

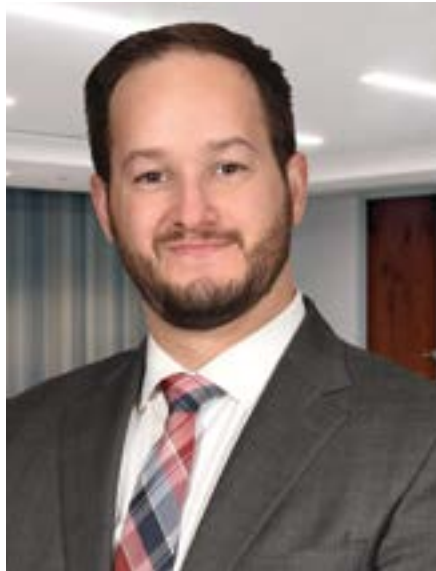
Message From the Chair

It has been one of my most distinguished honors to serve as chair of the Dispute Resolution Section—a true labor of love. When I joined the Section over a decade ago, I was a law student interested in learning from brilliant neutrals who were the most experienced, distinguished, creative, and thoughtful practitioners in the field. You have not disappointed me. I have learned so much and continue to learn during almost every interaction with our membership. Our group is phenomenally skilled at listening to one another, which has led to better programs, more rewarding initiatives and real progress in tackling our goals.

Now, as an experienced attorney, a father of three, a law firm partner, and an independent mediator and arbitrator, I look back at my journey and credit the Dispute Resolution Section for so much of my growth, individually and professionally. Thank you for supporting me and thank you for giving me this opportunity to lead you.

This will be my final message at the end of a very eventful year. While we had hoped that the pandemic challenges would have eased by now, it has been another difficult year with the COVID resurgence, and we are surprised to be caught up yet again in worry and disruption. It has been challenging for people across the board—whether you are managing the situation with young children, trying to re-enter society with a compromised immune system, or navigating the latest CDC guidelines wondering if you should be leaving your home. And while we may have been surprised by the pandemic's continuing impact, the dispute resolution community did not falter in its drive to assist the community in tackling their hard-fought disputes. The leap in technological proficiency we participated in at the beginning of the pandemic has become an important tool for the present and the future. We continue to negotiate, mediate, and arbitrate through platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, where the parties prefer remote options over in-person forums, and embrace the convenience and safety the virtual platforms provide. We continue to focus on helping one another, improving the dispute-resolving culture, and creating opportunities for collaboration. Congratulations for another productive year in the face of ongoing unprecedented obstacles.

Let's turn to some of our accomplishments over the past year...



Ross Kartez

In September, we hosted a jam-packed fall meeting. Mansi Karol, Noah Hanft, and Lauren Jones knocked it out of the park with six panels on cutting-edge topics. Chief Judge Janet DiFiore gave opening remarks and Timothy Murphy, general counsel at MasterCard, sat down with Noah Hanft for a riveting fireside chat. We capped off the evening with our first in-person reception in nearly two years. We look forward to having similar programs when it is safe to do so.

In December, we launched the first ever 16-hour Personal Injury Advanced Mediation Training. For many years, the court system has been plagued by an insurmountable number of personal injury cases lingering throughout the

State of New York. Delays from the COVID shutdowns and the lack of useable courtrooms has exacerbated the problem, leaving thousands of trial-ready cases without visible finish lines. The Section worked closely with various court personnel, including Lisa Denig, Joel Kullas, Lisa Courtney, Bridget O'Connell, and Glen Parker, to organize a training that could help address the mounting backlog of cases. We had an excellent organizing committee led by Jess Bunshaft and Jeff Anderson, and consisting of Angelicque Moreno (who took a significant leadership role despite being a new Section member), Timothy Murphy, Kathryn FitzGerald, Halina Radchenko, Anthony Emanuel, Karen Saab-Dominguez, Marc Pillinger, Jeff Miller, Jeff Lichtman, Michele Kern-Rappy, and Lauren Jones. Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Deborah Kaplan kicked off the three-day program with powerful welcoming remarks, and Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George concluded the program with optimistic words of wisdom and "thank you" to all who participated. This program is only the beginning of the Section's dedicated efforts in assisting the courts in addressing the massive backlog of personal injury cases. Many of our mediators have already joined the court rosters, settling numerous personal injury cases that would otherwise be consuming court resources. Thank you to all who organized and participated, especially Jess and Jeff. We look forward to this training as a regular Section offering.

Simeon Baum and Stephen Hochman continue to sell out seats for their Commercial Mediation Trainings (basic and advanced), which are now offered twice a year. These trainings have become some of the Section's most important initiatives for training neutrals and recruiting active

members. Many of our Section members are coaches and presenters, and we thank you for your dedication.

Charlie Moxley, Edna Sussman, and Lea Haber Kuck held their Comprehensive Commercial Arbitration Training for arbitrators and counsel. This program has been a standout over the years, with many of our members serving on the program faculty.

By the time you read this, the Annual Meeting will have already happened. I know it will have been a remarkable success. Our cutting-edge panelists include some of the most prestigious speakers in the industry. Our panel topics include: 1) Blockchain and Cryptocurrency Disputes; 2) Tales from the Frontline: Mediation Users' Lessons, Stories, and Feedback; 3) Presumptive ADR: Where We've Been and Where We're Going (with Court of Appeals Judge Cannataro); and 4) What Judges and Arbitrators Are Looking for in Your Real Estate Case. Special thanks to our program chairs, who have worked tirelessly to make this phenomenal program happen: Jess Bunshaft, Shashi Dholandas, Krista Gottlieb, and Dani Schwartz. We were forced to postpone the in-person reception, but we will relish seeing each other all the more.

We also developed a new diversity series, a series of in-person programs geared toward strengthening our ties and relationships with diverse practitioners and fostering opportunities to improve the culture of dispute resolution for everyone. We hope to improve our membership, programming, and initiatives, with the help of our colleagues of diverse backgrounds. This initiative goes hand-in-hand with the work of our Diversity and Inclusion Committee, under the leadership of Iyana Titus and Stephen Marshall. The accomplishments of that committee include organizing successful mentorship programs for aspiring neutrals of diverse backgrounds, running various well-attended diversity-focused programs, and acting on behalf of the Section to help establish the New York Diversity Equity & Inclusion (NY DEI) Neutral Directory. The NY DEI Neutral Directory represents a huge leap forward, providing a means to increase visibility and selection of ADR professionals from historically underrepresented communities. We thank Robyn Weinstein for her extraordinary leadership in bringing the NY DEI Neutral Directory to fruition.

The Section's Annual Mediation Tournament was back on the calendar for March 2022! The organizers have done an extraordinary job working on this program for the students and the community. This is an excellent opportunity for law students to enhance their mediation skills and get feedback from distinguished neutrals, while navigating very realistic hypothetical fact patterns. Of course, the \$6,000 in cash prizes doesn't hurt. Thank you Leslie Berkoff, Bart Eagle, and Gary Shaffer for your leadership, and to our numerous Section members who participate year after year.

Our journal's new editorial board, including Steven Bierman, Theo Cheng, Al Feliu, Julie Hopkins, Lela Love,

Jacqueline Nolan-Haley, Kathleen Paisley, Rekha Rangachari, and Steven Skulnik, have worked extremely well with Co-Editors-in-Chief Edna Sussman, Sherman Kahn, and Laura Kaster. *NY Dispute Resolution Lawyer*, the best publication in the industry, has kept us apprised of cutting-edge thinking and developments in ADR around the country and the world.

I want to emphasize the constant work, leadership, and dedication of our committee chairs. You have been unbelievable and have made my job easy. It would be difficult to cite all of your contributions, but having attended many of your regular meetings and programs, I can attest to the constant work you do and its critical importance to the Section and the ADR community. Our committees are the lifeblood of the Section, and provide a pathway to opportunities for member participation. I invite our members to dive in and join a committee—I promise you will be welcomed with open arms.

I also want to thank our NYSBA liaison, Catherine Carl, and our ever-devoted Continuing Legal Education coordinator, Simone Smith. Catherine and Simone go above and beyond to turn our ideas into programs, and to shift our goals into achievements. We cannot thank you enough.

During these challenging times, our Section and its members have maintained a strong sense of collegiality. We needed it and we appreciated it. The progress of our collegial community has been astounding. Thank you for everything you've done, everything you're doing, and everything you will do to promote dispute resolution in our community and to further the Dispute Resolution Section's initiatives.

In closing my chairmanship year, I want to recognize the critical work and the future promise of our incoming officers. I extend a warm welcome to our 2022-2023 officers:

Chair: Noah Hanft

Chair-Elect: Jeffrey Anderson

Vice-Chair: Jill Pilgrim

Treasurer: Deborah Reperowitz

Secretary: Evan Spelfogel

We look forward to your contributions.

Our Section has been particularly fortunate to have a cadre of leaders who continue to devote themselves to the work for the Section well after their official duties have ended, and I intend to join their ranks at the end of my term. I hope to see you all soon, perhaps at an in-person event!

Ross Kartez