get the “view profile” option;
- 3) Click on “View Profile,” then once you get to your profile page, click on “Email Subscriptions;”



- 4) Click on “Edit Profile” to change your settings for forum notifications;



5) Once you click “Edit Profile,” you will get the opportunity to change your notification settings with the drop down menus:

SAVE CANCEL

[Profile](#) [Privacy](#) Email subscriptions

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- Subscribed Mass emails from administrators, such as newsletters and other important notifications

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You can subscribe for updates in a particular forum or forum topic. Go to forum/topic page to subscribe.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Daily Weekly Immediately</div>	Forum	<a href="#">Board Members Content</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Immediately	Forum	<a href="#">VPO General Forum</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Immediately	Forum	<a href="#">Members Only Forum</a>

6) Make your changes, and click SAVE.

WATCH FOR MORE TIPS TO COME!

**DON'T FORGET TO SUBSCRIBE IF YOU HAVE NOT YET DONE SO. THE FORUMS ARE NOW OUR METHOD OF CONTACT AND DISSEMINATION OF MEMBER INFORMATION!**

## INTANGIBLE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP WITH NFPA

### **Association Benefit**

When you join one of NFPA's local associations, you automatically become a member of NFPA. A portion of the dues paid to each local association are sent to NFPA for each individual member. You will receive all the individual members' benefits listed inside plus the benefits of the local association you belong to.

NFPA local associations receive the following benefits:

### **Voting Privileges**

Each member association, regardless of its size, has one direct vote. Your association elects the President, all Officers, and your Region Director, votes on positions and issues affecting NFPA and the profession, and votes on dues and the annual budget.

### **Timely Information**

Your association board will receive a bi-monthly report titled *Inside NFPA* which contains information about NFPA activities, ABA activities, and other national/local events affecting the profession, copies of recently published articles, and information pertaining to other relevant activities.

### **Opportunities to Network and Debate Issues**

Once a year at the Annual Meeting, local association representatives come together to exchange ideas, discuss and debate critical issues facing the paralegal profession, and vote on the future direction of NFPA. Many members from local associations attend the Annual Meeting. The NFPA Annual Meeting is open to all members of NFPA—not just the NFPA Primary/Secondary or local association board members.

### **Connection to the Information Superhighway**

NFPA sponsors the Internet server [paralegals.org](http://paralegals.org). Member associations can list information about upcoming local association seminars/events/activities and other association information.

### **Internet Home Page**

Member associations receive a home page on the Internet which includes an e-mail address of "association@paralegals.org."

### **Association Management Assistance**

Upon request, NFPA will assist your association with general association management issues, financial issues, member retention issues, leadership training, public relation efforts, and in other areas.

The Vice President and Director of Membership is responsible for the overall association assistance programs in conjunction with the assistance provided by the Region Directors. These programs offer a wide range of board training, strategic planning sessions, membership growth advice and association management tips to assist your association. NFPA also holds association management training conference calls.

Association Management Tip Sheets are also often posted in *Inside NFPA*. Some Tip Sheet topics include:

Retaining Members New Members = Future Leaders How to Avoid "Bored" Meetings Recruiting Tips for Volunteers Non-Dues Income	Recruiting Members How to Run a Board or Committee Meeting Meeting Keeping Volunteers Motivated Tips for Dealing with Conflict How to Get New Life Into Your Newsletter
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### **Paralegal Publications**

Documents written specifically for the paralegal are available through NFPA.

*The National Paralegal Reporter* is a bi-monthly, high quality, full-color magazine mailed to each NFPA member. Circulation also includes paralegal educators, state and local bar associations, and other legal professionals -- total circulation is over 11,000 copies!

### ***The National Paralegal Reporter offers:***

- In-depth feature articles on timely topics such as Paralegal Roles and Choosing Vendors.
- How-to articles providing readers with practical information that can be directly applied to their careers.
- Legal updates providing information that affects the paralegal profession, such as case law, legislation, and technology.

### **Information Databank**

NFPA provides local associations with timely information about the profession and the issues surrounding it.

### **Individual Benefit**

You may also join NFPA directly. If you select this option, you become a sustaining member and receive individual membership benefits from NFPA. Although sustaining members do not have voting privileges and cannot hold a NFPA Board position, they can still contribute to NFPA by working on committees and/or by holding coordinator positions.



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<sup>1</sup> Average combined annual savings based on countrywide survey of new customers from 1/1/15 to 1/29/16 who reported their prior insurers' premiums when they switched to Liberty Mutual. Savings comparison does not apply in MA. <sup>2</sup> For qualifying customers only. Accident Forgiveness is subject to terms and conditions of Liberty Mutual's underwriting guidelines. Not available in CA and may vary by state. <sup>3</sup> Optional coverage in some states. Availability varies by state. Eligibility rules apply. <sup>4</sup> With the purchase of optional Towing & Labor coverage. Applies to mechanical breakdowns and disablements only. Towing related to accidents would be covered under your Collision or Other Than Collision coverage. Coverage provided and underwritten by Liberty Mutual Insurance and its affiliates, 175 Berkeley Street, Boston MA 02116.

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## Vermont Paralegal Organization

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### Board of Directors 2017-2019

		<u>Phone</u>	<u>Fax</u>	<u>E-mail</u>
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Secretary:	Karen Farnsworth	828-5500		<a href="mailto:karen.farnsworth@vermont.gov">karen.farnsworth@vermont.gov</a>
Treasurer:	Sara Boyden, RP	859-7062	859-8762	<a href="mailto:sboyden@dinse.com">sboyden@dinse.com</a>
NFPA Primary:	Corinne Deering, RP <sup>®</sup>	658-2311	658-0042	<a href="mailto:cdeering@pfclaw.com">cdeering@pfclaw.com</a>
NFPA Secondary:	Ashley LaRose, RP <sup>®</sup>	497-2010	489-5020	<a href="mailto:ashlarose@yahoo.com">ashlarose@yahoo.com</a>
Past President:	Kristin Provost, RP <sup>®</sup>	540-7920	658-1643	<a href="mailto:kprovost@veic.org">kprovost@veic.org</a>

### Standing Committee Chairpersons

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Finance:	VACANT			
Professional Liaison:	Carie Tarte, RP <sup>®</sup>	489-5258	489-5386	<a href="mailto:carie@maleyandmaley.com">carie@maleyandmaley.com</a>
Paralegal Certification Ambassador	Ashley LaRose, RP <sup>®</sup>	497-2010	489-5020	<a href="mailto:ashlarose@yahoo.com">ashlarose@yahoo.com</a>

### Special Committee Chairpersons

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