



Be Neutral

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From the Director: Thanks, To a Dedicated Colleague



Let me take a moment to acknowledge a debt of gratitude we Georgia ADR practitioners owe to Jill Radwin, staff attorney to the Georgia Child Support Commission. Jill died Friday, September 30, after a three-year fight with lung cancer. Georgia mediators, arbitrators, lawyers – in fact anyone who has dealt with child support here in the last six years – should take a moment to honor Jill's memory.

Jill didn't write the 2005 Georgia child support law. But she helped to make the maddeningly complex law more accessible and helped develop the tools that we ADR professionals use every day to calculate child support here in Georgia. Jill and her small staff studied the law, tested calculators, worksheets, collected feedback, suggested and oversaw improvements. She took phone calls and e-mails at all hours from people who were struggling to understand the child support guidelines, worksheets and calculators. She worked closely with our office to ensure that registered neutrals were always up to date on the latest developments in the child support field. I can't emphasize enough how important Jill has been to our expertise with the child support laws. Without her guidance, we would be lost.

Jill's office was just a few doors down from mine in the Administrative Office of the Courts suite. Her work ethic here set an example for all of us. She worked throughout her strenuous cancer treatments and clinical trials. She never complained, never asked for pity or sympathy, never asked to work part-time or to cut her workload. Save for an occasional request to reschedule a meeting or a deadline around her treatment, you wouldn't know she was embroiled in a fight for her life.

As her colleagues, we remember Jill also for her love of – and encyclopedic knowledge of – world travel, gourmet cuisine, and musical theatre. Vacation in Paris? She could recommend fabulous restaurants to try while you were seeing the sights in the City of Lights. Weekend in New York? She knew all the Broadway shows, which ones were worth a try, and where to catch a great post-show dinner.

Jill approached her personal and professional lives with passion and intellect. She could have worked anywhere, in any field, and would have been successful. Yet she chose to dedicate her work to ensuring the rights of children and their entitlement to adequate financial support. For that choice, we here in Georgia have been most fortunate.

If you'd like to read more about Jill, here are links to her obituaries:



<http://tinyurl.com/3ffkifu>

<http://tinyurl.com/42wfhtk>

On a more mundane note, registration renewal season is coming up. This begins the busy time of year when we get a lot of phone calls and e-mails about continuing education, application deadlines, fees, etc. There are only two staff members here. So if we don't answer the phone right away, it's probably because we're already on another line talking with another neutral, or

replying to an e-mail. Please leave a message. We try to respond within 24 hours to all phone and e-mail queries.

Shinji Morokuma, Director, GODR
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On-time Registration Renewal Season: November 1-December 31

The 2011 registration renewal season will begin November 1, with an on-time renewal deadline of December 31, 2011. Any renewal applications submitted after December 31, 2011, will be considered late, and late fees will apply. The late renewal deadline is April 30, 2012. Neutrals who do not renew by that date will be considered inactive. All registered neutrals must renew, except those with a registration expiration date of 1/1/2013.

To streamline the renewal process, only online renewals will be accepted. Online renewals should take most neutrals 5-10 minutes to complete. Our database vendor has addressed the technical issues that prevented a few of you from completing the online renewal process as smoothly as expected.

Renewal Applications: Online renewal access will be available through your personal online accounts on November 1. The online renewal application is already populated with your personal information, so most of you will need only to enter your continuing education information before proceeding to payment.

Renewal Fee: The basic renewal fee is \$125; it is \$150 for those registered in domestic relations mediation. Note: if you submit your online after December 31, 2011, it will be considered late, and your renewal fee will double to \$250 or \$300. We don't want you to have to pay the late fee, so please submit your online application before December 31, 2011. You will have the choice of paying your renewal fee with a credit card through PayPal or by submitting a check. You do not need to have or create a PayPal account to use the PayPal function.

Continuing Education: All renewing neutrals must show on their renewal applications that they have taken at least 3 hours of continuing education in 2011. You cannot carry over CE hours from previous years or toward future years.

Background Check Authorization: We've switched to a "permanent" authorization form so you don't have to send us a form every year giving us permission to run a GBI background check. See article below. Your application will not be processed without a signed authorization form. Mail, e-mail, or fax your signed form to us.

Some tips: If you are mailing us something important, first make copies and file them, then send the material via a service that provides tracking and delivery confirmation. If you are faxing us something important, keep the fax transmittal confirmation. If you are e-mailing us something important, request a return receipt when your message is delivered or read (many e-mail programs allow this), and save it. Or save our responses to your e-mail.

More Information: See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for information on renewal fees, what counts as neutral CE and how to earn CE.

****Always send important documents to GODR via a service that offers tracking and delivery confirmation.****



Reminder: Send in Your New Background Check Authorization Form

Just a reminder that we need a new background check authorization form from all registered neutrals. GODR has begun using this new "permanent" form through which you can authorize us to check your background whenever necessary, without your having to authorize it by signature each time. Once we have your permanent authorization, **you will never have to submit another background check authorization again** for as long as your registration status is active or inactive.



This new form simplifies the registration renewal process and eliminates several trees' worth of paperwork.

The form is posted on our website under "[Forms and Applications.](#)" If you haven't done so already, please fill it out, print it, sign it, and send it to us via e-mail, fax, post or express delivery as soon as possible so we can have it on file well before the 2011 renewal season starts November 1. We recommend that you always send important documents to GODR via a service that offers tracking and delivery confirmation.

Quick Question and Answer



Q: Why is there so much variation among local ADR programs in qualifications/requirements for neutrals and how they are compensated?

A: Local court programs have the authority under the Supreme Court ADR Rules to set requirements for their local neutral rosters beyond the statewide standards set by the Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution. They also have the authority to determine what types of cases are sent to the ADR program, when they are sent, and how neutrals in their program are assigned cases and compensated.

Local programs can and do design their local ADR rules to meet the local needs of their citizens, the courts, and the bar. That's why one program may have an open roster from which the parties pick a neutral for their case and with whom they directly negotiate dates and fees, and another program may have a limited roster of neutrals who are assigned cases by the program and are paid by the program for a certain number of hours.

A court's local ADR rules are reviewed and approved by the Commission before the program starts. That's done to ensure that the local rules do no conflict with [ADR Rules Appendix A](#), which constitute the Uniform Rules for Dispute Resolution Programs. (The Uniform Rules have been passed by the leadership councils of all of the levels of court in Georgia, and they are the rules that all Georgia courts must abide by in their local ADR programs.)

Questions and comments about local ADR rules are best addressed by the director of the local court program or the board of trustees for the local ADR fund. A current list of local ADR programs and contact information is always posted on our website under "[Find a Local Court Program.](#)"



Benefits: Exclusive Insurance Products for Registered Neutrals

Georgia-registered neutrals are entitled to participate in several insurance and retirement programs that have been designed specifically for them. If you need insurance, are planning for retirement, talk to the experts at [BPC Financial](#). They manage our new exclusive insurance and retirement program, and they can advise you on your insurance needs and help you find good deals on major medical insurance, healthcare savings accounts, dental and vision insurance, term life insurance and more. Registered neutrals receive the benefits of underwriting concessions, enhanced benefits, or reduced premiums and fees compared to shopping for similar products on the open market. Check out the [GODR Registered Neutrals Insurance and Retirement Programs website](#).

We've also arranged for special benefits on professional liability insurance for registered mediators and arbitrators with [Complete Equity Markets](#). See our [website](#) for more information

or contact [Betsy Thomas](#), 800-323-6234, ext. 472, and tell her you're a Georgia registered neutral!



CaseWatch for Mediators: “Magic Words” Can Make or Break Mediated Agreements

“Please.” “Thank you.” “Open the pod bay doors, Hal.” We know that the right words can make all the difference in life. The same is true in mediated agreements. In this month’s CaseWatch for Mediators, Mary Ellen Cates, family law attorney and registered mediator, shows you how the existence or absence of one key legal term can make an agreement enforceable or unenforceable – despite the supposedly clear intentions of the parties.

[Read Full Article](#)



CaseWatch for Arbitrators: Disclose Repeat Customers to Avoid Accusations of Bias

We all have people we enjoy working with more than others. And regular users of arbitration often have favorite arbitrators. It’s particularly important for arbitrators, however, to ensure that their frequent selection by a particular party does not taint their reputation for fairness. In this month’s CaseWatch for Arbitrators, John Allgood, Esq., veteran attorney, registered mediator and arbitrator, highlights a New York trial court decision that offers important ethical and practical lessons for Georgia arbitrators who are interested in protecting their professional credibility.

[Read Full Article](#)



Marketing Tip: Building Your Referral Engine

Anyone who buys or sells knows that word of mouth is more powerful than advertising. The same is true when marketing your ADR practice. What other people say about you carries more weight than what you say about yourself. So how do you get people to say good things about you? And how do you turn those positive comments into increased business? Our marketing maven and registered mediator Michele Gibson tells you how to pump up your referrals, in this month’s Marketing Tip column.

[Read Full Article](#)



Commission Meeting in November

The next meeting of the Commission on Dispute Resolution is scheduled for Thursday, November 10, 2011, at 2 pm, in Meeting Room 1 of the [State Bar of Georgia](#) Conference Center, 104 Marietta St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30303. Meetings are open to the public. Upcoming Commission meetings, agendas and minutes are always posted on our [website](#).

GODR MEMBER BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT – AUTO INSURANCE



Georgia Registered Neutrals may receive a discount on auto insurance through MetLife Auto & Home. This benefit is made available by BPC Financial, the administrator of the GODR Registered Neutrals Insurance & Retirement Programs.

[Visit program website to receive a No Obligation quote today >](#)

Products sold and serviced by BPC Financial, the administrator of the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution (GODR) Insurance Programs. GODR is not a licensed insurance entity and does not sell insurance.



Save the Date: 2011 ADR Institute

The 18th Annual ADR Institute and 2011 Neutrals' Conference will be held Friday, December 9, 2011, at the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center, 104 Marietta St. NW, Atlanta. We set an attendance record last year, and based on the speakers we are lining up, we think this year's conference will be even more popular. At least 6 hours of neutral continuing education and 6 hours of CLE (including 1 Ethics Hour) will be available. More details and conference registration will be available through www.iclega.org in November. Stay tuned!



Publicly Available Resources for Georgia ADR Professionals

We encourage you to visit the [blog](#) created by Georgia State University law professor Doug Yarn and GSU law student Alex Salzillo to inform and encourage discussion. Please add it to your reading list, send the link to your colleagues, and visit often. The address: <http://georgiaadr.wordpress.com/>



And don't forget the [Georgia Mediators Network](#), a great Facebook resource for the latest mediation news and articles from around the world. The page has been visited tens of thousands of times in just the few short months it's been around. Use the information there to pump your own professional web pages and your expertise. The Georgia Mediators Network is the brainchild of registered mediator Michele Gibson, our marketing columnist and newsletter producer.

Upcoming CE and Training Offerings

Don't wait until the 2012 renewal season to get your CEs. Check frequently at our [website](#) for the latest CE and training offerings. Remember, any ADR-related training you take counts as CE as long as you took it since your last renewal or your initial registration, whichever comes later. Lawyers, any CLE you took during that same time period counts as CE. Likewise, judges and CJE. Accountants and other professionals with CE requirements, same thing.



And remember, we recently posted two videos on our website that registered neutrals can watch for free to earn CE credit. Each video is one-hour long. Neutrals are free to watch the videos as many times as they wish, but we can only award 1 CE hour credit for each video once a renewal season. Please note the date you finished viewing each video so you can report it on your renewal form. Remember, registered neutrals are required to take at least 3 hours of CE each year in order to renew their registrations. Look for the link, "[Continuing Education Videos](#)," in the main menu of our website. For more information on what qualifies for CE, please see the "[Help! I Need CE!](#)" link on our website.

Be Neutral Back Issues Available Online

Be Neutral is sent monthly to all registered neutrals, generally at the beginning of the month. If you missed an issue, our back issues are posted at the bottom right of our website, under



[“Newsletter Archive.”](#) Please take a look. If you know people who want *Be Neutral*, please direct them to our subscription box at the bottom right of our [website](#), where they just need to enter their e-mail addresses. Please forward this newsletter to anyone who might be interested in ADR in Georgia courts. Forward it just as you would any other e-mail. If folks who are not registered neutrals want to receive the newsletter free of charge, they can submit their e-mail addresses in the subscription box at the bottom right of our [website](#). And sending us feedback is easy – just reply to this e-mail as you would any other e-mail. We want to hear from you!

Spread the Word

Please forward this newsletter to anyone who might be interested in ADR in Georgia courts. Forward it just as you would any other e-mail. If folks who are not registered neutrals want to receive the newsletter free of charge, they can use the subscription box at below this text or submit their e-mail addresses in the subscription box at the bottom right of the home page of our [website](#). And sending us feedback is easy – just reply to this e-mail as you would any other e-mail. We want to hear from you !

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