

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 158, No. 11

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

Chicago lawyer takes on role as local ADL board chairman

By John Flynn Rooney
Law Bulletin staff writer

As the leader of the Anti-Defamation League's regional board, Michael I. Rothstein wants to expand the group's outreach and educational efforts.

Founded in Chicago in 1913, the ADL, an international organization, combats anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice.

Rothstein, a partner with Tabet, DiVito & Rothstein LLC, took over as chairman of the ADL's Greater Chicago/Upper Midwest regional board at a meeting last week. The regional board comprises 160 members, including about 50 associate board members under 40 years old, Rothstein said.

ADL works with members of other faiths on various issues, he said.

"The ADL regularly steps up for Muslim-American citizens who are being discriminated against in building their houses of worship," he said. "People of all backgrounds come to the ADL for assistance."

"We've been doing increasing outreach in the Hispanic-American community. We have longstanding outreach efforts with the African-American community.

"I would like to continue that tradition and trend with other groups in the Chicago area."

Rothstein became involved with the ADL's Midwest Civil Rights Committee in the 1980s. He served as co-chair of that committee about a decade ago and has served on the ADL National Commission since late 2005.

"I knew (Rothstein) as a strong advocate in the civil rights area," said Myron J. Resnick, who served a two-year term as chairman of the ADL's Greater Chicago/Upper Midwest regional board starting in 2006. "He's an informed advocate for the vision of the ADL."

Resnick and other former local ADL regional board chairmen selected Rothstein for the two-year term. Rothstein replaced Brian Boorstein, a non-lawyer.

Rothstein "believes everyone should be treated equally and with respect," said Lonnie J. Nasatir, the ADL's regional director. "That's the way he lives his life and that's why he's a natural fit to be our leader."

The ADL's regional office staff, which stands at 19, provides programs and services to citizens in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North and South Dakota. The ADL's Chicago region raised \$3.6 million last year, Rothstein said.

ADL's educational programs include A World of Difference Institute, which provides



Michael I. Rothstein, a partner with Tabet, DiVito & Rothstein LLC stood in the West Bank village of Sebastia, Israel, in July 2011. Rothstein, chairman of the Anti-Defamation League's Greater Chicago/Upper Midwest regional board, visited Israel as part of an ADL leadership mission.

anti-bias education and diversity training programs in schools. Another activity for high school students known as the "Names Program" concerning name-calling is used at several area high schools, including New Trier and Vernon Hills high schools.

In December, Mark Aguirre, a former National Basketball Association player, returned to his alma mater, Westinghouse College Prep, as part of ADL's "Teaming Up for Respect" program. Aguirre stressed that the students treat each other with respect and avoid bullying, Rothstein said.

"We will work on increasing our penetration of these coexistence programs into the Chicago public schools," Rothstein said. "We hope to bring other professional athletes like Mark Aguirre in as a way to reach some of these kids who are in schools in some of the more difficult neighborhoods."

Rothstein, 51, and raised in Louisville, Ky., took an indirect path to the law.

He graduated from Indiana University with an undergraduate degree in accounting. Rothstein joined the Chicago office of the firm now known as Ernst & Young and became a

certified public accountant.

While working there, Rothstein saved money to attend law school. He enrolled in Boston University School of Law and received his law degree in 1987.

He then moved to Chicago and joined Phelan, Pope & John Ltd. as an associate.

When Phelan, Pope & John split up in 1996, Rothstein became a founding partner of Quinlan & Crisham Ltd. and remained there until 2001. At that time, he became one of the three founding partners of Tabet, DiVito & Rothstein.

Rothstein, who handles trial and appellate matters, previously served as president of the Appellate Lawyers Association.

Serving as ADL's regional board chairman involves significant exposure to the public and to influential officials, said Thomas C. Homburger, counsel with K&L Gates LLP, who previously served as the ADL's Midwest regional board chairman

Rothstein "is very well suited (for the regional board chairman position) because of his experience as an appellate lawyer," Homburger said.