



IL

CRA

ILLINOIS
COURT
REPORTERS
ASSOCIATION



SUMMER

2017

President's Message



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Greetings, ILCRA members. It has been my honor to serve as president of the Illinois Court Reporters Association for the 2015-2017 term. For those of you still resistant to volunteering to serve on a committee or accept a nomination to become a member of the executive board, I encourage you to reconsider. Without the support of past presidents of ILCRA and past board members, our wonderful executive director, Dave Wenhold, and the current ILCRA executive board, I would not have been able to complete my term. Each board member brings a unique perspective to the table. Board members – voting and nonvoting—openly share their opinions, concerns, suggestions, objections. Consider this a formal invitation to come to our next board meeting Friday, September 15, 2017, at the Wyndham City Centre in Springfield. The exact time will be announced in advance.

If committee work is where you'd like to start, please let us know. We also need members willing to mentor court reporting students and/or visit the students. If you enjoy public speaking, take a moment and schedule a visit to your local high school or public library with your writer and share our wonderful profession. If not you, then who would you suggest? If not now, then when? I have attended career days and did 90% of the speaking while another reporter did the writing. If you're uncomfortable writing an agenda of topics you'd like to cover during your presentation, you can always have the teacher require the students to submit questions they'd like answered and go from there. Bottom line: Just do it. We're all busy professional reporters. The personal satisfaction volunteering to make a difference is profound. Take the time to make time to volunteer and give back to our awesome profession.

Is your schedule too busy now? Did

you know each of the members of the executive board are working reporters? Here's an example of my busy day. My day started with a quick jog before leaving for the courthouse. I had to arrive early enough to unload my equipment because I was on call for Sunday juvenile detention hearings and needed to get through security before the student shadowing me in court arrived. Done and done. Go to court and answer questions re CSR and RPR test preparation. Do you remember what the medical term is for pink eye? Finished court for the morning and made plans for the court reporting student to come shadow again on Wednesday, finished editing a transcript, and printed it. Barely enough time to squeeze in a 25-minute walk. Done and done. I still have ten minutes before heading back to court. Just enough time to get my ILCRA board nominations in. Returned to court for the 1:30 session, then it's back to working on transcripts. When I arrive home, I have to get in another quick jog on my treadmill before enjoying the end of a spectacular 89-degree day and completing my final president's message.

My point in the last paragraph is: We all make time for what we consider a priority. Needless to say, encouraging court reporting students is a priority for me. I hope you'll join me and our president-elect, Kathryn Thomas, in mentoring students enrolled in court reporting programs. Time waits for no one. Time slows for no one. Join me in making the most of the time you have today. As always, I wish you peace, good health, prosperity and joy, joy, joy.

~ Vernita Allen-Williams

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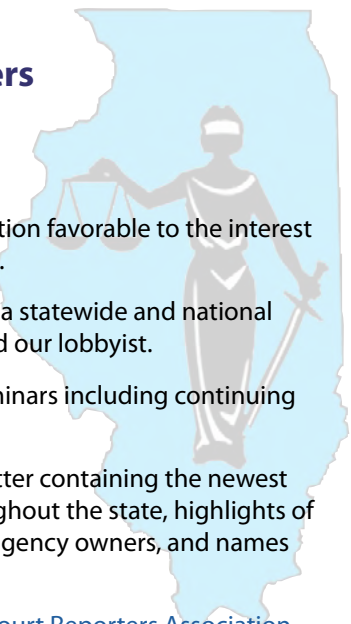
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For a listing of all **committees and current committee members**

[CLICK HERE](#)

What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- 
- **Works** to maintain your right to be certified.
 - **Monitors, promotes, and lobbies** to pass legislation favorable to the interest of court reporters, captioners and CART providers.
 - **Monitors** legislation affecting our professions on a statewide and national basis through both our Legislative Committee and our lobbyist.
 - **Sponsors** an annual conference and one-day seminars including continuing education and the latest in reporting technology.
 - **Publishes** *Ad Infinitum*, a quarterly online newsletter containing the newest up-to-the-minute reporting developments throughout the state, highlights of board meetings, advertisements of vendors and agency owners, and names and telephone numbers of ILCRA officers.
 - **Serves** as an affiliated state unit of the [National Court Reporters Association](#).
 - **Offers** members significantly reduced rates for the conventions and seminars.
 - **Awards** Student Scholarships, a Distinguished Service Award, an Award of Excellence for an Outstanding Educator, and conducts [speed contests](#) each year.
 - **Provides** resources on the ILCRA website, including the CSR Act, Court Reporters' Act, Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Transcript Act, and ILCRA Bylaws. It also includes officers' names and contact information as well as Committees and Committee Members. ILCRA Member Information is included on the website under "Find a Reporter."
 - **Offers** an Online Student Mentor Program.
 - **Promotes** student recruitment.
 - **Organizes** letter-writing campaigns on issues affecting our professions.
 - **Sends** representative members to legislative boot camps, leadership conferences, and the national convention for training and education.
 - **Provides** reporters for demonstrations on request and attends career days throughout the state.
 - **Provides** free CART brochures to its members.
 - **Provides** a court reporters network through Constant Contact which allows ILCRA to immediately be in touch with members via email.
 - **Serves** the membership with the phone number 703-729-4861 and a [website](#).
 - **Provides** an association management company to assist members.

ILCRA MISSION STATEMENT

To maintain standards of excellence in verbatim shorthand reporting, to provide continuing educational opportunities and advocate technological advancements, and to promote a spirit of mutual assistance between the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting and its consumers.

2017-2019 Candidates for ILCRA Board of Directors

President: Kathryn Thomas

Kathryn A. Thomas began her professional steno life reporting depositions in 1998 and transitioned to full-time CART and captioning around 2010. She is a graduate of Sparks College, an RDR, CRC, Illinois CSR, and Missouri CCR. She's served ILCRA on the Public Relations committee, Audit committee, CART committee, and also served as Region 2 freelance representative, Vice President, and President-Elect.

She's currently a member of the NCRA PAC governing board and has served previously on NCRA's Social Network committee. ILCRA sent her to NCRA's Legislative Boot Camp in 2014, and she has represented Illinois at NCRA's National Committee of State Association meetings. She is a regular competitor at NCRA speed and realtime contests, and in 2013 attempted to break the Guinness steno speed record along with five others.

She's also a big geek. Don't get her started on Supernatural, Doctor Who, or Harry Potter and do NOT ask her for thoughts on Disney's acquisition of Star Wars.

President-Elect: Georgia Long

Georgia Beth Long (Rollins) was born and raised in the small town of Sullivan, Illinois. Much to everyone's surprise, she became a court reporter "just like Mom" in 2007. She started as an official for the 11th Judicial Circuit in Bloomington, Illinois. She remained there for nearly a decade, covering an array of different court cases from divorces to adoptions, murder trials to asbestos. She thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of the job and the professionals she was surrounded by every day at the courthouse.

Upon becoming engaged in October of 2016, Georgia switched gears from an official court reporter and is now a freelance reporter. The change has presented a whole new world of challenges and opportunity and invaluable experience.

On a personal note, Georgia was married in May of 2017 to Jack. They both enjoy taking advantage of city amenities, including yoga, walking the dog, biking, and trying new restaurants.

Vice President: Andrea James

Andrea M. James has been an official court reporter in the 2nd Judicial Circuit in Illinois since November of 2013. Prior to that she spent 13 years as a freelance reporter in Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Kentucky. She completed her court reporting studies at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale in 1999. She is an Illinois CSR, as well as a RPR and a Realtime Systems Administrator through the National Court Reporters Association. Andrea has donated her time to the Veterans History Project and previously served on the Advertising Committee for the Illinois Court Reporters Association. She has been the Region 2 Representative for ILCRA since September 2014. Andrea is also a certified personal trainer and teaches group exercise classes.

Secretary: Pam Taylor

Licensed in 1973 and became a freelance court reporter for Metro Reporting from 1973 to 1976.

Became an OCR for Cook County in 1977 and within the 37 years that she was there before she retired in 2014, she was a court reporter, an assistant supervisor and an Assistant Administrator to the Criminal Division.

Besides her CSR, she has an NCRA, RPR and an Illinois CRR. Currently active as a freelance court reporter. While a court reporter she has always been a member with NCRA, now defunct CCRA, IOCRA, at one point holding the position of Vice-President and President of ILCRA.

Treasurer: Deborah Cohen-Rojas

Deborah Cohen-Rojas received her Bachelor's degree in English in 1998 from Carthage College, then finished court reporting school at the College of Court Reporting in 2007. She received her CSR later that year, then her RPR in 2008. Deborah worked as a freelance reporter until 2009, then became a court official at the 19th Judicial Circuit Court in Waukegan, Illinois, and has been there since. At the 19th Circuit, Deborah has served as a member of the Veterans History Project Committee since 2013. She was awarded the Employee of the Month award in December 2014, followed later that month by Employee of the Year. Deborah's hobbies include reading, writing, knitting, and crocheting, and she lives with her husband and four very demanding cats, all of whom make sure to fill up whatever time is left over. Deborah served as the Secretary of the Illinois Court Reporters Association from 2015 to 2017.

Region 1 Freelance: Mary Ann Casale

Mary Ann Casale has been a court reporter in Chicago since 1982 and has owned Casale Reporting Service, Inc. for almost 30 years, servicing clients both nationally and internationally. Mary Ann has served on various boards and currently serves on the Illinois Shorthand Reporters Board. She has volunteered for industry events in addition to serving as a test proctor for NCRA. She has been a member of ILCRA and NCRA since the beginning of her career and is also a longstanding member of STAR.

Region 1 Official: Etta Jones

Her professional career as a Certified Shorthand Reporter began in July of 1989 upon receipt of her associate's degree from The Chicago College of Commerce.

The first part of her career she served the legal community as a freelance reporter with several agencies in the Chicagoland community, including, but not limited to, R.C. Kerr and Associates, Toomey Reporting, Sachs Court Reporting and McCorkle Court Reporters.

During her freelance career she specialized in the medical field and conference reporting with entities such as The Chicago Public Schools and The Illinois Department of Public Health.

Since October of 2007 to date, she has served as an Official Court Reporter with the State of Illinois.

She is realtime certified with both the State of Illinois and the National Court Reporters Association and has received her Registered Professional Reporter certification from NCRA as well.

Why I Love My Job

*By Mary A. Trezzo, CSR, RPR
Official Court Reporter*

The sweetness of Tuesday, February 14, 2017: I started out my day in court with our scheduled jury trial turning into a bench trial, which was a good thing given the charges were a minor driving violation (at least minor from my perspective).

I was then able to attend an informal get-together of our court reporter staff hosted by our supervisor, Kathryn. Kathryn was dressed in a pretty red dress to celebrate Valentine's Day and she brought us delicious sweets.

As we were all socializing, anticipating an announcement from Kathryn, a knock on the door revealed a cart full of beautiful pink floral plants, one for each of us, from our Chief Judge, Judge Boles, in recognition of National Court Reporting and Captioning Week. Also, last week we received a written invitation to a luncheon in our honor to be hosted by Judge Boles for the following week.

I am overwhelmed and touched by this expression of appreciation. Kane County judges have always recognized us for our professionalism and show us a great deal of respect. They are very supportive, and when possible, they try hard to make our job easier.

I think it is very telling that we have Official Court Reporters who have been here in Kane County for 30-plus years with no future plans of retirement. I feel this kind of work atmosphere supports the fact that I can truly say, I love my job.

I was able to share this genuine sentiment when I was being interviewed by a Wabausee College student, Bria, this past Friday. The one hour interview started at 2:30 and ended at 4:20. I guess I had a lot to say.

Bria is a criminal law student. Her assignment was to interview a participant in court proceedings. Instead of going the

obvious route of interviewing a lawyer, she chose to interview a court reporter because her sister is considering this profession.

We started the interview with mutual enthusiasm. I provided her with a lot of printed material from ILCRA's website, NCRA's website and the Illinois Official Court Reporters' website. Bria had three full pages of questions, and the obvious ones opened the floodgates to me sharing my experiences and why I love my job. Not all her questions were easy, and that gave me the opportunity to share the ups and downs of the profession.

The very best part of the interview for me was at the end when Bria said, based on my enthusiasm and plethora of information and my personal experiences I shared with her, she was actually considering changing her career path and would like to pursue court reporting. I invited her to contact me if she'd like to shadow me, needs a mentor and to do an internship here in the future.

It makes me smile and laugh a little because I thought I wouldn't have enough information to keep her interested.

The bitterness of the day for me is when Kathryn announced her retirement come April after being with Kane County for 39 years. She has been a wonderful supervisor, always treating us with respect and as professionals. I will miss her with much fondness and sincere gratitude.

The sweetness of this news is that Kathryn is very active and loves to work, so her plans for retirement are filled with part-time jobs and many activities with friends and family.

This day has been full of deep introspection and supports my decision from 30-plus years ago of choosing court reporting as my profession. Did I mention, I love my job?

Save the Date!

ILCRA ANNUAL CONVENTION

September 14-16, 2017
Wyndham City Centre
Springfield, IL

Registration is now OPEN

Please join your colleagues for one of the most exciting conventions in years. ILCRA is proud to bring the powerhouse legends of court reporting (Nancy and Ed Varallo) to Springfield to share their knowledge with you. We will also have a legislative update from ILCRA's lobbyist and a member of the state legislature talking about what is going on that affects your bottom line. This is sure to be the can't miss seminar of the year.

Please go to www.ILCRA.org for more details on the conference including: the full agenda and descriptions of the seminar, the registration links, hotel information and much more pertaining to convention. This is YOUR opportunity to network and earn quality CEUs for an incredible price.

Don't miss out, REGISTER TODAY!

Yes, You CAN Do It!

*By Georgia B. Rollins, CSR
Freelance Court Reporter*

Stay with me, because this is going to sound crazy. But you are in control of your test anxiety.

Yep.

You have the power to overcome the lead-filled forearms, the shaky fingers that want to go everywhere but where they should, the lightheadedness, the tears, the racing heart, the little voice in your head saying, "That was an error! That was an error! That was four errors in a row! Are you even trying to pass?!"

You. You are in control of all of it.

I can't imagine how many of you are dismissing me right now because less than a year ago, I would have felt the same way. But stay with me just a little bit longer because I'm going to show you how it's true, and then I'm going to show you how to overcome it.

First of all, by way of background I like to think I'm pretty good at my job. I am a horrible test-taker. At least, that was the mantra I subscribed to for longer than I've been a working reporter.

"I am a horrible test-taker."

"I have test anxiety."

"I will never pass a test on the first try."

You say something enough, it has the power to become the truth.

But any one of you who have taken the test as many times as I have -- even half as many times as I have -- you know positive affirmations are simply not enough. You go into a test environment with the best-set intentions, and either as soon as that voice comes on... "Ready?" or you get through those first two minutes, you lose your nerve. Then, what was 225 now feels like 440, and all that cool and positivity that you started with has evaporated. This is typically followed by either wanting to melt into the floor and disappear forever, or taking your machine with tripod

attached and going all Pete Townsend on a wall with it.

Believe me. I get it. I was there more times than I care to tell you.

Here's some foreshadowing. Have you ever thought about your breathing in these times? I'm willing to bet the answer is no.

Here's the other thing, too. The word "anxiety" actually gives you a pass from having control over your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions.

I will digress for a moment. I am not a doctor writing for the Ad In. Please, obviously. I am also not belittling anxiety or depression, especially in the broad sense of the diagnoses. I am solely talking about the anxiety that arises when we, as court reporters, take tests. I am also one person who had one experience and read one article (which, when I searched to cite it, came up 404, URL not found. Go figure). So take this and apply it to your testing experience as you see fit; however, do NOT go against any kind of medical advice you've received without first consulting your doctor. Again, I'm limiting my scope of talking about anxiety to just test-taking.

Anyway, back to it.

All too often we do things or say things or believe things in order to perpetuate this feeling that we have no control. We give these feelings names, we rely on them like clockwork to mess up our day, our tests, our readbacks, and then blame our anxiety for our shortcomings; this "thing" that we don't associate with but resides within us only to cause us embarrassment and failure.

But it does not have to be that way, my friends. You actually have all the control, all the power, and everything already within you to succeed. *Asterisk: Unless you're a 180 student testing at 225. Yes, you have all that control, power, and everything within you, sure. You just need several, several more hours of practice. Hang in there!

But to give your fear a name, to depend on it, to give it power, all of that

takes the energy you have for good and feeds that fear. And if you think about it, in the dumbest-downed sense, all anxiety is a fear of something happening. You fear failure. You fear messing up outlines beyond recognition. You fear that all that prep work and ignoring everything and everyone else and countless hours of practicing was for naught.

Now that part, you actually have no control over the day of the test, so you can let that go. And while I'm here, let me say to you. Do not sit there and practice and beat yourself up for all the things you think you should have done before this moment, an hour before a test. Silently berating yourself is not going to help you. It may seem cathartic, but save it for when you're walking out. Or better yet, be constructive and make a list of what you can do better next time if your lack of preparation is causing you stress. The bottom line is, you have to exercise kindness to yourself, and you have to think about what to do better next time later.

Someone else more poetic than me once said on Facebook, think about all the negative things you think about yourself -- in this case, in the realm of taking a skills test. Now, imagine you're saying those things to your 10-year-old self. Would you? Or would you be a little kinder? Take your 10-year-old self to the test with you, and be kinder. Have you ever seen a kid after they've been paid a compliment? They run faster, they jump higher, they smile bigger. They essentially perform better. You will, too.

I'm sorry there wasn't more to the foreshadowing. The big secret to overcoming test anxiety is breathing. I can feel how anti-climactic that is, but again, stick with me and let me explain.

When we become panicked, our breath shallows. It's part of entering that fight-or-flight mode we experience in intense moments of stress. Your breathing is a primitive function that your body performs on its own (through the medulla

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Yes, you CAN do it!

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oblongata, if you were curious) that we don't have to think about at all. And when we're stressed, we don't want to be distracted with remembering to inhale and exhale.

But active breathing is a totally different concept. When you concentrate on your breathing, you actually activate the more evolved parts of your brain in your cerebral cortex, which brings your awareness more into your present situation. In active breathing, or "consciously breathing, you are controlling which aspects of the mind dominate, causing your consciousness to rise from the primitive/instinctual to the evolved/elevated."

Thus, you are in control of your fear. You are in control of your body. You are in control of where your conscious mind wanders. Are you going to think about that outline 10 strokes ago that you messed up but can actually probably make out? Or are you going to breathe, bring yourself

back to minute 2:48 of this test and hang in there for another two and a half minutes? You have the ability to control your mind, your body, your breathing. It's all within your power.

So here's my challenge to you the next time you're practicing for a test. As best you can, imagine yourself in a testing scenario. Allow that anxiety to creep in, and feel your fingers get tingly and the room around you start to dance. In that moment, I want you to check in with your breath. Where is it? I will bet you money you are breathing shallow; your inhale is at the top part of your sternum and your abdomen is still. I'll even bet it takes you a few minutes the first time around to even remember to check your breathing. That's okay! For as natural as it is, this will take a little bit of practice, too.

Instead of that mindless, shallow breathing, I want you to take a deep breath. By that, I don't mean a loud, obnoxious nasal-constricting breath

that only fills the top part of your lungs. I want you to take a breath that fills your abdomen and causes it to expand – the very action that makes our guts stick out, the very feeling we walk around and try and fight sometimes. When you exhale, I want you to constrict the back of your throat, like you were pretending to sound like a stadium full of 10,000 fans, or like you're trying to scream without making a sound. It should be slightly audible. Do this at your own pace as often as you possibly can.

After some practice refocusing on your breath, my hope is that your experience reflects my own: that little voice in your head quiets, the dictation becomes clearer, your forearms return to flesh and bone, your emotions subside; and when that voice pipes up again, "Holy moly, you're getting it! You're actually getting every word!" you inhale, exhale, and let that voice go quiet.

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For nearly 30 years, Jensen Litigation Solutions has been providing the very best in court reporting services to our clients. To meet ever-increasing demand, we are always looking to add talented, professional, and highly motivated reporters to our team.

Based out of our beautiful office space in the heart of the Chicago Loop, we provide top-of-the-line resources to all of our reporters. At Jensen you can expect to benefit from flexible scheduling, competitive compensation, extensive training/educational opportunities, outstanding amenities, and facilities that are second to none.

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Nominate deserving members and students for ILCRA's highest awards

Each year, ILCRA asks you to nominate some of your fellow colleagues and students to receive ILCRA's awards given out at the annual convention.

Specifically, there are three awards that are given out to worthy candidates: the ILCRA student scholarship, the Distinguished Service Award, and the Award of Excellence that is given to an outstanding educator. Please nominate a worthy person for these great awards.

You can go to www.ilcra.org to find the forms or simply click on the links here.

[Student Scholarship](#)

[Distinguished Service Award](#)

[Award of Excellence](#)

Yes, you CAN do it!

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I encourage you to incorporate this into your testing practice, as well as anytime you're writing. Because the moment you start to feel panicked, you can revert back to the most primitive and life-giving source we have, our breath, and take control of whatever situation you find yourself in.

I heard someone smarter than me once say something to the effect of, "Anxiety is a fear often rooted in the past or in the future. We become anxious over things that have already happened, or things that haven't even occurred and may never happen. So once you can identify where your anxiety is coming from – the past or the future – you can also bring yourself back to the present and realize that in this moment you're living in right now, you're actually okay. And so is everything and everyone else."

1. <https://www.doyouyoga.com/why-is-breath-so-important-in-yoga/>

Yes, I do yoga. No, I am no yogi. And no, my heels don't touch the ground in downward dog.

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What Makes A Leader?

*By Deborah Cohen-Rojas,
CSR, RPR
Official Court Reporter*

Have you ever wondered what makes a leader a leader? As I come to the end of a two-year term as the Secretary of the Illinois Court Reporters Association, I have to admit that I was still a little fuzzy on that concept myself. The story of how I came to be a member of the ILCRA board is not a particularly lofty or prestigious one. I was simply asked by our president, Vernita Allen-Williams, if I would agree to the nomination, and, because I love my profession and wanted to give back, I agreed.

And while the first step to such an endeavor is always the hardest – making the decision to take the plunge and say yes – I have to admit that I couldn't really see myself as a leader. Unfortunately for those of us that are perpetual self-doubters, that first big step is hardly the last. In a magical realm where knowledge, wisdom, and gravitas blink into existence the instant we agree to a leadership role, I'm sure more people wouldn't hesitate to sign up. Luckily, for the rest of us, there is the NCRA Leadership Conference.

The 2017 NCRA Central Region Leadership Conference was held May 19 to May 21 in St. Louis, Missouri. Along with myself, in attendance from the ILCRA board were Andrea James, Pamela Taylor, and Isaiah Roberts, along with members of state association boards from all across the central United States. Upon arrival to the hotel, attendees had the opportunity to meet Tiva Wood, the current President of NCRA, Christine Willette, NCRA's President-Elect, Dave Wenhold, NCRA's Director of Government Relations and Interim Executive Director/CEO, and Matthew Barusch from NCRA's Government Relations Department.



Over the following day and a half, these talented individuals presented seminars on the following topics: "The Nuts and Bolts of Association Work," "Your State's Finances," "Utilizing Your NCRA Rep at Your Convention," "How to Communicate Effectively With Your Members and the Press," "Effective Meeting Planning for a Successful and Profitable Conference," "Running an Effective Board Meeting," "State of the States Report," "How to Make the Most of your Leadership Role," and "Membership: The Lifeblood of Every Association."

Any one of these topics alone can sound overwhelming, but the friendly, down-to-earth, and detailed presentation of these subjects made them all far less intimidating and infinitely accessible. For me, some of the most significant points included: what makes an effective versus ineffective leader; the different types of leadership styles; how to efficiently manage a board agenda; how to address

emotional or controversial issues; how to manage your association's budget, including the planning and execution of conventions and budget development; how to build a cost/benefit analysis for new prospective projects; how NCRA's representatives can contribute to a state's events and the process by which to request the attendance of the reps; how to communicate effectively with members, which addressed different means by which to communicate – i.e., newsletters, e-blasts, social media – as well as the importance of things like body language and being prepared, consistent, and helpful, even when addressing challenging situations; the ins and outs of planning a successful meeting, right down to the small but crucial details like in-house versus outsourced audio/visual and how local unions will affect your meeting's setup; getting the most out of board meetings by having clear policies and procedures in place; issues that states are currently

What Makes A Leader?

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important thing is to be passionate about what you do and having the desire to give back to this great profession that has done so much for all of us. After all, everyone who serves, whether on a state board or nationally, is there completely voluntarily.

So what makes a leader? Sure, it involves core competencies like knowledge of governance, an understanding of “Robert’s Rules,” knowing what an IRS Form 990 is, the intricacies of pre- and post-convention planning, and how to focus a group of people who start spinning off on wild tangents during board meetings. But all this is knowledge gained over time and through experience, along with helpful seminars like those presented at the Leadership Conference. First, though, comes the passion, the desire to serve, and the willingness to learn. And that is something that every leader has in common, even when we’re not aware that we are leaders.

facing and how to stay active and engaged in legislative agendas; group information-sharing sessions on what works, what doesn’t, and new ideas regarding retaining and gaining membership.

All of these sessions definitely contributed to providing me with a solid base of knowledge and preparedness for moving up in my state association. To me, however, the most important takeaway lesson was learned during the session “How to Make the Most Out of Your Leadership Role,” which was led by Tiva Wood and Christine Willette. The presenters took turns telling their stories of being introduced at a young age to

court reporting, falling in love with the profession, and becoming reporters. They then described the process by which they each became involved in their leadership roles, beginning with state associations and then moving on to the national stage to serve as the President and President-Elect of NCRA.

The presenters were very generous in sharing with the attendees in all frankness that they sometimes ask themselves what they’re doing, how they came to be considered leaders, what exactly makes them qualified to be known as such when they often feel doubtful about being up to the task. In the end, they said, the most



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The Next Step, 17 Simple Questions to Ask Yourself

By Kathryn Thomas, RDR, CRC
Captioner

- Are you looking forward rather than backward? Tossing out the paper tape? Getting used to a new machine?
- Is your next step practicing connecting realtime to a tablet?
- Are you registered to take the RPR? Or RMR? Or the RDR? CCR? CRC? Contest?
- Have you packed your laptop and realtime cords so you can realtime for yourself on the next job?
- This Sunday, could you take your laptop and machine and practice captioning the sermon solely on your own laptop, perhaps enlisting a friend to watch your display to help you get used to eyeballs on your writing?
- Is your next step volunteering to present at a career fair?
- Then, what's your next SCARY step? What's the next step you need to take that absolutely terrifies you?
- Is your very first realtime job booked?
- Have you attained your CBC and are anticipating your first captioning or CART captioning job?
- Are you ready to join one of ILCRA's committees?
- Or is it something else, something farther along than any of these suggestions?
- Perhaps working overseas, or opening your own business, or taking a leadership role?
- When you hear the words "getting out of your comfort zone," are you excited, apprehensive, or scared? Or all three?
- Is it bad to be scared? Could it be that a lack of fear simply means you're not at risk?
- If you didn't feel fear, wouldn't that mean your next step isn't big enough? Would that mean that your next step is not really that big a deal?
- Has anything good in life come from a risk-free environment? Is it at all possible for anything amazing to come from safety?
- Security may be comfortable, but is it worth the boredom, the fatigue, the grind?

So, what's your next step?

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People You Should Know: For the Record

By **Deborah L. Goldberg**

This article was originally published in the Lake County Bar Association's The Docket, Vol. 2045, May 2017

If “it takes a village” to raise a child, it takes an even larger village to make a circuit court run efficiently. Every member of the team is a vital cog in the wheel which makes justice run. Not all of the cogs, however, are squeaky and showy. Some of the more important cogs quietly toil without being flashy. Sometimes, they are among the most important parts of the entire operation, yet intentionally go unnoticed. The purpose of this article is to introduce you to one of the more vital, yet unheralded, teams in the courthouse: The Court Reporters.

This writer was privileged to sit down at lunch and interview two of our experienced “Officials,” as they are styled, Colleen Eitermann and Vernita Allen-Williams. The former was certified in 1972, and the latter in 1986. Both went through a rigorous course of training, and both worked freelance before becoming Court-appointed. Their stories are not unusual.

Court reporting is frequently a second career, but not for these ladies. Currently, it’s a three year program to become certified by the National Court Reporting Association. From day one, students work on speed building, learning the equipment and the specialized languages, such as medical, legal, and technical jargon. Transcriptions must be ready in real time. Licensing requires a speed of 240 words per minute, plus an all day exam which incorporates dictation, multiple choice questions on theory and the equipment, and a 90 minute per portion transcribing test. Students will then wait five to six weeks for their results. They renew their licenses every two years. Our reporters attend a seminar every year sponsored by the Conference of Chief Judges, to keep abreast of developments in technology and the law.

Graduates can work either freelance, which affords great flexibility but no benefits, or be Court officials which provides a more predictable paycheck as well as insurance and pension benefits. The income for a first year graduate is comparable to that of a four year college degree holder. Lake County usually boasts a staff of twenty-one, but there are currently four openings and no applicants. Colleen and Vernita find this hard to believe as they both have great affection and enthusiasm for their profession. Vernita is actually finishing up a two-year term as President of the Illinois Court Reporters’ Association.

Illinois is what they call a “blended system” state. Although many circuits have electronic recording, a Court Reporter is still needed to transcribe the proceedings. When McHenry County was part of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit and the Illinois Supreme Court encouraged movement to electronic recording, then-Chief Judge Tonigan opted to have McHenry County take on that

responsibility. As a result, Lake County still counts on our Court Reporters to prepare transcripts, mark and keep exhibits, and make sense of what goes on in most courtrooms.

Our Court Reporters are versatile. They are given their schedule at the beginning of the year and are rotated through all of the divisions which call for them. You will see different faces in different weeks in Criminal, Juvenile, Civil and almost all of the other divisions. On any given day, a Court Reporter will be sitting in courtrooms big and small, sometimes recording a murder trial or sometimes listening to divorce prove-ups. It came as a distinct surprise to me to discover that the Court Reporters actually like Courtroom 105A, what Family Law practitioners call the “Harry Potter Courtroom.” The ladies explained to me that the acoustics are perfect there, even if the space and security are not.

If they have a take-home lesson for all of us, it’s to be “mindful of the record.” Sometimes, in the throes of legal battles, we forget how important it is to make a clear record. We are all guilty of speaking over each other, or mumbling, or turning our heads away from the Court Reporters. They follow protocol very strictly, and will ask the judge to instruct us lawyers to correct these failings rather than speaking to lawyers directly.

It’s not a huge surprise to learn that the Court Reporters take everything down phonetically. Some tune out the content so that they can just concentrate on the sound. Others pay close attention to the content. It’s a matter of style and preference for each Court Reporter. Colleen believes that she is the only Court Reporter who still works from a paper tape, which she disposes of after double checking her work. When I asked about security and privacy, she gently reminded me that no one else can decipher the hieroglyphics that result.

The future of Court Reporting seems secure. Even if more and more jurisdictions are moving to electronic recording – and I still do not have an answer as to how you read back a question or answer from a recording after an objection – someone still has to transcribe the recording. In addition, freelance Court Reporters are still needed for depositions. Transcriptionists also work on television and movies by providing real time closed captioning.

These folks are team players, and darned important members of the team at that. Judge Foreman recognized this and consulted with them on the design of the new Criminal Courts Building. They are very grateful to the court security officers, not only for security, but for keeping the courtrooms quiet enough to let them do their jobs. They are also exceptionally accommodating to private attorneys when transcripts are needed ASAP. They have seen it all and it takes a lot to rattle them, even if you wait until the last moment to perfect that appeal.

Next time you’re in a courtroom, take a moment to notice and appreciate your Court Reporters. Our Justice Train could not run without them.

Legislative Update by ILCRA's Lobbying Team

By the Team at Brown Hay + Stephens

As you are well aware, the General Assembly did not pass a budget by its May 31 deadline. As a result, the legislative session did not adjourn but rather recessed “to the call of the chair.” With the June 30 budget deadline fast approaching, Governor Rauner called lawmakers back for a special session the final ten days of June, beginning Wednesday, June 21. In addition to the budget proposal that already passed the Senate, the Illinois Senate and House Republican Leaders held a press conference last week to announce a budget proposal to be considered during special session.

Instead of a simple majority, it will now take three-fifths’ vote in both the House and Senate to pass legislation, making it more difficult to pass controversial bills like tax hikes or spending cuts. In addition to the continuing burden not having a budget has placed on higher education, human services, etc., if lawmakers don’t pass a budget by the end of the month, road construction will halt, Illinois’ Mega Millions could end, and the state’s credit rating could be downgraded to junk.

The following is a timeline of events in the days preceding the scheduled adjournment date:

The Senate had been negotiating all session toward a “Grand Bargain” that included legislative reforms for which Governor Rauner has been urging, increased revenue, and reduced spending. On May 17, the Senate passed legislation that included authorization to borrow \$7 billion to pay down bills, local government consolidation, pension reform, school funding reform, procurement reform, and gaming. There was Republican support on gaming, pension reform, and on the consolidation bill.

No Republicans supported a bill that would actually implement the budget because they wanted to further negotiate on taxes.

A huge sticking point is the Governor’s demand for a four-year property tax freeze. Democrats say they’ll only approve a two-year hike due to concerns over school funding.

On May 23, Senate Democrats moved ahead with a spending plan, tax hike, and budget cuts without Republican support.

Their plan calls for \$5.4 billion in higher taxes, including raising the personal income tax rate from the current 3.75 percent to 4.95 percent. The package extends the state sales tax to a number of services not now taxed including: laundry and dry-cleaning services, pest control, security and alarm services and tattoo and piercing services. The tax bill does not apply to repair and maintenance of cars or to landscaping services, which was in an earlier version of the bill.

The Senate also approved a \$37.3 billion appropriations bill that authorizes spending for state programs in the fiscal year starting July 1. The spending plan contains 5 percent across-the-board cuts for most state operations, although it does increase spending for K-12 education by \$330 million. A number of human-services programs would be fully funded, including the Community Care Program that helps seniors stay in their homes, domestic violence shelters and child-care services.

Senators also approved a companion budget bill that is needed to implement some of the spending authorized in the budget. The May 23rd version of the budget implementation bill eliminated some provisions from the bill that failed to pass on May 17, which included \$405 million in Medicaid cuts and reduced payments for retired teacher and community college worker health insurance.

These bills failed to advance in the House. Fear among Democrats of blowback from raising taxes trumped a desire by some to put a spending plan on the Governor’s desk. The end result is that for the second year in a row, partisan dysfunction at the Capitol sent lawmakers into a summer overtime session, leaving unanswered questions about whether an agreement can be reached to ensure elementary and high schools open on time this fall, colleges and universities can avoid further cuts, state employees get paid, the poor can get social services, etc.

Speaker Madigan’s decision not to hold budget votes Wednesday held some political benefits as he tries to protect a Democratic majority that’s kept him in power for all but two of the last 34 years. Going into overtime requires GOP lawmakers to either join in a solution to the impasse or split the blame for the continued stalemate. That’s because starting June 1st, passing a budget means at least some Republican votes to reach the three-fifths benchmark now required.

Both sides remain deeply entrenched. Many speculate we could be heading toward a repeat of last year, when they agreed to a stopgap budget to keep schools open and punted on a full-year plan.

Meanwhile, both chambers passed legislation that would:

- Make voter registration automatic for Illinois residents seeking a new or renewed driver’s license or state ID, unless they choose to opt out.
- Prohibit state law enforcement agencies from enforcing federal civil immigration laws.
- Expand automatic expungement for juvenile records.
- Raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2022.

- Allow the state to sell the Thompson Center.
- Change the state's funding formula for K-12 education.
- Make it easier for local governments to consolidate.
- Workers compensation changes.
- Property tax credits for veterans and seniors.

Past due bills now stand at \$14.655 billion and Illinois has had its bond rating downgraded once again.

Of the legislation tracked for ILCRA, only two bills passed both chambers:

If signed by the Governor, HB 2408 would require all regulated and licensed professions to supply an email address to IDFPR which may be a method of contact by IDFPR to the individual licensee for service of notice and other communications. Pursuant to the broad definitions in these pieces of legislation, Certified Shorthand Reporters would be subject to this requirement.

Also subject to gubernatorial signature is SB 1348 which generally makes changes to the Medical Practice Act of 1987, and extends the sunset of this Act. The portion of the legislation of note for ILCRA members is that the Act changes its language to make reference to references to "certified shorthand reporter" instead of the current designation of "stenographer." This change will ensure that only certified shorthand reporters (not unlicensed stenographers) may take testimony and preserve the record in investigatory hearings held by the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.

ILCRA and the Court Reporting Community Loses a Friend

By LeAnn Hibler, CSR, RMR, CRR

On May 11, 2017, Michelle Grimes passed away. Our profession lost one of our own to triple negative breast cancer, and I lost a personal friend. She was only 46. It's said we never know what impact we have on others, and Michelle is an example of that for me.

She worked at a law firm in Joliet as a title researcher when I first met her early in my career. As a freelance reporter I had been practicing my realtime and brought my laptop to depositions. Michelle's firm was a client of the agency I was working for, so we would see each other from time to time. One day Michelle asked if I could show her what I was doing with my equipment, which I did, and the rest is history. Michelle had enrolled as an online student at College of Court Reporting in Hobart, Indiana, and in 2009 when she was in her 160 wpm classes, she contacted me to be her mentor. She eventually completed her schooling and received her IL CSR.

Michelle was very humble. She hated to impose on people. She lived her life with grace and a beautiful smile on her face. She loved rock and roll and played the drums. Yes, she did! And she loved to ride motorcycles. She even started a charitable women's motorcycle club named Bee's Knees.

The thing that impressed me the most about Michelle was her professionalism. She ALWAYS dressed neatly when attending an ILCRA convention. Her hair always coifed in some cool, short hairdo using product to make it stand on end. I never once hesitated to refer her to friends for work because I knew she would make our profession proud.

Michelle and I became personal friends over the years. She definitely was one of us. Always striving for perfection. She will be sorely missed by many. Little did I know the impact that one conversation in a law firm so long ago would have on the both of us.

Rest in peace, my friend.



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