

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

**Norman Stein:** I'm Norman Stein. I'm one of the two co-organizers of this conference with Jim Wooten. ERISA was enacted a little more than thirty-nine years ago, and by the time these proceedings are published in the *Drexel Law Review*, we will be mostly celebrating and perhaps a bit lamenting the statute's fortieth anniversary.

Many have said that ERISA was a legislative miracle. As Jim Wooten tells us in his book,<sup>1</sup> there was no organized constituency pushing for comprehensive pension reform and there were plenty of powerful opponents lobbying against it, yet Congress enacted the statute. Yes, imperfect and chock full of unintended consequences, but nevertheless a magnificent piece of social welfare legislation.

Jacob Javits considered it second only to Social Security in social legislation during the twentieth century, and it has improved the lives of literally millions of Americans. We'll hear something today about how that happened from some of the miracle workers who made it happen.

ERISA is a statute that deserves to have its history told and explicated and that is what motivated this conference. My co-organizer Jim Wooten and I had no easy models to work with: an academic conference combining history, serious policy discussion, politics, and the very human stories of the people who worked to bring the statute to life, and told not through academic papers but through a discussion among the participants in the statute's history. You can comb the thousands of volumes of law reviews to date and there have not been many attempts to do anything quite like this.

So with the extraordinary help of the extraordinary people who are participating in the conference today, we often had to make up structure and approach as we went along. We wish we had had more time, of course, but also we hope Leonard Bernstein was right when he said, "To achieve great things two things are needed: a plan and not quite enough time." We're not sure we had a great plan, but we are quite sure that we did not have quite enough time.

Let me conclude with thanks, first to Drexel and the wonderful students from Drexel's law review who worked so hard in so many ways. To Mary McGovern, Drexel's magical and mystical Associate

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1. JAMES A. WOOTEN, *THE EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT INCOME SECURITY ACT OF 1974: A POLITICAL HISTORY* 1 (2004).

Dean for Administration. To Sarah Greenblatt, who handled public outreach with grace and competence. To Mary Ellen Signorille and Karen Ferguson—and here’s my obscure allusion—who much like Darwin and Wallace simultaneously and independently conceived of the idea for an ERISA oral history project. To the American College of Employee Benefits Counsel, the ERISA Industry [Committee], and the Pension Rights Center for supporting the conference. To my co-organizer and brains behind the operation, Jim Wooten, and to all the panelists who have generously given their time and energy to help tell the story of an extraordinary legislative achievement.

I want to introduce the editor-in-chief of our law review, Virginia Gordon.

**Virginia Gordon:** Thank you, Professor Stein, and good morning honored guests, attendees, and classmates. On behalf of the entire *Drexel Law Review* I want to thank all of our distinguished panelists for joining us today to create this history of ERISA. We expect that all attendees will learn a great deal and we look forward to memorializing today’s discussions and the work of some of our panelists in our spring issue to be published in [summer] of 2014.

I also want to take a moment to personally thank our Executive Editor of Symposium, Christy Bergstresser, and her committee—Alexandra McGee, Jennifer Ceglinski, and Meghan Kelly—for working tirelessly for months to ensure today’s event is a success by handling all of those behind-the-scenes things that we don’t always see but they make the day work well. So thank you all once again, and I hope you enjoy the Symposium.