



Housing and Development Law Institute

HDLI MESSENGER

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HDLI MEMBERS SPEND THE DAY WITH HUD'S NEW GENERAL COUNSEL GOTTFRIED AND FORMER HUD GENERAL COUNSEL DIAZ AT HDLI'S FIRST GENERAL COUNSEL FORUM!

In what many have said was a first in recent memory, on January 20, 2006 **Keith Gottfried**, HUD's new General Counsel, spent *all day* with HDLI members and guests taking part in HDLI's first General Counsel Forum held in Tampa, Florida. Joining Mr. Gottfried was **Clinton Administration HUD General Counsel, Nelson Diaz**. Both men spent the morning strategizing with about 40 inside and outside general counsel of public housing agencies from across the country. The Forum fostered open and frank discussion among the participants in a relaxed environment.

The day was chock full of engaging discussion. Attendees discussed ways in which to attain "The Indispensable General Counsel" status. Moderated by **Ricardo Elias Morales**, General Counsel of the New York City Housing Authority, attendees shared ways to maximize managing their relationship with the E.D., board of commissioners, and residents, always bearing in mind conflicts of interests. Mr. Morales also led a discussion on several innovative ways to stretch an agency's legal budget. Next, **Steve Holmquist**, of **Reno & Cavanaugh in Washington, D.C.** led a discussion about the status of HUD's new operating subsidy rule, outlining salient points of the rule and shedding light on many of the most confusing provisions. Attendees discussed the pros and cons of asset based management.

Following the morning discussions, **Messrs. Gottfried and Diaz** each gave an inspiring key note luncheon address. **Judge Diaz**, now a partner at Blank Rome LLP in Philadelphia, gave an address reminding us of the breadth of the Department's achievements during his tenure as HUD General Counsel, notably his famous "Diaz Opinion" which officially sanctioned mixed finance development, and his sense of possibilities for success under the present Administration.

Mr. Gottfried's key note address really hit home for our members, focussing on ways that he plans to provide housing agencies and their counsel more seamless access to the General Counsel's office - through better coordination, the publishing of all OGC opinion letters online, and the expediting of documentary approvals. HDLI will be working closely with **Mr. Gottfried** in the coming weeks to work on a number of issues discussed at the General Counsel Forum.

Engaging discussion followed in the afternoon as **George Keith Martin of McGuireWoods in Richmond** discussed current eminent domain issues following the backlash of the *Kelo* decision, and **Margaret McFarland, General Counsel of the District of Columbia Housing Authority** shared a recent eviction decision upholding "one strike" discretion of housing agencies. An outline of the many discussions had at the General Counsel Forum is available on HDLI's website at www.hdli.org. ***PLAN NOW to take part in HDLI's next General Counsel Forum!***