

MY POSITION WITH NFPA  
AS CO-COORDINATOR FOR  
UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW RESEARCH

By: Valerie A. Dolan

In June 2003, I received a telephone call from S. Kristine Farmer, Vice President of Positions and Issues, regarding NFPA's acceptance of my application to volunteer my time to assist NFPA in coordinating research regarding the issues of the Unauthorized Practice of Law. I was appointed co-coordinator with Scherry M. Elson, a paralegal in Florida.

Scherry and I agreed to split the country into two (2) parts, north and south. A month later, a box was delivered to my front door containing files dealing with the northern states of the United States, Canada and other files that affect paralegals nationwide. We report directly to Mrs. Farmer, who in turn takes our information and uses it for the *National Paralegal Reporter*, *Inside NFPA* and other reports to the NFPA Board.

My duties are as follows:

- Investigate and determine the establishment and current status of UPL committee and task force activities and paralegal participation on a state-by-state basis.
- Investigate and conduct research concerning recent legislative, court and bar association activities to prohibit non-lawyers from engaging in the practice of law which may include increasing the penalty for same, increasing the degree of the crime, etc.
- Investigate and conduct research to ascertain the statutory, administrative or judicial authority, which governs the practice of law and the unauthorized practice of law on a state-by-state and federal basis.
- Investigate and conduct research to ascertain definitions of "the practice of law" and "the unauthorized practice of law."
- Investigate and conduct research concerning recent activities involving paralegals accused of engaging in the unauthorized practice of law; ascertain whether an attorney was supervising the paralegal and the outcome of the accusations.

To date, the efforts of myself and Scherry have included collecting information and reports from the previous coordinator, splitting the northern and southern states of the U.S. to investigate and research UPL in those states and we have asked all members of NFPA for their assistance as "watch dogs" within their committees and/or organizations in monitoring UPL. Scherry was able to use the West law "free time" at her firm and establish a UPL automatic update to be sent to her email address, which she will then forward to me a copy of any findings.

In the future, we will continue to update the UPL statute chart previously created by the former coordinator (that can be found on NFPA's website) and we will update the NFPA website with articles prepared nationwide regarding UPL. We will also continue to spread the word of NFPA and its importance and continuing efforts in the Paralegal profession and the need for paralegals nationwide to get involved in NFPA and their local associations.