



The University of South Dakota.

SCHOOL OF LAW

USD School of Law was invited to New York for the 2008 Ms. JD Conference held April 5-6, to develop a national women law student's organization. Over the course of the conference the organization was formally named *The National Women Law Student Organization (NWLSO)*. Those in attendance also developed an executive board and established an online community for law students to network between schools and practitioners throughout the country.

Congratulations to USD Law's Women In Law 2007-2008 President, Abigail Cooke, for being elected the Regional Representative of NWLSO for the Midwest Region.

Please take one minute to register on the national website <http://ms-jd.org/user/register>. Your name will be added to a national database and will allow you to be found on the online registry as a member of the NWLSO. There is no fee or obligation to become a member.

USD's Women In Law is very proud to have its officers represented at the conference and conversing with over 100 women representing 74 schools.

Next year's President of USD's Women in Law will have the opportunity to attend the 2009 NWLSO conference in Chicago.

Below is the Conference Report.

NYC Conference Report
Prepared by Abigail Cooke

Conference held: April 3-5 in New York, New York, at the Marriott East Side

The goal of the conference was to combine female law students from around the country to develop and found a nation-wide organization for female law students. Appropriately, the name chosen for the new organization is the **National Women Law Students' Organization**. The conference was comprised of 90 women, representing 70 law schools, from 33 different states. For a complete list of schools in attendance please see, <http://ms-jd.org/>. The following is a brief statement of events at the conference.

Opening Reception:

The opening reception for the conference was held at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. This firm name may not be familiar to the midwestern region but the Wachtell Law Firm is one the largest Manhattan firms located on 52nd street in the CBS building. This prestigious firm donated over \$150,000 dollars to host receptions, provide all meals for the participants throughout the weekend and rent conference rooms at the hotel.

At the opening reception, **Chief Judge on the New York Court of Appeals, Judith Kaye**, spoke to the group about the evolving role of women in the law and goals for the future. Judge Kay was the first woman to sit on the New York Court of Appeals. Her recent article, *The Progress of Women Lawyers At Big Firms: Steadied or Simply Studied*, looked at law firms across the nation and was highlighted in her lecture at the opening reception.

Lynn Hecht Schafran, the Director of the National Judicial Education Program also spoke to the group and offered her perspective on the current professional climate for women in the courtroom.

Division of Group into Subcommittees in the Areas of Networking, Outreach, Student Liaisons, and 2009 Conference Committee:

I joined the networking committee where we discussed ways to network with practitioners within the state by exchanging ideas of different events held by individual women's law organizations throughout the country. I've developed a list of several events that USD's Women In Law program could implement within the next year and can be discussed at future meetings.

Division of Group into Regions:

The Midwest region was comprised of South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri and Kentucky. States not listed did not have delegates at the conference but we discussed how to get all of the Midwest involved in the next year. We are planning a Midwest regional conference possibly in Minneapolis at the beginning of next year. As we plan through the summer, more details will emerge and every WIL member at USD is invited and encouraged to attend the regional conference. At the end of this school year, there will be a regional webpage that each member can access to hear about job opportunities throughout the Midwest. Additionally, the Midwest web page will provide information about current women's issues and a chance to give feedback and perspective about the challenges that every woman may in the practice of law. Lastly, although USD was one of the smaller schools, we had a big voice. I was elected as Regional Chair for the Midwest Region along with another delegate from Michigan State University, Kristine Hansen.

Other elected positions include: Outreach Coordinator, Student Liaison, Networking Chair, and Conference Committee Chair. Please see me for more information about these positions.

Additional Speakers and Honored Guests at the Conference:

Denise L. Cote – J.D., Columbia, 1975

In 1989, Judge Cote served as the first woman chief of the Southern District's Criminal Division, where she remained until her appointment to the federal bench in 1994

Judge Betty Weinberg Ellerin – L.L.B., NYU, 1952

Judge Ellerin was New York's first member of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court – First Department. She also became the presiding Justice of the Appellate Division – First Department and currently serves as the Chair of the New York State Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts and as Senior Counsel for Alston & Bird, LLP.

Janice Goodman – J.D., NYU, 1971

Ms. Goodman was a founding partner at Bellamy, Blank, Goodman, Kelly, Ross, and Stanley – the first all-female law firm in NYC.

Joan Krey - J.D., Pittsburgh, 1975

Associate general counsel for Asbury Automotive. Ms. Krey also Chairs the Ginsberg Lecture on Women in the Law for the New York City Bar Association

Lynn Hecht Schafran – J.D., Columbia, 1974

Led the National Judicial Education Project to Promote Equality for Women and Men in the Courts and was a founding member of the ABA Commission on Women

Barbara Babcock – J.D., Yale, 1963

First woman on regular faculty at Stanford and taught the first course in sex discrimination at Stanford. Also served as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division during the Carter Administration before returning to Stanford and continue teaching in the areas of sex discrimination and gender equality

Dahalia Lithwick – J.D., Stanford, 1996

Senior Editor at the online new magazine, Slate.com where she writes columns in the “Supreme Court Dispatches,” “Jurisprudence,” and “XX Factors” series

Overall, the conference was extremely beneficial and inspiring. I was so pleased to represent USD at this event and hope that we are able to continue to be an instrumental part of NWLSO. Please don't hesitate to contact me for more information about the conference and future NWLSO events.

Thank you to everyone for your support in sending me to this wonderful event.

Abigail Cooke
2007-2009 WIL President.