

MESSAGE

from the President

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NDAA, It's Back

"Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense."

—Winston Churchill

IT HAS BEEN A VERY BUSY TIME of year and there is much to tell our members.

Spring Board Meeting

Our board meeting in Baltimore was a success and a lot of fun. We had the pleasure of an appearance from Attorney General Eric Holder. We certainly appreciate the outreach by the attorney general and hope that this will bode well for



The NDAA Board of Directors met with U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder at its spring meeting in Baltimore in March. Here, members of the executive committee pose with Holder. From left to right: Prosecuting Attorney Mike Wright, Warrenton, MO; State's Attorney Joe Cassilly, Bel Air, MD; Prosecuting Attorney Chris Chiles, Huntington, WV; District Attorney Jim Fox, Redwood City, CA; U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder; State's Attorney Pat Jessamy, Baltimore, MD; County Attorney John Sarcone, Des Moines, IA. Photo by Jay Bennett, Image Photo and Media Expressions.



improved relations between NDAA and the Department of Justice.

Our most important piece of business was the selection of the new executive director. The NDAA Board of Directors chose Scott Burns, formerly with the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Mr. Burns told the board that one of his priorities would be to give NDAA a more visible presence in Washington (which we really need). He has already reported for work and has brought his enthusiasm with him.

Checking Up on Congress

We had a number of prosecutors from Massachusetts, South Carolina, Virginia, Kansas, New Mexico, California, Hawaii, Montana, Maryland, West Virginia, Maine, Nebraska, Utah and others spend the day on Capitol Hill visiting with Senators and Representatives. Not only is it important for prosecutors to reach out to their members of Congress about our traditional issues of funding for the NAC, student loan forgiveness and Byrne JAG, but several new issues as well.

Recently the National Academy of Sciences released a report on the state of forensic science in the United States. Unfortunately before the official release of the study, distortions and lies about its contents were leaked to the press. Although initial stories claimed that the report would condemn forensic sciences, nothing could be further from the truth. The Innocence Project made grossly exaggerated claims about the impact of faulty forensic science in their exonerations.

NDAA responded by submitting written testimony to several Congressional committees to try and set the record straight. President-elect Chris Chiles and I attended two of the congressional hearings and meetings of the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations. Matt Redle, our state

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director from Wyoming, and Paula Wulff, program manager of NDAA's DNA unit, drafted an NDAA position on the study. There are many positive points that are raised in the study which we can all support and that will improve forensic science—such as better training and tuition assistance for forensic and medical examiners, better equipped and staffed crime labs, and standardized formats for reports. But other recommendations will divert necessary resources to untested assumptions which may in the long run move us away from the improvements we want.

NDAA has always sought research into ways of making prosecution, related fields, and corrections and re-entry more effective. An area of concern for prosecutors is congressional calls for action based on a lack of understanding of the criminal justice system and the communities it serves. For example, recently Senator Webb of Virginia called for a study of America's criminal justice system, which he referred to as a national disgrace. In fact, for those of us who work in the system, it is and should be a source of pride.

Yet again we get dragged back to the same old myths:

- That prisons are full of low-level drug offenders when we know that prosecutors are on the forefront of creating diversion programs to provide addicts who *want* treatment the chance to stay out of prison.
- That police cannot recognize the real problems in their communities, when innovative programs in youth development, domestic violence prevention and gang resistance have been developed by the police.
- That judges are unable to use their discretion to fashion sentences which differentiate violent or career criminals from first time offenders.

These are examples of the myths that we as prosecutors must debunk when we meet and educate other branches of government, federal and state, to the reality of crime and the criminal justice system.

Your members of Congress were home during the spring recesses. I hope you took the opportunity to introduce yourselves and our positions. Your involvement is the most precious and invaluable resource NDAA has. *Please* take advantage of opportunities to meet your members of Congress.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our summer conference this year will be at *Disney's Coronado Springs* resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. The

format will be different in that our committee meetings will run during the conference and conference attendees will be invited to attend. Chris Chiles will take over as president.

NDAA has much to do to represent the perspective of prosecutors in the many forums that we must appear and assert ourselves. Involvement of members will be the key to our success.

DEPARTURES

Their hours and hours of dedicated work over the past 12 months have brought solid and remarkable improvements to our association. We owe debts of gratitude to many of our employees and volunteers. I should mention four people who have recently left NDAA.

Ms. Rhea Arledge was our legislative counsel for years and was well known and respected on Capitol Hill and around the country. She did a great job and will be missed.

In July last year Ms. Sarah Bergin joined NDAA as our grants manager. Sarah improved the accounting system for grants by getting our computer grants module running and by meeting regularly with our grant personnel to help them understand their budgets. As a result of her efforts and others at NDAA we began recouping indirect costs from the federal government. This has put us on sound financial footing. Sarah left NDAA much better off than she found it.

In September of last year, Tom Sneddon came back from retirement in sunny Santa Barbara to freeze with us in Alexandria through a long winter to be our interim executive director. Tom's impact on NDAA will forever shape our association. His skills as a manager and his dedication as a friend of NDAA have been a huge gift to us. Our latest audit report has been filed and shows marked improvement in our management. Tom hired some current employees who will serve as his legacy including his role in recruiting and orienting our new executive director. I cannot thank Tom without taking the opportunity to thank his wife Pam for the sacrifice she made sharing him with us.

Finally, Paula Wulff, the program director for the DNA unit, is leaving for the FBI due to the cut in our grant funding for that unit. Many of you have attended trainings that Paula has provided and reached out to her as a resource during trials. She has been invaluable and her absence from NDAA will be a huge loss.

Thanks so much to these departing NDAA employees and a big thanks to our new and established employees who are provide outstanding professional services to our members.