

Paralegal Focus

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

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

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*Newsletter Design By
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President's Message

By Laurie S. Noyes

First off, I would like to express my gratitude to the VPO membership for the opportunity to serve as your Board President. I am excited to dig back into the VPO's inner workings and thrilled to be serving with a mixture of both new and returning board members as I begin that process. If the past year of this pandemic has taught me anything, it is to appreciate the opportunities that I have been given, and to express gratitude to those around me for their continued efforts in making our community a better place. So on that note, I want to also let you know how much I appreciate your continued investment in this organization and your dedication to the paralegal profession.

I would like to thank those new board members who have stepped up to the plate (and those continuing to stay in the batter rotation) for graciously agreeing to donate their time to the VPO. Please join me in congratulating and thanking the members of our new Board: Melinda Siel, Vice President; Donna Sims, Secretary; Diane Drake, Treasurer; Tina Wiles, NFPA Primary, and Robyn A. Sweet, CRP®, RP®, NFPA Secondary.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all the committee members who have stayed on and are continuing their contributions to the team, including Louise Reese on CLEs and as Newsletter Editor; Carie Tarte, RP®, AIC on CLEs, Ethics, and Sponsorship; Heather Rylant on Employment Opportunities; Krista Cadieux, RP® as Certification Ambassador; Caitlin Belcher, as the Website Chair, and Melinda Siel as Membership Chair. As you can see, these committees are often committees of one, but they can require the work of many hands, so I would encourage anyone who is interested in joining a committee to consider reaching out to find out how you can be involved. Currently, we also have a vacancy on the Pro Bono committee that needs to be filled. If any of these committees speak to your professional passion, we would love to hear from you and welcome the chance to work with our members more closely.

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On that note, given Diane Drake's election to the position of Treasurer, she will no longer be able to serve as the Finance Chair. The Finance Chair is a standing committee position, and the position must be filled by a Voting Member of the VPO. If you are interested in serving as the Finance Chair, please reach out to a Board member.

To the Board members who are stepping down, I thank you for your service and the countless hours and hard work you have invested in this organization. Under your recent leadership, the organization has made outstanding progress on some key initiatives, including strengthening its partnership with the VBA. Not only that, you accomplished these feats during some of the most difficult circumstances we have ever had to face over the last year during this pandemic. Your ability to adapt and provide continued leadership during such turbulent times, as well as the grace with which you all handled yourself is a testament to both your character and your work ethic. Each of you should be proud of the work that you have done and I hope to continue to have the opportunity to work with many of you during my term.

Finally, to the membership, I want to challenge you all to get active and become engaged with the organization. We want to hear from you – the good and the bad, the cute and the ugly. Share with us your wish lists, lodge your complaints, and tell us how to better support you as a member. My office door is always open (unless I am Zooming 😊), and I really want to hear from you. The Board is here to serve the membership, and we welcome your feedback and ideas. Please feel free to contact me directly at lnoyes@pfclaw.com.

Editor's Message

By Louise Reese

Please welcome our new board for the 2021-2023 term. It is very exciting to have new people on the board, and I look forward to continuing on as the editor of Paralegal Focus. Our new President, Laurie Noyes, has provided her first President's Message. Our new website coordinator, Caitlin Belcher, is our Member Spotlight. Caitlin has already jumped in head first, and will continue to update the website. Please review the Spotlight and "get to know" Caitlin.

We also have some new members to welcome to the VPO which is always exciting, and please congratulate Holli Johnson on becoming Vermont's newest Registered Paralegal!

Tina Wiles has also provided us with an informative update on NFPA happenings. Please take a look!

I hope you all saw the proclamation from the Governor that was posted on the VPO's Facebook page as well as the website setting May 19, 2021 as Paralegal Day. Thank you, Carie Tarte, for sending in the application.



Membership News

As of June 2021, we have 75 active members: 54 voting; 18 associate; 2 sustaining corporate; and 1 sustaining individual.

If you have any questions about renewing your membership please contact our Membership Chair, Melinda Siel.

The Membership Committee has been busy over the last few months. We sent out a thank you letter to our member firms and did a statewide membership drive. We are currently looking into options for a few Lunch and Learns over the summer, and are looking for input from members on what topics they would like to see. If you have any suggestions, please email Melinda at membership@vtparalegal.org.

Please welcome our newest members: Logan Volpe of Earle & Freeman PLC, Doreen Palmisano of Tarrant, Gillies, Richardson & Shems, Meagan Collins of Lynn, Lynn, Blackman & Manitsky, P.C., and Tatsiana Bussiere of Downs Rachlin Martin PLLC. Welcome to the family Logan, Doreen, Meagan, and Tatsiana!

Members on the Move

Holli Johnson, a paralegal with the State of Vermont, has obtained her RP designation. Holli has been a VPO member since 2019. Congratulation, Holli!

2021 Voting Results

President – Laurie Noyes
Vice President – Melinda Siel
Secretary – Donna Sims
Treasurer – Diane Drake
NFPA Primary – Tina Wiles
NFPA Secondary – Robyn Sweet, CRP, RP



Q&A

Caitlin Belcher Member Spotlight

<i>How old are you?</i>	30
<i>Describe your family?</i>	I live with my fiancé, Kevin, and our very special cat, Tuffy.
<i>Town in which you live?</i>	Montpelier, Vermont.
<i>What is your favorite food?</i>	I truly love all food, but have an affinity for seafood. See picture for evidence.
<i>Do have any pets? If so, what are they, and what are their names?</i>	Mr. Tuffy, as mentioned above, and it's important to include his various nicknames: Tuffers, T-master fresh, T-man, T-sizzle, Tuffster, T, and Tuff.
<i>What kind of hobbies do you have?</i>	Hiking, biking, painting, reading, cooking, reading about and viewing architecture/design, gardening, traveling, kayaking, eating (#1!!!). Jack of all trades, master of none...
<i>How do you unwind at the end of a long work week?</i>	Pizza and a movie
<i>What is your educational background?</i>	I graduated from Virginia Tech with a BA in Political Science and minor in History.
<i>Where do you work?</i>	Vermont Land Trust
<i>When did you first become a paralegal?</i>	1.5 years ago after a promotion.
<i>What area of law do you work in?</i>	Real Estate, Conservation

<i>What do you enjoy about working in that area of law?</i>	The conservation layer to my job adds a bit of complexity that I enjoy, and real estate law is a very practical area of law to know. It makes me happy to be a part of first farm purchases, community land conservation, and land protection for the benefit of wildlife and sensitive natural areas.
<i>If you could work in any other area of law, what would it be?</i>	Restorative Justice in family or criminal law. I currently volunteer for a program called CoSA (Circle of Support and Accountability) that works with folks returning to the community after jail.
<i>What is the one thing about being a paralegal you would change if you could?</i>	I don't think this is true for all paralegal roles, but as a real estate paralegal I don't get to work with the community as much as I would like. Also, I loathe transfer tax returns.
<i>How or why did you first enter the paralegal field?</i>	Started as a legal assistant at the Vermont Land Trust, Inc. and was promoted.
<i>Did you hold other positions, or have a different career, prior to becoming a paralegal, and if so, what was it?</i>	I worked for two years as a Magistrate's assistant in Colorado for the criminal and family dockets.
<i>What do you love about the paralegal profession?</i>	I enjoy the legal rigor. There is always something to learn and many areas of law.
<i>What things about the profession do you dislike?</i>	The hierarchical nature of the legal profession. I'm lucky that I don't experience that at my office, but I have experienced that working with other offices.
<i>How long have you been a member of the VPO?</i>	6 months.
<i>Tell me about the skills or traits you possess that you find most useful in your position?</i>	I'm proud of my analytical skills and systems thinking approach.
<i>What character oddities or personality traits do you find at odds with your career?</i>	Often informal and goofy.

What brief advice or friendly tip would you offer to someone just entering the paralegal field?

Systems are important; establish and keep improving them.





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NFPA News

By Tina Wiles, NFPA Primary

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for allowing me to serve as the Primary Delegate to the NFPA for another term. There are many things happening on the national level, and it is my goal to keep everyone informed on those issues and available opportunities. I am also looking forward to having Robyn Sweet join me on the national level in the coming months as she joins the VPO Board as the Secondary Delegate to NFPA.

The NFPA Non-Annual Policy Meeting was held on March 20, 2021. At that meeting the delegates approved the adoption of the American Bar Association Pledge for Change: Disability Diversity in the Legal Profession. The delegates also discussed whether or not to continue with annual or bi-annual conventions and virtual conventions. This discussion was tabled until the fall Convention. NFPA Board Members Mianne Besser and Lisa Lynch presented a leadership training workshop for attendees.

The Spring Region V Meeting was held on April 10, 2021 via Zoom. Region V delegates discussed the Joint Conference offerings, communications with headquarters, Annual Convention, the new policies and procedures, online CLE's, and potential agenda topics relating to amendments to the policies and procedures/bylaws.

As a reminder, the NFPA Student Scholarship deadline is July 1. I encourage any student members to apply for this scholarship opportunity. This year's topic is – “As many paralegal programs are currently in a virtual format due to COVID 19, please explain the benefits and disadvantages of the following paralegal programs: 100% online, a hybrid of online and in-person classes and totally in-person classes.”

Also, nominations for NFPA awards are due July 1. This is an opportunity to nominate someone from our association who is doing outstanding things for the paralegal profession, or recognize your local association. Here is the link for the Student Scholarship and NFPA Awards: Scholarship and Awards <https://paralegals.submittable.com/submit/715068f6-dd2b-46a5-861d-9b083c1f9a7a/2021-nfpa-student-scholarships>

Articles for the next National Paralegal Reporter are due July 30. If you are interested in submitting an article, please submit your idea or the article to Ron Badua at marketingdir@paralegals.org.

The NFPA Annual Convention will be in Portland, Oregon this year from October 7-10. The convention will be a hybrid event, which means that our members can attend the seminars and other meetings virtually if they chose. Convention registration opens July 1. I am planning to attend the convention in person with Robyn Sweet and look forward to representing Vermont in Portland, Oregon.

NFPA Recent News

Lori Boris has submitted her resignation and is stepping down as NFPA President. As a result, Lisa Lynch, the current President-Elect, will assume the position of President and complete the current term which concludes in 2022. Nominations for the President-Elect position will be accepted until June 21, 2021 and a ballot will be sent to the primary delegate for vote on June 28, 2021. If you wish to nominate someone for the position, <https://www.paralegals.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=3328#Volunteer>.

NFPA through MHQ had determined that the association was eligible to apply for a PPE loan to support NFPA for the losses incurred during 2020 and received PPE funds. The funds from the PPE loan will be used for payment to MHQ.



Vermont Attorneys Title Corporation has given us permission to reprint the following information from its June 2021 newsletter.

Agent Alert: Fund Transfer Frauds Escalate and Not Just Via Email Compromises

CATIC has received an increasing number of reports from businesses affected in one way or another by a fund transfer fraud. As you already know, the criminals have educated themselves on all the players involved in the real estate transaction, their respective roles, and the different requests that may be made regarding payments. Using this information, they will, for example, tailor a spoof request to a participant in the transaction so that deposits, payoffs, proceeds, you name it, are directed to the criminal.

Making matters worse is that the criminals communicate with us by all different means, like, for example, email, e-fax, regular fax, telephone, text, regular mail – again, you name it!

Of course, we have heard of numerous scams using fraudulent emails, tricking one into sending funds to the criminal. But we have also heard of cases where reliance was made on fund transfer instructions received in other ways. For example, a CATIC agent advised us of the receipt of a fake mortgage payoff instruction by regular fax; another received an instruction by e-fax. **It is imperative to discuss the concept of fraudulent faxes. Often, we are misled into believing that faxes are secure and the best form of communication, especially when wiring instructions become part of this equation. However, fax machines are incredibly insecure.**



AO 49 Amendment - Declaration of Judicial Emergency and Changes to Court Procedures 5-12-21

This Order was promulgated on May 12, 2021, effective immediately.

This order further amends A.O. 49, which declared a Judicial Emergency on March 16, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Paragraph 2 is amended to extend the effective date of the Administrative Order until July 5, 2021, based on the projections of public-health experts concerning the course of the pandemic.

Paragraph 5(d) is amended to lift the existing requirement for mandatory remote hearings effective June 14, 2021. By this date, individuals will have had an opportunity to become fully vaccinated. The Court anticipates that some hearings will continue to be held remotely after remote hearings are no longer mandatory and even after the conclusion of the judicial emergency. Amending the order now gives judges, court staff, parties, and their lawyers adequate time to plan for the possibility of in-person court proceedings.

The District of Vermont will be upgrading to the next version of CM/ECF, NextGen, on June 7th. Please visit the court's NextGen Page for further information and instructions. All CM/ECF users must take action steps in order to continue to electronically file on or after June 7.



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¹ 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. ² 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. ³ Optional coverage in some states. Availability varies by state. Eligibility rules apply. ⁴ 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. ©2017 Liberty Mutual Insurance Valid through November 11, 2017.

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