



July 10, 2006

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ALABAMA CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS MEET

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Montgomery, Alabama.....The Alabama Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (ACDLA) is proudly celebrating its 25th year of defending justice in Alabama. Newly-elected President Melinda Morgan Austin (Holt, Musselman, Holt & Morgan) of Florence, Alabama recently focused on the organization's silver anniversary at its Annual Meeting in Pensacola Beach, Florida.

Ms. Morgan Austin said, "When formed, the goals of the organization were to meet, organize, educate and promote criminal defense and criminal justice and to strive for excellence, integrity and cooperation in the field. The organization is continuing to meet these goals."

She continued, "During the past two years ACDLA has actively worked in the legislative arena to attempt to pass legislation that would insure adequate compensation for lawyers representing indigent defendants and indigent children. Currently these lawyers are being denied fair compensation through the denial of reimbursement of office overhead expenses, as entitled by law, due to a non-binding attorney general's opinion that is contradictory to Alabama Supreme Court precedent."

According to Ms. Morgan Austin, "Alabama lawyers representing the indigent accused, even those facing the ultimate punishment of death, and those protecting the best interest of indigent children are paid less per hour than lawyers hired by the state to handle property issues." She continued, "ACDLA firmly believes that our State can never insure adequate representation for the poor until the State is willing to pay a fair rate for that representation. This is just one of the many important issues in which ACDLA is establishing itself as a voice of reason and fairness in the criminal justice system."

Ms. Morgan Austin concluded, "Right now in our state, the challenges for criminal defense lawyers are greater than ever before, but with these challenges come many opportunities for growth of the organization. I look forward to leading ACDLA into the

weeks and months ahead with new programs to meet these challenges and encourage growth.”

Ms. Morgan Austin is Alabama’s third female president. She was elected President on June 23 and has served on the Board of Directors for ACDLA since 1999. Previous female Presidents include Mary Turner Roberts, Turner, Webb and Roberts, Tuscaloosa, Alabama and Christine Freeman, Federal Defenders, Middle District of Alabama, Montgomery, Alabama.

Officers elected to serve for the coming 2006-2007 year include:

Melinda Morgan Austin, Florence, AL – President
Joe Van Heest, Montgomery, AL – Immediate Past President
Jim Roberts, Tuscaloosa, AL-Next Past President
Bill Blanchard, Montgomery, AL – President-Elect
Richard Keith, Montgomery, AL – Vice President
Kathryn King, Cullman, AL – Secretary
Don Colee, Montgomery, AL – Treasurer

District Vice Presidents elected were:

District I – Patrick Tuten, Huntsville
District II – Randy Brooks, Anniston & Amber Ladner, Birmingham
District III – Jeff Duffey, Montgomery
District IV – Gordon Armstrong, Mobile & John Beck, Fairhope
District V – Paul Young, Enterprise
District VI – Mike Upton, Tuscaloosa