

# Negligence Law Section

## *Negligence Law Section Quarterly*

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### Message from the Chair

#### **“Two Eyes”**

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As my term as Chairperson draws to a close, I want to leave you with one last story. Several years ago, I attended a commencement speech at a small liberal arts college. I don't normally remember commencement speeches, but this speech was notably different. It involved the story of a young nurse who was placed in the difficult situation of having to tell a first-time mother that her newly delivered child had died. The situation was compounded by the fact that the mother was in critical condition after her delivery. The question arose as to how to best tell the mother what had happened to her child.

A wise person told the nurse: “When you walk into the patient's room, you need two eyes. With one eye you must evaluate the patient's condition to make sure she is stable and not in distress. With the other eye you must cry.” You see, the first eye is the eye of the mind, the eye of knowledge and discernment. The second eye is the eye of the heart, the eye that weeps and shows compassion. You need two eyes.

As lawyers, we too need two eyes to counsel and fully represent our clients. It goes without saying that we are required to have the eye of legal knowledge and discernment. We must stay up to date on the law and the ever-changing legal principles that may affect our client's rights and responsibilities. Our clients expect and need our very best legal insight, analysis and advice.

The need for the second eye is less obvious and often times overlooked, or not acknowledged at all. Some may ask, “What good does a crying eye do?” Why not try to decrease the emotion in a situation and focus on legal knowledge and discernment? Why even consider the eye of the heart?

We all know that many times it is the emotion of a situation or conflict that brings the client to our office. Often, the client is suffering from a personal, financial or emotional loss that has caused him/her great distress. Our clients need our empathy, understanding and insight in their quest for justice. In those situations, our ability to show compassion is essential. The eye of the heart is mandatory.

As lawyers, we have the opportunity to touch and improve the lives of many different people. In so doing, we should remember not to be so focused on legal knowledge that we neglect compassion; nor should we be so overcome by compassion that we neglect legal knowledge. Remember, the eye of the heart without the eye of the mind is mindless empathy. The eye of the mind without the eye of the heart is heartless knowledge. You need two eyes!

Looking back over this last year, I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Chairperson. It has been an honor to serve in this capacity, especially among so many friends and colleagues. The last year has been difficult due to COVID-19, as we were unable to meet together as we normally do throughout the year. I want to especially thank our wonderful Executive Director, Madelyne Lawry, and her staff for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. Finally, a special thanks goes out to the Section's Executive Board members who volunteered their time and energy to support and improve the Negligence Law Section. It has been a great pleasure working with all of you.

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