

SECTION SPOTLIGHT

Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section Looks to Expand Membership

Lucas Foletta, chair of the State Bar of Nevada's Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section, recently took the time to answer some questions about the section.

What is the Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section's main purpose or mission?

The primary purpose of the EUCL, as set forth in our bylaws, is to “enhance the role and skills” of the section’s lawyers through the “study, collection, development and dissemination of materials on subjects of interest to energy, utilities and communication law practitioners.” As a practical matter, this purpose manifests in our annual day-long CLE. We put on the CLE for our members and other members of the state bar to enhance our understanding of prescient topics in our practitioners’ fields.

Who are the members of the Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section?

Although members of the EUCL practice across various practice areas, most of our active members practice in the utility regulation and energy space. Many of our private practitioners appear regularly before the Public Utilities Commission, and we have a number of attorneys who work for the commission’s Regulatory Operations staff and General Counsel’s office as well. Indeed, over the years lawyer-members of the Public Utilities Commission itself have been active members.

We also have a good number of in-house attorneys who work with Nevada’s utilities, and a number of lawyers from the Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection are also members.

That said, we also have members who practice in the communication law

space. We would love to have more of those members. We actively try to enhance our annual CLE by devoting time to communication law issues.

For example, in 2018, we had a vigorous net neutrality panel composed of national experts. And we encourage more communication law practitioners to join and be active members.

What are the benefits of joining the Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section?

Our annual CLE is a great benefit. It really is a great opportunity not only to secure a substantial portion of your CLE hours—including substance abuse and ethics, which we always try to provide—but it is a great chance to talk with colleagues in your field. Our section is not as large as some, and most of the active members usually attend, so you can talk with most of the active members.

How can you join the Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section?

You can join the EUCL through the state bar website, which is nvbar.org.

Who holds leadership positions within the Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section?

In addition to me, our vice chair is Sam Crano and our secretary is Debrea Terwilliger; both work with the Public Utilities Commission. Our treasurer is Kyle Stephens, an attorney with Southwest Gas Corp. They are all great folks who really help keep the section going.

Does the section have any events coming up open to bar members?

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has put a damper on the event calendar. Generally, we do our annual CLE in the fall. We have not decided whether we will try and put it on this year. If we do, we will publicize it on the state bar website and via email blasts.

What advice do you have for attorneys who do not primarily practice energy, utilities and communication law?

My advice would be to give it a try. It is a great field. In my case, I practice primarily in energy and utilities. As I said before, it is a small bar. But we get to work on really technical and legally challenging issues that affect all Nevadans. We also get to practice before the Public Utilities Commission. The commissioners are excellent and the staff and professionals that work there are as well. That makes the work more challenging, interesting and rewarding.

What are the Energy, Utilities and Communication Law Section's goals for 2020? Next year? Five years?

Of course, we want to continue with our CLE efforts. But I would like—and I know others would too—to see the section membership grow, particularly in non-energy areas. A larger and more diverse membership would help broaden our perspective and sophistication as practitioners. So, I will ask the communication law practitioners one more time: please join!