1,000-plus, big names expected at ABA conference in Chicago

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Litigation strategies, career planning, ethical issues raised by cameras in the courtroom, dealing with difficult opposing counsel and navigating foreclosures are among the agenda items at an American Bar Association conference next week.

More than 1,000 judges and trial lawyers from around the country are expected to attend the ABA Section of Litigation’s annual conference April 24 to 26 at the J.W. Marriott Chicago.

Section of Litigation Chairman William R. Bay (pictured at left) said multiple programs on different topics will be offered at the same time "because one size doesn’t fit all."

"We’re the largest section in the ABA," Bay said. "We have 60,000 members who have interests all over the lot."

Areas of the law covered by various programs include securities, immigration, torts, real estate, financial services, business and commercial and labor and employment.

Programs aimed at such attorneys as corporate counsel, young litigators just starting their careers and sole and small-firm practitioners are on the agenda.

The conference is being held in Chicago for the first time in 20 years.

Bay, a partner at Thompson, Coburn LLP in St. Louis, said the city is the home of many ABA members.

Chicago also is a great city to visit, he said.

In addition to the breakout sessions, three plenary programs are scheduled.
On the final day of the conference, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Illinois Senate President John J. Cullerton are to join political consultant David Axelrod in a program on economic issues facing Illinois and the nation titled "A Look Ahead."

Cullerton, a Democrat from Chicago, is a partner at Thompson, Coburn. Emanuel and Axelrod, the director of the Institute of Politics at the University of Chicago, both served in President Barack Obama's administration.

Cullerton said he is pleased to have the opportunity to talk about matters of national interest with "two real national stars."

Also that day, Judge Ann Claire Williams (pictured at left) of the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will moderate a discussion titled "Litigators Making a Difference."

Scheduled panelists — all from Washington, D.C. — are Marcia D. Greenberger, co-president of the National Women's Law Center; Neal K. Katyal, former acting U.S. solicitor general and a partner in Hogan, Lovells; and Paul M. Smith, a partner in Jenner & Block LLP.

On Thursday, attorney Patricia Lee Refo of Snell & Wilmer LLP in Phoenix will lead a discussion on how globalization and changes in technology are shaping the issues faced by corporate counsel.

Panelists are to include N. Cornell Boggs III of Dow Corning Corp. and Dennis F. Kerrigan Jr. of Zurich North America.

The conference's chairs include Timothy L. Bertschy of Heyl, Royster, Voelker & Allen P.C. in Peoria; Eileen M. Letts of Greene and Letts; and Janice V. Mitrius of Banner & Witcoff Ltd.

Other conference chairs are Stephen J. Siegel of Novack and Macey LLP and Mary L. Smith, the co-managing director of the Section of Litigation.

In addition to Cullerton and Emanuel, honorary chairs of the conference include Illinois Attorney General Lisa M. Madigan and ABA President Laurel G. Bellows of Bellows Law Group P.C.

Also serving as honorary chairs are attorney Robert A. Clifford of Clifford Law Offices and Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride.

Other honorary chairs are Chief Judge Frank H. Easterbrook of the 7th Circuit, Chief U.S. District Judge James F. Holderman and Chief Cook County Circuit Judge Timothy C. Evans.

Online registration is closed, but anyone who wants to attend the conference may register on site.
For those attending the section's annual conference for the first time, Bay said, the cost is the same whether they register online or on site and whether or not they are an ABA member. Costs vary depending on the programs.

"When a conference like this comes to town," Bay said, "we want it to showcase talent and to be a community effort."

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