Chair’s column

By Ebony R. Huddleston, Esq.

The holiday season generally puts people in an upbeat and generous mood. Over the next month, we, as practitioners, should take the opportunity to express some of that goodwill cheer in our everyday practice. One way to incorporate the positive vibes of the season in your work life is to play holiday music in your office. For the past few years, beginning on November 1st, I choose various online Web sites to play holiday-themed music. I purposefully set the volume just high enough where other attorneys and staff in my firm can hear the jingle of a sleigh bell or a familiar melody that reminds them of the holiday season when walking by my office. It is amazing how a little lighthearted music will spark conversations about childhood holiday memories or plans to make sure family and loved ones have a happy holiday season. These memories and conversations provide a brief, yet pleasant distraction from the routine of the day.

Beyond the office, practitioners can wear symbols of the holiday season in the form of a bracelet, lapel pin, tie, handkerchief, or other accessories so as to be festive, but appropriately dressed for court appearances and meetings out of the office. I must admit, I am especially fond of

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Saint or sinner? The efficacy of the proposed “1,000 Shareholder” amendment to Section 12(g)

By Cory White

In early 2011 Facebook closed a $1.5 billion cash raise, $1 billion of which came through the usage of a special purpose Goldman Sachs investment fund. This allowed Facebook to pool the investment dollars of numerous investors while only recording one holder of record on its books, namely the Goldman investment fund. Amongst other things, some have suggested this was a move by Facebook to remain below the 500 equity holder registration threshold imposed by Section 12(g) of the Securities Exchange Act. A company that reaches this threshold has to register its securities with the Securities and Exchange Commission and begin periodic reporting. The SEC has traditionally noted that this registration requirement is in place to protect investors and preserve market integrity.

In response to what they believe to be a hindrance to capital formation, Representatives David Schweikert (R-AZ) and Jim Himes (D-CT) have introduced a bill in the House that would bump the threshold number to 1,000 equity holders in any particular class of security. The bill was introduced in June 2011. On October 5, 2011 the bill advanced through the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Capital Markets and Government Sponsored Enterprises. As with any change to the securities laws, the goal is to balance investor protection with the legitimate business needs of the issuer. Do the benefits of the new

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Chair’s column

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bold fashion statements my fellow practitioners make through a holiday-themed purse or dress socks. Holiday apparel also fosters great, spontaneous, conversations with clients and attorneys you might not have spoken with but for a compliment paid to the person. Holiday apparel even serves as great icebreakers with judges on the bench between motions. Inevitably, each year, someone always has a story about how a relative or good friend prompted the wearing of a certain item.

Once the workday ends, classic holiday videos like Home for the Holidays, A Charlie Brown Christmas and the 1938 version of A Christmas Carol take me to a different time and place. I find myself smiling and laughing, reminiscing and crying. At those moments, there are no billable hours, no clients who want more work done for less money, and no motions or briefs to be written. By allowing myself this outlet, when I return to the duties of practicing law I am more enthused and ready to go that extra mile at the office. I converse with my clients with greater confidence and they see that the quality of my work is truly worth the money. I note that even my pen scrolls across the pages of documents more easily, making the writing process for a brief or memorandum for the court a little less burdensome.

During this holiday season, do not take practicing law so seriously that you miss out on the joy of the holiday season. If you allow yourself to embrace the mood of the season in your practice, you cannot help but have a pleasant disposition during your workday. I challenge each reader to develop a niche when it comes to enjoying the holiday season while handling work case load. If you have already developed a holiday routine you are comfortable with, encourage someone else to carve out a special way to take pleasure in the season. Arriving at the office in a good mood sets the tone for the rest of the day. I can honestly say that law becomes a little more fun for me during this time of the year.

Our committee hopes that you enjoy the rest of the newsletter and remember to spread a little holiday cheer this season.

NOTE: We have included information about the Diversity Leadership Award on page three of this newsletter. Please be sure to review the eligibility information and nominate someone or an organization you know to be deserving of this award. The person or organization selected to receive the award will be recognized at the ISBA Annual Meeting in June 2012. Questions or comments can be directed to tobyeveland@aol.com.
ISBA DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

The Diversity Leadership Award recognizes long standing, continuing and exceptional commitment by an individual or an organization to the critical importance of diversity within the Illinois legal community, its judiciary and within the Illinois State Bar Association.

Eligibility: The recipient shall have made significant contributions to the advancement of diversity within the Illinois legal community, its judiciary and/or the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA). The recipient may be a lawyer or non-lawyer or an organization of lawyers or a combination of both.

For purposes of this award, “diversity” shall be construed broadly to include race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or any other category of historically disadvantaged individuals.

Consideration will be given to efforts to raise awareness of the importance of diversity to the legal profession; development of or participation in any innovative or meaningful initiatives or programs related to improving diversity within the legal profession; demonstrated commitment to diversity beyond the ISBA; or, exceptional support in advancing a particular diverse affinity group’s interests within the Illinois legal profession.

NOMINATION PROCESS

To nominate a person or organization for this award, please attach a letter or other supporting documentation that includes the following information:

1. Name of Nominee
2. Name of nominee’s law firm, company or organization
3. Nominee’s contact information, including telephone and e-mail address
4. A description of how the nominee has made significant contributions to the advancement of diversity within the Illinois legal community, its judiciary and/or the ISBA.
5. Contact information of the nominator. (Only ISBA members can nominate an individual or organization for this award.)

Deadline for submitting Nominations: Friday, April 6, 2012

The Award will be presented at the Annual Awards Luncheon on Friday, June 15, 2012, at the Abbey on Lake Geneva, Fontana, WI.

Submit nomination information to the Diversity Leadership Council, ISBA, c/o Janet Sosin, 20 S. Clark St., 9th Floor, Chicago, IL 60603, or by fax: 312-726-9071 or e-mail: jsosin@isba.org.
Saint or sinner? The efficacy of the proposed “1,000 Shareholder” amendment to Section 12(g)

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bill outweigh the costs? As noted below, the answer is a cautious “yes.”

The Basics

Section 12 of the Exchange Act speaks to the registration of securities by issuers based on how those securities are both held and transacted. Perhaps the most common form of registration is found under Section 12(a), which requires registration with any national exchange prior to the security being traded on that exchange. If a company desires to be publicly traded, i.e. traded through the facilities of a national securities exchange, it needs to move under Section 12(a) and the accompanying rules. This registration triggers the periodic reporting that publicly traded companies have to comply with under Section 13 of the Exchange Act. Trading on a national exchange is generally only viable after an IPO is launched, and trading on a national exchange allows the issuer to make up the costs of reporting. Consequently, launching an IPO is generally the best method of offsetting the reporting costs associated with public trading.

Section 12(g) provides for another set of registration requirements and, unlike Section 12(a), provides for mandatory registration based on company size. Regardless of the private nature of a company, a company must register under Section 12(g) once that company reaches 500 record holders in any class of equity security, as recorded on the books and records of the company, and has over $10,000,000 in total assets. The definition of “record holder” and the definition of “total assets” are both handled through SEC rules. As with Section 12(a) registration, Section 12(g) registration triggers continuing reporting requirements and makes the launch of an IPO prudent to offset the costs of reporting.

Finally, rule 12g5-1 notes that if a company records holders of record in such a way to knowingly and primarily circumvent Section 12(g), the beneficial owners of the securities will be treated like owners of record under the section and rules. It should be noted that the SEC has rarely invoked this rule and has yet to invoke the rule when special purpose vehicles (SPVs), such as the Goldman-Facebook investment fund, are used to facilitate investments in private companies. SEC Chairman Mary Schapiro did note that her staff is currently looking at the possible application of the rule to SPVs.

The Big Change

Some lawmakers and regulators see the current “500 shareholder rule” of section 12(g) as a hindrance to capital formation, which has always been a stated goal of the SEC and other financial regulators. Representatives David Schweikert (R-AZ) and Jim Himes (D-CT) have introduced a bill that will amend Section 12(g) to do the following:

- Raise the shareholders of record threshold to 1,000 shareholders;
- Exclude from the threshold number certain employees granted securities as part of compensation packages; and
- Exclude from the threshold number accredited investors, as defined by SEC rule making.

Representative Schweikert has noted that having regulators dictate when a company goes public is not necessarily the best thing for the capital markets. He has also noted that although the bill does affect giants like Facebook and Zynga, it is really aimed at smaller companies that, while prospering, do not have the resources to go public. The Congressman believes the current Section 12(g) has stunted the growth of these smaller privately held companies.

The Pros

As with most things, there are both pros and cons to the piece of legislation introduced by Reps. Schweikert and Himes. First, the pros:

1) The new bill does facilitate capital formation, as it opens up more private capital to smaller companies. These companies will be granted greater control over how capital is raised, creating greater flexibility in capital acquisition.
2) Because smaller companies will be able to dictate more effectively when and how they go public, the bill reduces the cost of doing business for these companies while stimulating growth.

THE CHALLENGE

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The articles in this newsletter are not intended to be used and may not be relied on for penalty avoidance.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to the Illinois State Bar Association, 424 S. 2nd St., Springfield, IL 62701-1779.
3) Finally, forcing companies to go public when they are not ready can cause instability in the public capital markets. The bill allows companies continued growth without subjecting the public markets to increased risk.

The One Big Con

Although other issues with the bill may be identified as the bill moves through Congress, the largest negative effect is the tempering of disclosure requirements. The necessary consequence of the new rule will be less public reporting by companies that have a significant number of record owners and perhaps countless more beneficial owners. This one big con must be weighed against the pros to determine the viability of the new legislation.

What if You’re Not Facebook?

It is important to understand this change in the statute, and consequently the rules, applies to any business that issues securities. Like all securities questions, the threshold issue is whether or not the company in question is considered an issuer of securities. If the answer to that question is yes, then the amendments to Section 12(g) will apply to that company’s issuance of securities. Still, only those businesses that are up against the 500 equity holder limit need immediately concern themselves with Section 12(g).

Consequently, smaller businesses with only a handful of equity holders of record should not be affected by the amendments but should always keep themselves informed as to current trends in capital formation.

The Verdict

SEC Chairman Mary Schapiro has noted how holders of record are counted and the number of holders that should trigger registration under Section 12(g) need to be reevaluated. This is due to the changes in the capital markets in the nearly five decades since Section 12(g) was adopted. With these changes in mind and after considering the advantages of the new legislation listed above, it is safe to say that the benefits apparent from the face of the legislation outweigh the costs. While any tempering of disclosure requirements should be met with scrutiny, it should be noted that many “private” companies today are able to escape registration and reporting because, while they have in excess of 500 beneficial owners, the number of record holders falls below 500 due to ownership of securities in “street name.”

The Commission has yet to identify any serious disclosure issues with this very common practice. It is also important to note that the securities fraud laws and regulations will still be in play for any securities based transactions and communications made to investors by private companies.

The move to a 1,000 shareholder limit would not cause as serious a deficiency in reporting as it may initially seem, as the new law would move more in line with current market realities. Additionally, the securities fraud laws would still provide powerful investor protections. When weighed against the greater access to capital, reducing the cost of business by the private companies that are generally affected by the current rules, and insulating our public markets from certain companies and sectors not yet ready to go public, the benefits of the new law outweigh the costs.

Cory White is a 2009 graduate of DePaul University College of Law. He is currently a managing member at the law firm Hafelein | White, LLC where he focuses his practice on securities compliance.


10. 15 U.S.C. § 78(g); 17 C.F.R. §§ 240.12g-1-12g5-2.
11. 17 C.F.R. §§ 240.12g5-1(b)(3).


Gary Zhao focuses his practice on commercial litigation at SmithAmundsen. His fluency in Mandarin Chinese and knowledge of the Chinese culture also make him a tremendous asset for his firm’s China-based clients.

While all litigators think they have exceptional talent when they walk into a courtroom, Zhao, 34, actually has it -- and it shows, said Katherine Lengiewicz, who has known Zhao for over five years as a friend and a former colleague at SmithAmundsen. “No matter how large or small the task, Gary is prepared. Being a litigator is more than just going to court. A good lawyer has to see the big picture while continuing to be involved in the minutia. Gary does both,” Lengiewicz says. “I’ve observed Gary before more than one jury. He not only convinces people of his point of view, but does so while remaining respectful of his opponent and the system itself. To watch Gary before a jury is to know he is a litigator.”

James Smith of Ryan, Ryan, & Landa has known Zhao for seven years and was his supervising partner at SmithAmundson for three. Smith remembers Zhao’s perseverance in cases that at first blush seemed to not be going his way. “The measure of Gary’s litigation skills was in those cases where he was foreclosed from supplementing his disclosures… I was impressed that Gary never panicked,” said Smith. “Though he understood and appreciated the challenges, he was also resourceful enough to do the research and either challenge plaintiff’s evidence through a motion in limine practice or by finding alternative methods to introduce favorable evidence…”

As a lead attorney, Zhao obtained significant settlement after he prosecuted a breach of a commercial lease agreement on behalf of a large real estate and financial services company against a large cable television operator; successfully defended a $38 million dollar false internet advertising suit in the Northern District of Illinois; and won a motion for judgment on the pleadings for a global membership association facing civil fraud and conspiracy claims. Gary has significant experience defending clients who are subject to regulatory investigations undertaken by various state and federal government agencies. He currently serves as co-national coordinating counsel for a major food processing and packaging company in connection with a FDA recall. Using his bi-cultural and bi-lingual background, Gary has also served as outside litigation and corporate counsel for large publicly traded Chinese companies and their subsidiaries in the Chicago region.

Prior to joining SmithAmundsen, Zhao worked for two years as a judicial law clerk for Presiding Justice Mary W. McDade of the Illinois Appellate Court, Third Judicial District. “Gary’s greatest strengths are his very practical approach to litigation and his unflinching focus on representing the interests of his clients;” said one nominating attorney. “His experiences as a judicial clerk… have provided him with a valuable perspective as a judicial officer.”

Zhao is a member of the Illinois State Bar Association, where he serves on the Standing Committee on Racial and Ethnic Minorities and the Law. Zhao has been appointed to serve a two-year term, from 2010 to 2012, as an ABA Business Law Section Ambassador, an honor which carries a prestige and distinction reflecting the substantive contributions of a business lawyer of color. Gary is also active in both local and national Asian American bar organizations. He currently co-chairs the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association’s litigation committee. He is a past board member of the Asian American Bar Association (AABA) of Chicago and a current board member of AABA Law Foundation. He serves as a pro bono attorney with the Chicago Chinatown legal clinic hosted by the AABA and volunteers for the National Immigrant Justice Center, where he helps Chinese children in immigration detention centers with their asylum proceedings.

“Gary uses his legal knowledge and skills not just to advocate for the clients he is paid to defend, but he gives back to his community and to those less fortunate,” said attorney Heather Kingery, who has worked with Zhao and known him for seven years “Gary is not just a well-rounded attorney, but also a well-rounded member of our community.”

He earned his B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1999 and his J.D. from Washington University in St. Louis School of Law in 2002. While in law school, he was the Executive Essays Editor of the Washington University Global Studies Law Review.

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Diversity Fellow Spotlight—Beverly A. Allen, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, Inc.

By Beverly Yang

Beverly A. Allen has been a leader in bringing justice and equality to the underprivileged since she was a student at St. Louis University School of Law, where she earned her J.D. in 1990. Each and every year of law school, Beverly served those who could not receive legal assistance at the St. Louis University Law Clinic. Upon graduation, Beverly was commissioned to be Judge Advocate General’s Corp of the United States Naval Reserve.

Beverly worked at the Naval Legal Service Office in Norfolk, Virginia for two years before being appointed to the Defense Department, Naval Air Station Oceana, where she was eventually promoted to Department Head. During her time in the Naval Reserve, Beverly handled cases for victims of racial and ethnic discrimination even while occasionally facing discrimination as an African American woman. Despite these challenges, and as a result of her leadership qualities, Beverly was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander within four years.

After leaving the Naval Reserve, Beverly began working at the Central Office of Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation (Land of Lincoln) in East St. Louis. In order to understand the community served by Land of Lincoln, one cannot ignore East St. Louis’ past. East St. Louis was wracked by lynchings and race riots during the Reconstruction Era as African Americans migrated from the rural south in search of a living wage. Since 1950, the population of East St. Louis has steadily decreased as non-minority residents migrated away from the city. Unmistakable signs of historic segregation and economic inequality are characteristic of East St. Louis today.

At Land of Lincoln, Beverly handled private landlord/tenant, consumer, utility and family law cases until 1998. Beverly also drew upon her managerial experience in the military to develop and implement a legal hotline. With the legal hotline, Beverly aimed to increase the quantity and quality of legal services that Land of Lincoln could provide to citizens who could not afford legal help. The legal hotline morphed into the Land of Lincoln, Legal Advice and Referral Center, with Beverly as Managing Attorney, growing the hotline from a small staff to seven attorney intake and advice lines. With avid support from administration, Beverly has also developed the program-wide race equity initiative and now heads the Land of Lincoln Race Equity Task Force. The Task Force is committed to strengthening recruitment practices that will attract diverse talent at all levels within the organization and support the promotion and advancement of minority employees.

Given her decades-long dedication to serving those who cannot afford legal services, advocating on behalf of minorities and fighting for equal justice, it is only fitting that Beverly has been appointed to the ISBA Diversity Leadership Council as a 2011-2012 Fellow. The ISBA Diversity Fellows program was inaugurated in 2010 to increase diversity in the membership of ISBA section councils, committees, and other leadership positions, to educate young lawyers about the work, structure, and policies of the ISBA, and to develop a diverse group of future leaders of the organization.

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January


Tuesday, 1/10/12- Teleseminar—Dangers of Using “Units” in LLC Planning. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.

Friday, 1/13/12- Teleseminar—Bridging the Valuation Gap: “Earnouts” and Other Techniques. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.


Wednesday, 1/18/12- Live Studio Webcast—Step-by-Step Appeals in Child Custody. Presented by the ISBA Child Law Section; co-sponsored by the ISBA Family Law Section. 11-1.


Friday, 1/20/12- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Practical Professional Responsibility for Health Care, Life Sciences and Corporate Attorneys and their Outside Counsel. Presented by the ISBA Health Care Section. 1-4:15.

Friday, 1/20/12- Collinsville, Gateway Center—Motion Practice. Presented by the ISBA Tort Law Section. 9-12. Max 66.

Tuesday, 1/24/12- Teleseminar—Incentive Trusts: Approaches and Limits to Encouraging “Good” Behavior in Beneficiaries. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.

Thursday, 1/26/12- Chicago, Union League Club—Making the Record on Appeal and Ethics and Civility in the Court Room. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association, the Illinois Judges Association and the Women’s Bar Association of Illinois. 1:30-4:55 CLE; 5-6:30 Reception.

Friday, 1/27/12- Collinsville, Gateway Center—Motion Practice. Presented by the ISBA Tort Law Section. 9-12. Max 75.


February


Friday, 2/3/12- Bloomington, Holiday Inn & Suites—Hot Topics in Agricultural Law 2012. Presented by the ISBA Agricultural Law Section. 9-4:45. Max 150.


Thursday, 2/9/12- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Nuts and Bolts of Starting Your Own Practice: A Primer for Ethically Creating Your Own Law Firm. Presented by the ISBA young Lawyers Division. 12:30-5:00.

Friday, 2/10/12- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Limited Representation: The Ethical, Legal and Practice Issues Exposed. Presented by the ISBA Law Office Management and Economics Committee and the ISBA General Practice Solo and Small Firm Section. 8:30-12:45.


Monday, 2/20/12- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Advanced Worker’s Compensation- Spring 2012. Presented by the ISBA Worker’s Compensation Law Section. 8:30-4:00.

Monday, 2/20/12- Fairview Heights, Four Points Sheraton—Advanced Worker’s Compensation- Spring 2012. Presented by the ISBA Worker’s Compensation Law Section. 8:30-4:00.

Tuesday, 2/21/12- Teleseminar—Negotiating and Drafting the Purchase of Bank-Owned Commercial Real Estate. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.


March

Thursday, 3/1/12- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—eTechnology in the Courthouse: Present and Future. Presented by the ISBA Bench and Bar Section. 1:30-4:45.
Don’t miss this easy-to-use reference guide to Supreme Court Rule 213(f) & (g)

SUPREME COURT RULE 213(f) & (g) QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE
 third edition
(Current through May 2011)

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The Guide is a useful tool for quickly learning the law under Rule 213(f) & (g). It reviews all of the Illinois Appellate and Supreme Court decisions to date concerning Supreme Court Rule 213(f) & (g). In addition to a summary, the Guide organizes the propositions for which the cases stand by topics that can be quickly referenced during argument on a motion in limine or motion to bar opinion witnesses.

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