

Dear Members of the AILA:

I thought long and hard about whether to seek another term as an Elected Director and decided to run because I see nothing but opportunity in the fight for immigration reform. In a climate where industry groups and chambers of commerce are focused on immigration as a vehicle for growth and voters are impatient with Congress for its failure to create a system that encourages compliance and supports families, if we give the pendulum a good push we can make it swing back toward sanity.

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Since 1998, I have spoken to fellow lawyers, the public and the media, written op-eds, analyzed legislation, worked on candidate Obama's Immigration Task Force which provided him with a blue print for what the Administration could do to reform the system, and done liaison at various levels within DHS. I look forward to continuing these efforts with the goal of getting Congress to pass CIR before President Obama leaves office. I am also committed to AILA because it changes lives and provides uncounted benefits to its members. I want to contribute to those benefits and ensure the membership takes full advantage of them. Finally I think AILA has incredibly diverse and dynamic leadership and my personal attributes of a strong work ethic, thoughtfulness and the ability to get along with most anyone are valuable in keeping that dynamism going productively.

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I have served AILA since 1996 when I became my Chapter's Advocacy Chair. Currently, I chair the NSC Liaison Committee and serve on SCOPS, Transparency Task Force and the Business Immigration Committee. I have been lucky enough to establish good working relations with my counterpart at NSC but I realize it's not all roses, lollipops and puppy dogs just because you can talk reasonably with a particular official. There are many intractable problems that will not be solved by talking. However, my experience with NSC has taught me it is critical to establish non-adversarial, respectful relationships, because they make it easier to deal from a place of commonality when hard things need to be said and done and strong positions need to be taken.

<http://www.pbl.net>

In 2012, I also joined the Transparency Task Force, because I felt there was a real need to help AILA members understand their own organization and be empowered to get involved. As a result, my focus has been and continues to be to produce FAQs that allow our members to more easily access information, get insight into how AILA works and, if they so choose, get involved. This is an on-going effort and there will always be room for improvement. Nevertheless, the FAQs will allow those who want to improve AILA to ask questions, make suggestions for improvement and become more involved in the association that, after all, exists to serve them.

In 2010-2011, I was Chair of the USCIS SCOPS Committee for which I received a President's Commendation, Co-chair of the USCIS HQ Policy Committee, Annual Conference Basics Track Chair, a member of the Physician Committee and the Board of Publications. I also served as Associate Editor of AILA's Waivers Book, was a member of the Kazarian, L-1 and Legislative Task Forces and spoke at the Annual, Fall, Mid-Year and Spring conferences. Previously, I

chaired the Detention/Removal Committee, served on committees for Publications, Detention Standards, Strategic Planning, ED Transition, CIS General Counsel, CIS Headquarters, Due Process, and other Conferences, and spoke every year at AILA national conferences. I served for 11 years as my Chapter's INS/USCIS Liaison and, in 2009, was honored to receive my Chapter's Excellence in Immigration Advocacy Award.

## **CHALLENGES FOR AILA AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM**

**Immigration Reform.** We need to seize every chance to introduce the "Average American Voter" to the "Immigrant Next Door." One way to encourage members to participate in this effort is to include more regular media tools postings on InfoNet and other AILA information sharing venues to keep media outreach in the forefront of members' minds and remind them of the tools we have. I would also increase media training for Chapters and do more to reach out to non-news media that build public sentiment in a way newspapers do not. The latter needs to be more organized than the *ad hoc* requests from one reporter or another. Only through favorable public sentiment can we hope to move legislators who do not support reasonable reform out of fear they will not be re-elected. I talk or write to anyone, anywhere, about immigration reform. I want to make sure every member not only wants to do the same but has the tools to do so.

**Congress.** We need more meaningful communications between Congress and AILA members. As an example, my Chapter has a Congressional "buddy" system to disseminate information, answer questions and provide legislative analysis. We are technocrats and better situated than anyone to help Congress navigate the legal ramifications as opposed to the emotions of the immigration debate. The "buddy" system works both with "friendly" and "unfriendly" offices, because it emphasizes one-on-one engagement and is thus less easy to ignore. We can and should blanket Congress with AILA buddies not to influence but to educate. We are uniquely placed to review legislation and explain why certain language does or does not work, and what the likely consequences of certain choices are, and then funnel that information to Congress. We have a powerful role to play in moving the immigration legislative agenda forward but we must be proactive to realize the promise of reform.

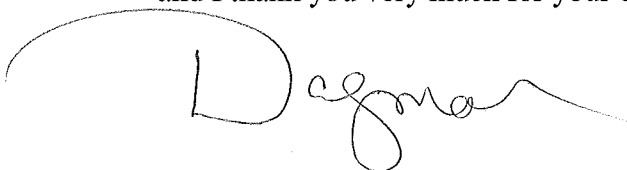
**Liaison.** Keeping good and improving bad relationships with DHS is more and more difficult but will not be deterred! USCIS sees fraud around every corner, has turned the "culture of no" into a "culture of hell no", and curtailed access and interaction through centralization and outsourcing. ICE and CBP increasingly focus on law enforcement at least in part because of outside pressures. All of this has had a corrosive effect on us and them. Somehow we have become one another's "enemy" when, often, our goals are compatible. I do not think we can effectively communicate this point through stakeholder calls because they have a certain one-way-mirror quality which impedes true collaboration. Therefore, I have some concrete suggestions for improving liaison:

1. **Truly listen to their point of view.** We, understandably, often formulate responses to the government before the message has been fully delivered and considered. We need to do a better job listening to what is really said and, perhaps more importantly, not said.
2. **Clearly present our position without implied or direct judgment of their contrary position.** When we and the government disagree, we need to try harder to understand what has led to the government's position and a better job of explaining how our position, if contrary, will better serve the needs of the whole and comply with the law.
3. **Once the government understands our position and we understand their motivations, it is time to persuade.** Find the points of intersection between our objectives and their concerns and propose something that furthers both.

Your reaction to these suggestions may well be: "Well, duh!!!!" The truth is we all have the best intentions but when emotions run high and long simmering resentments come to the fore it is hard to remember let alone implement these three simple steps. They will not guarantee positive results but I have no doubt they improve the chances.

**Governance & Member Services.** I want to find a way to involve more AILA members in the organization. This will bring new blood into leadership and will help us distinguish ourselves from organizations that provide only practice resources. The FAQs currently being developed will help – as long as they are regularly updated to reflect changes and input from members. If members can easily understand how AILA works and how they can be involved, at whatever level they choose, this creates a greater sense of community. I also pledge to focus on the reality that AILA is nothing without its members. We must ensure AILA delivers services in a cost effective and timely manner, and that members always get value for their investment in AILA. We need to produce quality publications, CLE programs and other efforts to aid our members in the toughest times they have ever faced. We also need to buoy members' spirits through community building so the typical sole practitioner knows she is not alone when she cannot sleep at 1 a.m. for fear that a typo will cost her client his right to remain in the U.S.

In sum, I have tried and will continue to bring the BOG an open mind, hard work, intelligence, and boundless energy. I will use my ability to build good working relationships with almost anyone, to understand their agendas and to address them in a respectful manner to ensure my work benefits our members. I love my AILA work and believe you lead by example. It is the only way to earn and maintain the respect of your peers and the people whom you hope to influence through your work. Often my AILA projects have been short notice and extremely time sensitive, but because I believe that when you are committed to a cause you make time for its needs, this has never felt like a hardship. AILA is a wonderful community and, if elected, I will continue to work toward the best interests of this community as a member of AILA's BOG and I thank you very much for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dagna", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.