

Lessons from the Bumblebee



YOU MAY HAVE HEARD that the bumblebee should not be able to fly — that according to the laws of aerodynamics, a bumblebee’s wings are too small in proportion to the size of its body, and they cannot beat fast enough to support flight. Yet ...

In these tough times, the legend of the bumblebee reminds us of the value of determination and perseverance. We are in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. A *Wall Street Journal* article noted that this recession has been marked by the loss of professional jobs, including lawyers.’ In 2008, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number of unemployed lawyers increased 66 percent to a ten-year high of twenty thousand. In 2009, according to LawShucks.com, more than four thousand lawyers have been laid off from law firms.

The economic crisis has disproportionately impacted young lawyers. Associates have been laid off in record numbers. Recent law school graduates have found it difficult to get jobs. Starting dates for incoming associates at many large law firms have been deferred for months.

The Young Lawyers Conference (YLC) is committed to serving the nine thousand lawyers in Virginia who are in their first three years of legal practice or under the age of thirty-six, especially during these difficult economic conditions and unprecedented

changes in the legal industry. As a new member service initiative, the YLC recently offered hardship scholarships and discounts to its Professional Development Conference, so that young lawyers who had been affected by the economic crisis could attend.

Young lawyers facing challenging circumstances are not without resources. For example, the American Bar Association, under the leadership of President Carolyn B. Lamm, has a website to help lawyers during the economic downturn. It contains a job board and serves as a clearinghouse of information on topics such as job searching, networking, and professional development. The ABA’s Economic Recovery Resources portal is <http://new.abanet.org/economicrecovery/default.aspx>.

In addition, the American Law Institute-American Bar Association and the Association for Legal Career Professionals offer a Web-based presentation, “Managing a Legal Career Transition in Tough Times,” at <http://www.ali-aba.org/career/>.

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Uncertainty and other challenges arising out of the economic crisis may cause increased stress, which can create or exacerbate mental health problems. For lawyers struggling with increased

stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems triggered by the economic crisis, Lawyers Helping Lawyers (<http://www.valhl.org/>) provides confidential twenty-four-hour assistance.

Now, more than ever, young lawyers must develop their legal expertise, acquire practice management techniques, learn business development skills, and network. These opportunities are available to young lawyers through the YLC, now as always. Young lawyers defy the odds, even in changing and uncertain times.