

REPORT . . .
Lawyers Professional
Responsibility Board

By

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LAY MEMBERS OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD
MAKE EXCELLENT CONTRIBUTIONS . . .

On May 11, 1978, the Minnesota Supreme Court amended the Rules on Lawyers Professional Responsibility to change the composition of the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board. After a short transitional period, the new rules will provide for an increase in the number of nonlawyer members of the Board. After the rules become fully effective, the Board will have a total of twenty members, including twelve lawyers and eight nonlawyers.

Although addition of lay members to the attorney disciplinary process has now been accomplished in more than twenty states, Minnesota was a pioneer, in 1972, as one of the first states to take this step. Starting with an initial appointment of three lay members in 1972, lay participation on the Board will be increased, under the new rule, to 40%. This figure is believed to be the highest in the nation. Because of Minnesota's experience with the participation of lay members, we frequently receive requests from other states and other countries for information as to the effectiveness of lay membership. We are pleased to report that our experience has been virtually an unqualified success.

When lay members were first appointed to the Board responsible for lawyers' discipline, it was believed that the principal function they would serve would be to enhance the credibility of the disciplinary process in the eyes of complainants and the general public. In practice, lay members have also offered insights and points of view that might otherwise be overlooked by attorney members. As lawyers with a common background of legal training, we sometimes tend to inflate the significance of matters deemed by lawyers to be important, and, conversely, we sometimes tend to minimize matters of substantial concern to our clients. I have seen a process of enlightenment occur time after time in panel hearings and board meetings, and for it we are grateful to our excellent lay members.

The present six nonlawyers members of the Board are:

Arthur N. Goodman
St. Paul

Dr. Phillip C. Helland

St. Paul

Jared How

Mankato

Mrs. Irene Janski

Richfield

William I. Novak

Gilbert

Mrs. Martha Zachary

Inver Grove Heights

All of these members serve on the Board without pay and all have excellent attendance and participation records. The profession and the public should be grateful for the outstanding service provided by these Board members.

The nonlawyers members on the Bar Association District Ethics Committees located around the state also deserve recognition for their voluntary efforts. At least 20% of the membership of these Committees is comprised of lay persons. With only a few isolated exceptions, we have received very positive reports from the Chairmen of the District Ethics Committees as to the role being played by these Committee members.