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The National Organization on Legal Problems of Education: Serving the Profession

by Martha M. McCarthy

The National Organization on Legal Problems of Education (NOLPE) is a nonprofit, nonadvocacy organization that was established almost three decades ago to provide a vehicle for the dissemination of unbiased information about current issues in school law. Among those who played significant roles in championing the need for such an organization in the early 1950s were Edward Bolmeier, Lee Garber, Robert Hamilton, Madeline Remmian, and Roger Shaw. The organization was officially launched at a national convention held in various regions in the United States and foreign countries. NOLPE has members in every state in the United States as well as in Germany, Puerto Rico, Canada, Australia, Brazil, China, and Japan. One of NOLPE's major strengths lies in the diversity of its membership which facilitates bringing a variety of perspectives together to address complex educational law problems.

Membership and Governance

Membership in NOLPE is open to all individuals and organizations with a special interest in educational law. Among its current 3,000 members are practicing attorneys, administrators and faculty members in schools of education and law schools, school board members, public and private school administrators and teachers, staff members of state and federal education agencies and professional associations, and libraries. NOLPE has members in every state in the United States as well as in Germany, Puerto Rico, Canada, Australia, Brazil, China, and Japan. One of NOLPE's major strengths lies in the diversity of its membership which facilitates bringing a variety of perspectives together to address complex educational law problems.

NOLPE is governed by a board of directors consisting of the president, immediate past president, president-elect, vice-president and nine directors. Officers are elected annually, and three board members are elected each year to serve three year terms. The Nominations Committee attempts to devise a slate of officers and board members reflecting the various role groups in NOLPE and broad geographic representation. The NOLPE board meets before and after the Annual Convention and often holds a midyear meeting.

The NOLPE executive director, who is appointed by the NOLPE Board, manages the operation of the organization as set forth in the constitution and by-laws. Marion McGheehey served in this role for two decades (from 1962 until his death in 1982), during which time NOLPE membership increased almost tenfold and the organization attained international stature in the field of school law. Tom Jones is now executive director and has played a key role in the implementation of several new services for NOLPE members. The NOLPE staff has been located in Topeka, Kansas (5401 Southwest Seventh Avenue, Topeka, Kansas 66606) since 1982.

Programs and Publications

Each year NOLPE hosts several seminars which address current legal issues such as the federal rights of handicapped children and collective bargaining. The seminars, which are held in various geographical regions, are limited in enrollment to provide an opportunity for maximum participation and in-depth exploration of specific legal topics. NOLPE also co-sponsors various school law conferences with other state and national professional associations.

NOLPE's Annual Convention provides a forum for the discussion of current school law problems with experts from all parts of the United States and foreign countries. Lawyers can receive continuing legal education credit for attending the convention as well as NOLPE regional seminars. The convention format stimulates dialogue among attorneys, professors, and practitioners and also provides an opportunity for specific role groups to meet and share ideas. For example, the NOLPE network of professors of school law meets to exchange teaching strategies and materials and share current research interests. The con-

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vention also includes a business meeting at which time
the membership discusses future programs and activities
and elects officers and board members.
NOLPE publications are invaluable in keeping the mem-
bership up-to-date on school law issues. Among NOLPE's
regular publications are the following:
1. **NOLPE Notes** is a monthly newsletter containing
brief summaries of reported and unreported cases,
administrative decisions, legislative developments,
and publications of interest. An insert with an up-
date on the current Supreme Court docket is in-
cluded in each issue.
2. **NOLPE School Law Reporter** is a monthly loose-
leaf publication with cites and brief summaries of
all reported state and federal school cases by
topic. It also includes analyses of recent cases of
particular interest.
3. **NOLPE Case Citations** is an index to current cases
on a particular school law topic (e.g., search and
seizure, home education) which is published five
times a year.
4. **The Yearbook of School Law** is an annual publica-
tion in which the previous year's federal and state
court decisions affecting public and private schools
and higher education are analyzed.

5. **Convention Proceedings** is an annual publication
composed of papers on timely school law topics
that were presented at the NOLPE Convention.
In addition to the regular publications, NOLPE pub-
lishes other books and several monographs each year on
topics such as student suspensions and expulsions,
teacher evaluation, and discrimination in employment.
Recently, a mini-monograph series was launched which is
designed to offer practical legal guides in areas such as
how to conduct a due process hearing.
NOLPE occupies a unique position in that it is the
only national organization that focuses specifically on
educational law concerns. As school law issues have be-
come more numerous and complex, the organization has
attempted to respond through its programs, services, and
publications. Based on the results of a comprehensive
needs assessment conducted by the board of directors in
1980-81, the **NOLPE School Law Journal** was discon-
tinued, and the mini-monograph series and **Case Citations**
were initiated. Both of the new publication ventures have
been extremely successful. The NOLPE Board of Direc-
tors currently is engaged in developing long-range plans
for the organization and is committed to keeping NOLPE
responsive to its membership and at the forefront in the
field of educational law.