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Post Office Box 191074

Atlanta, Georgia 31119-1074

Tel: 404.816.9455

jdavis@gdla.org

July 23, 2013

Cheryl L. Palombizio

DRI - The Voice of the Defense Bar

Director of Member Services

55 W. Monroe, Suite 2000

Chicago, IL 60603

RE: Fred H. Sievert Award Nomination – Lynn M. Roberson

Dear Cheryl:

On behalf of the Georgia Defense Lawyers Association, it is my pleasure to nominate GDLA Immediate Past President Lynn M. Roberson for the Fred H. Sievert Award. Lynn truly embodies the criteria – she is an outstanding defense bar leader, who has initiated innovative projects for the betterment of the organization and exercised strong leadership.

To understand Lynn's accomplishments, one must view them through the lens of our association's history. The GDLA was founded in 1967 by a handful of white male defense lawyers who wanted to socialize and informally share war stories and techniques. The GDLA has since grown to more than 700 members, and offers formal avenues for training, networking and communication.

Lynn was elected to the GDLA Board of Directors in 2004, where she was consistently re-elected until she was elevated to one of four Vice President positions in 2007. She served in that capacity until she was elected Secretary-Treasurer in 2010. That election marked the first time a woman had held an officer position in the GDLA. She was then elected Executive Vice President in 2011 and ultimately President in 2012, making her the first woman to lead the GDLA. Lynn was also involved with DRI on behalf of our SLDO, serving as Georgia's State Representative from 2008-2011.

During the same period, Lynn was active with the Atlanta Bar Association, the largest voluntary bar in the Southeast with over 6,000 members. She was climbing the ladder there, just as her star was rising in the GDLA. It was clear she was in line to be Atlanta Bar President, and that timing was accelerated when the heir apparent preceding Lynn was appointed to the appellate bench. Lynn's term as Atlanta Bar President-elect and, subsequently, President moved up a year, which translated into her serving simultaneously as Atlanta Bar President and GDLA President.

To the casual observer, that may have seemed like an impossible feat – or at least one that meant one of the associations would surely suffer. How could one person possibly lead both groups, and do so effectively? But those of us who know Lynn were convinced she was probably the *only* one could conquer that unprecedented challenge.

The *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, Georgia's leading publication for business and industry, recognized Lynn's prowess and spotlighted her landmark achievement in the August 2012 article, "First Woman to Head Lawyers Group Paid Dues" (see Exhibit A pdf). It explained the secret to her success wasn't being a woman – it was hard work:

Warner S. Fox, a partner with Hawkins Parnell Thackston & Young LLP in Atlanta and a past president of the association, said it wasn't Roberson's gender that got her elected to the leadership post.

"Lynn's just dynamic," he said. "She's always been tireless in her efforts. I don't know where she finds the time to do it all. ... Under our system, it's her time to be president."

None of us knows how she finds time to do it all – and to do it well. We're almost certain that her day somehow has more than 24 hours in it or that she never sleeps! All of this she accomplished while continuing to be one of the premier premises liability lawyers in Georgia; she is consistently named a Georgia Super Lawyer and among the Top 50 Woman Super Lawyers in our state.

It should also be noted that during Lynn's year as Atlanta Bar President, its Executive Director of 47 years, Diane O'Steen, retired – meaning Diane was at the Atlanta Bar when the GDLA was created! As if that weren't enough, both the CFO and CLE Director of 38 and 27 years, respectively, also retired. Coordinating a nationwide search and conducting hiring interviews for these three critical positions just added more to Lynn's plate. Again, all while she was serving as GDLA President, too.

Although Lynn does not like to highlight her being the first woman GDLA President – "It's not particularly flattering that it took us this long," she says – that may be the reason she was focused on diversity during her tenure. In terms of an innovative project, she appointed the GDLA's first Diversity Committee. Again, we realize that's not innovative by some SLDO standards, as we may be a bit behind the times, but it was a breakthrough moment for the GDLA.

Additionally, Lynn proposed to the GDLA Board of Directors that we apply for membership in the Multi-Bar Leadership Council (MBLC), which the Atlanta Bar created in 2001 to foster and improve relationships among the members of local bar associations, while focusing on diversity and inclusion. Our membership application is expected to be approved next month, so the GDLA will become part of a larger statewide effort to promote diversity through judicial candidate forums, networking receptions, community service projects and more.

Even before the foregoing efforts during her term as President, Lynn was focused on diversity. One example was during her time as a member of the GDLA's Trial Academy. Lynn recognized the need for the faculty to be more representative of the legal community. She invited the first African-American faculty to participate and worked to increase the number of women on the team. As chair, for which she served three years, she invited Douglas Burrell to join the faculty. Douglas has since risen to Vice-chair and will Chair the program for 2014. Douglas, picking up the mantle to diversify the faculty, has added an African-American female, as well as a second African-American male, to the distinguished group for this coming year.

It is hard to capture Lynn's extraordinary accomplishments on paper, because she defies the role of a typical bar leader and so much of what she does to inspire others is intangible. Her energy, enthusiasm, dedication and focus are unparalleled. She has left an indelible mark on the entire legal profession in

Georgia through her leadership of both the GDLA and the Atlanta Bar. She has made headlines literally and figuratively, elevating the GDLA's profile by educating so many about our existence as a counterpart to the local American Association for Justice chapter. Just about everyone in the legal community knows Lynn, and now that expansive audience knows what the GDLA is and how membership therein can benefit the civil defense lawyer.

Finally, while most Past Presidents ride off into the sunset – and some SLDOs even struggle to keep them involved – Lynn has taken over as Chair of the GDLA Diversity Committee, and will be our representative to the MBLC. She has already created a great legacy, but she is never one to rest on her laurels. In Lynn's eyes, her work is never done – being outstanding is never enough, which is why we believe she unequivocally deserves to be honored with DRI's Fred H. Sievert Award.

We thank you and the committee in advance for your consideration.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a small loop at the end.

Theodore Freeman
GDLA President