

# Washington Law Review

---

Volume 25  
Number 4 *Annual Meeting of the Washington  
State Bar Association*

---

11-1-1950

## Report of Public Relations Committee

Leo A. McGavick

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wlr>

---

### Recommended Citation

Leo A. McGavick, *State Bar Journal, Report of Public Relations Committee*, 25 Wash. L. Rev. & St. B.J. 347 (1950).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wlr/vol25/iss4/9>

This State Bar Journal is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Reviews and Journals at UW Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Washington Law Review by an authorized editor of UW Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [cnyberg@uw.edu](mailto:cnyberg@uw.edu).

such executive assistant shall be fixed and determined by the Board of Governors.

The employment of the usual and customary clerical and secretarial employees for the conduct of the activities of said association shall not be subject to the employment eligibility requirements hereinabove set forth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association shall solicit the Legislature of the state of Washington for amendment of Rem. Rev. Stat. 138-9 so as to provide for increase in the dues of active members of this Association up to a maximum sum of \$50 annually.

The Committee recommends that said resolution does not pass.

3. The Committee recommends that the following resolution does pass:

RESOLVED, that the Washington State Bar Association in annual convention assembled, expresses its sincere appreciation of the Spokane County Bar Association and the Seattle Bar Association for their grand hospitality and their substantial contributions toward the success of this convention.

(Signed) Richard S. Munter, *Chairman*  
 Thomas L. O'Leary  
 Thomas P Gose  
 Joseph L. Hughes  
 F A. Kern

Mr. President, I move the adoption of the Report of the Committee on Resolutions.

---

#### REPORT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

By LEO A. MCGAVICK

My report will be as brief as possible, unless you ask questions.

I think that the new chairman—or President-elect—of the American Bar Association did most of my work today in pointing out how the people of the country in general apparently feel about the lawyers, and where we stand with the public, and has demonstrated rather emphatically we need to do a lot of work if we want to remove the 25 per cent so strong against us, and also win over a few of the 50 per cent.

Now the Committee was appointed by the Board of Governors, I think, following a very general recognition throughout the United States of the need for the lawyers to do a little public relations work in their own behalf. Maybe that was brought to our attention more forcefully because of the position the Medical Association found itself in,

and the fight that it is now being compelled to wage for probably its very existence.

This Committee reviewed some of the work being done in other states. There has been a splendid article in the October issue of the *American Bar Journal* covering the work of the Public Relations Committee of Minnesota. Extensive programs have been carried on in Missouri, Iowa, and most of the midwestern states. Its need was recognized in the eastern states and midwestern states longer than we have recognized its need.

We have the programs that have been carried on so successfully—for example in the state of Minnesota—involving a large outlay of cash. They got together at a Bar Convention such as this and made an analysis, and after that they asked themselves: "What is wrong with our past activities? What has brought about the 25 per cent of actual dislike for lawyers that we find existing today?" They discussed what they could do about it.

I am not going to refer to or read these pamphlets, but they did come up with the conclusion that to meet the position they found themselves in, there were four objectives that they might set out to accomplish. The first was to explain the law and lawyers to the public.

Now maybe you have read some of the articles in this August issue of the *Readers' Digest*. There is a story that appeared in a weekly magazine, "Don't be Afraid of Your Lawyer," or something like that or "Are You Scared of Lawyers?" There was an article along about in February in *Good Housekeeping*, a very good article on why people should consult lawyers, and the mess they find themselves in when they try to handle legal work, or take it to their banker, or accountant, or real estate broker. Those articles all appeared generally throughout the United States.

I personally believe if we can get articles along the same line as these, we will accomplish a good deal in explaining law and lawyers to the public. I would recommend your reading this little article in *Readers' Digest*, and you will see what we have in mind as being a good thing to call to the attention of the public.

The second objective decided upon was this American system of individual liberties—and that has been well brought out by the President-elect of the American Bar Association who talked to us today

The third was to merit public confidence through unselfish service. We have tried to do that in the past. I noticed in the Seattle paper just recently a nice article about an attorney in Seattle who got together a

group of ex-Marines and they offered their services to the Marines again called to serve their country in this emergency, and the article, I think, was good public relations. It said that these young fellows banded themselves together and offered free services—were willing to stay all through the night, if necessary—to help these fellows straighten up their affairs before they left home.

I think we are all agreed that the past radio programs were amateurish. However, in existence now there are some programs that can be obtained. This Committee intends to obtain some of the programs. They are scripts put on by professional people, and they can be brought here, if they are sponsored by Bar Associations. They are good programs and will accomplish our purpose.

Our Legislative Committee was, I believe, also in the line of good public relationship. Apparently (and I was not here yesterday, but the governor was, and said lawyers as a whole weren't interested in government) any of you and these gentlemen who have worked in the Legislature, serving in either the House or the Senate, do a lot. Those lawyers who give up their time and go down to the Legislature and try to carry on the program that the Legislative Committee thinks is a good thing for the public—it will indirectly, by our sponsoring it, reflect some credit, and effect good public relationship.

I want to say now, without taking sides on the issue about the Code, that these men down there on the Judiciary Committees are doing a yeoman job as lawyers.

It was my privilege to represent the Bar Association in two sessions—1943 and 1945—and I know that the lawyer members of both House and Senate have a tough job trying to carry out programs left in their laps. They are not dealing with lawyers. They are dealing with farmers and businessmen, and I think probably the toughest group to deal with is farmers. I know when we tried to raise judges' salaries for the first time, they didn't think much about what the judges are doing. These fellows take a ribbing.

We sponsored a good public relationship program in the adoption of the Code. We told them, "You have to get us money You have to get us twenty-five thousand dollars. You have to get us another twenty-five thousand." We dilly-dallied. I am surprised we did not tax the patience of these men. We asked them for more money We are supposed to have a responsible Committee down there.

Mr. Wright told me, when he was trying to get the Code drawn up, he was sure that he had some fellows working at first there. He sent up

for the insurance man and a man who was experienced in labor law. He sent out for their suggestions, and didn't get any answer. Some of the fellows wouldn't work at it. That goes all along the line. I think Ben Grosscup did answer him. But if we don't help those lawyers, and if we don't help our own Committee out, how are we going to have something we think will please the public?

I was there in the last session, and I know the Bar Associations were notified that the bill was up for consideration. I didn't see any of them down there fighting it or opposing it. You have to help these fellows in such services to the public.

I am firmly convinced it is the time for lawyers to take an interest in government, and that is one good way. That is the way we can form good public relationship. Too many of us sit around and gripe at every officer elected and do nothing about it when he is elected. We didn't help them when they were down there. I know the Judiciary Committee—Mr. Gallagher—was looking around for help. He was not down there representing the lawyers' association, but someone should have been.

Anyway, we think we are fully cognizant of the fact there should be corrections made. (I am getting off on another subject now.)

However, gentlemen, there is a lot of work to be done if we want to have the general respect that we think we are entitled to as lawyers. We have been relying for a great many years on the lawyers who represented this country in the early days, who made a good reputation for the lawyers as leaders in government. Your President has touched on that. But I think we have a job to do.

The Committee decided we should print pamphlets, like the other states did. There are many suggestions. "Do You Need a Will?" for example. These have been suggested, and other associations are willing to give us the benefit of the work they have done at great expense—"Have You Made a Will?" "Have You Met Your Lawyer?" There are news articles that can be sponsored and put out. That is going to cost money.

This Committee was appropriated \$1,500 for this year's work. We decided we could hire a public relations man at \$75 a month. Well, he has done some work, but there has not been a great deal more work done than apparently he can afford to do for \$75 a month. There will be printing to be done.

I think the new Committee will probably have to make some recommendation to the Board of Governors for a larger amount. Minne-

sota raised \$42,000 before they undertook the program. Missouri and Iowa a comparable amount. They did good, big jobs. They put out pamphlets, wrote news stories, and that is what we intend to do—have news stories go out to our papers. I believe the Committee on Unauthorized Practice of Law—Mr. Wright of Seattle—helped them to write some stories and get them published.

But there are a good many suggestions that can be put into effect and will help, I believe, not only the reputation of the lawyers, but will help them as far as their pocketbook is concerned, because I think it is a matter of educating the general public to the fact that the lawyers are not gougers, and if we do find gougers, we should discipline those people at once. We should acquaint the general public with our fee charges and we should let them know we are earning those fees.

One of the hardest things in practice is fixing fees after the work is done. I find no trouble with contingent fees. You can have people come in with a personal injury suit—\$25, \$50, or \$33, \$40, or whatever your fee might be. Even if you don't go to court they are happy because they know they have to pay it. People pay realtors 5 per cent (5 per cent on city property, 10 per cent on outside property) They are happy to pay it. On some of these deals they get a handsome commission. Lawyers don't publicize commissions. In estate matters you have your problems. They will come in and finagle around.

We can do a lot of work. We have in our Committee. I might say probably the most we have done—I have made a long report to the Board of Governors—probably the greatest value is that there has been brought home very forcibly the matter of public relations work if we went to retain prestige, and want to keep making money. Because if we don't we are going to have a lot of public officials doing our work.

Title Insurance Companies? Pretty well accepted. The realtors are practicing law (Mr. Mattheu says they won't if he knows about it.) Banks are giving advice. We are sitting back. I do not even want to go into that.

Our Committee recommends the new Committee give serious thought to the amount of money which they will need to put on a satisfactory program, and recommends the distributing of pamphlets of comparable material; the preparation of news items; the appointment by local bar associations of public relations committees who will

handle it. We can secure publicity of a lot of information though public firms.

We believe this Committee will have very good effect upon the young lawyers because it will renew their knowledge of what position the lawyers should hold in the community, and it will give them a chance to go out and do the job for the whole association.

Thank you very much.

---

#### REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NEW SUPREME COURT RULES

BY WILL L. LORENZ

It is getting rather late. Also, it is getting very hot.

I thought as I left my chair of the remarks made by the young boy in the third grade. He had just been called by his mother on the first day of the school year. When he realized after he awakened what a horrible day it was, he clasped his hands, looked up at the ceiling, and said, "Oh, Lord, how I hate to get up."

That is how I feel now, since it is so late in the afternoon, and we have other things to take care of.

I might say, with your indulgence, I have prepared a rather formal talk. I see that the note today is informality rather than formality. I was originally told I had half an hour, which then seemed to me was an awfully long time. I prepared this. I had my wife check it. I assure you—if someone should ever read it—there are no split infinitives. There are no dangling phrases. But in view of the fact that the Supreme Court rules have not been published as yet, I would much rather make a few informal remarks, and rather use this epistle I prepared as a guide to my remarks and not as a formal oration.

I do not like to start to talk with an apology. As I mentioned before, at the time this spot on the program was arranged, it was hoped that the rules would have been published and you would have had an opportunity to read them and understand them. However, the Supreme Court rules have been finished and adopted by the Court. They are official, but there are some changes proposed in the Rules of Pleading, Practice, and Procedure and in the General Rules of the Superior Court, and those changes are dependent upon the action of the Judicial Council and the Superior Court Judges Association at this Convention.