VICKEN ISHKHAN SIMONIAN
Armenian Bar Association Chairman Emeritus

November 21, 1956 to May 13, 2014

“OUR CHAIRMAN FOREVER”

by Judge Amy Hoogasian

Vicken Ishkhan Simonian, Chairman Emeritus of the Armenian Bar Association, passed away on May 13, 2014, after a long battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease). Vicken was the guiding light of the Armenian Bar Association, having been involved since its inception and serving on the board for many years including as Chairman of the organization, twelve years as Treasurer, and six years as Chairman Emeritus.

Vicken was born in New York, New York, on November 21, 1956. At three years of age, he moved with his family to Fresno and, soon thereafter, to Los Angeles. Vicken grew up, attended school, and practiced law in the greater Los Angeles area. Throughout his younger years, Vicken developed a deep passion and gifted talent for running. He attended Hollywood High School and, later, L.A. City College where he finished his junior college career winning the 1976 Junior College State 5000 meter race in record time. Thirty-eight years later, Vicken’s time still remains the all-state record.

Vicken went on to attend the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) where he continued on a path of amazing running achievements. In 1977, Vicken qualified for the NCAA

Chairman’s Message

The Armenian Bar Association has hit its stride as we continue apace into our 25th year of service to the legal profession and to the Armenian communities around the world. How far we go and how wide we spread will depend on how much we all want to succeed.

As descendants of the victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide, we have already been blessed and born

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25th Anniversary Annual Meeting In New York

Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the Armenian Bar Association returned to the non-stop excitement and energy of New York City for its Annual Meeting on the weekend of May 30-June 1, 2014. The well-attended event drew members and guests from the Republic of Armenia, Canada, Europe and from across the United States.

The weekend started with a specially-arranged private tour of the United States Court of International Trade located in lower Manhattan and was organized by long-time Armenian Bar member Anna Djirdjirian. Ms. Djirdjirian serves as the Court’s Deputy Library Director. Those in attendance were treated to a meeting at the impressive Ceremonial Courtroom with Judge Leo Gordon who gave a personalized and detailed presentation about the Court’s jurisdiction and practice. He then took the group for a behind-the-scenes viewing of the building, showing the photos of judges of the Court from its inception to the present. The meeting ended with a delightful reception in the beautiful library which boasts picturesque and iconic perspectives of the Brooklyn Bridge, the Court of Appeals, and the New York State Supreme Court. Following the Court meeting, Chris Parnagian, another stalwart member of the organization, led the group to the popular South Street Seaport for lunch.

On Friday afternoon, the Board of Governors had the honor of convening its meeting on Armenian soil (literally, within the sovereignty of Armenia nestled in America) as they assembled at the Republic of Armenia’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in midtown Manhattan. “The Mission graciously hosted the annual meeting of our Board and provided our Association the first easy step in relationship

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MEMBERS IN THE NEWS AND ON THE MOVE

Robert Cannuscio, former Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association and an Intellectual Property partner at Drinker Biddle & Reath in Philadelphia, was listed in Intellectual Asset Management’s 2014 edition of The World’s Leading Patent Professionals. Robert was cited for inclusion in the IAM book by his clients for his ability to bridge “the legal and technical divide well” and his ability to develop sound IP portfolios.

James Derian’s (former Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association) term as president of the Oakland County Bar Association ended on June 30, 2014. In the association’s 80-year history, Derian, who works as the corporate counsel for Delphi Automotive Systems, is the first in-house attorney from a private company to serve as president. He will no longer be on the board, but will chair the nominating committee next year. In his 10 years as a board member, he introduced several new programs to the association, including Constituitional Day and Law Day. “These programs were designed for 8th graders to educate them about the legal process and provide them with tools for better decision-making. With funding from the Oakland County Bar Foundation, we presented the programs at Pontiac Middle School and three charter middle schools also in Pontiac,” said Derian. The Oakland County Bar Association is a nonprofit membership organization for attorneys and judges who practice law in Oakland County.

Robert Cannuscio

Chairman Ex Officio, Garo Ghazarian (pictured on the right with his life-long dearest friend and the late Chairman Emeritus, Vicken Simonian) and Talin Yacoubian, a long-standing member of the Armenian Bar Association, have been elected as Co-Chairs of the Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee for the Western United States. As co-chairs of the AGCC-WUS, Mr. Ghazarian and Ms. Yacoubian are tasked with planning and implementing all major commemorations taking place within the Western United States concerning the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The AGCC is an umbrella organization of more than 20 of the largest and most recognized world-wide Armenian organizations and representatives of the major Armenian churches and the Republic of Armenia. Ms. Yacoubian is a partner at Yacoubian & Powell, LLP, a full-service law firm in downtown Los Angeles. Mr. Ghazarian has a successful criminal defense practice. On July 23, 2014, Mr. Ghazarian was unanimously elected by his fellow commissioners to serve a second term as Chairman of the City of Glendale’s Civil Service Commission.

Mark Kadian presented his first novel, “Anahid Played Soorp: The Finding of Aran Pirian” at the Glendale Public Library on March 21, 2014. The book is a historical novel set in the final years of the Ottoman Empire amid the throes of the Armenian Genocide. Aran Pirian, the son of an academician father and musician mother, has all of life’s essentials and more. But Aran and his younger sister, Anahid, are unaware of what is about to come as World War I and a Turkish nationalist movement intent on ethnic cleansing intervene and subsume their lives. A knock on the door of their home and the abrupt seizure by Ottoman soldiers of Aran’s father, Hovan, mark the beginning of events which force Aran, Anahid and their mother, Marem, on a harrowing journey. Mr. Kadian practices real estate and litigation in the Detroit area where he lives with his wife and four daughters.

Mesrop G. Khoudagoulian was recently named Chief Executive Officer of Natrol Inc., a leading manufacturer of health and nutrition supplements. Mr. Khoudagoulian has served as Natrol’s general counsel since 2011. In 2013, Mr. Khoudagoulian secured a jury verdict in Florida in the amount of $3.27 million and attorney’s fees and costs in the amount of $1.3 million, for breach of contract and warranty. According to the verdict, Nature’s Products Inc. (NPI) of Sunrise, Florida supplied Natrol with protein powder products that were mislabeled and advertised as gluten-and wheat-free, leading to a recall order by the Food and Drug Administration. Nature’s Prods. Inc. v. Natrol, Inc., No. 11-62409 (U.S. Dist. Ct., S.D. Fla., jury verdict rendered October 24, 2013). Mr. Khoudagoulian is a graduate from Howard University School of Law in 2000.

Professor Ann Lousin, former Chair of the Armenian Bar Association, was featured in a PBS television broadcast and a special edition of In the Loop entitled “Women In Politics,” which aired on July 3, 2014. She was joined on the panel of experts by Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Michael McKeon of McKeon & Associates. The full program may be viewed online at: http://youtu.be/OSJ-pL0B4HM

Please send your job announcements, press releases, articles, and/or noteworthy information to: Saro Kerkorian, Skerkanian@aol.com

MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

Vanna Kitsinian graduated from the University of Southern California in 2002 with a major in Philosophy of Ethics, Law and Value. She earned her Juris Doctor degree from Pepperdine University, where she was a member of the Law Review. While at Pepperdine, Vanna was an intern for the Malibu Superior Court’s Honorable Judge Lawrence Mira and Federal Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, the Honorable Dickran Tevrizian.

Upon graduating from law school in 2005, Vanna began her career by working for the medical malpractice law firm of Rushfeldt, Shelley and Drake, LLP. Thereafter, she accepted a position in the Los Angeles office of Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard and Smith, LLP. In 2014, Vanna joined her brother in private practice at the Kitsinian Law Firm, and currently works on civil litigation matters with an emphasis on pharmaceutical liability, product liability and personal injury cases. In addition to her busy career, Vanna is active in the Armenian community and volunteers her time to the Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region. She currently serves as the co-chair of the ANCA’s “America We Thank You: An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief” committee. Additionally, for the past seven years, Vanna has served as a Commissioner for the World Council of Churches Commission of Churches for International Affairs on behalf of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, for the Armenian Apostolic Church.
championships having run his personal best for the 5000-meter race and creating the third fastest record for that race in UCLA history. That year he also competed in the marathon and recorded the third fastest time in UCLA history. Vicken’s marathon time of 2:27:34 is still number ten in the UCLA record book. Vicken graduated from UCLA in 1978 majoring in history. He finished school as a UCLA Letterman and was a lifetime supporter of UCLA athletics.

Yet, even after college graduation, Vicken’s running career continued to skyrocket. He joined the famed Santa Monica Track Club and, in 1981, won what was then called the “Orange County Masters Marathon.” Vicken’s time of 2:18:58 qualified him for the 1984 U.S. Olympic Trials. Vicken also competed in the Western Armenian Athletic Association Olympics. Today, Vicken’s jaw-dropping times remain as the number one records for both the one-and two-mile races in the Armenian Olympics. For these achievements, Vicken was presented with the Most Outstanding Athlete Award in 1977, 1978, and 1987. In events over two miles, Vicken is known as one of the greatest Armenian long-distance runners of all time. Vicken’s skillful athletic abilities were evident in other areas of his life, including his love for the outdoors, where he organized and led friends on hiking, camping, and downhill skiing trips.

Vicken’s fierce, competitive running spirit mirrored the way he continued to live his life especially as a successful attorney. Vicken attended University of West Los Angeles School of Law graduating in 1986. As a young lawyer, he began practicing in Pasadena, California, for the Law Offices of Eugene Alkana and Steven Blunt. He subsequently opened up his own law firm specializing in general civil litigation and personal injury while later developing a specialty in unlawful detainer law. Vicken had many loyal clients over the years as he grew his practice into a successful, thriving and respected law firm while, at the same time, acting as Judge Pro Tem for many years. Vicken also helped many indigent clients throughout his career at pro bono clinics and in other capacities. He frequently participated as an athlete and organizer of the Homenetmen Navasartian Games in Los Angeles for many years. Vicken’s countless contributions to the Armenian community are immeasurable, having given unending time and energy as a volunteer in many capacities for many different organizations.

But Vicken’s true love was for the Armenian Bar Association. Due to countless hours of commitment, time, and vision, Vicken instrumentally formed the Armenian Bar Association into the flourishing organization that it is today. He poured his heart and soul into the organization believing it was an effective way to help others and advance the Armenian legal profession throughout North America and
the world. Vicken served the Armenian Bar in many capacities as a Board Member, Chairman, Treasurer, and Chairman Emeritus. He was the editor of the bar association’s Newsletter for several years. He mentored many law students and organized several pro bono clinics for the community. As Treasurer, Vicken kept impeccable records and books of the many years of activities of the Armenian Bar Association. He undertook much of the “behind-the-scenes” work and thankless tasks of record-keeping, tax-filing, and accountability of the organization, without fanfare, just because it needed to be done. Many individuals from around the country became active in the organization due to the contagious enthusiasm Vicken exhibited for the Armenian Bar Association.

He has left his mark in every state where there is an Armenian Bar member. The Armenian Bar Association became an overwhelming success due to the charismatic man leading the helm over the many years, Vicken I. Simonian. Many would say Vicken was the Armenian Bar. They would be right.

Amy Hoogasian is a United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Judge. She sits in San Francisco, California. Originally from Chicago, Illinois, Judge Hoogasian presently serves as a member of the Armenian Bar Association Board of Governors.

THE ARMENIAN BAR ASSOCIATION
ESTABLISHES
THE VICKEN I. SIMONIAN MEMORIAL
SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Armenian Bar Association remains ever-faithful and forever-grateful to Vicken I. Simonian’s multi-dimensional vision and unending work, which deepened the roots and extended the horizons of this organization. In an effort to commemorate and memorialize Vicken’s vision, at the Simonian family’s request and with its support, we have established the Vicken I. Simonian Scholarship Fund. If you (or your law firm) are interested in contributing to the fund, please write to:

The Vicken I. Simonian Scholarship Fund
c/o Armenian Bar Association
P.O. Box 29111
Los Angeles, CA 90029
SAN FRANCISCO—Justice Marvin R. Baxter on June 18, 2014, announced that he will not seek re-election as an Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court in the November 2014 general election. He will conclude his current term of office and retire on January 4, 2015, after 24 years on the Supreme Court and 32 consecutive years of public service.

“I have been privileged to have such an interesting and fulfilling career in the law, serving as a deputy district attorney, in private practice, as Appointments Secretary to Governor George Deukmejian, and as an Associate Justice on the California Court of Appeal and Supreme Court,” said Justice Baxter. “It is a great honor to have served on the state’s high court since 1991. With three Chief Justices, twelve Associate Justices, and excellent staff, I have been able to contribute to its substantial body of opinions and case law. At the local and statewide levels I was gratified to have the opportunity to assist Governor Deukmejian in the appointment of more than 700 judges and numerous executive branch appointees, and to have supported the evolution of our judicial branch of government as a member of the Judicial Council of California and its committees. Jane and I look forward to an active retirement and will focus our time and attention on family and friends, traveling, hobbies, and charitable activities.”

Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye commented on the announcement saying, “I was very fortunate when I became Chief Justice to have the quiet-spoken and reflective Justice Baxter on my left-hand side not only on the Supreme Court but also on the Judicial Council. I will miss his sage advice and counsel. Justice Baxter has a wealth of experience and is an intellectual force to be reckoned with. His cautious approach has not only helped our judicial branch develop and manage the checks and balances of our democratic system, but his legal reasoning has significantly contributed to the ‘documents of state’ that our court’s opinions represent and therefore to the rule of law.”

Having grown up on his family’s farm in Fowler, Fresno County, Justice Baxter began his legal career in 1967 as a Fresno County deputy district attorney, where he served for two years. He then became an associate and later a partner in the Fresno law firm of Andrews, Andrews, Thaxter, Jones and Baxter, where he practiced civil law for 13 years. In 1983, he became Appointments Secretary to Governor Deukmejian, serving as principal advisor for six years on all gubernatorial appointments made to the executive and judicial branches of government.

Former Governor Deukmejian stated that, “Marv Baxter has been a good friend and trusted advisor for over 30 years. His quiet yet thoughtful demeanor served as a steady influence during some troublesome times that I experienced in the Governor’s Office. His endless efforts resulted in well established recommendations that I grew to rely upon, especially in the selection of individuals for judicial appointments. His accomplishments both on and off the bench have been justifiably praised by all who know him.”

In 1988, Governor Deukmejian appointed Baxter as an Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District, where he served for two years. Justice Baxter was then nominated by Governor Deukmejian in 1990 to serve as an Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court, confirmed by the electorate, and subsequently reelected to a second 12-year term in 2002.

“Two terms on the State Supreme Court is remarkable,” noted retired Chief Justice Malcolm M. Lucas. “Justice Baxter is a solid person, with great perseverance and intelligence and he added so much when he came onto the court and still does to this day—the court will greatly miss him. And at my vaunted age of 87, I can say that it is not too bad just to sit back and contemplate life, but I know he owns a classic 1958 Corvette that may get some more attention. I wish him and his wife Jane well in whatever endeavors they choose to undertake together.”

Justice Baxter was educated in the local public schools in Fowler, received an undergraduate degree in Economics from the California State University, Fresno, served in San Francisco as a Coro Foundation Fellow in Public Affairs, and graduated from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco with a Juris doctorate degree in 1966. He has held leadership positions within his alma maters and bar associations, having served as President of Fresno State’s student body, its alumni association and its trust council, and as President of the Fresno County Bar Association and the Fresno Young Lawyers Association. He is a Director Emeritus of UC Hastings College of the Law.

In 1996, then-Chief Justice Ronald M. George appointed Justice Baxter to the Judicial Council of California, on which he still serves. He will have served 18 years as Vice-Chair of the Judicial Council when he retires, and has chaired the council’s Policy Coordination and Liaison Committee for 16 years, as well as its Appellate Advisory Committee. He has served on the council during a crucial period for the judicial branch in its development as an independent, co-equal branch of government, involving court unification, trial court funding, facilities, and the establishment of the trial courts as independent employers.

Former Chief Justice George commented that, “Justice Marvin Baxter has contributed decades of public service at both the state and local levels of government, working in or with all three branches of government. The people of the state of California will continue to benefit for many years to
Roza Petrosyan, born in Yerevan, Armenia, came to the United States at the age of eleven. She is now a resident of Glendale, California and will be entering her first year of law school at the University of Southern California, Gould School of Law in the fall of 2014. Petrosyan recently graduated from the University of Southern California with a double major in History and Psychology and a minor in Russian Area Studies. She received many academic accolades during her college career including being named USC Presidential Scholar, Foulke History Scholar and a member of the USC Dean’s List for all semesters. Notably, in 2013 her thesis “Voiceless Heroes: Female Resistance during the Armenian Genocide” was awarded “Best Honors Thesis” in the USC History department and was the first prize winner in the research category for the USC Undergraduate Writers’ Conference. She was extended the honor of presenting her thesis as a guest lecturer for political science classes at USC and at the USC Alumni leadership conference.

In addition to her academic studies, Petrosyan was an active member of the USC Armenian Students’ Association, serving at times as Vice President and Secretary/Historian. Her work experience includes interning for the USC Shoah Foundation where she helped make accessible the testimonies of 400 survivors of the Armenian Genocide. She has also served as an intern for the Society of Orphaned Armenian Relief and volunteered at the Armenia Fund Telethon. In her spare time, she tutors international students in English at the USC American Language Institute and is an academic tutor for elementary school students at the Youth Policy Institute.

Petrosyan’s references offered glowing recommendations of her impressive academic accomplishments, promise as a lawyer and dedication to the study of human rights.

In June 2014, the Scholarship Committee, comprised of Christine Engustian (East Providence, RI), Laura Karabulut (Toronto, Canada), Elizabeth Al-Dajani (Chicago, IL), and Lara Kayayan (Los Angeles, CA), recommended to the Board of Governors that Alexander Bedrosyan and Roza Petrosyan receive the Armenian Bar Association’s 2014 student scholarships. The committee’s recommendations were unanimously approved by the Board and we are happy to share with you the brief descriptions of Alexander’s and Roza’s deserving records of accomplishment.

**Alexander Sevan Bedrosyan** is currently a law student at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Upon graduating in 2016, he plans to practice international arbitration, facilitating the process of dispute resolution between business partners from different countries, among them Armenia, and becoming what he characterizes as a “valuable bridge-builder in the new globalizing world.”

Bedrosyan excelled in his studies as an undergraduate at Columbia University, graduating Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude in May 2012 with degrees in Political Science and Russian. He maintained a cumulative grade point average of 3.995, which placed him in the top 1% of his graduating class at Columbia. His current performance at the University of Pennsylvania Law School reflects the same degree of intellectual rigor, commitment to hard work, and readiness to face challenges with which he was able to graduate so impressively as a Columbia undergraduate. At the law school, Bedrosyan is a Dean’s Scholar. He was chosen to represent the University of Pennsylvania at the Salzburg Global Seminar, run by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Breyer. Most impressively, Bedrosyan was an oralist for his school team during this past year’s Jessup International Law Moot Court competition, the largest and most prestigious moot court competition in the world.

In addition, Bedrosyan has demonstrated an ardent and sustained involvement with issues concerning the Armenian community over the past several years. At Columbia, Bedrosyan served as president of the Armenian Society during the 2011-2012 academic cycle. As an intern for Moscow’s Dilijan International School of Armenia, he contributed to the development of curricular material that will teach students how to utilize the resources of globalization and international networking. In Moscow, Bedrosyan also raised funds for the restoration of the Surb Giragos Church in Tigranakert/Diyarbakir. From these experiences, Bedrosyan has learned how international cooperation and collaboration can help advance Armenian interests. In addition, Bedrosyan has demonstrated an ardent and sustained involvement with issues concerning the Armenian community over the past several years. At Columbia, Bedrosyan served as president of the Armenian Society during the 2011-2012 academic cycle. As an intern for Moscow’s Dilijan International School of Armenia, he contributed to the development of curricular material that will teach students how to utilize the resources of globalization and international networking. In Moscow, Bedrosyan also raised funds for the restoration of the Surb Giragos Church in Tigranakert/Diyarbakir. From these experiences, Bedrosyan has learned how international cooperation and collaboration can help advance Armenian interests.
25th Anniversary Annual Meeting In New York

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building with the Mission,” said Gary T. Moomjian, Vice-Chair and Co-Chair of the Organizing Committee of the Association. He continued, “While Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan was unable to be with us in person for the meeting, he took the time—despite the time difference—to address the Board telephonically from Yerevan, for which we are very grateful.

The meeting kicked off with a cocktail reception on Friday, May 30th at the Tufenkian Artisan Carpet New York Showroom. The guests in attendance were treated to welcoming remarks from the founder of the Armenian Bar Association, Raffi K. Hovannisian, Vice Chair of the Armenian Bar Association from New York, Gary T. Moomjian, and the Executive Director of the Tufenkian Foundation, Antranig Kasbarian. Retired California Supreme Court Justice Armand Arabian gave inspirational reflections on his family’s history, his upbringing in the State of New York and his legal and judicial career.

On Saturday morning, the conference was held at the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. It began with a solemn remembrance of the untimely passing of the Armenian Bar Association’s Chairman Emeritus, Vicken I. Simonian, which was presented by Chairman Garo Ghazarian. This was followed by a special video presentation devoted to Vicken’s larger-than-life presence which was prepared by one of ArmenBar’s newest members, Malvina Mardirosyan. The touching tribute showcased photos taken throughout the 25 years of ArmenBar history, as provided by Anna Djirdjrian and Jacklin Boyajian.

Following the stirring memorial to Vicken I. Simonian, an election for the Board of Governors took place. Armen K. Hovannisian, Garo Ghazarian, Edvin Minassian, Christine Engustian, Gary Moomjian and Vanna Kitsinian were elected to three-year terms on the Board.

The conference then continued as it unfurled three captivating Continuing Legal Education panels. Ethics in Social Media was presented by Stacy K. Marcus, a partner in the international law firm of Reed Smith. Ms. Marcus reviewed current developments in the law and regulations which apply to advertising and marketing and focus on the new world of digital technology, social media and mobile marketing.
The Saturday keynote luncheon featured Kenneth Roth, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, a leading global human rights research and advocacy group. Mr. Roth described human rights issues of interest to the Armenian legal community, particularly those facing the besieged Armenian communities in Syria.

The second CLE session followed the luncheon and featured Mark L. Movsesian, Frederick A. Whitney Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Law and Religion at St. John’s University School of Law. Professor Movsesian, a former United States Supreme Court Clerk clerk to Justice David H. Souter, aptly guided enthralled attendees on the timely issue of the plight and challenges of the ancient and existing Christian populations in a lecture entitled “Human Rights Concerns in the Middle East.”

The third CLE session, “Ongoing Legal Efforts and Challenges to Preserve Armenian Antiquities and Cultural Property,” was moderated by Mark A. Momjian, a prominent family lawyer and partner of Momjian Anderer, LLC. The top-notch panelists were Claire S. Kedeshian, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Eastern District of New York; Anahid M. Ugurlayan, Senior Staff Attorney, National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus; and Yelena Ambartsumian, Law Clerk at Shaub, Ahumty, Citrin & Spratt LLP. The discussants covered international law conventions relating to the protection and recovery of historic Armenian cultural properties, as well as federal and state statutes and relevant case law.

On Saturday evening, the Association gathered at Ammos Estiatorio, a local Greek restaurant, where the spirit of camaraderie instilled throughout the weekend further flourished.

“We are thrilled by the outcome of the Association’s 25th anniversary milestone meeting held in the host City of New York,” said Denise G. Darmanian, Co-Chair of the Organizing Committee of the Association, “not only to celebrate the record turnout and attendance at the meeting, but also to mark 25 years of thriving growth of the Association and a touch-point to its stellar beginnings.”
WHEREAS during the final years of the Ottoman Empire and especially beginning on April 24, 1915, the government of the Ottoman Empire conceived and executed a plan to exterminate the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire; and

WHEREAS other minorities of the Ottoman Empire, including but not limited to Greeks and Assyrians, also suffered the loss of life and property at the hands of the perpetrator regime of the Committee of Union and Progress, i.e. the Young Turks; and

WHEREAS the plan to execute the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was the first genocide of the twentieth century, resulting in the execution and death on forced marches of at least one and a half million Armenians and causing untold agony to the survivors and their descendants to this day; and

WHEREAS on April 24, 2015, Armenians and non-Armenians alike will observe the centennial of this crime perpetrated against the Armenian nation and humanity; and

WHEREAS the government of the Republic of Turkey, successor state to the Ottoman Empire, continues to deny the genocide perpetrated by its predecessor state; and

WHEREAS, as of the ninety-ninth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2014, the government of the Republic of Turkey has refused to make a meaningful gesture of admission of the truth or of reconciliation with the Armenian nation and has refused to offer restitution to the Armenian nation; and

THEN, THEREFORE, the Armenian Bar Association, the largest association of lawyers of Armenian descent, acting from a desire to obtain justice for and promote the welfare of the Armenian nation, finds the following:

I. The Armenian nation does not seek revenge upon the dead who committed crimes against our people, but justice from the living who are in a position to make restitution to the Armenian nation.

II. The principle of restitution and justice is to put the victims in as good a position as if the wrong and harm had not occurred.

III. There is no way to restore to life the millions of Armenians who died during the Genocide or give life to those who would have been born if their ancestors had not perished.

IV. There is no way to compensate fully living Armenians for the suffering borne by so many of their descendants.

V. There is no way to repair fully the damage wrought...
upon the integrity and richness of Armenian culture, especially that of Western Armenia.

VI. The only way for the Republic of Turkey to have a mutually beneficial and harmonious relationship with the Armenian nation is for the government of the Republic of Turkey to admit the actions of its predecessor state and to take steps necessary to begin reconciliation. AND, the Armenian nation demands that certain measures be taken by the government of the Republic of Turkey as partial compensation for the lives lost, the property confiscated, and the damage visited upon the culture that was and is an integral part of the patrimony of the Armenian nation, including but not limited to the following:

1. The government of the Republic of Turkey must recognize officially the genocide of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, and the Turkish state must apologize on behalf of the people of Turkey for genocidal crimes perpetrated and denied by predecessor regimes.

2. The government of the Republic of Turkey must make a good faith effort to ensure that the genocide of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire is taught in the schools of Turkey.

3. The government of the Republic of Turkey must make a good faith effort to seek reconciliation and normalization of relations between Turkey and the Republic of Armenia.

4. The government of the Republic of Turkey must restore the personal property owned by Armenians of the Ottoman Empire to its rightful owners or their heirs or must offer fair and just compensation for the loss of that property.

5. The government of the Republic of Turkey must restore the real property owned by Armenians of the Ottoman Empire to its rightful owners or their heirs or must offer fair and just compensation for the loss of that property.

6. The government of the Republic of Turkey must guarantee the free, equal, and independent status of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and other Armenian religious organizations, including but not limited to the elimination of discrimination and legal impediments to the free exercise of religion.

7. The government of the Republic of Turkey must guarantee the equality of members of the Armenian nation residing in the Republic of Turkey, including but not limited to the elimination of discrimination against them in all forms whatsoever.

8. The government of the Republic of Turkey must restore the Armenian churches of all denominations or offer fair and just compensation for the loss of that property. The Armenian churches of the Ottoman Empire, whether Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, or Armenian Protestant, were the largest owners of both real and personal property in the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire. The churches also played a paramount role as the repository of the national wealth and culture of the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire and of the Armenian nation around the world. Because thousands of clergy were murdered and almost all of the churches and religious buildings were severely damaged or destroyed, the churches bore the heaviest losses of any Armenian institution during the Genocide. Because the Armenian churches are historically the main custodians of Armenian culture and the welfare of the Armenian nation, they bore the greatest share of the burden of trying to alleviate suffering after the Genocide, a task made more difficult by the extreme losses they suffered.

9. The government of the Republic of Turkey must preserve and guarantee access to the Armenian religious, historical, and cultural sites within the Republic of Turkey, with the right of intervention by the Republic of Armenia and representatives of the Armenian nation to guarantee and oversee preservation of those sites.

10. The government of the Republic of Turkey must return all of the Armenian historic homeland, including but not limited to returning Mt. Ararat and its immediate surrounding area and the ancient Armenian City of Ani and its immediate surrounding area to the Republic of Armenia as part of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.

11. The government of the Republic of Turkey must recognize that Nagorno-Karabagh, also known as Artsakh, is an independent republic deserving of all rights and responsibilities of sovereign countries.

12. The government of the Republic of Turkey must provide the Republic of Armenia with free access to the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea, with appropriate access to railroads, highways, and international harbors on both the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea.

13. The government of the Republic of Turkey must provide and guarantee the Republic of Armenia with fair use of the natural resources of the area of Turkey leading to the border between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia, including but not limited to rights to water, mineral rights, pasture, arable land, and timber.

14. The government of the Republic of Turkey must make a good faith effort to enter, with no pre-conditions or qualifications, into a multi-lateral pact with the Republic of Armenia and other interested parties in the region with a view towards clarifying the Republic of Armenia’s relations with the Republic of Turkey and its other neighbors and guaranteeing the security of the Republic of Armenia. These pacts would not be based upon the contradictory legacy of the treaties of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but would be based upon the realities and aspirations of the twenty-first century.

15. The government of the Republic of Turkey must make a significant financial contribution to those Armenian charities that currently minister to the needs of survivor communities of the Armenian Genocide.

THEREFORE, the Armenian Bar Association calls upon the government of the Republic of Turkey to accept and fulfill these demands in the name of justice for the dead and the living and those yet unborn and as the beginning of reconciliation and a harmonious relationship between the citizens of the Republic of Turkey and the descendants of the victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide.
The Pro Bono Committee of the Armenian Bar Association is a standing committee which facilitates access to basic legal services for those in need and apprises Armenian immigrants of their rights and responsibilities. The committee maintains close working relationships with prominent legal and social service agencies, and state bar associations. The mission of the Committee is to ensure access to justice through the expansion and enhancement of the delivery of legal and other law-related services to the underserved through volunteer efforts of legal professionals nationwide. The Committee fosters the development of pro bono programs and activities by law firms, law schools, and other community service organization.

In the past, the Committee has published Know-Your-Rights pamphlets in Armenian for dissemination to the Armenian Community. It has also co-sponsored legal clinics with the Armenian National Committee of Glendale and Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County, where community members were given the opportunity to consult with attorneys regarding a wide range of legal issues. These clinics have provided community members an opportunity to receive guidance from attorneys in various areas of law including immigration, landlord/tenant, civil, small claims, family law, criminal matters, trusts, will and estates. After the intake process is completed, individuals are assigned to meet with and discuss their issue with an attorney on a one on one basis. The attorneys offer information and assistance only.

Pro Bono Programs Continue

The Armenian Bar Association and The Armenian Youth Federation (Vahan Kardashian Montebello Chapter)

Welcome The Community To A

Pro Bono Legal Clinic

September 18, 2014
6:00 p.m - 8:00 p.m.
420 Washington Blvd.
Montebello, CA 90640

The program will allow members of the community to receive free legal guidance in various areas of the law, including but not limited to, immigration, landlord/tenant, family law, criminal, employment, trusts and estates.

ArmenBar members who are interested in participating please contact the Pro Bono Committee at:

Peter Hosharian, Esq.
hosharianlaw@gmail.com
Azniv Ksachikyan, Esq.
azniv_ksachikyan@yahoo.com

Justice Marvin Baxter announces Retirement

Continued from page 6

come from the legacy of incisive, objective, and common sense decisions that he rendered for the court and as a leader in judicial administration during his years on the Judicial Council. Justice Baxter’s constructive and collegial approach to problem-solving was of great benefit to me and to our colleagues during the time we served together. I join the many persons in the judicial branch and the legal profession who have expressed deep appreciation for Justice Baxter’s service, and in wishing him and his wife Jane all the best in the future.”

Justice Baxter has received a number of awards and recognitions over the years including the Distinguished Alumnus Award from UC Hastings College of the Law, the Distinguished Alumnus Award from California State University, Fresno, the Mentor Award from the Fresno County Young Lawyers Association, a “Man of the Year Award” from both the Armenian Professional Society and the Armenian National Committee. He is an honorary member of the Armenian Bar Association.

Justice Baxter has been married to Jane Pippert Baxter, a retired teacher, for 51 years. They have two adult children, Laura Baxter-Simons and Brent M. Baxter, and four teenage grandchildren. - See more at: http://www.courts.ca.gov/26473.htm#sthash.gAdqmUZ8.dpuf
Armenian Bar Association Asks Congress To Demand That The Republic Of Turkey Return Armenian Churches And Property To The Armenian People

June 25, 2014

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
United States Congress
Washington, D.C.

Dear Representatives:

Imagine for a moment an America with no churches. Imagine our cities and towns cleansed of their places of worship. Imagine our citizens’ Sundays, Sabbaths, and High Holy Days stripped clean of their promise of religious assembly and expression.

Imagine the unimaginable and you will see the importance of House Resolution 4347 (the "Turkey Christian Churches Accountability Act").

This nation was built and continues to prosper on the twin pillars of patriotism and faith. We know that you stand proud and protective of this deep and powerful American tradition and ask that, in the same spirit, you give consideration to the pending legislation.

Ottoman Turkey’s genocide of the Armenians took a huge and horrific human toll. We know that and you know that. Less known is the fact that there were a few lucky survivors of the Genocide which remain upright today on the land where so many Armenians were felled. The surviving Armenian and Christian churches are witness to an ancient native civilization, lost for now, but deserving of the dual destinies of recovery and return.

We kindly ask that you bring to your consideration the simple vision of what you would want for your own families and faith. It’s much the same all around the world.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amen K. Hovannessian
Chairman, Armenian Bar Association

*In loving memory (2014)
Armenian Bar Stages Deluxe Luncheon At The Palm Restaurant For Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan

On February 2, 1996, Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians, met with several Board members of the Armenian Bar Association along with a host of attorneys, judges and other dignitaries at the Metropolitan News Enterprise offices in downtown Los Angeles. The meeting was organized by Metropolitan News Enterprise general manager S. John Babigian. The Catholicos was accompanied by an entourage of clergy, including Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian.
Farewell Dinner Gala For Tatoul Markarian, Armenia’s Ambassador To The United States

On the evening of June 16, 2014, members of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association were in attendance at the luxurious Montage Hotel in Beverly Hills, California as the Southern California Armenian community gathered to pay tribute to Tatoul Markarian, the Republic of Armenia’s outgoing Ambassador to the United States of America.

The event featured as keynote speaker, Dr. Viken Hovsepian, the Chairman of the Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Western United States Region. Dr. Hovsepian praised Ambassador Markarian’s efforts at seeking to reinforce Armenia’s security as well as his promotion of Armenia’s economic development by encouraging trade and investment in the Republic of Armenia. In addition to Dr. Hovsepian, the Archbishop of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, Hovnan Derderian, and the Archbishop of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Church, Moushegh Mardirossian, were featured on the program and each gave stirring speeches which drew much applause from the audience. Mr. Sinan Sinanian, Board Member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union’s World Wide Board, also gave his words of thanks to Ambassador Markarian.

Armenian Bar Association Chairman, Armen K. Hovannisian, stated during an interview taken following the evening’s festivities: “Tonight, the Armenian Bar Association joins in saluting Mr. Markarian for his service to the Armenian nation. For the past 25 years, the Armenian Bar Association has committed itself to promoting the rule of law and seeking justice for the Armenian people. We stand ready to assist Armenia’s incoming ambassador with the legal expertise and strength of our membership.”

Ambassador Markarian will now take the post of Armenia’s Ambassador to Belgium and Tigran Sarkissian was recently selected by the Republic of Armenia to succeed Mr. Markarian as Armenia’s Ambassador to the United States.
By virtue of a special-purpose grant, the Armenian Bar Association has dedicated $10,000 to fund student loan forgiveness for those attorneys who are public servants in the State of New York. Awards will be divided among deserving candidates. We encourage all those who qualify to apply. The following are the criteria of eligibility:

1. An attorney of Armenian descent.
2. Member of the New York State Bar in good standing.
3. In public service in New York State for at least one year (no upper limit in number of years). In addition to traditional public interest/human rights positions, attorneys working in the court system, district attorneys’ offices, U.S. Attorneys’ offices, public defender offices, governmental offices or the offices of elected representatives also qualify.
4. Applicant must have student loans to repay.
5. Member of the Armenian Bar Association; applicant may join after submitting an application and learning of the award determination, but must become a member before the award is actually given.
6. Brief meeting (this may be by telephone for those outside the New York Metropolitan area).

Please provide a letter of interest, with your business and home addresses, email address and telephone number, and the information, or confirmation, as set forth in 1-6 above. Please include proof of the existence of a student loan.

Once completed, please either email to lisa@armenianbar.com or mail to:

Armenian Bar Association
PO Box 29111
Los Angeles, California 90029

Applications must be submitted by August 31, 2014.
Please email questions to lisa@armenianbar.com.

The purpose of the Fund is to appreciate the sacrifices and the services of those attorneys of Armenian descent who have chosen public service for the greater good and support them in repaying their student loans.

Special thanks to Souren A. Israelyan, Esq. for funding this special program.

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On Thursday, March 27, 2014, the Armenian Bar Association hosted a dazzling mixer in San Francisco, California, at the beautiful law offices of Bingham McCutchen, located in the downtown financial district. Several dozen Armenian attorneys attended the event hosted by former Armenian Bar Association Chairman David Balabanian, of Bingham McCutchen, on the 28th floor of the Bingham law firm and organized with Judge Amy Hoogasian. Guests intermingled and conversed against the jaw-dropping backdrop of the gorgeous San Francisco Bay and views of the Bay Bridge.

This was the first Armenian Bar Association event for many of the attorneys who attended. They came to the event to meet and connect with fellow Armenian lawyers in the Bay Area. California Supreme Court Justice Marvin Baxter and wife Jane were among the accomplished guests, all of whom exemplified practicing in a diverse area of legal backgrounds within the Bay Area or throughout California. The gracious host, Mr. Balabanian, welcomed the crowd and explained his involvement with Armenian Bar Association, having served as the first Chair of the organization. Armenian Bar Association Board Member Judge Hoogasian spoke of the benefits of joining the Armenian Bar Association, while explaining the various projects and programs currently undertaken by the organization. While conversing, guests mingled over an impressive, overflowing Middle-Eastern mezze spread while viewing the sparkling waters of the San Francisco Bay.

Many guests expressed several sentiments of enjoyment of the evening and stated their intentions to be involved with other future Armenian Bar events. Overall, it was a successful event bridging together new attorneys and seasoned lawyers for excellent camaraderie and a common cause. The San Francisco Armenian Bar attorneys hope to hold future events in the coming months. If interested in planning or attending, please contact Board Member Hon. Amy Hoogasian at amyhoogasian@gmail.com.
A group of Armenian-American philanthropists have been fighting each other in court for years over stalled plans for an Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial in Washington. Two decades after plans for the museum began, its future is still uncertain, but the legal wrangling is coming to a close.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit on Tuesday confronted a long list of issues surrounding the project, including the control of a cluster of buildings in downtown Washington that were intended for the museum.

“More than seven years and millions of dollars in legal fees later, much of the parties’ work to achieve their dream of a museum appears to have been for naught, which is regrettable,” Judge Robert Wilkins wrote. “Whatever happens next, hopefully our decision today can at least serve as the last word on this dispute’s protracted journey through the courts.”

The three-judge panel upheld a trial judge’s ruling that one of the project’s major donors, the late businessman and philanthropist Gerard Cafesjian, had a right to seek the return of the downtown buildings he bought for the museum. The appeals court also found that Cafesjian did not breach his fiduciary duties to the nonprofit created to oversee the museum project.

Cafesjian, a Minnesota-based businessman and philanthropist, joined forces in the 1990s with other Armenian-American philanthropists—members of the Armenian Assembly of America—to develop a plan for an Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial.

Cafesjian’s lawyer, John Williams of Williams Lopatto, said in an email that “we are pleased with the decision and glad that we can finally move forward.” Wiley Rein partner William Consovoy argued for the Armenian Assembly and the museum nonprofit. He also could not be reached on Tuesday morning.

In 2000, the Armenian Assembly, funded in large part by Cafesjian, bought the former National Bank of Washington building as the site of the future museum. Cafesjian also bought other properties nearby, which he donated to the museum project. The group created a separate nonprofit to focus on the museum project, and Cafesjian entered into an agreement with the Armenian Assembly about the terms of his gifts.

Under the agreement, if the properties weren’t developed by the end of 2010, the Armenian Assembly would have to return the money Cafesjian put in to buy the buildings or turn the properties over to him. That section of the agreement was known as the “reversion clause.”

Over the next few years, little progress was made on the museum. As the D.C. Circuit noted in Tuesday’s opinion, tensions also began to mount between Cafesjian and another philanthropist and businessman involved in the project, Hirair Hovnanian, who helped found the Armenian Assembly of America. Cafesjian resigned from the museum nonprofit in 2006, as did his “right-hand man,” John Waters Jr.

Beginning in 2007, Cafesjian became entangled in litigation against the Armenian Assembly of America and the museum nonprofit in federal courts in Minnesota and Washington. The claims were later consolidated before a federal judge in Washington. The nonprofit and the Assembly accused Cafesjian and Waters of misconduct and breaching their duties to both groups.

Cafesjian brought counterclaims accusing the nonprofit and the Assembly of violating their agreement with him. Cafesjian and Waters also wanted to be indemnified by the nonprofit for the costs of defending against its breach-of-fiduciary duty claims, under the terms of the nonprofit’s bylaws.

Following a bench trial, the judge mostly rejected the allegations made by both sides, although she did agree with Cafesjian and Waters’ indemnification claim. The judge found that the “reversion clause” in the agreement between Cafesjian and the Assembly was valid.

The D.C. Circuit on Tuesday upheld the dismissal of the breach-of-fiduciary claims against Waters and Cafesjian, who died in September 2013, as well as the trial judge’s finding that the reversion clause was valid.

“With the benefit of hindsight, appellants may now think this deal improvident, but no sense of buyer’s remorse can empower us to rewrite the plain terms of the contract to which they agreed,” Wilkins wrote.

The appeals court also ruled that Cafesjian and Waters should be indemnified against defending the nonprofit’s breach-of-fiduciary duty claims, and approved the $1.4 million the trial judge awarded to cover their legal expenses.

Chief Judge Merrick Garland and Senior Judge Douglas Ginsburg also heard the case.


A copy of the Court’s ruling may be found at: http://www.cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/opinions.nsf/512483B16599F90685257D16004E43B3/$file/11-7048-1502537.pdf
NEW YORK — “We have an unrelenting commitment to our common heritage. So, too, are we united in our mission of service and in our vision of justice. And thus, the Armenian Bar Association (ArmenBar) is not your typical professional lawyers’ and judges’ organization,” said Armen K. Hovannisian, newly-elected chairman of ArmenBar at the group’s 25th annual national meeting recently.

“Our organization is a bridge between the legal profession and the needs and aspirations of the Armenian nation. Our desire is to bring the rule of law and the respect of rights to all our communities,” he said proudly in a telephone conversation with this writer. “It is my blood line that defines, drives and motivates me, not merely my profession. We see and feel ourselves as Armenians who also are legal professionals,” he emphasized.

Born in Fresno, Hovannisian, now 51, moved with his family to Los Angeles at a young age, and graduated from UC Berkeley, and the UCLA Law School. He served as ArmenBar chairman in the early 1990s, and has been a member of the board since the inception of the organization. He and his wife Elizabeth (nee Aranosian), have two daughters and two sons.

Among his family members are his father, UCLA Professor Emeritus Richard Hovannisian, his mother Dr. Vartiter (nee Kotcholosian), and brother Raffi who was Armenia’s first foreign minister, and founder of both Armenia’s Heritage Party, and also the Armenian Bar Association 25 years ago.

“We have a singular loyalty to our own, and to providing legal resources to our communities in the spuirk [diaspora] and also for the people in Armenia and Artsakh. In our 25-year journey, we have now come to the time for reflection and forward-looking milestones,” he said.

Hovannisian related that it took several generations for the Armenian community to heal, recover and reconstitute itself after the Genocide, revealing that his grandfathers and grandmothers worked for many years in the mills of Massachusetts, and in the fields of California’s San Joaquin Valley. “That first generation, after suffering so much loss and trauma, kept it together by not often sharing its nightmarish past with their children, and making sure their lives of hope and promise would be restored in their new country.”

Today Armenians in America “are no longer the ‘tired, hungry, poor, huddled’ masses. The public success stories back then were few because the focus was on rebuilding life itself. Now that it’s been rebuilt, we are currently a dispersed, vibrant, confident, well-to-do people holding our heads high, and completely fluent in the ways of the world. For the future, we need to make it the success story of the Diasporan community.”

The generation of “our parents and grandparents made progress and moved forward on an individual or micro level,” he noted. “Now we need to do it on a group level, on a diasporan level, using every forum in the courts, arts, sciences, media, literature, film, dance, education, etc., in both the white and blue collar worlds, in order to embrace and exult in our Armenianess, and to show that we represent the best, both for our heritage and for America. The challenge now is how to express what we want,” stated Hovannisian.

With half of the ArmenBar members located in California with its large Armenian population, the organization in its 25-year history has created mentorships, group and panel discussions, as well as receptions in California and many other states, most recently in New York, with judges and legal experts. Besides its thriving student program, it has also provided pro bono clinics, mostly for the newly arrived Armenian immigrants, informing them of their duties and responsibilities.

One of its strong points is the Armenian Bar Association’s activism through its Armenian Rights Watch arm, which flexes its muscle when the rights and entitlements of Armenians are compromised.

“We are the Diaspora’s legal voice and legal representatives when our rights are violated which happens more often than one can imagine,” he declared. This activism involves filing lawsuits, meeting with employers, and sending letters to schools urging the teaching of the Armenian Genocide. “We take action for teachers who have been restricted in teaching this issue with their students, such as the recent case of an Armenian-American teacher in Arizona who was terminated for mentioning the Armenian Genocide in his math class.”

In Armenia, with the republic beginning down the road to
independence in 1991, and starting to “breathe on its own,” the Armenian Bar Association began its relationship with the emerging independent country by sponsoring a legal exchange program with the country’s Supreme Court and universities. Dozens of legal exchanges were started bringing their counterparts to the US for study, with Armenia returning the favor. “We offered the opportunity. We didn’t impose on our counterparts, but rather allowed them to evaluate what’s best for their society. Armenia kept many of the legal procedures, but they have since incorporated several of our initiatives.”

From 2013 to 2014, the Armenian Bar representatives in Armenia concentrated on bringing reform “to a largely oligarchic ruling regime, and transparency in efforts to combat the prevailing corruption. We have reached out to communities to educate them and partner with various charitable groups, by giving counsel and advice to both practitioners and the citizenry, in such fields as domestic violence, and human and civil rights.”

Citing one of the Armenian republic’s gravest problems, he said that the massive emigration of people leaving Armenia due to lack of hope and opportunity must be addressed. In Armenia today, there is the continuing danger of a brain drain from one of the former Soviet Union’s most educated and advanced republics. “It is necessary to make Armenia attractive for students and the youth, by creating a secure environment based on the rule of law and democratic values.”

“And in the US, ArmenBar is a reflection of our community. Our parents and grandparents came here for hope, a safe haven and the promise of peace. Because of their heroic efforts, the true identity of the Armenian was not lost. At the same time that our culture was being preserved in our homes, we became part of our local communities across this country. Now is our opportunity to keep our Armenian traits of respect and courtesy, and not to always be conciliatory in the face of wrongdoing. It is necessary to talk respectfully, and reclaim what belongs to us without having a chip on our shoulders.”

In the past, “our ancestors preserved our posterity with our churches, picnics, social gatherings. Now we must move forward outside of the protective walls of self-preservation,” Hovannisian continued. “We have paid our dues. We are now fluent outside of those walls, and we are walking proudly into the future.”

ArmenBar member Denise Darmanian who co-chaired the New York national meeting, paid tribute to the “astute foresight and keen intellect” of both Armenian Bar Association founder Raffi Hovannisian and current Chairman Armen Hovannisian. “To attend one of the annual or mid-year meetings of ArmenBar is akin to attending a family reunion,” she commented. “Our membership amply epitomizes the best among the Armenians. In our midst are many attorneys who are first generation sons and daughters of immigrant families, and still others who are immigrants themselves who have risen through the ranks of American academia and jurisprudence to reach the pinnacle of success in law firms, law schools and the judiciary.”

When ArmenBar first began, “it was comprised of a handful of lawyers,” she continued. “Today, we have several hundred members from around the world. On the horizon, we see the next generation of Armenian lawyers, bright, capable, well-equipped to serve the diaspora and the homeland.”

Calling the Armenian Bar a “pan-Armenian organization,” 2012-2014 Chairman Garo Ghazarian who has made numer-
Armenian Bar Association Reacts To Legislative Bill Impacting Genocide-Related Claims

The Armenian Genocide resulted in the loss of life and land and also in the misappropriation of personal property, including works of art belonging to the victims and survivors of the Genocide. Their families and heirs remain the rightful owners of the plundered artwork, some of which is in the illegal possession of Turkish government-owned or controlled museums. If a pending Congressional bill is enacted into law, the art and antiquities which were stolen during the Armenian Genocide will enjoy undeserved protection from the claims of their legal owners.

The United States Senate is now considering a bill (the Foreign Cultural Exchange Jurisdictional Immunity Clarification Act), approved overwhelmingly last month in the House of Representatives, which would block legal claims to artworks on loan from abroad. The bill would divert U.S. federal and state courts of all jurisdiction, with one major exception and one monumental omission.

The exception is Nazi-looted artwork belonging to Jews. The omission is Ottoman/Turkish-looted artwork belonging to Armenians.

The Armenian Bar Association questions why the Holocaust alone, among atrocities affecting ownership, is being afforded special treatment. To be sure, the lending and borrowing of artworks has been viewed as the essence of cultural exchange between museums in the United States and abroad. So prevalent is the practice that the U.S. government has traditionally protected it with laws that shield the artworks from being seized by anyone with a claim to legal ownership while the artwork is on display in this country.

Nevertheless, in view of the potential denial of the property rights of the descendants of the victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Bar Association has requested that the bill’s sponsor, Senator Diane Feinstein of California, act responsibly to defeat the bill or to put Armenian Genocide-related claims on equal footing with Jewish Holocaust claims.

Our letter to Senator Feinstein appears on page 21.
A copy of the full text of H.R. 4292 may be found at: https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr4292/text

Chairman’s Message

Continued from page 1

as winners. It is now our turn and our time to return the favor of our good fortune by fortifying the posterity and future of our shared heritage through the ideas and actions of our organization.

To be sure, the days leading to the centennial of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2015 will rightfully demand our attention and participation. We plan on doing our part to deliver on the spoken and unspoken promises of the survivor generations to the ancient, native civilization that was martyred and to the historic lands that were dispossessed.

Borrowing from the title of one of my father’s books, the coming year will find the Armenian Bar Association Looking Backward, Moving Forward.

We are also mindful that there are many other positive and desired dimensions to membership in the largest association of Armenian judges, lawyers, and law students. One of those added pluses is getting to know each other in order to establish and develop meaningful professional and personal relationships.

To that end, we are excited to initiate a regularly-appearing email dispatch of a “Members In Our Midst” column. I kindly ask that you send to our attention a brief description of who you are and what you do, and then we will share the information on a staggered basis with the rest of the membership. For those of you who are not yet members, please join now so that you may be able to interface and interact with everyone else.

If possible, when you send in your brief background information, also include a photo so that our virtual community may come to resemble the real one which we always enjoy when we get together throughout the year. Finally, I would ask that you include a sentence or two on the names of the Armenian towns and villages (or early Diasporan locations) to which you can trace your family’s past.

In that way, historic Armenia may, in a small way, be revived and replenished with your presence.

E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many, We are One

Armen K. Hovannisian
Chairman, Armenian Bar Association

Celebrating 25 Years

Continued from page 19

ous trips to Armenia, Artsakh and the Middle East, including Kessab, Syria where he met with the displaced Armenian refugees, explained that the ABA, regardless of our respective specialties in law have diligently striven to make it function as a voice against injustice suffered by our people.”

As a “hub of diverse opinions, the Armenian Bar Association has been demanding justice when called for, and being blunt when necessary, from Yerevan to Ankara to Washington, DC,” Ghazarian stated. “Together, as lawyers, judges, law professors and law students, we shall continue to always reach farther in the future for our people.”


This article was carried and placed prominently in Armenian newspapers throughout the country and internationally.
June 11, 2014

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The Armenian Bar Association is writing you to express our concern about a pending bill, the “Foreign Cultural Exchange Jurisdictional Immunity Clarification Act.” We understand that the art museums in the United States especially wish this bill passed.

When a museum owned by a foreign government lends artwork or other cultural property to a museum in the United States, it runs the risk that an American citizen will claim title to that artwork or cultural property on the grounds that it was stolen from that citizen or his or her ancestors. We appreciate the hesitation that foreign state museums have in lending anything to an American museum if there is any danger that they will have to fight such claims in court.

However, we are more concerned with the rights of American owners. We are primarily concerned with the fact that an American cannot easily seek to recover stolen property while it is in a foreign country. Only if the property physically arrives in the United States can an American citizen truly bring a claim.

The bill exempts foreign state-owned museums from these claims, with the sole exception of claims for property stolen during the Holocaust from 1933-1945. Notably, the bill does not similarly except claims of property stolen during the Armenian Genocide from 1915-1923 which should be afforded viability to the hundreds of thousands of your Armenian-American constituents.

Why should this bill deny the right to bring claims to all Americans except those regarding Holocaust claims? We think such a singling out of one group could well be unconstitutional under the United States Supreme Court cases of AIA v. Garamendi (Holocaust insurance claims) and Movsesian/Arzoumanian v. Victoria Versicherung (Armenian Genocide-era insurance claims).

Moreover, why indeed should the United States want to grant exemptions to foreign museums at all? It is true that many foreign state-owned museums might refuse to let property travel to the United States unless they could obtain immunity. There would be a loss to the Americans who would like to see these objects here.

However, we believe it is more important to protect the rights of American citizens to have their and their families’ property returned to them. This bill would place the interests of foreign museums over the interests of American citizens.

Very truly yours,

Armen K. Hovannisian
Chairman of the Board of Governors
Armenian Bar Association
The Armenian Bar Association
thanks the following annual sponsors for their generous contributions and continued support:

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The PARTAM all things Armenian™ app lets you enjoy photographs and descriptions of Armenian landmarks and institutions throughout the world.

The material has been painstakingly researched and compiled by Stepan Partamian since 2008.

“Great Resource to Have!! I absolutely LOVE this app!! And they just keep expanding it! In addition to notable, historical locations, I really like the Armenian American contributions to society aspect. Well Done!”
by Gadghadz - Version 1.1 - May 22, 2014

“I absolutely love this application. Great job...”
by ruzik - Version 1.0 - Apr 30, 2014

“I just downloaded this wonderfully compiled app. To my amazement, I found a wealth of knowledge and information about Armenians meticulously compiled all in one place. It provides detailed descriptions about people, places, and things. I want to commend you Stepan for all your hard work, time, and dedication that you put and continue to put into this app and making it available to all so that people can be educated and informed.”
by Astghik Sardarian - Version 1.0 - Apr 27, 2014

“I love it. I love it . Thank you very much Stepan Partamian for Partam all things Armenian”
by Veronica Giragossian - Version 1.0 - Apr 24, 2014

“Amazing. Highly recommended. Very educative and helpful App. A must have for everyone interested in all things Armenian. :)”
Karen Mkrtchyan on Jul 11, 2014 at 10:10 AM

“Informative, interesting, educating!!!! Finally !!! Must have for all Armenians worldwide!!”
by SilvexoRay10 - Version 1.0 - May 9, 2014

“Must have. Finally an app for us.”
Scarlet Avakian on Jul 6, 2014 at 3:04 PM
The Newsletter was the great passion of Vicken I. Simonian. He was the author of many of the articles that were featured over the years. We hope to continue in Vicken’s tradition of writing informative articles for the Armenian Bar Association members and friends. To that end, we encourage you to contact us with ideas and articles that would be of interest to the ArmenBar audience.

The Newsletter Committee extends its appreciation to Stepan Partamian for his significant and kind voluntary efforts in the preparation and production of the Armenian Bar Association Newsletter. For several years in our organization’s early history, Stepan helped distinguish our publications in the most favorable, positive and colorful of ways. We welcome Stepan back to our “newsroom” and thank him for bringing along his inimitable flair and standard professionalism.

We also thank Kathy Ossian and Anna Djirdjirian for bringing to you the faces and places of the Armenian Bar Association through the photographs they have contributed to this issue.

Saro Kerkonian and Lucy Varpetian
The Armenian Bar Association is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, formed in 1989 to enable attorneys of Armenian heritage 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 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 bylaws, 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.

Some of the Association’s operations include:

- Worldwide network of attorneys
- Continuing legal education seminars & workshops
- Pro bono program
- Rule of law projects in the Republic of Armenia
- Armenian Rights Watch
- Annual and mid-year national meetings
- The Newsletter
- Membership directory
- Amicus curiae submission on issues of interest
- Topical and regional practice groups
- Cooperation with other bar associations and lawyers’ societies

The 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. Opinions expressed in the Newsletter are those of the authors of the articles and/or the editors of the Newsletter and do not necessarily represent the views of the Armenian Bar Association.

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