

UCA Meeting Minutes

05/20/2015

CWA Local 1180 Offices, 6 Harrison Street, New York, NY 10013

Meeting began at 7:30

Report-backs:

Left Forum: One of our panelists at the upcoming Left Forum, labor lawyer David Tykulsker, attended the meeting and brought up a number of important questions to consider as our organization moves forward.

Is there a way to use professional standards for organizing? What is the state of foreign outsourcing? What is the current position of the ABA and the Model Rules concerning contract attorneys practicing law? What is the structure we're hoping to use (see below for more on this)?

Tykulsker also brought up the idea that the UCA could potentially show up as an amicus on a fee petition if there is an occasion to do so and argue that the discrepancy between rates paid to contract attorneys and the rates billed to clients is inequitable. These cases may be rare as these generally show up as part of the plaintiff-side, and document review tends to be defense-side.

Please join us Saturday, May 30, 2015 - Session 3, 3:15pm - 05:00pm for our panel at the Left Forum as we continue this discussion. Room 1.125, 524 West 59th Street, John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York, New York, NY 10019

Bill of Rights and Demands: Our Bill of Rights and Demands is a work in progress. Our goal is to have an abbreviated version with bullet points plus the current longer, more explanatory version. Our BOR&D committee is editing for inclusion on the website by the date of the Left Forum panel, May 30, 2015, but we intend for it to be a live document which we will continue to discuss even beyond that date.

Website: The website has launched, and new content is being added all the time. If you have something you'd like to see on the website, including news articles related to contract attorneys and the legal profession, please send it our way.

In addition, we are now utilizing united.contract.attorneys@gmail.com as the primary email address for communication from the UCA. In addition, we have a Facebook, Twitter & Google+ page. The links to those pages are on the footer of the website.

Health Insurance: Our Health Insurance Committee had no additional information at this time, but one member brought up the Working Partnerships USA (<http://www.wpusa.org/>) as a group we might look to for guidance as we move forward with our goal of obtaining affordable health care for contract attorneys.

CLE (in partnership with the NLG Labor & Employment Committee): We are currently looking to host our CLE regarding the rights of contract attorneys in late August. We are in the process of following-up with presenters who we are hoping will take part in the CLE with regard to their availability.

In the process of this discussion, the UCA became aware that the oral argument before the 2nd Circuit in the *Lola v Skadden* case will take place at 10am next Friday, May 29th, 2015 at Thurgood Marshall US Courthouse, 40 Foley Square, New York, NY 10007. We intend to have UCA representatives in the courtroom, and we encourage any and all contract attorneys to attend if they are able.

Survey: One of our members is compiling a survey to collect demographic information on contract attorneys as part of a master's thesis, and the UCA believes this information would be beneficial to the organization as well. As soon as the survey is finalized, we will send an email out to our list and post a link to the survey on the website.

Proposals & New Business:

Attorney/Agency Pay Disputes: Several contract attorneys have contacted the UCA recently complaining that the agencies are withholding pay in number of ways. It is part of the UCA's mission to be a safe space to air grievances and to help our members seek the protection of labor laws. As our organization is still in its formative stage, however, we are still developing the best way to handle complaints like this. We are interested in working with any affected contract attorneys to help resolve these issues, so if you have personally been affected, please reach out to the UCA. One idea put forth was to issue a demand letter from the UCA for the withheld wages, but we are open to pursuing other avenues if available and appropriate.

Next Steps for Organizational Structure: The UCA is in the process of determining what kind of organization we hope to become as we grow. Several structures were put forth such as a hiring hall model, workers' cooperative, non-profit organization, and professional association. If you have any input on the structure you'd like to see, please let us know. We plan on continuing this discussion at future meetings.

Uniform Bar Exam: NY has recently adopted the Uniform Bar Exam, which is currently given in 15 other states. This raises concerns about the possible influx of attorneys from other states willing to take lower rates, but it could also be an organizing opportunity to build solidarity with attorneys in other areas. This sparked a discussion on the possibility of the UCA putting out position statements on this and other topics. If you are interested in a particular topic, or if you'd be willing to assist with drafting such a position statement, please let us know!

Next Meeting: Our next meeting will take place Wednesday, June 17th at 97 Hudson St, Tribeca.

We have also scheduled our July meeting to take place on the 15th at the same location.

The general meeting adjourned at 9:30pm