



United States Ombudsman Association

Special points of interest:

- The 2017 USOA's 37th Annual Conference will be held October 2-6 in San Antonio, Texas.
- Meet our newly elected Board of Directors
- Effective communication with the citizens we serve

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Message from the President

Dear USOA colleagues and friends:

I hope you have been doing well since the last newsletter.

On June 23, 2017, Linda Lord-Jenkins retired as Alaska Ombudsman, and as a result, stepped down as USOA Vice President. Linda was a Director of the USOA for 13 years, having served as Outreach and Development Committee Chair in 2004, Vice President from 2005 to 2007, President from 2007 to 2011, and Vice President from 2011 until her retirement. She was also a member of the USOA's New Ombudsman Training faculty since 2004 and contributed countless hours and resources to the USOA and its members. While Alaska has lost the services of an exemplary ombudsman, we are very fortunate that Linda has chosen to continue to participate in the USOA as a retiree member. I hope that you will join me in recognizing Linda for her years of outstanding service to the USOA and the governmental ombudsman profession.

Following Linda's resignation from the Board, voting members of USOA were invited to submit applications to fill the remainder of her term. At the Board's July monthly meeting, the remaining Directors appointed Diane Welborn, Ombudsman, Dayton, OH, to fill the vacant Director seat on the Board and to serve as Vice President. Diane has served numerous terms on the USOA Board, including as Vice President and Treasurer, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the International Ombudsman Institute.

As you may know, Amy Calderwood, Kristie Hirschman, Joanne MacDonnell, Ruth Miles, Gerald Papica, Lin Quenzer, and I were elected to serve as your Directors on the 2017-2019 USOA Board. We will be taking office at the annual meeting of the USOA membership on October 5, 2017, when your current Directors' terms end. Please feel free to contact any of us if you have any suggestions on how we can improve the USOA during the next two years, or if you have any questions about the Board.

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Finally, if you have not yet registered for this year's annual conference, please consider joining us. The conference planning committee has put together an excellent agenda for this year's conference in San Antonio, Texas, which will be held October 2-6 at the Drury Plaza Hotel. The Conference Registration Packet can be found on the USOA website, at <http://www.usombudsman.org/usoa-events/annual-conference/>. I hope to see you there!

Best regards,

Robin K. Matsunaga
President



2017 USOA Annual Conference



**2017 USOA Annual Conference– San Antonio, TX
October 2– 6, 2017**

“The 21st Century Ombudsman: Big Challenges, Bigger Opportunities”
Dr. Gerald R. Papica, USOA Director of Conferences and Training

Greetings!

As I compose this newsletter article, we only have three teleconference meetings left and the 38th United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) annual conference in San Antonio, Texas will commence on October 4-6. The event will be preceded by two pre-conference sessions on October 2-3. It will take place in the heart of downtown at Drury Plaza Hotel San Antonio Riverwalk.

The city of San Antonio is beautiful as well as historical. “Remember the Alamo” on April 21, 1836 “marked the end of the land battle for the Texas War of Independence.” (Source: quotes.yourdictionary.com/articles/who-said-the-quote-remember-the-alamo.html)

The diverse composition of the 2017 Conference Planning Committee are (in alphabetical order): Lin Chao (Ombudsman Services Coordinator – Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman in Georgia), Lisa Chapa (Office of the TX Attorney General in Austin), Kristie Hirschman (Ombudsman – Iowa Office of Ombudsman in Des Moines), Linda Lord- Jenkins (Retired Ombudsman – Alaska Office of the Ombudsman in Anchorage), Robin K. Matsunaga (Ombudsman – Hawaii Office of the Ombudsman in Honolulu), Ruth Miles (Small Business Advocate – Oregon Secretary of State in Salem), Dennis Nyland (Mental health Ombudsman – Montana Office of the Governor in Helena). Gerald R. Papica (Ombudsman Program Director – Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth in Nashville), Traci Shinabarger (Child & family Ombudsman – Montana Department of Justice/Children’s Justice Bureau in Helena), Lin Quenzer (Ombudsman – Mayor’s Office in Lincoln, Nebraska), Rafael Roman (Ombudsman and Risk Manager – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Acquisition and Grants Office in Washington, DC) and Artie Whiting (Principal Ombudsman – Salt River Project in Phoenix). The planning committee began meeting bi-weekly on February 9.

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2017 USOA Annual Conference

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The Welcome Remark will be made by Mara Flanagan Friesen. She is the Deputy Attorney General in Austin, Texas. The Keynote Speech will be delivered by Sonny Melendrez. He was Billboard Magazine's "Radio Personality of the Year" twice. The event will kick-off with an evening reception on October 2. Along with multiple plenary and concurrent sessions, there is a Networking Event on October 4.

"The New Ombudsman Training" will be taught for two days on October 2-3. The day-long "Dealing with Unreasonable Complainant Conduct" will be offered twice on October 2 and 3. As required by the association's by-laws, a USOA annual meeting will be convened on October 5.

Enhance your ombudsman skills and learn new, creative approaches to problem resolution by attending various plenary and concurrent sessions. The sessions (October 4-6) that will be offered include:

- ◆ Raising Your Voice for Public Policy Advocacy as an Ombudsman
- ◆ Writing Keep it Simple
- ◆ Collaboration with Non-profit Sector
- ◆ Creative Case Strategizing
- ◆ Crisis De-escalation
- ◆ USOA Chapter Meetings
- ◆ Administrative Fairness Guidelines
- ◆ Effective Moral-suasion: Leveraging Social Behavior as a Catalyst for Change
- ◆ Interviewing
- ◆ Building a Community of Respect through Effective Communication
- ◆ Suffer from Burnout? Give 'em the F.I.N.G.E.R.!

We sincerely hope that you will be able to join us in this year's annual gathering of dedicated experts, resolution-oriented, and knowledgeable individuals. The conference is also a vehicle to rekindle friendships and meet new, like-minded folks from various parts of the country and the globe. You do not want to miss this one.

MEET OUR NEWLY ELECTED USOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS!!!

RUTH MILES

As Oregon's inaugural Small Business Advocate, Ruth Miles oversees the Office of Small Business Assistance, seated in the Secretary of State. Ruth and her team work collaboratively with small businesses, nonprofits, state and local government to help streamline and improve Oregon's government.

Ruth brings a unique combination of public and private sector experience to her work, with 18 years running small businesses to add to her nine years of service in the Legislative branch. Since opening the office in January 2014, she's crisscrossed Oregon to visit with business leaders and associations, chambers of commerce and community partners to hear their concerns about getting caught in red tape. And everywhere she goes, she runs with scissors.

GOALS:

As a newer Ombudsman who is still in the process of building a completely new program, I have a somewhat unique perspective. USOA has been critical to my growth as a professional by supplying ongoing training opportunities and the means to develop collegial and mentor relationships. Serving on the USOA Board and its subcommittees is a means for me to give back. In particular, I'm interested in three key areas:

- ◆ sharing/developing best practices on how to "tell our story" – effectively communicating the good work that we are already doing;
- ◆ bringing new technology resources to the USOA, both in the context of our daily work and in our annual conferences; and
- ◆ providing the means to further develop professional relationships and training for our members.

LIN QUENZER

As Lincoln, Nebraska's City Ombudsman, Lin Quenzer is responsible for investigating constituent concerns regarding the application of Lincoln Municipal Codes for departments of City government, is Title VI and ADA Compliance investigating official, City LGBT Liaison, as well as manager of the online complaint response system, the ACTION Center. Quenzer has been Lincoln City Ombudsman since 2000 and is a sole executive ombuds practitioner.

Quenzer has a long term commitment to pursuing excellence in ombudsing. She has been a member of USOA since 2003. Joining the USOA Plenary Committee in 2012, Quenzer was Plenary Co-Chair and Host City Chair in 2014. She became interim USOA Municipal Chapter Chair in 2016 and is currently serving in this capacity. Quenzer continues her service to USOA on the Plenary Committee and hopes to ensure the USOA meets networking and training needs of the membership through her board service.

MEET OUR NEWLY ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS!!

GERALD PAPICA

Gerald R. Papica earned his Ed.D. from Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. His areas of specialization are Child and Youth Studies and Management of Programs. He also received a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Tennessee State University in Nashville. Dr. Papica works for the State of Tennessee for more than 30 years and has been with the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) since 1994. He became the agency's ombudsman in 2001 and assists children in state custody, Child Protective Services, kinship care and foster homes. He volunteers as a foster care review board member for more than 20 years and represents TCCY as one of the jurors for the Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Care Licensing Hearing.

Dr. Papica is one of the faculty members for the New Ombudsman Training and has been involved with the USOA conference planning committee for several years. He served as the conference planning committee chair from 2002 to 2009. He was the USOA Vice President from 2011-2013. He is serving as the USOA Director of Conferences and Training for FY 2015-2017 and was re-elected to serve the USOA Board of Directors for FY 2017-2019.

Dr. Papica is TCCY's current Ombudsman Program Director. The TCCY Ombudsman Program hosted the 2005 USOA annual conference. He authored "The Ombudsman's Guide to Fairness" which was published by the Journal of International Ombudsman Institute in 2011 (Spring Edition).

GOALS:

- ◆ Assume a new role in the 2017-2019 USOA Board of Directors
- ◆ Continue being a part of the Conference and Planning Committee
- ◆ Participate in the monthly board meetings
- ◆ Remain an active member of the USOA and provide leadership
- ◆ Represent the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth as a local, state agency dedicated to the tenets, principles, and practices of the USOA

MEET OUR NEWLY ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS!!

AMY CALDERWOOD

Amy Calderwood became King County Ombudsman in 2003, and was reappointed to a second five-year term in 2009, and a third term in 2014. As King County Ombudsman, she has overseen expansion of the Ombudsman's Office to include a land use ombudsman, an expanded role in investigating employee whistleblower and retaliation complaints, and investigation of lobbyist disclosure complaints. The King County Ombudsman's Office is charged with investigating citizen complaints about the operations of King County (population 2 million), alleged violations of the county ethics code, employee whistleblower and retaliation complaints, and lobbyist disclosure violations. Ms. Calderwood also manages the King County Tax Advisor's Office, a division of the Ombudsman's Office which provides advice and assistance to all persons responsible for the payment of King County property taxes.

Amy has served as Chair of Outreach and Development since being elected to the USOA Board of Directors in 2010. Her goals for this term continue to be to support a dynamic organization of public sector ombudsman offices and the establishment of new offices. She also looks forward to working with other members in her capacity as Outreach Chair.

KRISTIE HIRSCHMAN

Kristie Hirschman was appointed State of Iowa Ombudsman in 2017. Her classical ombudsman office has the authority to investigate complaints about most Iowa state and local government agencies. The office's 16 staff members review over 4,500 complaints and information requests annually. Ms. Hirschman began working for the Iowa Office of Ombudsman in November, 1995 as it's assistant ombudsman for environmental affairs. She is completing her third term on the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) Board of Directors and currently serves as Secretary/Treasurer for the 2015-2017 term. She was recently re-elected to the 2017-2019 Board. Ms. Hirschman has been a member of the USOA's New Ombudsman Training faculty since 2010. She is an investigator certified by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR) and she completed 40 hours of mediation training through Iowa Mediation Services.

GOALS:

My goal is to work with my fellow Board members to increase membership and expand member benefits.

MEET OUR NEWLY ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS!!

JOANNE MACDONNELL

Joanne MacDonnell joined the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens' Aide Office as Deputy Ombudsman in 2005 after serving nearly eight years as the Arizona Corporation Commission Director of Corporations.

Prior to working in government, Joanne worked in the private sector at FCC Investors, Inc. (dba: Valley Seed Company), serving on the Board of Directors and as an accountant. She also worked in real estate as a licensed Realtor associate and real estate appraiser.

Joanne has Bachelor of Science degrees in Business Administration and Real Estate from the University of Arizona, is an investigator certified by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR) and completed mediation training through South Mountain Community College. She has additional training including the Executive Course, Project & Investment Justification Training, various risk management, procurement and ethics courses through Arizona Government University; the Leadership Module through Rio Salado College and AZGU; and ombudsman training prescribed by the U.S. Ombudsman Association (USOA).

Joanne was a member of the Association for Conflict Resolution, qualified in the "Practitioner" category. Currently, she is active in the U.S. Ombudsman Association (USOA), where she has previously served on the Board as Secretary/Treasurer and Outreach Director. She was active in the Conference Committee for many years and hosted the 2015 USOA Conference in Scottsdale. She has been active in the USOA Children and Family Chapter of USOA since 2005, and is currently serving as Chapter Chair. Joanne is a member of the CPS Citizen Panel Review Committee, the Arizona Court Improvement Committee and the Court's Parent Representation Committee. She has been a judge for the Central Arizona BBB Business Ethics Award for the past six years.

Joanne was elected again to USOA Board and hopes to resume her former duties as Secretary/Treasurer once the new board undertakes its duties. According to USOA bylaws, the Secretary/Treasurer duties include having custody of the corporate seal of the USOA and the authority to fix the seal to authorized instruments. The Treasurer also the responsibility for all funds and securities of the USOA and shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in the books of the USOA. The Treasurer also gives an account of all USOA transactions and reports the financial conditions of the USOA to the membership. The Treasurer works with the Business Office to ensure that USOA's taxes and non-profit corporate reports are filed with the appropriate authorities.

MEET OUR NEWLY ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS!!

ROBIN MATSUNAGA

Robin K. Matsunaga was appointed by unanimous vote of the Hawaii State Legislature in 1998 to serve as Ombudsman for the State of Hawaii. He was reappointed to a second term by the 2008 Legislature and to a third term by the 2016 Legislature. He is the third appointed Ombudsman for the office, which opened in 1969 to investigate citizen complaints about executive agencies of the state and local governments in Hawaii. The Hawaii Ombudsman Office is a classical office and the first of its kind to be established in the United States.

Mr. Matsunaga has been a member of the United States Ombudsman Association Board of Directors since 1999, having served as Chair of the Outreach and Membership Committees (1999-2001), President (2001-2003, 2003-2005), Past-President (ex-officio, 2005-2007), Vice President (2007-2009), Conferences & Training Committee Chair (2009-2011), and President (2011-2013, 2013-2015). He is currently serving as President of the USOA Board for the 2015-2017 term and was re-elected to the 2017-2019 Board. Mr. Matsunaga was an instructor of the USOA's New Ombudsman Training workshop from 2005-2009, in 2012, and from 2014 to present.

Mr. Matsunaga earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He is married and has a daughter.

Mr. Matsunaga's goals for the next two years are to work with the 2017-2019 Board to strengthen the UISOA and provide USOA members with training and other support; to provide guidance and historical perspective to the Board and USOA members when requested; and to work with other organizations, such as the American Bar Association, to ensure the continued relevancy of the traditional ombudsman institution and the USOA.

Getting the Word Out– Effective Communication with the Citizens We Serve

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman's (OVO) vision is to be recognized as a centre of excellence in the use of ombudsman best practices that advances the fair treatment of Veterans and their families.

As an evidence-informed organization, our mission is to ensure the fair treatment of Veterans and their families and to uphold the *Veterans Bill of Rights* by reviewing and addressing complaints, systematic and emerging issues regarding programs, service and benefits provided by Veterans Affairs Canada. We often present our recommendations for Veteran programs and services through detailed reports and analysis. The world of communication, however, has changed. It is important to recognize the shift in public perception on how information can and should be delivered from print to electronic, and within different networking environments. Expectations for immediate information combined with real-time news and information discovery have required us, as the OVO, to expand our communication mediums and tools.

As we delved into social media, we focused on better understanding our target audiences and stakeholders and aligning our mediums of communications with their expectations. We found social media not only complements but enhances our existing communication and marketing approaches; facilitating a two-way dialogue with the OVO's multiple audiences. However, to make it effective, we needed to modify our information tools and rules of engagement in a manner that addressed the communication needs of our audience.

For example, our 30 page reports, which are still available, were accompanied by one page infographics; (<http://www.ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/eng/reports/infographics>) easily consumed key messages in bite-size pieces of information that best describe our work. For those stakeholders who required more detail, the supporting report was available for additional background. Although a seemingly small example of change, the impact on the level of engagement received was significant. Having a social media presence helps the OVO ensure that it has the ability to engage with targeted demographics and deliver information and messaging using the social media platforms of their choice.

In our role, clear, concise information is essential in influencing change, engaging audiences and assisting our Veterans. By enabling quick and easy channels of communication with the Veteran community, the OVO can relay key messages effectively and efficiently.

Tamra Benjamin

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Getting the Word Out– Effective Communication with the Citizens We Serve

Improved communication and wider public appreciation for the work of the ombudsman are key objectives of the Alaska State Ombudsman’s 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. A variety of strategies, tailored to reach and inform diverse stakeholder groups, are being deployed and/or explored to achieve these goals.

We take advantage of “earned media” about investigations and reports. We are also identifying opportunities for outreach through print, radio (a major source of information for Alaskans), and other outlets. Later this summer, we’ll be refreshing our website and other communication tools so that they are effective in a variety of contexts, particularly social media. Ombudsman staff will host an outreach and information booth at the annual Alaska Federation of Natives convention in October, with the goal of reaching more indigenous Alaskans from rural communities. We launched a monthly e-newsletter in July designed specifically for legislators and commissioners/ executive branch leadership, focusing on topics and information most useful to them.

In July, we began a series of in-person meetings with state staff in the agencies about which we receive the most complaints. At these meetings we explain the role of the Ombudsman and the investigatory process. We provide an overview of the number and type of complaints filed with our office and how we screen complaints and respond to those that are not ripe or suitable for investigation. We also share data related to complaints in which investigators find no error or wrong doing by the agency, highlighting when agency staff, either in response to our contact or simply in the course of doing their jobs, perform efficiently and effectively. Ombudsman staff have also begun attending public meetings/informational sessions hosted by agencies about which we receive complaints, in order to hear comments from agency staff and the public and to learn about program changes that may give rise to complaints. These conversations are designed to increase understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Ombudsman, and how that relates to agency staff’s day-to-day work.

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The United States Ombudsman Association was founded in 1977 to foster the establishment and professional development of public sector ombudsman offices throughout the United States and the World. The USOA is the oldest ombudsman organization in North America.

Special thanks to Gerald Papica and the members of the USOA conference committee for their hard work putting together our annual conference. In addition to the conference work sessions and presentations, I look forward to the opportunity to meet with fellow ombudsman and learn about their strategies, challenges and successes. The chapter meetings in particular provide a structured discussion with other ombudsman within each of our shared professional areas of focus. We are all “life-long learners” and the USOA Annual Conference enable us to both share our knowledge and learn from each other. See you in San Antonio.

All the best,

Patrick Dowd,
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