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BOB WELLS TO RECEIVE NABE BOLTON AWARD IN CHICAGO

Robert S. (Bob) Wells, executive director of the South Carolina Bar, is the 2009 recipient of the National Association of Bar Executives (NABE) Bolton Award for Outstanding Bar Leadership. The Bolton Award is NABE's highest accolade and recognizes the exceptional professionalism and achievement of a bar executive. It is named in honor of the late Fred Bolton, executive director and secretary of the Pennsylvania Bar Association from 1966 until 1977.

Wells has been a dedicated member of NABE since becoming the South Carolina Bar's chief executive in 1985. He has served on numerous NABE committees and provided his expertise and insights as a speaker for NABE programs, for the National Conference of Bar Presidents, and at the American Bar Association Bar Leadership Institute. Known for his unparalleled understanding and execution of parliamentary procedure, Wells served more than eight non-consecutive terms as chair of the NABE Bylaws Committee. He has also served as chair of the NABE Membership Committee and has worked actively on the Administration and Finance Committee throughout the years.

His service to the profession over the last 24 years is described as a "case study in character, tenacity and professionalism." He guided efforts to achieve judicial merit selection—a task that took 20 years to achieve—providing frank, yet honest criticism of the state's legal service program as part of the Legal Corporation Counsel's restructuring efforts. Wells was the instrumental architect of the Ethics 2000 revised rules of professional responsibility, ultimately adopted in 2006, and proposed model rules for lawyer advertising.

Wells was described by a member of his staff as a "mentor of mentors...whose commitment to the development of his staff is unwavering. From the initial employment interview to annual performance evaluations, he never stops challenging those who come to work for him..." Past presidents of the South Carolina Bar have also hailed Wells' compassion, judgment, integrity and his leadership role at the bar. "Bob has also instilled great loyalty among his staff, who share his vision of service to the Bar membership and the profession."

During Wells' tenure, the South Carolina Bar built a new facility and swiftly satisfied the debt, evaluated the state's attorney and judicial discipline system and fought for court-appointed attorney compensation. Also a loyal advisor to the South Carolina Bar Foundation, he was instrumental in the initial development of the foundation's IOLTA program and conversion to an "opt-out" program, which quickly doubled IOLTA revenues. He further assisted in the transition to a mandatory IOLTA program.

The Bolton Award will be presented at the Joint Luncheon of NABE, the National Conference of Bar Presidents, and the National Conference of Bar Foundations, on Friday, July 31, 2009, at the Annual Meeting in Chicago.