

HB

120

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date Referred: January 27, 1989

FURTHER REFERRALS: FINANCE

Date of Committee Action: 4/10/89

The JUDICIARY Committee recommends that:

HOUSE BILL NO. 120 [EXTEND BOARD OF GOVERNORS/AK BAR ASSOC.]
"An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association; and providing for an effective date."

[] be replaced with _____ [] the same title
[] a new title

[] have attached amendment(s)

- do pass
- do not pass
- no recommendation
- individual recommendations
- additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

- fiscal impact
- zero fiscal note
- zero with analysis

APPROVES PREVIOUS:

- fiscal note(s) published: _____
- zero fiscal notes(s) published: _____

SIGNING DO PASS:

[Handwritten signatures: Mike D., G. Schir, Peter Marshall, Peter Jace, M. G. ...]

SIGNING OTHER THAN DO PASS:
(Do Not Pass, No Recommendation, Amend)

[Handwritten signature: M. G. ...]
Chairman's signature

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

2 HOUSE BILL NO.

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act extending the termination date of the Board
7 of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association; and
8 providing for an effective date."

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

0 * Section 1. AS 08.03.010(c)(19) is amended to read:

1 (19) Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association
2 (AS 08.08.040) - June 30, 1993 [1989].

3 * Sec. 2. This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).
4
5
6
7
8
9
0

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: _____
 Title: "Extending termination date of
 Alaska Bar Association"
 Sponsor: House Judiciary
 Requestor: House Judiciary

Agency Affected: Alaska Bar Association
 BRU: _____

Components: _____

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
PERSONAL SERVICES		0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING		0	0	0	0	0

CAPITAL		0	0	0	0	0
----------------	--	---	---	---	---	---

REVENUE		0	0	0	0	0
----------------	--	---	---	---	---	---

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL		0	0	0	0	0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME		0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME		0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY		0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS : (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The Alaska Bar Association is wholly funded through dues paid by its members. No State funds are used for its operations.

Prepared by: Max Gruenberg Phone: 465-4968
 Division: Rep. Gruenberg, Co-Chair Date: _____
 House Judiciary Committee

Approved by Commissioner: _____ Date: _____
 Agency: _____

Distribution (by preparer):

- Legislative Finance
- Legislative Sponsor
- Requestor
- Office of Management and Budget
- Impacted Agency(ies)

**STATE OF ALASKA 1989 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
FISCAL NOTE**

REQUEST:	Bill Version: HB 120	Publish Date: 1/27/89
Revision Date:	Agency Affected: Alaska Court System	
Title: An act extending the termination date of the Board of Governors ...	BRU:	Trial Courts
Sponsor: Judiciary Committee	Components:	
Requestor: House Judiciary		

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES:	(Thousands of Dollars)					
OPERATING	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
Personal Services
Travel
Contractual
Supplies
Equipment
Land & Structures
Grants & Claims
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL
----------------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------

REVENUE
----------------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------

FUNDING:	(Thousands of Dollars)					
General Funds	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Federal Funds	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .
Other	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

POSITIONS:						
Full-time	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .
Part-time	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .
Temporary	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

No fiscal impact.

Prepared by: <i>Jan Strandberg</i> Jan Strandberg, General Counsel	Phone: 264-8228
Division: Alaska Court System	Date: 02/10/89
Approved by: <i>Arthur H. Snowden, II</i> Arthur H. Snowden, II, Administrative Director	Date: 02/10/89
Agency: Alaska Court System	

- Distribution (by preparer):
- Legislative Finance
 - Legislative Sponsor
 - Requestor
 - Office of Management & Budget
 - Impacted Agency(ies)
 - Senate Secretary

A PERFORMANCE REPORT ON THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION

February 3, 1989

Audit Control Number

41-1352-89-R

Chief Justice, Alaska
Supreme Court

Warren W. Matthews

Alaska Bar Association

Executive Director

Deborah O'Regan

Board of Governors

President
President-Elect
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member

Larry R. Weeks
Jeffrey M. Feldman
Ardith Lynch
Andonia Harrison
Lew M. Williams
Daniel R. Cooper, Jr.
Kenneth P. Eggers
Elizabeth Kennedy
Susan C. Orlansky
Sandra Stringer
Michael A. Thompson
Alex. Young

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE
BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

AUDIT DIVISION
P.O. BOX W
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-3300

February 3, 1989

Members of the Legislative Budget
and Audit Committee:

In accordance with the provisions of Titles 24 and 44 of the Alaska Statutes (sunset legislation), the attached report is submitted for your review.

A PERFORMANCE REPORT ON THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION

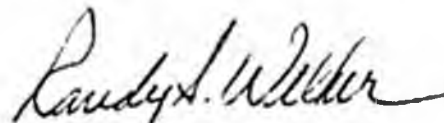
February 3, 1989

Audit Control Number

41-1352-89-R

The purpose of this audit is to examine the activities of the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association (ABA, the Bar, or the Association) to determine if there is a demonstrated public need for its continued existence, and if the Board has been operating in an efficient and effective manner.

The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted governmental performance auditing standards. Audit scope and methodology will be discussed in the Report Objectives, Scope, and Methodology section of this report. Audit results may be found in the Report Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations, and Analysis of Public Need sections of this report.



Randy S. Welker, CPA
Legislative Auditor
Division of Legislative Audit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Report Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	1
Organization and Function	3
Report Conclusion	5
Findings and Recommendations.	7
Analysis of Public Need	13
Appendixes:	
A. Revenues Compared with Expenses	21
B. Discipline Statistics	22
C. Bar Examination and Admission Statistics.	23
D. Attorney Referral Calls Received.	24
E. Membership on ABA Committees.	25
F. Grievances Filed by Category.	26
Agency Response:	
Alaska Bar Association.	27

REPORT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the intent of Titles 24 and 44 of the Alaska Statutes (sunset legislation), we have examined the activities of the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association to determine if there is a demonstrated public need for its continued existence, and if the Board has been operating in an efficient and effective manner.

Legislative intent requires consideration of this report during the legislative oversight hearings to determine whether the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association should be reestablished. The law now specifies that the Board will terminate June 30, 1989 and have one year from that date to conclude its affairs.

The policy and audit approach utilized by the Division of Legislative Audit for performance reports can best be described as "audit by exception." This methodology focuses audit effort on areas of an auditee's operation that have been identified by a preliminary survey as having a high degree of probability for needing improvements.

Therefore, by design, finite audit resources are used to identify where and how improvement can be made and little time is devoted to reviewing well-run operations or programs. Consequently, this report highlights those areas needing improvement and does not emphasize those operations and programs that are properly functioning.

Discussion of the objectives, scope, and methodology of our review follows.

Objectives

The Alaska Bar Association was created in 1955 as an instrumentality of the State to ensure that only qualified members of the legal profession of good moral character are allowed to practice in this State. The primary objective of this audit, therefore, is to determine whether that need for protection of the public continues to exist today.

The secondary objective is to review the major processes instituted by the Alaska Bar, namely the examination of prospective members, admission, and discipline procedures, for effectiveness in meeting the public need. The tertiary objective is to evaluate those processes in particular, and Bar operations in general, for economy and efficiency of operation.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

The practice of law in the State of Alaska is regulated by the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association. The Board consists of twelve members; nine attorneys elected by the active membership of the Association, and three non-attorney, public members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the legislature in joint session.

The powers and duties of the Board are conferred by the Alaska Integrated Bar Act (AS 08.08) and the Alaska Bar Rules promulgated by the Supreme Court of Alaska.

The two primary functions of the Alaska Bar Association are the admission and discipline of its members. To accomplish these and other functions, the Association has a 1989 operating budget of \$1,277,501. Funding is provided primarily by membership dues (\$310 per year), admission fees, lawyer referral fees, continuing legal education, and interest income.

The Association's office is located in Anchorage and is staffed with twelve full-time employees and one temporary part-time employee.

REPORT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the intent of Titles 24 and 44 of the Alaska Statutes (sunset legislation), we have examined the activities of the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association to determine if there is a demonstrated public need for its continued existence, and if the Board has been operating in an efficient and effective manner.

Legislative intent requires consideration of this report during the legislative oversight hearings to determine whether the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association should be reestablished. The law now specifies that the Board will terminate June 30, 1989 and have one year from that date to conclude its affairs.

The policy and audit approach utilized by the Division of Legislative Audit for performance reports can best be described as "audit by exception." This methodology focuses audit effort on areas of an auditee's operation that have been identified by a preliminary survey as having a high degree of probability for needing improvements.

Therefore, by design, finite audit resources are used to identify where and how improvement can be made and little time is devoted to reviewing well-run operations or programs. Consequently, this report highlights those areas needing improvement and does not emphasize those operations and programs that are properly functioning.

Discussion of the objectives, scope, and methodology of our review follows.

Objectives

The Alaska Bar Association was created in 1955 as an instrumentality of the State to ensure that only qualified members of the legal profession of good moral character are allowed to practice in this State. The primary objective of this audit, therefore, is to determine whether that need for protection of the public continues to exist today.

The secondary objective is to review the major processes instituted by the Alaska Bar, namely the examination of prospective members, admission, and discipline procedures, for effectiveness in meeting the public need. The tertiary objective is to evaluate those processes in particular, and Bar operations in general, for economy and efficiency of operation.

Scope and Methodology

Recent state and national trends in the legal profession (i.e., increases/decreases in numbers of: students attending law school, applicants for admission to practice, cases litigated, etc.) were analyzed to determine public need. Resources utilized to determine these trends included statistical information obtained from the Alaska Bar Association, the Alaska Court System, the American Bar Association, and assorted trade publications and HALT (an Organization of Americans for Legal Reform).

The review of Alaska Bar Association operations included all activities for calendar years 1986, 1987, and 1988. Examination and admission statistics (i.e., pass/fail rates, required passing scores, multi-state bar exam (MBE) scores, etc.) were obtained, reviewed, and compared with national statistics for consistency. Individual applicant records were reviewed for compliance with established Bar rules and procedures, accuracy of reporting, and timeliness of processing.

The attorney discipline process was analyzed for conformance with standards recommended by the American Bar Association and compared with procedures adopted by other states in the Pacific Northwest. A sample of individual discipline files were reviewed for compliance with established Bar rules and procedures, and timeliness. Current discipline statistics produced by the Alaska Bar were reviewed against historical data to determine trends in caseload and processing time.

Activities of the Board of Governors were examined through a review of meeting minutes and discussion with Association staff. Board composition and appointments were also reviewed for conformance with statutory requirements.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

The practice of law in the State of Alaska is regulated by the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association. The Board consists of twelve members; nine attorneys elected by the active membership of the Association, and three non-attorney, public members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the legislature in joint session.

The powers and duties of the Board are conferred by the Alaska Integrated Bar Act (AS 08.08) and the Alaska Bar Rules promulgated by the Supreme Court of Alaska.

The two primary functions of the Alaska Bar Association are the admission and discipline of its members. To accomplish these and other functions, the Association has a 1989 operating budget of \$1,277,501. Funding is provided primarily by membership dues (\$310 per year), admission fees, lawyer referral fees, continuing legal education, and interest income.

The Association's office is located in Anchorage and is staffed with twelve full-time employees and one temporary part-time employee.

REPORT CONCLUSION

This review contains policy issues raised as a result of our evaluation of the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association. The final policy decisions affecting ABA are not within the scope of this report, but require legislative consideration. In debating these issues, the oversight committees should take into consideration the findings and recommendations and other information presented in this report so the potential impact of policy changes can be evaluated.

Report Conclusion

In our opinion, the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association should be reestablished. Since the first three attorneys were admitted to the practice of law in Alaska in 1884 membership has grown to the current level of 2,707. In addition to the number of applicants seeking admission to practice, court statistics indicate increasing numbers of lawsuits being filed annually. It would appear that more members of the general public are interacting with the legal profession and that financial resources both expended on and resulting from those interactions have greatly increased. These factors result in a greater potential for harm to the general public, thereby indicating a need for continuing governance of the profession.

The public interest requires that the public be secure in its expectation that those who are admitted to the bar are worthy of the trust and confidence clients may reasonably place in their attorneys. The Board of Governors provides this protection by reasonably assuring that persons licensed to practice law are qualified and by assuring that those licensed act in a competent and ethical manner through a sophisticated complaint investigation process.

Furthermore, nothing came to our attention during our review that showed the public's best interest would be better served by any different regulatory method.

Overall, it is our opinion that the Board operates in an effective and economical manner. However, we have made recommendations which, if implemented, will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Board's operations (see the Findings and Recommendations section of this report).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No. 1

The Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association should comply with Alaska Bar Rules governing appropriate sanctions in attorney discipline cases and public access to disciplinary proceedings.

In January 1988 the Board of Governors acting as the formal disciplinary board of the Bar violated several Alaska Bar Rules governing disciplinary enforcement. In concluding a disciplinary matter before them which had been heard in formal public hearing, the Board imposed a sanction of private reprimand for a violation of Alaska Bar Rule 15(4) (failure to respond to a grievance).

The disciplinary rules which the Board is currently operating under became effective January 1985. These rules were changed upon recommendation of the American Bar Association evaluation of Alaska procedures. Pertinent changes included Rule 21 which states that after the filing of a petition for formal hearing, hearings held before either a hearing committee or the Board will be open to the public. Under the new Rule 16, private reprimands are no longer possible at the Board level except in cases where the respondent and discipline counsel agree by stipulation to that sanction. Since the stipulation precludes the need for a petition for formal hearing, the proceeding remains confidential.

Subsequent to the Board's decision which was reaffirmed after discipline counsel's appeal, proposed changes to Bar Rule 16 allowing private reprimand by the disciplinary board were forwarded to the Supreme Court. Those proposed changes were recently referred back to the Association for reconsideration with the following comment. "It seems somewhat incongruous to have the hearing process open to the public but to allow a private reprimand following such a hearing."

This Board action was indeed incongruous and has generated confusion among Association staff as to public access to the outcome of this proceeding. Since private reprimands are maintained as confidential documents which the public does not have access to, it appears the intent of the Board was to seal these records as confidential after they became public under current Bar rules.

We recommend that in all future proceedings the Board of Governors strictly conform with adopted Rules of Court applicable to disciplinary proceedings.

Recommendation No. 2

The Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association should recommend a proposed change to Alaska Bar Rules clarifying and limiting the Board's authority to engage in lobbying and other political activities.

The Alaska Bar Association is a mandatory bar in that in order to practice law in Alaska a lawyer must be a member in good standing of the Association. This requirement makes it difficult for an attorney to disassociate himself/herself from a political stance adopted by the Board of Governors or the Association. In light of this fact, the appropriateness of lobbying and other political activities by the Board or Association is questioned.

Some of the actions taken by the Board and Association which would be considered questionable include a decision to lobby in support of the continuation of the Alaska Women's Commission and a resolution to cease all business dealings with the Republic of South Africa and Libya in protest of current political conditions.

The lobbying issue has been debated nationally by other mandatory bar associations and has been the subject of court proceedings in other states. The Wisconsin Supreme Court has responded to the concern by permitting attorneys who object to the bar's legislative activities to reduce their membership dues by a certain percentage. The Washington State Supreme Court recently took a more direct approach by amending general Bar Rule 12 governing Washington State Bar Association general purposes to include the following.

(c) Activities Not Authorized. Among the specific actions which this rule and these Purposes do not authorize are:

(1) Taking positions on issues concerning the politics or social positions of foreign nations;

(2) Taking positions on political or social issues which do not relate to or affect the practice of law or the administration of justice;

(3) Supporting or opposing, in an election, candidates for public office.

We recommend the Board of Governors propose a similar amendment to Alaska's bar rules to clarify and limit activities of the Board to those appropriate to a mandatory bar.

Recommendation No. 3

The Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association should take prompt action to reduce both the number of backlogged disciplinary investigation cases and the length of time it takes to bring an investigation to a conclusion.

At the time of our last audit (October 31, 1984) the Alaska Bar Association had 41 cases pending disciplinary or other proceedings and an additional 165 cases under investigation. As of December 31, 1988, the Alaska Bar Association's discipline section had 18 cases pending disciplinary or other proceedings and an additional 160 cases under investigation. Although the actual number of open cases has decreased slightly, the average number of days open has increased.

An analysis of the status and length of time these cases have been open showed the following.

<u>Status</u>	-----1984-----		-----1988-----	
	<u>Cases</u>	<u>Avg. Days Open</u>	<u>Cases</u>	<u>Avg. Days Open</u>
<u>Pending Proceedings:</u>				
Pending Supreme Court	5	636	5	1,082
Pending Disc. Board	6	425	2	787
Pending Hearing Comm.	10	720	4	771
Pending Admonition	3	422	5	618
Pending Fee Arb.	12	291	1	985
Pending Conciliation	5	332	1	219
<u>Total</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>471</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>769</u>
<u>Under Investigation:</u>				
Investigator on Case	11	606	--	--
Special Counsel	1	1,662	1	871
Under Review (Prelim.)	113	188	25	85
Investigation (Formal)	40	342	134	375
<u>Total</u>	<u>165</u>	<u>261</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>333</u>

In addition, an analysis of cases closed during 1986, 1987, and 1988 was made. The information presented was produced by Association staff and includes grievances not accepted, closed by admonition, closed by reprimand, closed by suspension, closed by disbarment, and dismissed. The overall processing time represents the average time from the date a grievance is filed until either a determination is made to decline an investigation or the case is completed. The results follow.

Analysis of Closed Cases

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Cases Closed</u>	<u>Overall Processing Time (Avg. Days Open)</u>
1986	251	207
1987	277	169
1988	244	187

Significant improvement was noted in reduction of case backlog during 1985, 1986, and 1987. During 1988, however, the backlog began to return to previous levels.

We encourage the Board to take prompt action to reduce the case backlog. In addition, we recommend that during the Board's deliberations of available options, consideration should be given to the length of time taken to conclude cases. It is in the best interest of ABA, the complainant, and the attorneys against whom the grievances were filed to take timely action in closing cases. The deterioration in processing time on open cases reflects, in part, the increase in complexity of cases coming before the Bar. However, a review of discipline files did reveal significant "dead" time in several proceedings. In one proceeding the dead time caused the investigation trail to become cold and resulted in the case being dismissed.

Therefore, we recommend that the Board's actions not only address the immediate need to reduce the case backlog, but also address the long-term staffing needs of the discipline section.

Recommendation No. 4

The Alaska Bar Association should comply with the public notice requirements of AS 08.08.075.

Chapter 52, SLA 1981 amended the Alaska Integrated Bar Act (AS 08.08) to bring meetings of the Board of Governors under the public meeting statutes, AS 44.62.310 and .312. More specifically, the Bar Act was amended to require that the public shall be given 30 days notice of meetings of the Board, except for emergency meetings.

Legislative Audit's 1984 audit of the Bar found that ABA had not publicly advertised meetings of the Board. Our current review found that the Board has properly noticed all face-to-face meetings of the Board, but has not publicly advertised teleconferenced meetings. A review of the minutes of these meetings demonstrated that these meetings were for the purpose of carrying out Board business which, in some cases, included discussion and voting on resolutions before that body.

We recommend that the Alaska Bar Association publicly advertise all meetings of the Board in conformance with applicable statutes and regulations.

Recommendation No. 5

The Alaska Bar Association should elect members of the Board of Governors in conformance with statutory guidelines.

AS 08.08.040-050 requires that members elected to the Board of Governors serve three-year terms subject to a specified triennial rotation. The purpose of this requirement is to maintain a level of experience on the Board which would be lost were a majority of members to rotate on any given year.

In recent years the Board of Governors has had several mid-term resignations. Statute allows the Board to appoint a replacement until the next annual election. The current rotation problem has arisen by election of a new Board member for a full three-year term rather than for the balance of the existing term.

We recommend that at the next annual meeting of the Alaska Bar Association those terms currently out of rotation be adjusted and, in the future, members elected to replace a resigning member be elected for the balance of the existing term.

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC NEED

Limited Analysis

The following analyses indicate both positive and negative factors as they relate to the public need as defined in the "sunset" law. These analyses are not intended to be comprehensive, but to address those areas we were able to cover during our examination.

I. The extent to which the board, commission, or program has operated in the public interest.

- A. ABA admits applicants to practice law through a sophisticated examination process which was designed under consultation with a national expert. The exam has withstood a court challenge as to its adequacy as a test of competence. Admission is also contingent on the passage of the Multi-state Professional Responsibility Examination and a character investigation to determine if the applicant is of good moral character.

The Alaska Bar Association has recently developed proposed changes to the Alaska Bar Rules which will facilitate the determination of "good moral character." At this time those rules changes have not been adopted by the Supreme Court of the State of Alaska.

- B. Effective January 1, 1985 the Alaska Bar began admitting members under motion for reciprocity. That option is limited to attorneys in the active practice of law for five years in states with which Alaska has a reciprocal agreement.
- C. ABA has a lawyer discipline process for the investigation of complaints of ethical misconduct. Sanctions are imposed on those found to be in violation of the rules of conduct. This process was developed through a cooperative effort of the Supreme Court, the Board of Governors, the ABA staff, and a review team from the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Professional Discipline.

In response to the American Bar Association's recommendation, and to alleviate public concern that attorney discipline is not taken seriously by ABA, discipline rules provide that once a petition for formal hearing is filed, the disciplinary proceedings become open to the public.

- D. ABA provides public notice of any attorney who has been disbarred or suspended.
- E. In addition to the three public members who serve on the Board of Governors, the Board has also appointed a total of 34 non-attorney individuals to serve on disciplinary hearing committees and fee arbitration panels throughout the State.
- F. If a complaint received by ABA does not constitute misconduct on the part of an attorney, but rather is primarily concerned with a fee dispute, ABA offers a fee arbitration process. This process provides for the dispute to be arbitrated by a third-party panel consisting of two attorneys and one public member.

Similarly, ABA offers a conciliation process to attempt to resolve disputes between attorneys and clients where the dispute is neither fee- nor misconduct-related. Failure by an attorney to participate in good faith in the conciliation process may be grounds for disciplinary action.

- G. ABA operates an attorney referral service, funded by subscribing attorneys, whereby anyone from around the State or from outside the State can call a toll-free number and receive the names of three attorneys who practice law in certain disciplines. Subscribing attorneys agree to provide referred clients the first half hour of consultation at a reduced rate of \$35. (See Appendix D for the number of referral calls received by discipline.)
 - H. ABA maintains a Client Security Fund for the purpose of making reimbursement to clients of attorneys who have suffered non-insured losses of money, property, or other things of value as a result of a dishonest act by an attorney. A portion (\$10) of each ABA member's annual dues is deposited in the Fund.
 - I. ABA jointly sponsors with the Alaska Legal Services Corporation the Alaska Pro Bono Program which involves attorneys in the delivery of free legal services to low-income Alaskans.
- II. The extent to which the operation of the board, commission, or agency program has been impeded or enhanced by existing statutes, procedures, and practices which it has adopted, and any other matter, including budgetary, resource, and personnel matters.

A. ABA has been impeded by the absence of Bar Rules governing the degree to which the Board of Governors may be involved in lobbying and other political activities (see Recommendation No. 2). They have also been impeded by the absence of guidelines as to "good moral character" which, as noted in I.A. above, proposed changes to the Bar Rules have been drafted, but have not yet been adopted.

B. The operations of the Board are enhanced by a substantial budget funded virtually entirely by the ABA membership through dues, admission fees, continuing legal education, lawyer referral fees, conventions, and interest income. The 1989 budget totals \$1,277,501. (See Appendix A for a schedule of ABA revenues and expenditures.)

III. The extent to which the board, commission, or agency has recommended statutory changes which are generally of benefit to the public interest.

A. The Board has not recommended any statutory changes during our three-year audit test period. However, the Board's involvement in the process of evaluating and revising the Alaska Bar Rules governing Bar Association policies and procedures has been a dynamic one.

IV. The extent to which the board, commission, or agency has encouraged interested persons to report to it concerning the effect of its regulations and decisions on the effectiveness of service, economy of service, and availability of service which it has provided.

A. ABA is enhanced by an unprecedented involvement of the membership (in excess of one half) in its operations. That involvement may take the form of service on one of the eight standing committees or four bar rules committees. It may also take the form of participation in a section (group of members with similar specialization (i.e., bankruptcy law, criminal defense, etc). Each section is responsible for monitoring the law, suggesting revisions, and reporting annually to the membership. It may also take the form of participation in adjunct organizations (such as the Alaska Pro Bono Program) or special projects (such as the Statewide Lawyer Referral Service).

B. ABA publishes all proposed changes to the Alaska Bar Rules in its quarterly publication The Alaska Bar Rag which is distributed to all members of the Association. Members are asked to submit any and all comments on those proposed rule changes for review by the Board.

- V. The extent to which the board, commission, or agency has encouraged public participation in the making of its regulations and decisions.
- A. As previously noted, in addition to the three public members who serve on the Board of Governors, the Board has also appointed a total of 42 non-attorney individuals to serve on disciplinary hearing committees and fee arbitration panels throughout the State.
 - B. ABA has publicly advertised face-to-face meetings of the Board of Governors in major newspapers and the Alaska Bar Rag. They have not advertised teleconferenced meetings at Association business has been conducted (see Recommendation No. 4).
- VI. The efficiency with which public inquiries or complaints regarding the activities of the board, commission, or agency filed with it, with the department to which a board or commission is administratively assigned, or with the Office of the Ombudsman have been processed and resolved.
- A. ABA is an instrumentality of the State and not administratively assigned to any department. Five complaints have been filed against it with the Office of the Ombudsman during the last three years. Investigation into complaints filed with the Ombudsman have been somewhat stymied by a disagreement with ABA as to whether they have jurisdiction over it.
 - B. ABA has adopted rules governing appeal procedures for both the disciplinary and examination/admission processes. As noted in Recommendation No. 3, resolution of disciplinary proceedings in 1988 averaged a processing time of 187 days. ABA received two appeals of the July 1988 bar exam results which were released in November of that year. Both appeals were heard at the January 1989 meeting of the Board of Governors.
- VII. The extent to which a board or commission which regulated entry into an occupation or profession has presented qualified applicants to serve the public.
- A. We found no instances where the Board had licensed unqualified applicants.

- B. Although many complaints are filed against attorneys, approximately fifteen percent result in sanctions against those attorneys. This represents sanctions against approximately one percent of the active membership of the Alaska Bar Association annually.
- C. The Alaska Bar Association offers a continuing legal education program to its membership and also maintains an education library.
- D. ABA sponsors and promotes the LEXIS program, a computer-assisted legal research service.

VIII. The extent to which state personnel practices, including affirmative action requirements, have been complied with by the board, commission, or agency to its own activities and the area of activity of interest.

- A. Nothing came to our attention that showed the Board was in violation of any affirmative action or hiring requirements.
- B. The Board has on several occasions voiced concern over the low minority pass rate of the Alaska Bar Exam. A national consultant on bar examinations was asked to review the exam in 1986 and found it not to be unusually biased. He recommended the problem be corrected through tutoring and remedial programs. At their June 1988 meeting the Board of Governors resolved to ask the Alaska Bar Foundation to develop a scholarship program for minorities; and to resurrect the Continuing Legal Education Opportunities Committee to tutor minority applicants.

IX. The extent to which statutory, regulatory, budgeting, or other changes are necessary to enable the agency, board, or commission to better serve the interests of the public and to comply with the factors enumerated in this subsection.

Please refer to the previous section, Findings and Recommendations.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION
REVENUES COMPARED WITH EXPENSES
For the Calendar Years 1986, 1987, and 1988
(Note 1)

	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
<u>Revenues</u>			
Membership Dues	\$ 677,753	\$ 705,347	\$ 697,310
Admission Fees	148,575	105,675	94,875
Cont. Legal Ed.	122,549	112,596	140,318
Lawyer Refer. Fees	53,361	51,836	55,883
Annual Meeting	33,635	31,633	73,415
Interest on Invest.	82,399	75,687	59,772
Lexis Service	-0-	46,072	15,637
Other	100,332	65,606	92,653
<u>Total Revenues</u>	<u>1,218,604</u>	<u>1,194,452</u>	<u>1,229,863</u>
<u>Expenses</u>			
Admissions	150,832	151,686	136,905
Board of Governors	43,766	34,382	25,923
Discipline	286,714	281,488	294,600
Administration	251,004	253,791	255,241
Lawyer Referral Svc.	31,715	31,740	33,993
Cont. Legal Ed.	144,126	168,345	171,077
Annual Meeting	34,750	38,045	58,825
Fee Arbitration	30,888	41,002	38,896
The Bar Rag	36,468	39,688	35,335
Alaska Law Review	22,000	25,000	26,500
Lexis Service	-0-	58,074	19,488
Other	76,002	29,274	28,780
<u>Total Expenses</u>	<u>1,108,265</u>	<u>1,152,515</u>	<u>1,125,563</u>
<u>Other Financing Sources (Uses):</u>			
Loss on Sale of Investments		<u>(47,553)</u>	
<u>Excess (deficit) of Revenues over Expenses and Other Financing Uses</u>	<u>\$ 110,339</u>	<u>\$ (5,616)</u>	<u>\$ 104,300</u>

Note 1: The 1986 and 1987 revenue and expense information was taken from audited financial statements of ABA. The 1988 information was obtained from the accounting records of ABA and has not been audited.

APPENDIX B

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION
DISCIPLINE STATISTICS
(Note 1)

Disposition of Cases Closed
During 1986, 1987, and 1988

<u>Disposition</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
Disbarment by Supreme Court	2	1	0
Suspension by Supreme Court	2	0	2
Public Censure by Supreme Court	0	0	0
Public Reprimand by Disciplinary Board	-	-	1
Private Reprimand by Disciplinary Board	9	0	2
Private Admonition by Discipline Counsel	17	9	23
Dismissed	<u>109</u>	<u>111</u>	<u>74</u>
<u>Total Closed Cases</u>	<u>139</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>102</u>

Status of Cases Open
as of December 31, 1988

<u>Status</u>	<u>Cases</u>
Attorney on Probation	8
Short Term Suspension	0
Pending Supreme Court	5
Pending Disciplinary Board	2
Pending Hearing Committee	4
Pending Admonition	5
Pending Fee Arbitration	1
Pending Conciliation	1
Held in Abeyance	4
Special Counsel Investigation	1
Filed/Under Review	25
Under Investigation	<u>134</u>
<u>Total Open Cases</u>	<u>190</u>

Note 1: The information in this Appendix was obtained from statistical summaries prepared by ABA's discipline section.

Note 2: All numbers reflect individual complaints filed and not the number of attorneys under investigation.

APPENDIX C

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION
BAR EXAMINATION AND ADMISSION STATISTICS
For Calendar Years 1986, 1987, and 1988
(Note 1)

Bar Examination

	<u>Number Taking Exam</u>	<u>Number Passing Exam</u>	<u>Percent Passing Exam</u>
February 1986 Exam	102	70	68%
July 1986 Exam	106	66	62%
February 1987 Exam	78	58	74%
July 1987 Exam	76	48	63%
February 1988 Exam	58	42	72%
July 1988 Exam	84	52	61%

Admission Under Motion for Reciprocity

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Admitted</u>
1986	16
1987	8
1988	10

Note 1: The information in this Appendix was obtained from statistical summaries prepared by the Alaska Bar Association.

APPENDIX D

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION
ATTORNEY REFERRAL CALLS RECEIVED
For Calendar Years 1986, 1987, and 1988
(Note 1)

<u>Area of Discipline</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
Administrative	214	235	274
Admiralty	33	32	31
Arts	1	0	7
Bankruptcy	505	429	373
Commercial	505	345	292
Construction	29	19	14
Consumer	383	559	632
Discrimination	100	94	60
Eminent Domain	9	10	12
Environmental	6	3	3
Family	2,213	2,619	2,705
Felony/Misdemeanor	808	702	692
Foreign Language	1	2	10
Immigration	70	82	20
Insurance	122	92	89
Labor Relations	461	464	562
Landlord/Tenant	286	322	334
Malpractice	155	158	202
Mining	6	9	14
Negligence	732	729	873
Patent/Copyright	128	162	157
Public Interest	1	4	-
Real Estate	504	718	706
SSI Cases	2	40	22
Tax	89	102	103
Traffic	289	183	117
Trust/Wills/Estates	230	247	285
Workers' Compensation	189	216	273
<u>Total</u>	<u>8,071</u>	<u>8,577</u>	<u>8,855</u>

Note 1: The information in this Appendix was obtained from statistical summaries prepared by ABA.

APPENDIX E

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP ON ABA COMMITTEES
February 3, 1989

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Attorney Members</u>	<u>Public Members</u>	<u>Total Members</u>
<u>Board of Governors</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Standing Committees</u>			
Bar Polls and Elections	8	-	8
Continuing Legal Education	12	-	12
Ethics	12	-	12
Historians	10	-	10
Law Related Education	17	4	21
Statutes, Bylaws & Rules	12	-	12
<u>Total Standing Committees</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>75</u>
<u>Bar Rule Committees</u>			
Law Examiners	29	-	29
Disciplinary Hearing:			
First District	10	2	12
Second & Fourth Districts	8	3	11
Third District	25	8	33
Conciliation Panels:			
First District	4	-	4
Second & Fourth Districts	4	-	4
Third District	8	-	8
Attorney Fee Review:			
First District	15	6	21
Second & Fourth District	10	2	12
Third District	36	13	49
Client Security Fund	6	-	6
<u>Total Bar Rule Committees</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>189</u>
<u>Other Adjunct Involvement</u>			
American Bar Assoc. Delegate	1	-	1
AK Assoc. of Legal Assistance	1	-	1
AK Bar Foundation	5	-	5
AK Code Revision Commission	1	-	1
AK Comm. on Jud. Conduct	3	-	3
AK Judicial Council	3	-	3
AK Law Review	3	-	3
AK Legal Service Corp.	17	-	17
Ninth Circuit Judicial Conf.	5	-	5
Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation	1	-	1
Bar Rag	16	-	16
Tutors	11	-	11
<u>Total Other Involvement</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>67</u>
<u>Total Committee Membership</u>	<u>302</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>343</u>

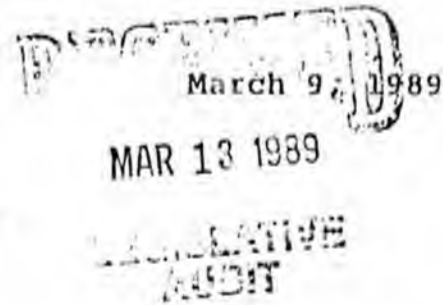
APPENDIX F

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
ALASKA BAR ASSOCIATION
GRIEVANCES FILED BY CATEGORY
For Calendar Years 1986, 1987, and 1988

<u>Grievance Category</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
Trust violations (embezzlement, conversion, withholding client's property)	6	11	9
Conflict of Interest	13	15	9
Neglect (failure to perform, delay)	39	44	35
Relationship with client (disclosing confidential information, improper withdrawal, abandonment, failure to protect interest of client).	24	23	7
Misrepresentation/Fraud	10	13	11
Excessive Fees	1	1	3
Interference with justice	32	35	34
Improper advertising and solicitation	6	2	0
Criminal conviction	0	0	1
Personal behavior	1	0	2
Willful failure to cooperate with discipline authorities	0	0	0
Medical incapacity	0	0	0
Incompetence	0	0	0
Other	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Total Grievances by Category</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>144</u>	<u>112</u>

ALASKA BAR
ASSOCIATION

Randy S. Welker
Legislative Auditor
Division of Legislative Audit
Pouch W
Juneau, AK 99811



Dear Mr. Welker:

This letter is written to respond to the recommendations contained in the Division of Legislative Audit's preliminary performance report on the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association. It is my understanding that the Division's recommendations and this response will be contained in your final report to the Alaska Legislature's Budget and Audit Committee.

Let me say that I appreciate the positive comments about the Bar's lawyer referral, pro bono and CLE programs. We have worked hard to have increased member participation and public access and it is gratifying to have you acknowledge those improved aspects. We understand that it is your function to point out ways that we can improve and accept your report in that spirit. In response to your specific recommendations:

Recommendation No. 1: The Legislative Auditor has questioned the Board of Governor's action in a disciplinary matter in which the Board imposed a private reprimand following a public hearing. The Board subsequently recommended to the Alaska Supreme Court proposed changes to Alaska Bar Rules 10(c) and 16(a) which would allow a private reprimand to be imposed by the Board. The court referred the matter back to the Board for reconsideration before they discussed the proposal.

Currently the Bar Rules provide that the Board can issue a private reprimand only if discipline counsel and the attorney stipulate to that discipline and that once imposed, this information is not released to the public. In their decision to issue a private reprimand in the referenced matter, the Board recognized the incongruity of allowing a private reprimand following a public hearing. However, their desire was to make a distinction in the severity of discipline imposed. The Board's position was that the public would have access to the outcome of this discipline matter, but the Board would not publish a notice regarding the imposition of discipline.

Randy S. Welker
March 9, 1989
Page 2

At the January 19-21, 1989 Board of Governors meeting, the Board discussed the proposed rule changes and is attempting to work out a tenable solution. The Board directed discipline counsel to review the Discipline Rules and submit proposed rule changes which would delete the terms "public" and "private" wherever the rules refer to reprimands. The result of this proposal would give the Board the authority to impose a reprimand either after hearing or by stipulation of discipline counsel and the attorney. This would give the Board the flexibility when they issue a reprimand to determine the level of severity of the discipline imposed. After a public hearing the Board could impose a reprimand that would be public, without requiring publishing a notice in the Bar Rag.

The Board does recognize that this is an area which needs to be worked out and they will most likely be recommending proposed changes to the Bar Rules following the March Board meeting.

Recommendation No. 2: The Board has recognized for several years the problems associated with a mandatory bar association taking a formal position on political issues, with which members of the Association may disagree. In 1986, this matter arose with the issue of tort reform. The Board of Governors decided that it was not appropriate for them as a Board to take a position on tort reform. Instead, the Board sponsored a public hearing and invited speakers from various sides of the issue to make presentations.

The Association has, in the past couple of years, occasionally taken positions on political issues. In 1988 the Board voted to support the continuation of the Alaska Women's Commission, and the membership voted at the annual business meeting in 1986 to cease doing business with South Africa and Libya. While the South Africa/Libya resolution was done somewhat tongue-in-cheek, the resolution supporting the Women's Commission was serious and adopted after some discussion of the appropriateness of the action.

The court cases around the country which have considered the question of lobbying by mandatory bar associations have generally stated that bars may lobby or take positions on political issues, provided they make some provisions for not spending or refunding that portion of the dues of a member who may disagree with the bar's position. Several bar associations will refund, upon request and on a pro rata basis, that portion of bar dues spent by the bar on lobbying.

Randy S. Welker
March 9, 1989
Page 3

The Alaska Bar Board of Governors has not gone beyond passing a resolution on political issues and has no plans to actively lobby on such issues. The Bar is aware that the Washington State Bar Association has a provision which lists appropriate lobbying areas for them (Washington is also a mandatory bar association.) The Board agrees that it is a good idea to focus on this question and determine appropriate areas on which the Board could take positions. The Board of Governors will be reviewing the provisions listed by Washington and may recommend changes to the bylaws which would cover the question of lobbying and taking positions on political issues.

Recommendation No. 3: The Board of Governors has regularly focused its attention on the discipline process and taken steps to reduce the number of backlogged discipline cases and the amount of time it takes to bring cases to a conclusion.

In the winter of 1985, the Board of Governors directed discipline counsel to review their caseload and determine the status of and probable disposition of each case and report to the Board at the mid-March meeting. The staff was specifically instructed to concentrate on those cases, especially the older cases, and resolve those cases which could be resolved. By the end of the first quarter of 1986, the discipline caseload was at its lowest point of 125 open cases.

By the end of the second quarter of 1987, the discipline caseload had edged up to 156. The Board analyzed the caseload to determine why the caseload was gradually increasing and to look for possible solutions. In August of that year, the Board contracted with a former discipline counsel to handle some of the more routine discipline cases on a part-time basis. With the assistance of the contract discipline counsel, the caseload level through the first half of 1988 remained about the same, even though the total number of new cases initiated and total grievances went up.

In October 1988, the Board of Governors hired an additional half time assistant discipline counsel. The hiring of this staff person is an indication of the Board's commitment of the Bar's resources to reduce the caseload and processing time.

In 1988, in addition to its regular monitoring of the discipline process, the Board requested an analysis of the discipline caseload which reflected the average processing time for cases closed, cases dismissed, and cases not accepted for investigation after screening for the years 1986 and 1987. This analysis, which is reported on page 10 of the preliminary

Randy S. Welker
March 9, 1989
Page 4

report, reflected an average time (date filed to disposition) of 207 days for 1986 and 169 days for 1987. The analysis for 1988 shows an average of 187 days.

In reviewing the processing time, discipline counsel believes that the Bar is dealing with a greater number of more complex and more serious cases than several years ago. There have been an increased number of hearings over the past four years. The formal hearing process requires a considerable investment of time by discipline counsel and staff in preparing for hearing, conducting the hearing itself, and then preparing the necessary record and briefing for the Board and the Supreme Court. Thus, the average time to process a case is significantly increased with more cases going to hearing and on to the Board and to the Court.

Another factor which increases the processing time is the failure of attorneys to respond to grievances opened by discipline counsel for investigation. An attorney's non-response is itself a grievable offense, which must be dealt with either before or with the underlying grievance itself. There seem to be more of these non-responses as economic times get hard. Finally, once the case is filed with the Court, the case comes within exclusive control and processing guidelines of the Court.

The Board of Governors recognizes that the discipline caseload is an ongoing priority, as demonstrated by the Board's efforts over the years to take action to manage the caseload. We believe the recent hirings to be a positive step to meet this continuing problem.

Recommendation No. 4: The Board of Governors has conscientiously complied with the statutory requirement to give 30 days public notice of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Board has generally found it necessary to call one or two unscheduled conference call meetings a year. Conference call meetings are usually called to deal with matters which cannot wait until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. For example, in 1988 the Board called conference call meetings to arrange hearings in two admission appeals and to decide on the purchase of a new computer system before the manufacturer's deadline.

The statute does grant exemptions to the notice requirement in the case of emergency meetings. In the case of the admissions appeals, the applicants were operating under tight time constraints and since the matters were confidential, the Board met in executive session.

Randy S. Welker
March 9, 1989
Page 5

The Board will make every effort to publish notice of conference call meetings. The Board's schedule of meetings is currently published in the Bar Rag, as well as the notice being published in the State's major newspapers.

Recommendation No. 5: The Board of Governors is now aware that several of the Board seats are "out of sync" due to the mid-term resignation of several Board members. The Board has, as required by statute, appointed attorney members to the vacant seats until the next general election. Rather than having a election for a three year term, the Board will treat these as elections for the remainder of the terms of that Board seat.

A notice recently went out to the active members of the association soliciting nominations for the vacant seats on the Board. This gave notice that one of the seats was for a two year term and one of the seats was for a one year term. With the election to these seats, the Board seats will be back in sync according to the rotation set out in the statute.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the manner in which your Division conducted the performance audit. I hope your Division found the Bar's staff cooperative. If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact me or the Bar Association staff directly.

Sincerely,



Larry R. Weeks
President

cc: Deborah Ricker
Division of Legislative Audit
Deborah O'Regan
Executive Director

exdir127



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Larry Weeks

At the end of the summer I was approached by a Fairbanks lawyer who indicated that Dr. Irving Rothrock of Fairbanks, this year's president of the Alaska Medical Association, was interested in forming a joint committee to discuss the treatment of medical malpractice in Alaska and ways in which it might be improved.

I've known Dr. Rothrock for some years and believe him to be a reasonable and rational man. I called him and when in Fairbanks he bought me a lunch and we discussed the idea. We agreed to each appoint four persons from our various associations to look at how medical malpractice is treated in Alaska and what might be done to address some of the problems.

We each appointed four persons, one from Fairbanks, one from Ketchikan, and two from Anchorage. I tried to appoint a plaintiff and defense attorney and then other persons who had both plaintiff and defense experience. Ames Luce has chastised me, perhaps quite properly, for not appointing a plaintiff lawyer who actually does medical

malpractice work to the committee.

The four lawyers and doctors met on December 12 in Anchorage and talked about how they would proceed. The consensus of the lawyers is that three of the doctors came unwilling to talk about medical malpractice but only about how the tort system in general must be reformed. The doctors believed that the committee's existence itself might keep the legislature from taking some action, and as long as the committee was not willing to address the reformation of the tort system, they didn't want to be a part of it and did not want to seek to address the particular problems of their own profession.

One doctor suggested that it was best that the whole system come crashing down rather than attempt to make changes in small ways.

The lawyers, Millard Ingraham, Co-chair; Donna Willard of Anchorage; Geoffery Currall of Ketchikan and Jim DeWitt of Fairbanks were by all descriptions honorable, courteous, and basically flabbergasted. I relate this nonsuccess so that the membership as a whole is aware of

how adamant, even paranoid the medical profession is about what is happening. With the exception of Dr. Doolittle of Fairbanks, all of the physicians present basically wanted to talk with the Bar Association only if we were willing to accept the Citizen's Committee on Tort Reform as our credo.

I don't believe that Dr. Rothrock was trying to set us up and it is my understanding that Dr. Doolittle wrote Dr. Rothrock a letter afterwards telling him that he was embarrassed by the medical participation in the committee. However Dr. Rothrock had indicated to me that he would attempt to appoint the reasonable and respected folks in the profession as opposed to the crazies. If three out of four of the "reasonable" medical people are as fanatic as these folks then we have a great breach that is yawning beneath us and which some day will have to be bridged.