

# President's Message

JAMES S. RICHARDSON SR.

## Government Relations

**W**ITH THE PASSAGE of H.R. 660, legislation addressing court security, and its signature by the President, one of the FBA's longtime goals—the improvement of security for federal judges—has come to fruition. This effort has been some time coming.

Many of us may not have been fully aware of the gravity of the issue before the homicide of the husband and mother of U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow in 2005 and the murder of Georgia Superior Court Judge Rowland Barnes in his courtroom less than two weeks later, but members of Congress as well as the judiciary had been working on this problem for many years.

The bill provides a considerable increase (\$20 million dollars) in the budget of the U.S. Marshals Service for fiscal years 2008 through 2011 to permit the agency to increase the protection of judges, other judicial officials, and courthouses. The legislation increases the maximum criminal penalty for voluntary manslaughter to 15 years (from 10 years) and for involuntary manslaughter to eight years (from six years). HR 660 also prohibits the possession of dangerous weapons in federal courthouses and increases sentences for threatening or killing federal witnesses and informants. This issue's "Washington Watch" column summarizes the details of the legislation. An important feature of the legislation is the criminalization of the practice of filing false liens against a federal employee and provides for a maximum penalty that includes 10 years of confinement as well as a substantial fine. This is an important provision given the recent trend of disgruntled individuals harassing judges and civil servants by filing false liens.

This legislation has been a textbook application of the Federal Bar Association's Government Relations Program. Although the issue had been simmering for some time in 2005, the events of February and March of that year brought it to the forefront. Tom Schuck, FBA president at that time, tasked the Government Relations Committee and the Bruce Moyer, the association's government relations counsel, with quickly developing a plan of action to support the judiciary in this area. The Government Relations Committee made this issue an action item and proceeded to work with the Administrative Office of the Courts, the U.S. Marshals Service, and others to produce appropriate legislation.

During his term, Bill LaForge, the association's immediate past president, wrote several letters to the

appropriate committees in the House and Senate urging passage of the legislation. (For the text of one of the letters, go to [www.fedbar.org/legis2-14-07.pdf](http://www.fedbar.org/legis2-14-07.pdf).)

While the association was not asked to testify about the bills, we stood ready to do so if the opportunity presented itself.

I lay all this out because I am often asked what the money collected as dues for the national organization of the FBA is used for. While the Government Relations Program makes use of a small part of that income, its efforts really return quite a bang for the buck. Over the years, members of Congress and the staffs of the House and Senate have come to see the Federal Bar Association as an honest broker for various issues related to the judiciary, federal employees, and other issues involving federal practice. We are regularly invited to testify before hearings on such wide-ranging topics as the status of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the review of Social Security disability claims.

However, the Government Relations Program is not simply an "inside the beltway" effort. We seek input from all levels of the association: sections, divisions, and chapters. Currently, the FBA is supporting legislation dealing with the reemployment of federal annuitants—an issue suggested by the San Antonio Chapter. The legislation would allow the government to tap the expertise of former employees without the paperwork and red tape that impedes such employment today. In addition, we are strongly urging increased compensation for Criminal Justice Act attorneys, an issue brought to the Government Relations Committee by the Criminal Law Section.

As president of the association, I urge you to consider this aspect of your membership. If you are interested in serving on the Government Relations Committee, please let us know. A more important step is to talk with leaders of your chapter about issues that have an impact on federal law. Finally, I strongly encourage you to read Bruce Moyer's



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**JONES** *continued from page 25*

It is interesting that Judge Jones also points out that the work product attorneys present to the court is often the result of work cumulatively accomplished by a group of people. The court's work, however, is done in isolation, which preserves the neutrality of the court and best serves the parties and society at large.

**Reaching His "PR"**

The judge's senior law clerks are expected to take part in interviewing prospective law clerks. Candidly, when I interviewed candidates in chambers, I gave them more information than I actually elicited from them. Even though this practice may be attributed to an overblown ego, I would like to think it was more helpful to candidates in choosing their prospective employer. And let's face it, if a lawyer is being interviewed for a federal clerkship, he or she is likely to be a strong candidate for the position based on credentials alone. In the case of our interviews, if candidates had a love for running, they would receive extra points, because the judge, quite simply, is a running fanatic.

I learned about the degree to which the judge is drawn to running marathons within the first few hours of my first day clerking for him, when he explained to me that he had recently achieved his "PR" while training for the U.S. Marine Corps Marathon, which was scheduled to take place in a few weeks in Washington D.C. Sadly, all the details of his explanation were lost because of my ignorance of running terms such as "PR." But as the days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, I learned that "PR" means one's "personal (best) record" and also learned how very grueling it is to train for and run a marathon. I was not surprised to learn that Judge Jones had run 11 marathons since had he picked up the sport.

When asked what attracts him to running marathons, Judge Jones responded that running is a microcosm of life. It requires setting goals, developing a plan to achieve established goals, having the flexibility to modify that plan when unexpected events occur, and maintaining sheer determination to reach or exceed one's goals.

Actually, training for and running marathons reflects Judge Jones' treatment, theory, and practice of the law. Like the physical stamina needed for running

a marathon, Judge Jones exhibits a consistent analytical stamina in unfolding and applying often complex nuances of the law. Just as a marathon tests one's passion for running, so too complex and sophisticated litigation tests one's passion and zeal for the law. Given this analogy, one might conclude that Judge Jones is at a full sprint toward a *daily* PR in and out of the courtroom.

**Parting Words**

As the judge would agree, brevity is bliss, so I'll keep this short. I am very pleased and honored to have had this opportunity to share my experiences with, and perceptions of, U.S. Magistrate Judge Gary R. Jones, both as a judge and as a human being. He is a good man with a brilliant mind, a healthy sense of humor, and a very sharp wit. Some parting advice? Never challenge him to a race. **TFL**

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"Washington Watch" column that appears in each issue of *The Federal Lawyer*. His reports will keep you posted on what is happening in Washington and how the FBA can have an impact through our Government Relations Program. **TFL**

