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NY Court of Appeals Judge Robert S. Smith Visits Domus

by Craig D. Robins, Esq.

On September 20, 2007, Robert S. Smith, an associate judge sitting on the New York Court of Appeals, appeared as the keynote speaker and special honoree at the annual dinner of the Theodore Roosevelt Chapter of the American Inns of Court. The event was very well attended with approximately 80 guests including many judges from the federal, state and local branches, and numerous other dignitaries.

The guests had a great opportunity to mingle with the judge in a reception prior to the dinner. Several guests discussed cases they litigated against Judge Smith when the judge was an active litigator in private practice. He was appointed to the Court of Appeals in 2003.

The highlight of the evening was a half-hour speech in which the Judge discussed his ideas about “the New Federalism” and how courts are addressing inconsistencies between the United States Constitution and the fifty different state constitutions. He especially discussed the frequent litigation over the legality and constitutionality of same-sex marriages and, after offering interesting insight, analysis and commentary, concluded that this issue is indeed a new federalism problem. He received a standing ovation when he finished his presentation.

The dinner, which was hosted by Nassau and Suffolk

County bankruptcy lawyer, Craig D. Robins, as the master of ceremonies, had several other Inn of Court presentations. Outgoing president, Lois Carter Schlissel, who is the managing attorney of Meyer, Suozzi, English & Klien, delivered some opening remarks. She mentioned that when she was a law school intern, she flew around the country with Judge Smith and other attorneys, who were engaged in a litigation project.

Nassau County Supreme Court Judge Ira B. Warshawsky, a former president, delivered the invocation. President of the Nassau County Bar Association, Lance D. Clarke, offered the toast to Domus.

Nassau County Supreme

Court Referee, Frank N. Schellace, a member of the Inn, detailed Judge Smith's lengthy and impressive background and provided his introduction. Both he and Judge Smith have been presidents of different chapters of the Federalism Society.

Judge Smith swore in the Theodore Roosevelt Inn's new 2007-2008 board, officers and president. Incoming-president, Leonard B. Austin, a Nassau County Supreme Court judge, delivered an address about the future of the chapter. Judge Austin was elected to the Supreme Court in 1998 and has been assigned to the Commercial Part since 2000.

Also sworn in was the new president-elect, Douglas T. Burns. On behalf of the Inn, Craig D. Robins presented Judge Smith with an engraved lead crystal candy jar. Judge Austin, Marilyn K. Genoa and Craig D. Robins also presented Lois Carter Schlissel with a gift for her service as past president. The Inn customarily makes a donation each year to a local law school and this year the recipient was Hofstra Law School.

The Theodore Roosevelt Inn of Court is a chapter of the American Inns of Court, which is dedicated to the enhancement of civility, ethics and legal excellence in the practice of law. To foster these concepts, the chapter emphasizes hands-on participation in the preparation and presentation of programs which address every-day experiences which lawyers face in their practices. Members

include a number of federal and state judges, from seasoned trial lawyers to inexperienced litigators, attorneys from both public and private sectors, and law students from Touro, Hofstra and St. John's Law Schools.

The Chapter holds monthly dinner programs which are usually held at the Nassau County Bar Association and follow an agenda that typically begins with a buffet dinner. At the dinner, not only do the members interact socially but the more experienced attorneys and judges mentor younger lawyers and law students. Dinner is followed by the monthly program and is often concluded by a lively discussion where members pose questions and discuss their diverse views and perspectives. The Theodore Roosevelt Inn of Court has received authorization to grant its members C.L.E. credit for attending the programs.

Editor's Note (revised 2008): Craig D. Robins, Esq., a frequent contributor, is a Long Island bankruptcy lawyer who has represented thousands of consumer and business clients in Chapter 7, Chapter 11 and Chapter 13 bankruptcy cases during the past twenty years. He has offices in Medford, Commack, Woodbury and Valley Stream. He can be contacted at CraigR@CraigRobinsLaw.com and (516) 496-0800. Please visit his bankruptcy law firm Websites: BankruptcyCanHelp.com and CraigRobinsLaw.com.