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Historical Society

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April 21, 2016

Francisco Gomez
California State Bar Governance in the Public Interest Task Force
180 Howard St.
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Mr. Gomez,

As President of the Board of Directors of the California Supreme Court Historical Society, I write regarding the proposed restructuring of the California State Bar. The Society receives the majority of its annual funding from the voluntary \$25.00 “check off” that appears on each State Bar annual dues statement. Because the Society’s existence is dependent on this funding, the Society asks that the Governance in the Public Interest Task Force consider the potential negative impact that could stem from the proposed structural changes to the State Bar, and recommend against any changes that would threaten the ability of the Society to carry out its mission.

The California Supreme Court Historical Society was founded in 1989 as a non-profit public benefit corporation dedicated to recovering, preserving, and promoting California’s legal and judicial history, with a particular emphasis on the State’s highest court. The Society serves the interests of the bench and bar, the academic community, and the general public through its publications, educational programs and support of scholarly research. In addition, the Society assists with exhibitions, oral histories, court tours, and the acquisition and archiving of judicial materials.

The Society has an active Board of approximately 35 individuals, including Court of Appeal Justices, Superior Court Judges, professors and attorneys who are well recognized in their practice areas. Because the Society relies on its Board to generate many of its programs and publications, it has a modest annual budget of less than \$150,000. Over two-thirds of that amount comes from the voluntary \$25.00 State Bar contributions. With the donations the Society receives from State Bar members, it is able to work actively to carry out its mission. To illustrate, during the past two years alone:

- The Society partnered with several Bar Associations and historical societies to present “Chief Justice David Terry and Federalism” both in Fresno and at the 2014 State Bar Annual Meeting in San Diego. Each program featured seven judges in a dramatic reading about the life of David Terry, a controversial former California Supreme Court Chief Justice. Then Associate Justice Marvin Baxter played the role of Chief Justice Terry in both programs, joined by Associate Justice Kathryn Werdegarr, Superior Court Judge Barry Goode and four federal district court judges in Fresno. Before an audience of over 750 attorneys at the State Bar Annual Meeting, *all* other California Supreme Court Justices, including Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, participated in the program.

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- The Society published annual volumes of California Legal History, the Society's frequently cited and highly regarded annual journal which features scholarly articles and oral histories of prominent figures of the California bench and bar.
- The Society also published its Newsletter, a biannual publication offering timely articles, book reviews, member news and Society updates.
- Each year, the Society conducted its annual Selma Moidel Smith Law Student Writing Competition, open to both law and graduate students, with the winner receiving both a cash prize as well as publication of the winning article in the Society's Journal.
- The Society enhanced its website, www.cschs.org, by adding content and facilitating navigation, resulting in the site serving as a resource for attorneys and academics engaging in scholarly research.
- The Society will shortly be publishing The History of the California Supreme Court, a landmark book that covers the history of the Court from 1850 through 2010. The Berkeley Public Policy Press has scheduled publication for mid-summer 2016.

The California State Bar, in its current form, has enabled the Society to maintain California's legal history and educate others about it. The Society urges the Task Force to make a recommendation that will preserve the ability of the Society to continue to serve the legal community and the general public.

Sincerely yours,

Jennifer L. King

President, Board of Directors

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