

## Legal Update



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## Labor & Employment

### Employee Free Choice Act – A change employers may not be prepared for



Frank C. Botta



Mariah L. Lewis

The Obama Administration recently moved into the White House waving the campaign banner promising “change,”—and the likely question on everyone’s mind is what will that “change” be?

On December 21, 2008, then President-elect Obama announced the creation of a White House Task Force on Working Families, an initiative that, among other things, is charged with restoring labor standards. AFL-CIO president John J. Sweeney, along

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## Bankruptcy

### Of bailouts, bankruptcy and Obama

President Obama confronts vexing issues related to the country’s ongoing economic crisis. His Administration faces the immediate task of determining the future of the federal bailout package enacted in October 2008. The Administration also needs to provide leadership on the proper role of the nation’s bankruptcy laws in helping to foster solutions for economically distressed individuals and entities.



John G. Loughnane

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## Labor & Employment (continued)

with other unions and labor advocates, welcomed the creation of the task force. In fact, the chair of Change to Win, a grouping of seven unions and six million workers, stated that the task force shows that "change truly is coming to Washington."

So what does this "change" entail for the American workforce?

By now everyone has heard of the "Employee Free Choice Act"—also known as the "Card Check" legislation—which will make it easier for unions to organize companies. If passed in its current form, the Employee Free Choice Act would have a dramatic impact on the American workplace and eliminate one of the flagship purposes of the National Labor Relations Act—to ensure that a representative election is conducted fairly and that each eligible employee is afforded the opportunity to vote by secret ballot.

Currently under the National Labor Relations Act, a union must prove that it represents a majority of employees before it has the right to bargain on their behalf. The first step in organizing a group of employees is to have the employees sign "union authorization cards" evidencing their desire to be represented by a union. The employer may choose to either voluntarily accept these "cards" as evidence of the union's majority support, or demand that the union petition the National Labor Relations Board ("NLRB") to hold a secret ballot election.

Traditionally, a ballot election has been viewed as fundamental to American labor relations because it ensures that employees' expression of support for a union is not the result of coercion, intimidation and/or corruption. The NLRB has strictly regulated employer and union conduct during the representation process and will invalidate an election if there is evidence of threatening or coercive conduct. Additionally, under the current law, an employee is not bound by his or her signature on the union authorization

card and is free to vote non-union by secret ballot at the election polls. Fundamental to this process has been the right of both the union and company to campaign prior to the election to fully inform the employees of their respective positions and the facts regarding unionization.

The Employee Free Choice Act as currently written threatens both employer and employee rights. Among other things, the legislation eliminates the campaign period and the secret ballot portion of the representative process and would require the NLRB to certify a union when a majority of workers sign authorization cards designating the union as their representative.

In addition, the legislation provides that if the parties do not successfully bargain for a first contract in 90 days, then either party may force mediation before the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service ("FMCS") and thereafter, binding arbitration. Also, the legislation includes civil penalties of up to \$20,000 per violation, treble back pay, and mandatory applications for injunctions.

While it is impossible to know whether the Employee Free Choice Act in its current form will actually pass through Congress and be signed into law by the new Administration, it is reasonable to assume that some version of the Act will pass, given the fact that it is co-sponsored by President Obama himself and supported by the democratic majority in the House and Senate. It is a major objective for organized labor and is of major concern for business interests.

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## Bankruptcy (continued)

### Bailout Implementation

On October 3, 2008, President Bush signed the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008. The media colloquially referred to the law as the \$700 billion bailout bill. The law made \$350 billion immediately available to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Originally, Treasury was expected to use the funds to acquire troubled assets. However, Treasury changed course and announced that the bailout money would instead be used for a voluntary capital purchase program pursuant to which Treasury would purchase senior preferred shares of United States financial institutions on standardized terms. Under that program more than 100 financial institutions have received \$167.8 billion (including \$25 billion each for Wells Fargo, JP Morgan and Citigroup). Treasury also determined to allocate \$40 billion of the bailout funds to AIG and an additional \$20 billion of support to Citigroup (beyond the investment noted above). In December, the Bush Administration announced plans to lend \$17.4 billion from the bailout fund to General Motors Corp. and Chrysler LLC.

President Bush indicated he would not seek the second \$350 billion of the bailout funds during his term. However, in the days leading up to his inauguration, then President-elect Obama lobbied for the release of the funds. On January 15, 2009, the Senate took action and voted 52-42 to approve the second \$350 billion.

To help obtain passage, President-elect Obama had his economic advisor Lawrence Summers circulate a letter to the Senate. The letter makes clear that the new Administration will not use the funds for industrial bailouts. It also emphasized that approximately \$50 billion to \$100 billion would be used to address the nation's foreclosure crisis. The letter also stated that no new substantial investments would be made from the program without the personal approval of President Obama.

President Obama faces the challenge of inheriting the management of the bailout program mid-stream. The list of those

seeking financial relief is long: insurance companies, credit card companies, retailers, commercial real estate owners, city and state governments and individuals—including homeowners and individuals—faced with foreclosure—to name just a few. Congressional hearings on the funds previously allocated are sure to involve intense scrutiny about the recipients, the usage of the funds and the benefits (if any) obtained to date. As this scenario plays out, the oxygen extended to the automakers will begin to run low, putting their future back in the hands of Capitol Hill.

As just one example of the angst surrounding the program, on January 21, 2009, the House passed legislation strengthening oversight of the bailout funds. The Senate, however, is not expected to take up the bill. The House measure was passed after the Summers letter succeeded in convincing the Senate to release the second \$350 billion.

Even though the House measure is not expected to become law, there is sure to be much discussion about how the bailout money has been utilized to date, the results obtained and how future allocations should be made. The potential for political wrangling over these issues is very high.

President Obama will need to demonstrate true leadership to keep the country moving and focused on implementing solutions. The government will not be able to prevent economic harm to all. Identifying priorities, establishing ground rules and putting the remaining bailout funds to work in a transparent and expedited fashion will help non-recipients to focus on the business of developing their own nongovernmental bailout or restructuring solutions.

## Bankruptcy Reform

In addition to managing implementation of the remaining bailout funds, President Obama will need to consider what changes are desirable to the nation's bankruptcy laws.

In 2005, Congress passed the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act, which made several major changes to the law governing both individual and corporate bankruptcy filings. Although President Obama will hear pleas to adjust some of the corporate bankruptcy changes, the loudest cries will pertain to the consumer side—especially as the economy continues to sputter.

In general, the 2005 law compelled more individuals to commence reorganization cases instead of liquidation cases. As a result, individuals filing bankruptcy since October 2005 have found it more difficult if not impossible to avoid indebtedness for certain types of debts.

During his election campaign, President Obama pledged to reform the bankruptcy law to create an exemption in bankruptcy for individuals who can prove they filed because of medical expenses. With the residential foreclosure epidemic continuing despite some voluntary restructuring efforts, some believe that the new Administration will also seek to provide bankruptcy judges with the power to restructure ("cram-down") the terms of mortgages on primary residences. That proposal will raise the question of who should bear the cost of the losses that will be incurred—calls are already being made for the government to bear the expense.

Indeed, as this article was going to print, the House Judiciary Committee announced plans to hold hearings on the "Helping Families Save Their Homes in Bankruptcy Act of 2009" (H.R. 200). The bill seeks to amend current law governing individual reorganizations under Chapter 13 of the bankruptcy law to allow an individual debtor that has received a foreclosure notice on his or her principal residence to reduce the mortgage to the current value of the property. The bill has also been introduced in the Senate (S. 61) and is pending before the Committee on the Judiciary. As widely reported, Citigroup has voiced its support for the Senate version.

In addition to the issue of allowing individuals to use bankruptcy to reset their mortgages on primary residences, some groups will seek the complete revocation of the 2005 amendments. A battle has waged for decades between consumers and credit card companies about the proper role of bankruptcy. The credit card companies clearly claimed an important victory for themselves in 2005. President Obama will need to determine whether to seek to reverse that victory entirely and immediately, or, to focus on the most problematic issues for consumers in the short run. Other groups will contend that the 2005 amendments have exacerbated the current troubles of retailers. In particular, critics point to mandatory preferred treatment for utility companies and certain vendors and the shortened time that retail debtors have to decide whether to keep or terminate leases. There has been a litany of failed Chapter 11 retail cases since the amendments—Sharper Image, The Bombay Company, Circuit City, Tweeter, and Mervyns are but just a few of the retailers that have liquidated. Others have suggested that these retailers failed not because of the 2005 amendments but rather because of overleverage, soft consumer spending, changing shopping habits and other economic factors.

## Conclusion

President Obama will need to make tough choices on the role of the bailout funds and the role of bankruptcy in building a path toward a better economic future. There will, of course, be many battles fought over any proposed changes. We will monitor the developments in Washington and remain prepared to provide counsel to our clients in navigating the difficult economic waters that will exist in 2009.

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# Transportation

To jolt economy, President Obama and Congress eye billions in infrastructure spending



Daniel B. Markind

Since his election in November, President Barack Obama has been working on an economic stimulus package to help jump-start the American economy.

In early 2009, Mr. Obama released a preliminary plan which called for a package of somewhere between \$600 million and \$1 trillion, which includes over \$100 billion earmarked for infrastructure development. If passed, these funds could lead to the biggest government infrastructure investment since the interstate highway system was launched in the 1950s, and in effect, spurring both short- and long-term economic growth.

This influx in spending will have profound implications on the American economy. Huge sums will be transferred from the government to contractors and then on to tradesman for projects ranging from bridge and road repair to airport runway development and light rail construction. It is yet to be determined which projects will be funded, what mechanism will be used and how decisions will be made. While the simplest and quickest way to accomplish the economic stimulus will be to simply upgrade the current systems, this process runs the risk of squandering a unique opportunity to prepare and conceptualize the transportation system of the future.

For business, including law firms, the stimulus package means guaranteed economic activity in a clearly-targeted segment of our economy. Unlike the bank bailout, this money will be used for the express purpose of putting people directly to work. It is doubtful that amorphous concepts such as "solidifying balance sheets" will determine where this money

*“While the simplest and quickest way to accomplish the economic stimulus will be to simply upgrade the current systems, this process runs the risk of squandering a unique opportunity to prepare and conceptualize the transportation system of the future.”*

goes. As such, law firms such as Eckert Seamans have a unique opportunity to assist clients in playing a role in determining where this money goes and how it gets there. Our contacts and clients in municipalities, transportation authorities, governmental agencies and the like should be very proactive in determining what their needs are and how much they will cost. It stands to reason that priority would be given to funding "ready-to-go" projects that could award contracts in 90 to 120 days.

Regarding specific legislation, a major battle will come early with the obligation of the Congress to determine what to do about the Airport Improvement Act. This program, among other things, funds the Aviation Trust Fund, and is periodically extended and expired. On October 1, 2008, the program was extended until March 31, 2009. Given the state of the economy and the status of the stimulus package, it is anybody's guess if the program will be extended or reenacted, and in what form.

Eckert Seamans has also been advising clients on the efforts of the European Union to regulate emissions and the ongoing E.U./U.S. Open Skies discussions, which will directly impact the U.S. aviation industry during the new administration. The E.U. Emissions Trading Scheme ("ETS") seeks to cap carbon emissions to

20 percent of 1990 levels by the year 2020, or 30 percent in the event of an international agreement. The ETS affects flights to, from and within the E.U. Airlines would receive 85 percent of their allowances for free in 2012, and the remaining 15 percent will be auctioned in 2013-2020. The international community generally opposes the E.U.'s unilateral approach in favor of a comprehensive approach through International Civil Aviation Organization ("ICAO").

In addition, the foreign ownership restrictions of U.S. airlines are a key concern in the second round of E.U./U.S. Open Skies discussions. Currently, a foreign entity or individual may not own more than 25 percent of the voting interest or 49 percent of equity interest in a U.S. airline. These restrictions limit the amount of foreign investment in the U.S. aviation industry. The E.U. has recently reached an agreement with Canada to raise the voting rights ownership level from 25 percent to 49 percent. The E.U. is pressing the U.S. to agree to a similar increase. Such efforts have been met with resistance in the U.S. Congress despite support from the Bush Administration.

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# Litigation

## President Obama will leave his legacy in the federal courts



Shannon B. Stewart

Tort reform did not surface as an issue very often during the 2008 Presidential campaign due to the more pressing issues of the economy and ongoing war in the Middle East.

However, the plaintiffs' bar, typically a strong supporter of the Democratic Party, has already begun its initiatives to roll back some of the reforms that took place during the George W. Bush Administration. Will President Barack Obama toe the party line and side with the plaintiffs' bar to reign in reforms, or will he, as he has touted, act independently of plaintiffs' lawyers and favor reforms that he believes will work for the American people at both state and federal levels?

President Obama's legislative record indicates that he recognizes that some type of tort reform is necessary. Yet while he may entertain reform efforts, he is not likely to stand as a champion of any significant reform. His impact on the civil justice system will more likely come in the form of nominees to the federal bench.

Chris Wallace interviewed then Senator Obama on *FOX News Sunday* in April 2008 and asked him to identify issues on which he has broken away from the Democratic Party line. Obama pointed to his 2005 vote in favor of tort reform in the form of the Class Action Fairness Act ("CAFA"), an initiative strongly opposed by the trial lawyers' contingency. CAFA directed lawsuits alleging a nationwide class to a single federal court; rather than allowing the attorney representing the class to shop for the most favorable state jurisdiction.

In 2006, then Senator Obama and former adversary Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton co-authored an article in the May 25, 2006 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and subsequently co-sponsored a bill entitled the National Medical Error

Disclosure and Compensation ("MEDiC") Act of 2005. The article, entitled "Making Patient Safety the Centerpiece of Medical Liability Reform," promoted open communication about medical errors between physicians and patients to improve patient safety, as well as alternative dispute resolution programs to deal with medical errors and resulting injuries outside of the courts. The MEDiC Act would have created an Office of Patient Safety and Health Care Quality to establish and maintain a database to track malpractice and to fund research into prevention of future injuries. It would also have provided grants to hospitals, doctors and health systems that established programs to disclose medical errors and offer fair compensation for injuries that resulted. In addition, the MEDiC Act would have given a physician the opportunity to disclose an error without fear that a court would admit the disclosure as an admission during subsequent legal proceedings. However, the MEDiC Act died in committee in 2006.

Obama's most likely impact to the civil justice system will take place in the federal courts. He stated in a July 2007 speech, "We need somebody who's got the heart, the empathy, to recognize what it's like to be a young teenage mom. The empathy to understand what it's like to be poor, or African-American, or gay, or disabled, or old. And that's the criteria by which I'm going to be selecting my judges."

President Obama has also mentioned on several occasions that he holds former Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, the late Earl Warren, in very high regard. His tenure as Chief Justice was divisive: liberals generally hailed the landmark rulings issued by the Warren Court, including the legal status of racial segregation, civil rights, separation of church and state and police arrest procedure in the United States; however, conservatives decried the Court's rulings, particularly in areas affecting criminal proceedings.

The lower federal courts act as the final authority in most cases brought in the

federal courts. The courts of appeals terminated more than 60,000 cases in 2007, while the United States Supreme Court generally considers fewer than 100. These numbers leave the courts of appeals as the final arbiters of federal justice in the vast majority of cases brought before the federal bench.

While actuarial statistics show that President Obama may have the opportunity to nominate one, if not two Justices to the Supreme Court, he will make his strongest impact in the lower federal courts. By the end of January 2009, 14 seats will be vacant in the Circuit Courts of Appeals. Democratic appointees presently constitute a majority on only the 9th Circuit. Congress will likely create an additional 14 appellate seats if it follows last year's recommendations by the Judicial Conference of the United States. Thus, by filling these vacancies along party lines, President Obama could potentially boost the Democratic presence in the federal judiciary from 36 percent to 58 percent.

If President Obama fills these vacancies with nominees chosen in large part for their hearts and empathy, he will permit a more pragmatic view of justice to herald from the bench. He may also open the door for the courts to roll back some of the reforms initiated under the Bush Administration by creating opportunities for judges to legislate from the bench by focusing on personal values and perspectives of the world, rather than strictly adhering to legal principles.

Of course only time will tell how President Obama's first term will affect tort reform. Most likely, he will leave his legacy as it relates to the civil justice system in the federal courts. Congress will have the last word on any legislative changes to the civil justice system, and President Obama will not likely stand in its way.

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# Firm News

## Firm Opens Office in Charleston, WV

On January 1, 2009, all 13 of the attorneys from Charleston-based Hendrickson & Long PLLC combined their practices with Eckert Seamans, giving the firm a significant expansion in West Virginia and an important Charleston presence.

"Hendrickson & Long has built a reputation as a premier litigation-oriented law firm, taking on difficult and complex assignments for clients from across the nation," said Tim Ryan, Chief Executive Officer of Eckert Seamans. "We have worked closely with David and Scott for nearly fifteen years serving common clients of our respective firms. This group's experience, its established reputation in West Virginia, and the collective talents of its attorneys provide a perfect fit for Eckert Seamans."

### Joining the firm as Members are:

**David K. Hendrickson** has over 25 years' trial experience. His practice focuses on product liability, toxic torts, medical malpractice, insurance defense and general business litigation. He was a founding partner of Hendrickson & Long. He has been named in Chambers USA America's *Leading Lawyers for Business*, as one of *The Best Lawyers in America* and is a member of The International Academy of Trial Lawyers. A former Captain in the United States Army, he earned his bachelor's degree at West Virginia University, and he received his law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law.

**R. Scott Long** was a founding partner of Hendrickson & Long and concentrates his practice on product liability, personal injury, medical malpractice, toxic tort and asbestos defense. He serves plaintiffs and defendants, including clients that range from individuals and privately held entities to Fortune 100 companies. He has particular experience with class action

litigation. He was named in Chambers USA America's *Leading Lawyers for Business* and has been ranked among *The Best Lawyers in America*. He received his bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University and his law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law.

**Jeffrey H. Hall** focuses his practice on product liability, insurance defense, and toxic and mass tort litigation. He has more than 20 years' trial experience in both state and federal courts. He earned a bachelor's degree from West Virginia University, a master's degree from Marshall University, and his law degree from the Thomas M. Cooley School of Law in Michigan.

**Josef A. Horter** concentrates his practice on insurance defense, coverage opinions, insurance law, and general defense litigation. He has also built his practice on employment litigation, insurance subrogation, and creditor bankruptcy. He received his bachelor's degree from West Virginia University and his law degree from Ohio Northern University School of Law.

**Stephen M. Schwartz** concentrates his practice on product liability, environmental law, workers' compensation, business law, administrative law, general defense litigation, and intellectual property law. He serves as West Virginia local counsel for the Home School Legal Defense Association. He is admitted to practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office. He received his bachelor's degree from the Colorado School of Mines and his law degree from the University of Arkansas.

**Dwane L. Tinsley**, an accomplished trial attorney, focuses his practice on insurance defense litigation, including automobile accidents, personal injury, premises liability, product liability, insurance fraud,

and criminal defense. He presently serves as the President of the West Virginia Bar Association. Formerly, he was Managing Trial Attorney for Nationwide Insurance Trial Division, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in Fayette County (West Virginia), and Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia. He is a certified agent for the National Football Players Association and serves as a mediator for the United States Postal Service and through the West Virginia State Bar. He earned his bachelor's degree from Davis & Elkins College, his master's degree from Howard University, and his law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law.

### Joining as Of Counsel are:

**Barbara Allen Samples** focuses her practice in the areas of product liability, toxic tort and asbestos defense. She is also experienced in family law and personal injury law. She earned her law and bachelor's degrees from Wake Forest University.

**J. Miles Morgan's** practice focuses on medical malpractice, personal injury, employment discrimination, product liability defense and federal criminal litigation. He was law clerk to United States District Court Judge Irene Keeley. He received his bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University and his law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law.

### Joining as Associates are:

**Apryll H. Boggs'** practice focuses on product liability, toxic tort defense, silica litigation, insurance defense, and general defense litigation. She earned her bachelor's degree at the University of Kentucky and her law degree at the West Virginia University College of Law.

**Lora A. Dyer** practices in the areas of toxic tort, product liability, insurance litigation, securities regulation, creditor rights, bankruptcy, and general civil defense litigation. She served as law clerk to Judge Jams C. Stucky of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, and she interned at the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals. She received her bachelor's degree from Marshall University and her law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law.

**Stephen E. Hastings** represents plaintiffs and defendants in cases that involved personal injury, product liability, professional malpractice, nursing home liability, breach of confidentiality/invasion of privacy, employment relations, wills, property law, toxic torts and other general areas of litigation. He received his bachelor's degree from West Virginia University and his law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law.

**H. Jerome Sparks'** practice is centered on toxic tort defense, insurance defense, product liability, and general defense litigation. His bachelor's degree is from the University of Charleston. He earned his master's degree from West Virginia Graduate College and his law degree from Tulane University.

**Benjamin F. White** concentrates his practice in the areas of Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income and Veterans Disability. Prior to practicing law, he served in the United States Army with the 101st Airborne Division from 1983 to 1986. While serving his country, he spent six months in Sinai, Egypt on a Multinational Peace Keeping mission and earned the Expert Infantry Badge (EIB), Jungle Expert Certification and Air Assault Certification.

Eckert Seamans will maintain its Charleston office at 214 Capitol Street. The historic building that the office is located in, a 1900's-era architectural structure situated in the middle of Charleston's business and financial districts, has been preserved through a joint effort between Hendrickson & Long and the Charleston Renaissance Committee. The exterior of the building has been refurbished, while the inside has been transformed into modern, state-of-the-art office space. The result is a unique building ideally suited to meet client needs.

## New Additions

Eckert Seamans is also pleased to welcome the following lawyers who have recently joined the firm's Washington, D.C., Boston, Philadelphia and West Chester offices, respectively:

**Steven Conway** is an Associate in the firm's Boston office, serving in the Business Division. He focuses his practice on corporate law, taxation and trusts and estates, including advising high net worth individuals, families and businesses on estate planning, business succession planning and corporate matters. He has broad experience assisting families with the establishment and administration of special and supplemental needs trusts.

**Shelley A. Hession** is an Associate in the Aviation Group, practicing in the Washington, D.C. office. She advises clients in aviation and transportation regulatory and operational matters before the Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration, and in many aspects of general corporate and administrative law, including corporate governance, contracts and transactions and bankruptcy matters.

**Joshua D. Hill** is an Associate in the firm's Philadelphia office, serving in the Litigation Division. His practice is concentrated in professional liability matters. Prior to joining the firm, he represented clients through the Defender Association of Philadelphia,

an independent, non-profit corporation which represents approximately 70 percent of all persons arrested in Philadelphia that are determined to be indigent by the courts.

**Joshua Kirsch** is an Associate in the Litigation Division, practicing in the West Chester office. He focuses his practice in the defense of professionals, with particular emphasis on legal malpractice matters and the defense of Dragonetti Act actions. He has developed extensive civil commercial litigation experience and has participated in numerous settlement negotiations resulting in amicable resolutions to otherwise highly contentious disputes.

# Firm News

## Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas honors Eckert Seamans' Attorney with Pro Bono Publico Award

Henry M. Clinton, a Member of the firm's Business Division in the Philadelphia office, has been selected by the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas to receive its 2008 Pro Bono Publico Award. Clinton received the honor for his outstanding contributions to the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas through his commitment to providing quality pro bono legal services to Philadelphia's underprivileged citizens. More specifically, he represented individuals in cases that involved fraudulent deed conveyances or other title-related issues. This pro bono service was provided within the civil court's Trial Division. The Pro Bono Publico Award was presented to him at a special reception in the Alex Bonavita Law Library at City Hall on Thursday, January 22, 2009.

"This recognition is well-deserved. Hank has made a long-standing commitment to our community, one that we have always supported and appreciated," said Albert Bixler, Member-in-Charge of Eckert Seamans' Philadelphia office. "Eckert Seamans is very proud of Hank's service to the community and his clients for many years."

Clinton's client practice includes both real estate transactions and real estate-related litigation, along with representing commercial and residential real estate sellers and purchasers. In May 2007, he was recognized by the Philadelphia Volunteers for Indigent Persons (VIP) for his five years of service to the Tangled Title Advisory Committee, which assures that struggling Philadelphia residents have clear title to their homes.

## Eckert Seamans Charitable Foundation

As we turn the page on the firm's year-long 50th Anniversary Celebration, we are very pleased to announce one final initiative: the establishment of the Eckert Seamans Charitable Foundation. Our Foundation has been initially funded with a contribution of \$100,000 and subsequent annual contributions will be made by the Members of the firm. This initiative will

allow us to continue to support worthwhile charities, events and community organizations. We thank our clients and friends for making it possible to invest in our communities and assist those who may otherwise be underserved. Please let your contact(s) at the firm know if you think there are particular charitable efforts which we should consider funding.