

Message from the Chair

By Nicholas M. Ward-Willis

This is certainly an interesting time to assume the mantle as Chair of our Section. I view it as one filled with many challenges and opportunities to further demonstrate to members of the Environmental and Energy Bar why membership in our Section is of extreme benefit to them. Past chairs of our Section have been faced with a variety of issues over the Section's 40-year history. Whether it



be the introduction of environmental law in its infancy, responding to the need for climate change regulation, or commenting on new regulations or amendments to statutes that have resulted in unanticipated impacts, the Section and its members have stepped up and adapted. This pandemic is no different. Under the guidance and direction of former Chair Howard Tollin, whom I thank for the leadership and vision he provided to the Section during his term, the Section seamlessly transitioned into holding virtual Cabinet meetings, our first virtual Executive Committee meeting, and first Zoom webinars. I am extremely appreciative of the foundation that has been laid for the Section by Howard, Marla Wieder, Kevin Bernstein, and others who preceded me.

As I consider the challenges that lay ahead while I plan virtual meetings for our Fall and Annual meetings, I am envisioning ways to reimagine those meetings so that we can continue to provide our members with the core foundation of our Section—Connections, Collegiality, and CLEs. These three “Cs” are the very reason that members of the Bar, young attorneys, and law students should join and actively participate in our Section. Needless to say, our Section over the years has provided a variety of CLE courses educating members on recent developments of case law, regulations, and environmental topics. Membership in the Section also provides the ability to make connections with environmental consultants and

environmental and energy attorneys in small and large firms, corporations, municipalities, and federal and state government offices, and diverse geographical areas of our state so that there is an opportunity to network and grow and develop one's business. Finally, and perhaps the most challenging in a virtual era, is to ensure that we still maintain the collegiality of our Section that makes us, in my opinion, the fun Section. None of these can be accomplished without the dedication of a tremendous number of hours by the many volunteers of our Section and I thank them for that. I also urge everyone to take a moment to figure out what you can offer to the Section. This is your Section and the Section becomes stronger with a more active membership. I recognize not everyone has the same interest or ability to commit, but I would hope that all have the interest and time to commit either by joining a Committee or agreeing to participate as a mentor to a law student. We have the need for volunteers, whether it be for two hours per year, 20 hours per year, or more. Please reach out to one of the officers to find out more about how you can make a difference.

In closing, I wish everyone good health and please take a moment to reflect upon the great strides made by the Section in its 40 years since its transition from a task force to a full-fledged committee in 1980. I recall that it was at that time, when I was 14 years old, that I developed my first interest in environmental law. It was at the end of the summer and my father was preparing to winterize the lawnmower when he asked me to empty the remaining dredges of gasoline into the stream that ran through our property and connected to the Hudson River. It was only when he was annoyed that I had dumped the gasoline at the top of the stream where it emptied into our property, and not at the most downstream point on our property, that my interest in environmental protection dawned as I wondered why it would matter whether I poured the gasoline into the stream at the top or at the bottom as the effects were the same except to one individual. In closing, please continue to participate and stay healthy. Thank you.