

HAWAII Women LAWYERS

February/March 2006

Upcoming Events

YWCA Bling Fling

When: May 11, 2006

Time: 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Where: Anne Namba's showroom
324 Kamani Street

Ticket Cost: \$75.00

RSVP: Contact Zale Okazaki at
zale000333@hotmail.com.

HWL Elections

HWL will be holding elections for new Officers and Board Members. If you are interested in becoming a board member, please contact Stacey Djou or any of our current board members for more information.



Photo from Annual Awards Ceremony

Hawaii Women Lawyers
1976-2006

**Celebrating 30 Years of Enabling
Women to Live Their Best Lives**
~ in Law, at Home and at Work, in the
Community ~

HWL's Sixth Annual Balancing Work & Family Lunch

Hawaii Women Lawyers, with assistance from the William S. Richardson School of Law, is planning its Sixth Annual Balancing Work & Family Lunch, which is scheduled for Wednesday, April 5, 2006, from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm at the William S. Richardson School of Law. The event, which began when several students expressed interest in talking with local attorneys about the ability to balance the demands of work and family while practicing law, has been extremely successful, with about 50-60 students attending each year. The students appreciate the participation and candor of HWL's attorneys. We hope to have 12-16 panelists so that we can accommodate as many students as possible, and provide many different perspectives and experiences.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact HWL Law Student Rep. Natalie Wilson at friend@hawaii.edu.

Thank you for your participation and support!

HWLF IS SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2006 RHODA LEWIS PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

The Hawaii Women's Legal Foundation is seeking nominations for the 2006 Rhoda Lewis Public Service Award. If you have a nomination for the award, please send a statement about the nominee to HWLF, including a resume, if possible, and information on the nominee's public service activities. Please send the statement, including related information, to P.O. Box 2576, Honolulu, HI 96803-0576. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2006.

The Rhoda Lewis Public Service Award provides a \$500 honorarium to honor an outstanding woman attorney for extraordinary public service. The Award is named for Rhoda Valentine Lewis, the first woman appointed to the Hawaii Supreme Court. Past recipients include Loren Walker (extraordinary volunteer community service) (2005), Shawna Sodersten (Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline) (2004), and Tracey Wiltgen (Mediation Center of the Pacific) (2003).

President's Column

Stacey Kawasaki Djou, HWL President



Thank you to all of you who attended last week's awards ceremony. HWL is so privileged to have such an amazing group of awardees. Their personal stories are an inspiration to me, and a testament to the success of women in the legal profession and in our community. To all of the attorneys, judges, elected officials, and especially Rai Saint Chu, who founded HWL, thank you for supporting our honorees and for sharing in such a special evening.

Stacey

HWL 2005 Annual Awards Ceremony



On March 10, 2006, HWL held its Annual Awards Ceremony honoring five outstanding women in our community. The 2005 award recipients were: Thalia Murphy (Outstanding Woman Lawyer of the Year), Melody MacKenzie (Lifetime Achievement Award); Honorable Colleen Hirai (Outstanding Judicial Achievement Award), Laurie Tochiki (Distinguished Service Award), and Representative Barbara Marumoto (President's Award). Nearly two hundred people joined us in honoring these women. HWL would like to thank everyone for their support and send a big congratulations to all awardees.



The Judicial Selection Process

A Brown Bag Discussion with the Judicial Selection Commission

by Della Au Belatti



At the brown bag luncheon on February 21, 2006, Judicial Selection Commission members Rosemary Fazio, Sidney Ayabe, and Shelton Jim On discussed the role of the Commission in the selection and retention processes of Hawaii's judges.

Created in 1978 by a State constitutional amendment, the Commission has a tremendous influence in determining who serves on the bench as a Justice or judge. The Commission is charged with reviewing and evaluating applications for all judicial vacancies and voting, by secret ballot, for qualified nominees. These nominees are then forwarded to the appropriate appointing authority who, with the advice and consent of the Senate, selects the individual to fill the judicial vacancy. The Governor is the appointing authority of judges to the Supreme Court, the Intermediate Court of Appeals, and the Circuit Courts. The Chief Justice is the appointing authority for judges to the District Courts.

The Commission also exerts influence over the retention of judges independent from either the Senate, Governor, or Chief Justice. When a judge or Justice petitions the Commission to be retained in office, the Commission conducts a thorough investigation into the qualifications of the petitioner for continued judicial office. This investigation includes confidential questionnaires, interviews with confidential sources, interviews with the petitioners, and review of an extensive application submitted by the petitioner and other court documents. After this investigation, the Commission, by secret ballot, determines whether the petitioner should or should not be retained in office.



Right from the start, Hawaii Women Lawyer members were a lively and engaged audience that questioned the panelists on a range of topics, including consideration of underrepresented groups in the selection process, the merits of confidentiality in the proceedings, and the need for greater transparency. Two themes emerged from the dialog among the participants and the panelists.

First, despite criticisms of the judicial selection and retention process, the merit-based approach in Hawaii is one of the best in the country. This is evidenced by the thoroughness of investigations conducted by the Commission in a manner that seeks to gather as much information from all the participants in the legal system.

Second, the value of confidentiality was underscored to encourage individuals to even consider applying for a judicial vacancy. Confidentiality was also supported in order to make individuals feel comfortable in coming forward with honest and constructive criticisms they may have about individuals seeking first-time appointments or for judges seeking retention.

Judicial selection and retention are vital processes to a legal system that seeks to provide justice to our communities. Through discussions like the February brown bag luncheon, HWL hopes to continue to educate our membership about these processes, identify the ways in which members can participate in these processes, and build the bar's and the public's trust in the overall functioning of our judicial system.

Mahalo to the Judicial Selection Commission and the Following Panelists at the February Brown Bag Lunch:

Rosemary Fazio currently serves as the vice-chairperson of the Commission and has been a member of the Commission since 2003. Ms. Fazio is a partner in the law firm of Ashford & Wriston. She was elected by the bar to serve on the Commission.

Sidney Ayabe has been a member of the Commission since 2001 and previously served as the chairperson for two years from 2003 to 2005. Mr. Ayabe is a partner at Ayabe Chong Nishimoto Sia & Nakamura. Mr. Ayabe was also elected by the bar to serve on the Commission.

Shelton Jim On was appointed by Governor Linda Lingle to serve on the Commission starting in April 2005. He is one of the partners at Jim On & Beerman.

Hawai'i Women Lawyers

P.O. Box 2072

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96805

PRE-SORTED STANDARD

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2005-2006**

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