FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING
A CELEBRATION IN CAMBRIDGE, MA

In celebration of the Association’s fifth anniversary, a fun-filled gala reception was held, attended by over 250 members and friends, at the Armenian Library and Museum in Watertown, Massachusetts. In the photo above (from left to right), the Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, A. Paul Cellucci, presented the Association’s Honorary Membership Certificate to the Honorable George Keverian, former Speaker of the Massachusetts House. Philanthropist Carolyn Mugar and legendary, land title law expert Norma Karayan were presented with beautiful framed Honorary Membership Certificates by Board of Governors member Tamar Hajian and attorney Cerise Jelenian, respectively, during the reception.

by Thomas Samuelian

The Association held its Fifth Annual Meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 15 - 17. Over seventy members and numerous guests, from as far away as Armenia and France, attended the business meeting at Harvard Law School on Saturday, April 16. After the business meeting, the Association celebrated its Fifth Anniversary with a Gala Reception at the Armenian Library and Museum in Watertown, MA and recognized the achievements of three honorary members: philanthropist Carolyn Mugar, legendary attorney Norma Karayan, and former Speaker of the Massachusetts House, the Hon. George Keverian.

On Sunday, April 17, members were treated to a breakfast sponsored by the Armenian Network, where U.S. Senate candidate Chuck Haytaian (R-NJ) and 1994 Association Chair Armen Hovannisian spoke about efforts in New Jersey and California to make the Armenian Genocide part of the public school curriculum.

Business Meeting
Chair of the Board of Governors, Thomas J. Samuelian, called the meeting to order promptly at 9:30 in Austin Hall. The assembled members greeted a delegation of legal experts from Armenia and other eminent members, including two members of the California Supreme Court, Justice Armand Arabian and Justice Marvin Baxter.

Committee reports about the Association’s many accomplishments over the past year were approved without objection. Briefly, the highlights of the last year as reported by the Committees: Pro Bono and Legal Education: the publication, with support of the California State Bar, of a series of law brochures in Armenian for distribution among

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ASSOCIATION ASSISTS HUNDREDS THROUGH ITS IMMIGRATION LOTTERY PROGRAMS

Approximately 1,500 people received free legal assistance to complete Immigration and Naturalization Visa Lottery forms, on April 30 and May 21, 1994, at all-day events sponsored by the Association’s Pro Bono Committee and hosted by the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Centers in Hollywood and Glendale, California.

Pro Bono Committee chairperson Vicken Simonian and Association member Hagop Tashjian, an immigration law specialist, organized the event after seeing a need for it in the community. In a recent interview, Simonian described the reason for the event: “Applicants are being charged from $75.00 to $275.00 by some lawyers and nonlawyers to complete an application which simply requires one’s name, date of birth, place of birth and mailing address on a piece of paper. This event was designed to educate people about the application process, help them complete the application and prevent the type of gouging that is going on.”

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MEMBERSHIP DRIVE HELD IN NYC
by Denise Darmanian

The first reception for prospective members of the ABA from the New York City area was held on Friday, March 18, 1994 at the offices of Gallo & Darmanian.

Attorneys from throughout the NYC area were invited to attend the cocktail reception. The objective of the evening was to inform attendees of the Association’s activities and to encourage their participation in Association events, particularly the 1994 annual meeting in Massachusetts.

Among the guests present were Association members Joseph Basralian, Nadine Sarajian and Gahmk Markarian. Mr. Basralian addressed the small gathering and described the Association’s accomplishments to date and its future objectives.

The reception was organized in an effort to encourage greater membership in the ABA among east coast attorneys. A similar event is currently being planned for attorneys practicing in New Jersey.

The evening offered attendees an opportunity to network on a local level while learning first-hand about the benefits of being a part of our national association.

Denise Darmanian is a partner of the New York City law firm of Gallo & Darmanian and is current chair of the Student Affairs Committee.

MEETING Continued from page 1
Armenian-speakers; public lectures and seminars, and legal services for members of the community who are unable to pay; Armenia Liaison: expansion of activities in Armenia through grants from the National Endowment for Democracy and the Eurasia Foundation which have enabled the Association to support the development of a civics education curriculum in Armenia, an anthology of human rights documents, a legal affairs column, and a Legal Research Center at the Yerevan State University; shipments of books and equipment for legal institutions; Armenian Rights Watch: responding to factual and legal errors in the Department of State’s Human Rights Report on Armenia; Student Affairs: bar review program, mentorship and shadow program, intern placement; Membership: publication and distribution of a new Association brochure and phone survey of membership.

After approval of the committee and financial reports, Justice Armand Arabian addressed the meeting calling upon the members to actively assist Armenia and continued on page 3

Professor Aida Iskoyan speaks about the development of environmental law in Armenia during her presentation at Harvard University’s School of Law, Austin Hall.
GENOCIDE CURRICULUM DISCUSSED AT ABA FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING

by Vicken Simonian

Association Chair Armen K. Hovannisian spoke to a large crowd on the final day of the Armenian Bar Association's Fifth Annual Meeting at the Sheraton Commander Hotel near the Harvard University campus in Cambridge. The topic of discussion was the Association's recent efforts to introduce a film on the Armenian Genocide into California's public school curriculum. Hovannisian highlighted the events leading to the Association's current negotiations with the Department of Education.

The featured speaker was Garabed "Chuck" Haytaian, the current Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly, and a candidate this year for the U.S. Senate. Haytaian has been a politician for 19 years and is a leading candidate for one of two Senate positions available in the state of New Jersey. In order to win, however, he will have to unseat incumbent Senator Frank Lautenberg. As a result, his Senate race is one which is hotly contested.

Haytaian spoke with vigor regarding a bill he introduced in the state legislature in New Jersey to have the Armenian Genocide, as well as the Holocaust and other genocides, taught in the New Jersey school system as part of its required curriculum. The bill was signed into law on April 7, 1994. Haytaian noted that the Turkish public relations machine had attempted to block the bill from passing. He also indicated that he had received threatening letters during the time the bill was up for consideration.

Following the presentations the speakers addressed questions and met with attendees.

Vicken Simonian is a sole practitioner in Pasadena, California, and a current member of the Board of Governors of the Association and chairperson of the Pro Bono Committee.

A gathering of leaders. U.S. Senate candidate and current Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly, Chuck Haytaian, and California Supreme Court Justices Marvin Baxter (left) and Armand Arabian (right) following Haytaian's enthusiastic speech to an audience of over 150 persons at the Association's Fifth Annual Meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

U.S. Senate candidate Chuck Haytaian talks of the bill he introduced in the New Jersey legislature making the Armenian Genocide and other genocides part of the school curriculum.

MEETING Continued from page 2

Artsakh. Next, elections were held for the one third of the fifteen-member Board, term expiring 1997, according to the staggered term arrangement adopted in 1992 at the Annual Meeting in Washington. The five governors elected were Harry S. Cherken, Jr., Shahen Hairapetian, Armen Hovannisian, Vahe Messalian, and Vicken Simonian, all active members of the Association for many years.

After elections, the assembled members broke down into six discussion groups to brainstorm about priorities for the Association in the coming year. The Association also adopted resolutions thanking Annual Meeting organizers Anthony Barsamian, Sonya Nersessian, and Tamar Hajian for their splendid work and reaffirming the Association's commitment to community service, the defense of Armenian rights, the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, and the establishment of the rule of law in Armenia, as well as a resolution calling upon the Board of Governors to explore the possibility of holding the mid-year or annual meeting in Armenia in 1995 or 1996.

After lunch, the Association heard presentations from the 1994 delegation of legal experts from Armenia whose attendance was made possible through the Bahayan Fund. Prof. Aida Iskayan spoke about environmental law, Prof. Garnik Safarian about Armenian legal history, Prof. Armen Harutunian about the drafts of the Armenian Constitution, and Vahram Sogomonian, Esq. about commercial law in Armenia.

The meeting concluded with continuing legal education seminars by Association board members Victor Boyajian, on the topic of Capital Formation, Prof. Ann Louis, on the topic of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and David Davidian introduced the audience to the world of Internet...
LANDMARKS OF ARMENIAN LAW

by Prof. Garnik Safarian

(The following speech was delivered during the Association's Annual Meeting at Harvard Law School.)

How old is Armenian law? You may think Armenian law is a new phenomenon only one or two centuries old. But, in fact, Armenian law is very old. Today, I will speak about six landmarks of Armenian law.

1. The Canon Book of the Armenians
2. The Canon Book of David Alavkavordi
3. General Epistle of Nersess Shnorhal
4. The Book of Judgments of Mkhitar Gosh
5. Code of Smbat Sparapet
6. The Snare of Glory by Shahamir Shahamirian

Why are these landmarks? They are systematic collections of laws, customs, norms and decisions that guided secular and religious leaders for hundreds of years.

As in many other countries, the church was the source of the earliest landmarks of Armenian law. Up to the twelfth century, little is known about Armenian secular law. Before this date, there were no codes of civil law or legal acts, except for canon law.

Armenian canon law began in the fourth century, after Armenia adopted Christianity. The canon law of Armenia is based upon the Bible, the Old and New Testaments. Canon law also draws upon the writings of non-Armenian Church fathers and the doctrines of the church councils. Centuries later, canon law served as a basis for civil law.

The adoption of Christianity, therefore, was very important not only for religion and the history of the Armenian people, but also for law.

The first landmark I shall discuss is the Canon Book of the Armenians. It was written around 720 A.D. At that time, Catholicos Hovhannes Odznetsi led the Armenian Church. Catholicos Hovhannes was known as "Imastaser," the philosopher, because of his dedication to learning. He produced the first systematic collection of Armenian canon law - corpus juris canonici. It is one of the earliest collections of canon law in the world. The Canon Book has about 100 chapters and contains over 1000 rules.

The Church was an important institution in Armenian history. It touched all aspects of people's lives. Like the Church, canon law regulated many aspects of people's lives — for example, family relations, engagements, weddings, divorce, and inheritance. It also regulated certain civil and criminal matters.

Thus, the Canon Book of the Armenians governed both religious and secular matters. For 12 centuries, from 720 to 1920 when Soviet law began, this Canon Book was the main source of Armenian law. The Armenian Church continues to use this Canon Book.

The second and third landmarks built upon this foundation. The Canon Book of David Alavkavordi is a new discovery. The General Epistle is a broader and more practical work. St. Nersess Shnorhal addressed the clergy, lords, and ordinary men and women. He outlined rules of conduct for a well-ordered Christian society. Together with the decisions of the Church Council of Sis in 1243, these form the basis for traditional Armenian law.

The fourth landmark dates to the 12th century. The Book of Judgments of Mkhitar Gosh was written in 1184. It consists of three parts: the General Introduction, Church Law, and Secular Law. Gosh's book was not only a code of laws. It was also a treatise on government, the state, and justice. Gosh believed in natural rights and human equality. He proposed a theory of state sovereignty. His theory is a link between feudal and modern legal thought. Gosh's code operated in historic Armenia as well as in the Armenian communities in Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Iran, Sudan, and elsewhere.

It may be interesting to note that Gosh was born and lived just north of Karabagh, in Gandzak (modern Ganja). Gosh's Code is a measure of the importance of the Armenian community of Karabagh to Armenian culture and throughout the middle ages.

The fifth landmark is the Code of Smbat Sparapet. Smbat wrote his code in 1265 for the Cilician Kingdom. Smbat was influenced by Gosh. However, their codes are very different. Smbat's code is narrow. It contains only rules. It does not present theories of law and state. Still, Smbat's code was very successful. It operated in the Church and in Cilicia for many centuries.

The sixth and final landmark I would like to discuss is The Snare of Glory by Shahamir Shahamirian. Shahamirian wrote The Snare of Glory in 1786, in Madras, India. His book is a product of the Enlightenment, written around the same time as the Constitution of the United States. It consists of two parts. The first part discusses the need for self-rule in Armenia. The second part presents a model constitution in 521 articles. The constitution calls for a liberal, parliamentary
republic and proclaims the equality of all citizens.

The Snare of Glory remainstingly. Shahamirian had a profound understanding of Armenia and Armenia’s relations to its neighbors. According to Shahamirian, the main guarantee of the existence and welfare of the Armenian people is the restoration and consolidation of national statehood.

These landmarks of Armenian law have more than historical significance. As these landmarks remind us, the process of writing laws and constitutions is not new to Armenians. We have done this before and we will do it again. We live in very interesting times.

Professor Safarian is on the faculty of the Institute of Law and Philosophy, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, Armenia.

LOTTERY Continued from page 2

The events received wide-spread media attention ranging from articles in all the major Armenian newspapers to announcements on the Armenian Teletime television program.

Approximately 10 Association members were present at each location to advise the applicants and assist them to complete the forms. The Social Service Center’s staff, directed by Nora Ashjian, were also present throughout each five-hour event to help the applicants. Hagop Tashjian provided his expertise and advised those present who had more specific questions on immigration issues.

The Association provided the applicants with the application forms, pre-addressed stamped envelopes and consultation. There was no fee charged for the services rendered.

The Immigration Lottery Assistance Program is one of a variety of events regularly organized by the Association’s Pro Bono Committee. For more information on Committee events contact Committee Chairperson Vicken Simonian at (818) 584-0043 or write to the Association at P.O. Box 84375, Los Angeles, CA 90073.

MEETING Continued from page 3

Mr. John Yervant.

The delegation members were Prof. Aida Iskoyan and Prof. Armen Harutunian from the Yerevan State University Law Faculty; Prof. Garnik Safarian of the Institute of Law and Philosophy, National Academy of Sciences; and Vahram Sogomonian, Esq., a private practitioner specializing in commercial law and direct foreign investment in Armenia.

Prof. Iskoyan, whose specialty is property law and environmental law, spoke about the development of environmental law in Armenia. Prof. Harutunian, whose specialty is constitutional and local government law, spoke about the drafting and adoption process in Armenia. Prof. Safarian, a specialist in Armenian legal history, spoke about landmarks of Armenian law from the 5th to the 19th century (see the summary of Prof. Safarian’s presentation on page 4). Vahram Sogomonian, Esq., a private practitioner, spoke about the development of commercial and corporate law in Armenia. The delegation conversed informally with the assembled members.

In addition to participating in the Association meeting, the delegation visited Harvard University and Harvard Law School and made presentations to the Boston Bar Association, the Massachusetts Bar Association, and the Boston-area members of the International Section of the American Bar Association.

Delegation from Armenia

Once again the Association’s Annual Meeting had the privilege of hearing about legal developments first-hand from a distinguished delegation of legal experts from Armenia. The delegation’s attendance was made possible through the Babayan Fund, endowed three years ago by Vahram Sogomonian, a private practicing attorney in Yerevan, Armenia captivated the audience with his colorful description of what it is like practicing commercial law in Armenia today.
ARmenian Bar Association Board of Governors and Committee Chairs 1994-95

I. Executive Committee

ARmen K. HOvANNISIAN – Chair
Work: Chadbourne & Parke
601 S. Figueroa Street, 16th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90017
213/892-1000
Direct Dial: 213/892-2004
FAX: 213/622-9865

HARRY S. CHERKEN, JR. – Vice-Chair
Work: Drinker, Biddle & Reath
1100 Philadelphia Natl Bank Bldg.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107
215/988-2721 FAX: 215/988-2757

SHAHEN HAIrapetian – Treasurer
Work: Knapp, Petersen & Clarke
500 North Brand Blvd., 20th Floor
Glendale, California 91203
818/547-5164 FAX: 818/547-5329

LISA BARSOOMIAN – Secretary
Work: Anderson, Kill, Olick & Oshinsky
2000 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Suite 7500
Washington, D.C. 20006
202/728-1544 FAX: 202/728-3199

II. Board of Governors

THOMAS J. SAMUELIAN
Work: Morgan, Lewis & Bockius
1800 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
202/467-7296 FAX: 202/467-7176

LEVON SAGATELYAN
Work: Berberian & Sagatelyan, Inc.
520 S. El Camino Real, Ste. 420
San Mateo, California 94402
415/348-5066 FAX: 415/348-2072

DAVID MARK BALABANIAN
Work: McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen
Three Embarcadero Center
San Francisco, California 94111
415/393-2170 FAX: 415/393-2286

S. TAMAR HAJIAN
Work: Brandeis University
Post Office Box 9110
Waltham, Massachusetts 02254-9110
617/736-3012 FAX: 617/736-3018

HONORABLE JACK HOOGASIAN
Work: Courthouse
18 North County Street
Waukegan, IL 60085

SARO KERKONIAN
Work: Hinden & Grueskin
4661 West Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90019
213/954-1800 FAX: 213/954-0600

PETER KUPELIAN
Work: Kupelian, Orman & Magy
P.O. Box 197
Maccabees Center, 9th Floor
Southfield, Michigan 48077-0197
313/357-0000 FAX: 313/357-7498

PROFESSOR ANN LOUSIN
Work: 315 S. Plymouth Court
Chicago, Illinois 60604
312/987-1434 FAX: 312/427-8307

ZAVEN SINANIAN
Work: Office of the Attorney General
300 South Spring Street, 8th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90015
213/897-2394

VICKEN I. SIMONIAN
Work: Law Offices of Vicken I. Simonian
151 N. El Molino Avenue, Suite 310
Pasadena, California 91101
310/584-0043 FAX: 310/795-6138

VAHE K. MESSERLIAN, ESQ.
Work: Law Offices of Vahe K. Messerlian
1600 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 500
Encino, CA 91363
818/379-1750 FAX: 818/379-1755

III. Committee Chairs

ARMENIAN PROGRAMS

VAN KRIKORIAN – Committee Chair
Work: Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10112-0181
212/698-2500 FAX: 212/956-3153

STUDENT AFFAIRS

DENISE DARMANIAN – Committee Chair
Work: Gallo & Darmanian
245 East 58th Street, Suite 23D
New York, New York 10022
212/826-5058 FAX: 212/826-5606

NEWSLETTER

SARO KERKONIAN – Committee Chair
Work: Hinden & Grueskin
4661 West Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90019
213/954-1800 FAX: 213/954-0600

ARMENIAN RIGHTS WATCH

NADINE SARAJIAN – Committee Chair
Work: Riker, Danzig, Scherer, Hyland
& Perretti
Headquarters Plaza
1 Spedwell Avenue
P.O. Box 1981
Morristown, NJ 07962
201/538-0800 FAX: 201/538-1984

MEMBERSHIP

ANTHONY BARSAMIAN – Committee Chair
Work: Chmielinski, Wilchins & Witman
36 Washington Street, Suite 70
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181
617/431-2231 FAX: 617/239-1378

PRO BONO

VICKEN I. SIMONIAN – Committee Chair
Work: Law Offices of Vicken I. Simonian
151 N. El Molino Avenue, Suite 310
Pasadena, California 91101
310/584-0043 FAX: 310/795-6138

SPECIAL COUNSEL TO THE BOARD

PRISCILLA KRIKORIAN
Work: Day, Berry & Howard
One Canterbury Green
Stamford, Connecticut 06901
203/327-5304

CANADIAN LIASIONS TO THE BOARD

ROBERT ADOURIAN
Work: 900 Dawn Mills Road, Suite 3
Dawn Mills, Ontario,
Canada M3C 1V8
416/441-4141 FAX: 416/441-6898

LEON J. PALVETZIAN
Work: Gowling, Strathy & Henderson
19 Thorne Street
Cambridge, Ontario,
Canada N1R 5W1
519/621-6910

SPECIAL COUNSEL TO THE BOARD

PRISCILLA KRIKORIAN
Work: Day, Berry & Howard
One Canterbury Green
Stamford, Connecticut 06901
203/327-5304

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Work: Day, Berry & Howard
One Canterbury Green
Stamford, Connecticut 06901
203/327-5304

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PRISCILLA KRIKORIAN
Work: Day, Berry & Howard
One Canterbury Green
Stamford, Connecticut 06901
203/327-5304
News from Canada

ARMENIAN BAR ASSOCIATION LOCAL GATHERING IN MONTREAL

By Harry Dikranian

Increasing interest in the Association led to a recent membership drive and information session in Montreal on May 24, 1994, at the offices of Lavery De Billy. Mr. David Eramian, a partner, and member of the Armenian Bar Association, graciously hosted the event which was organized by student member, Harry Dikranian. The 22 Armenian members of the Quebec Bar Association and 14 law students became acquainted with the Armenian Bar Association through its newsletters, flyers, directory and letters from various Board Members.

Of the many constructive suggestions, Mr. Seti Hamalian of Lengvari Broman proposed that each Montreal lawyer agree to spend at least half an hour with an Armenian law student to help them in career planning, c.v. and résumé writing. Mr. Hrair Djihanian suggested ways that new Montreal members could help Armenia, especially through the ABA Armenia Program and its chairperson Van Krikorian.

One of the startling aspects of the evening was the evidence of the rapidly increasing number of young Armenian lawyers in Montreal. Also, although there is currently only one Armenian female attorney practicing in the province, Ms. Lena Kaladjian, St. Pierre, Bunun & Associates, 11 of the 14 law students are women.

These young students are clearly motivated and eager to start their careers in law. They were grateful to have had the opportunity to learn more about the Armenian Bar Association and they and the lawyers in attendance alike are looking forward to becoming more involved locally and through ABA committees already at their disposal.

Harry Dikranian is a law student at Montreal’s McGill University School of Law.

AT THE ASSOCIATION’S GALA RECEPTION . . .

Legal experts from Armenia, guests of the Association’s Bahayoun Fund, pose with Association leaders and honorary member at the Association’s Gala Reception. From left to right, Prof. Armen Haroutunian of Yerevan State University, Tamar Hajian, Board of Governors member of the Armenian Bar Association, Prof. Garnik Safarian of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, Prof. Aida Iskayan of Yerevan State University, Thomas Samuelian, Chairperson Ex Officio and current Board of Governors member of the Armenian Bar Association, Vahram Sogomonian practicing attorney in Yerevan, and honorary member Carolyn Magar.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name ____________________________

Firm or Organization ____________________________

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Phone ( ) ____________________________

Law School/Year _________________________________________

Admitted to Bar (Jurisdiction/Year) ____________________________

Areas of Practice _________________________________________

Type of Practice:

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Interest in Committees:

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☐ Association Newsletter ☐ Armenia Programs
☐ Student Relations ☐ Membership
☐ Membership

Enclosed please find my check for:

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☐ $25 (Law Student Dues) ☐ Other ____________________________

Signature __________________ Date __________________

Please detach this application and send, together with your check, to: ARMENIAN BAR ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 84375
Los Angeles, California 90073
(818) 986-0646
AIMS AND STRUCTURE

The Armenian Bar Association is a non-profit, non-partisan organization formed in 1989 to enable attorneys of Armenian heritage and other interested individuals to better serve the law, the legal profession, and the Armenian community.

The Association provides pro bono services and legal education in Armenian communities across the country and sponsors programs to promote democracy and the rule of law in the new Republic of Armenia.

Coming together socially and professionally, members from around the world have the opportunity to learn from one another as they join their different backgrounds and experiences in Association activities.

The Association is a democratic organization. It is supported and directed by its members, who approve its By-Laws, elect its Board of Governors, nominate prominent jurists as honorary members, and set the Association’s annual goals and policies.

The Armenian Bar Association is committed to serving the profession of law, addressing the legal concerns of the Armenian community and fostering respect for human and civil rights.

ACTIVITIES AND BENEFITS

Some of the Association’s operations include:

- Continuing Legal Education, Seminars & Professional Workshops
- Pro Bono Program
- Rule of Law Projects in Armenia
- Armenian Rights Watch
- Annual National Meeting
- Association Newsletter
- Membership Directory
- Amicus Curiae Submissions on Issues of Community Interest
- Worldwide Network of Attorneys
- Topical and Regional Practice Groups
- Cooperation with other bar associations and lawyers' societies

COMMITTED TO SERVE

The Armenian Bar Association NEWSLETTER is published periodically by the Armenian Bar Association. Members and friends of the Association receive a subscription to the NEWSLETTER as part of their membership.

Letters and other submissions should be sent to Editor Saro K. Kerkonian, Armenian Bar Association NEWSLETTER, P.O. Box 84375 Los Angeles, CA 90073 • Telephone (818) 986-0646. Opinions expressed in the NEWSLETTER are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Armenian Bar Association.

Armenian Bar Association
P.O. Box 84375
Los Angeles, CA 90073

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