

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

COLIN SIMPSON | **WTLA PRESIDENT**



Blasting north from Denver on I-25 on a beautiful early November morning with law partner Larry Jones at the wheel I am reflecting on my 32 years of law practice and legislative work as I decide what of benefit I can share with my fellow WTLA members. There are a few things I know for sure. I feel especially lucky that I still very much enjoy helping people with difficult and challenging problems. I have great partners and colleagues whom I trust and like, and I am blessed to live in Wyoming with a wonderful family. But this column is not about me, it is about what I can do for WTLA and what WTLA can do for you.

WTLA is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2019. Many great lawyers have given much in time and money over the last half-century to protect the health and safety of Wyoming families, enhance consumer protections, and preserve every citizen's right to trial by jury and equal justice. WTLA provides a voice for you and your clients in the Wyoming Legislature and works year-round to give back to the people of Wyoming by protecting their rights and our Constitution. As your WTLA President I will continue the fight and help to improve the ability of the WTLA to provide meaningful programs and services to its members, including you! (*see inset below*)

Legislative monitoring, information sharing, and lobbying are very important benefits WTLA provides to its members. The Legislative Subcommittee reviews all bills and the Board decides what if any actions to take on legislation. Bills already on

our watch list for the 2019 Session include:

Billed vs paid medical expenses: Rep. Clark Stith of Rock Springs will be running a bill to limit compensation to amounts paid for medical care rather than the amount billed—an effort multiple states have declined to adopt. This bill threatens fair compensation for injury victims.

Agricultural Feed Products (19LSO-0251.0) Joint Ag Committee. An Act specifying that agricultural feed products are not subject to a strict liability standard of fault in civil actions. Appears to be special legislation and may not protect the rights of consumers or promote food safety.

Crime victim compensation eligibility clarification (19LSO-0221) Joint Judiciary Committee. Clarifies that compensation shall only be awarded for economic losses occurring within a 24-month period from the date of the injury or discovery of the crime. The Division may extend the 24-month period to allow compensation for mental health counseling and care occurring within an additional 12 month period for a total of 36 months.

Limitation on length of probation (19LSO-0231) Joint Judiciary. Limits the length of a felony probation term to the maximum term of imprisonment allowed by law and in no case shall exceed 42 months, rather than 5 years.

Probation and parole-incentives and sanctions (19LSO-0230) Joint Judiciary. An Act relating to criminal procedure and sentencing; establishing incentives and sanctions system for probation and parole super-

vision as specified; specifying authorized sanctions; providing procedure for imposing sanctions; providing definitions; providing for the award of credit against original sentences for parolees; requiring the use of validated risk and need assessments; and clarifying requirements for placement in an intensive supervision program.

Limitation on length of parole (19LSO-0227) Joint Judiciary. An Act relating to sentence and imprisonment; providing the maximum term shall not exceed the minimum term: (A) By more than 30 months for each felony when the maximum allowable term of incarceration provided by law is less than 25 years; and (B) By more than 60 months for each felony, when the maximum allowable term of incarceration provided by law is 25 years or more.

In the near term, I hope to hit every Judicial District to meet with WTLA members to find out how WTLA can serve you better. I also will be lobbying legislators. We are working on developing "Practice Tip" videos to give you access to quick practical tips to help your practice. We are fortunate to have many new younger Board members who will help lead WTLA forward. Stay with us for the ride and let us know what your specific needs are as we want to be as responsive as we can. ☎

WTLA OFFERS:

- Listserv networking and mentoring benefits to learn from others about everyday issues, practice tips and forms.
- Opportunities to meet face-to-face with attorneys from across the state who will share their knowledge and experience and who want the chance to learn from you as well.
- Access to quality educational and practice resources through our website and CLE programs.
- Discounted, free and quality member oriented educational programs.
- Leadership development skills through speaking opportunities, writing for our magazine and e-news and participating in programs designed to give back to our communities.
- Up-to-date news and information that impacts your practice of law.
- Opportunities to give back to your community and State through End Distracted Driving Programs, our UW Student Chapter and our Bike Helmet Giveaways.