



# THE ADVOCATE

Newsletter of the Advocates Society,  
an Association of Polish-American Attorneys



## OFFICERS FOR 2023-24

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**Hon. Thomas Nowinski**  
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## Board of Governors

*The Management of this Society is vested in the Board of Governors, consisting of the Officers, Chairs of Standing Committees and Past Presidents. The Board shall advise, guide, direct and determine the overall policy of the Society.*

## *The Advocates Society's* Annual Judges' Night

Thank you to all who attended the Advocates Society's Annual Judges Night on October 19th at the Polish Museum of America - to the best of our knowledge - the longest running Judges Night in Illinois!

Particular thanks for attending go to Justices **P. Scott Neville**, **David Overstreet**, and **Joy Cunningham** of the Supreme Court of Illinois; Chief Judge **Sarah Darrow** of the United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois; Chief Judges **Clarence Darrow** of the 14th Judicial Circuit; various Justices of the Appellate Court of Illinois including **Jesse Reyes**, **Cynthia Cobbs**, and **Carl Anthony Walker**; various Presiding Judges of the Circuit Court of Illinois including **E. Kenneth Wright Jr.** and **Diann K. Marsalek**; Chairman **Kerry Peck** of the Supreme Court Commission on Elder Law; Cook County Circuit Clerk **Iris Martinez**; Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner **Mariyana Spyropolulos**; as many as 90 sitting judges including Advocates **Jonathan Clark Green**, **Michelle Gemskie**, and **Diane Pezanoski**; various retired Judges including Advocate **Joan Smuda** and **Bob Bertucci**.

Thanks to volunteers **Justyna Regan**, **Guy** and **Penny Youman**, **Penelope Youman**, **Sophia Youman**, and **Mark Dobrzycki** for helping make the event a success! As well, thanks go to President **James Robaczewski** of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America and President **Richard Owsiany** of the Polish Museum of America who hosted the event. Check out some photos from the event on pages 3 to 8.

Lastly, a BIG thanks to Judge **Michael Chmiel** of the 22nd Judicial Circuit of the State of Illinois, Advocates' 1st Vice President, for spearheading this year's event!



WROCLAW, POLAND

## Calendar of Events

### December 2023

5th - Board Meeting; 6:30pm

Networking; 7pm Meeting (Zoom)

21st - General Meeting and Holiday Party; 6:30pm Cocktails and Networking; 7pm Meeting; (Copernicus, 5216 W Lawrence, Chicago)

### January 2024

9th - Board Meeting; 6:30pm

Networking; 7pm Meeting (Zoom)

18th - General Meeting and CLE; 6:30pm Cocktails and Networking; 7pm Meeting; (Copernicus, 5216 W Lawrence, Chicago)

### February 2024

6th - Board Meeting; 6:30pm

Networking; 7pm Meeting (Zoom)

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### *Public Relations & Newsletter Committee*

The Joint Committee manages, edits and coordinates the production of the newsletter.

Kathy E. Bojczuk, Chair  
Hon. Michele Gemske  
Ann L. Melichar  
Pamela Sakowicz Menaker  
Julia Jensen Smolka  
Hon. Joan Ellen Smuda  
Jessica Wiczorkiewicz



*The Advocate* is published quarterly, coming out in March, June, September and December. Content and photos, including news about members, can be emailed to [Advocatessociety@gmail.com](mailto:Advocatessociety@gmail.com) for publication consideration.

# Letter from Madame President

Dear Members and Friends,

As 2023 draws to a close and my term as President is in its last quarter, I am continually impressed by the talent and dedication of Advocates Society Members. Members are engaged as leaders in the legal community, the local Chicagoland community, and the worldwide community. Members work to uphold standards of the legal profession, fight injustice, and uphold the rule of law. Whether you joined for the quality programming, good friends, great food and beverage, or common heritage, you leave our events and meetings having learned insight about something or someone.

I pray for justice and peace at home, as well as, in and near our heritage homelands. Europe and the Holy Land are engulfed in war began by unexpected, unwarranted attacks. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" is as true as it ever was (Martin Luther King, 1963). I have hope that righteousness, truth, and love will prevail. The days are getting shorter now, but soon the days will start getting longer. Light will conquer darkness. Love will conquer evil.

Have a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season for your families! Happy New Year! Happy Chanukah! Merry Christmas!

Ann L. Melichar  
2023-2024 President, Advocates Society



# The Advocates' Annual Judges' Night



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*"Networking that matters is helping people achieve their goals."  
- Seth Godin*



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# The Advocates' Annual Judges' Night



## CLE: Breaking the Cycle: Managing Imposter Syndrome & Perfectionism

On November 16th and at the Advocates Society General Meeting, Tony Pacione, the Deputy Director of the Lawyer's Assistance Program (LAP) presented a 1-hour CLE presentation called "Breaking the Cycle: Managing Imposter Syndrome and Perfectionism." This CLE was a joint CLE with the Bohemian Lawyers Association and took place at the Copernicus Center.

Impostor syndrome (IS) refers to an internal experience of believing that you are not as competent as others perceive you to be and it has links to maladaptive perfectionism and fear of failure. It can affect anyone no matter their social status, work background, skill level, or degree of expertise.

### Participants learned:

- Why lawyers, particularly, early career, women and minorities are a vulnerable population.
- The common mental health issues associated with Imposter Syndrome and Maladaptive Perfectionism.
- The signs and characteristics associated with Imposter Syndrome and Maladaptive Perfectionism.
- What you can do to minimize these feelings as you navigate the practice of law and your career as an attorney.



**PRESENTER, TONY PACIONE**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE LAWYER'S  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

*Special thanks to Judge Chmiel and Mark Dobrzycki for the photography.*

# *The Advocates' Scholarship Fundraiser & Silent Auction*

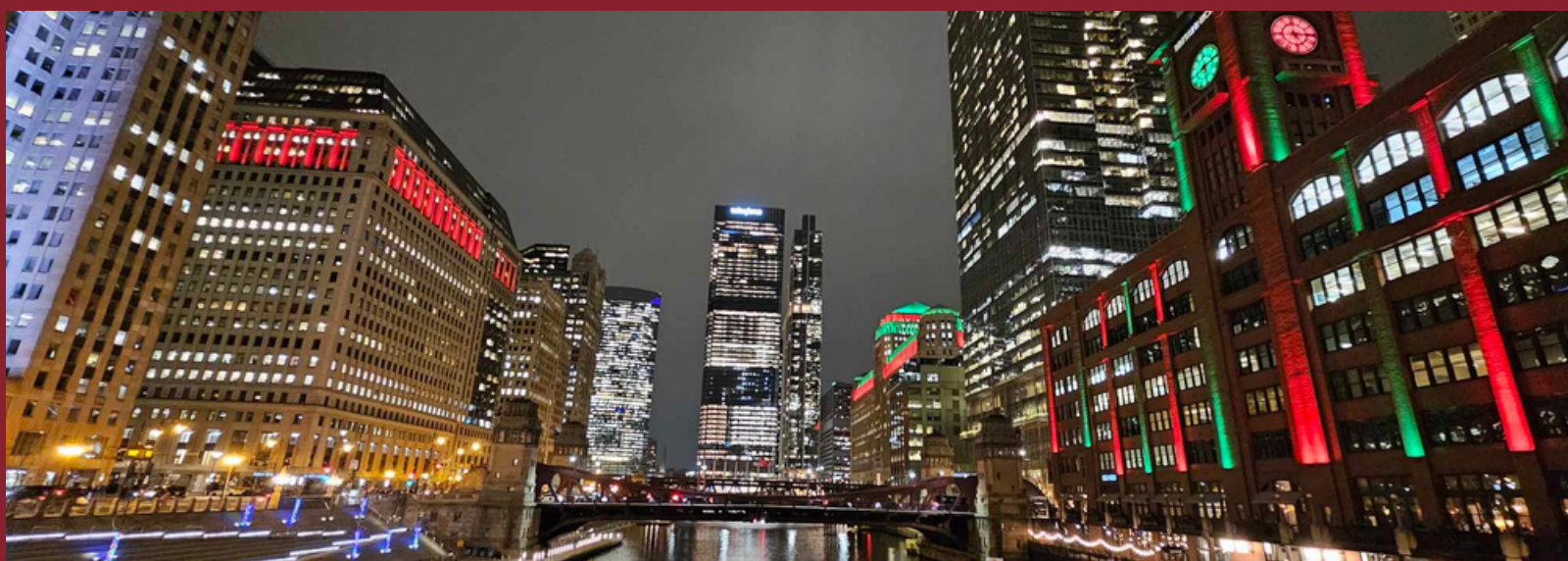


On November 30, 2023, the Advocates Society held its annual Scholarship Fundraiser and Silent Auction. The evening was a resounding success and all attendees enjoyed the special family-style dinner and camaraderie. Some of the 40 donated and sold items included: a Suite at the Ritz Carlton Chicago, dinner gift certificates, artwork, theatre tickets, Bourbon, artisan Vodka, wine, hockey, baseball, basketball and football tickets, and a 33.7 pound holiday sausage and bread gift basket.

Scholarships were also awarded at the event to **Tom Bacharz, David Blondin, Alexis Gonzalez, Pamela Kobeszko, Jacob Rotolo** and **Elaine Montgomery**. The funds raised will benefit the Polish American Advocates Society Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships to entering or current law school students who are of Polish descent.

Finally, a special thanks to **Eryk J. Wachnik**, Advocates' 2nd Vice President, for planning such a successful and fun event!

# *The Advocates' Scholarship Fundraiser & Silent Auction*



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## Advocate SPOTLIGHT: *Attorney Dominika Poplawska-Purcha*

We are also featuring Dominika Poplawska-Purcha who is bilingual Polish-speaking attorney, founding attorney of Poplawska Purcha and Associates LLC, working in the areas of probate, guardianship, and family law. She has been inspired to help people navigate the difficult process of divorce and separation through her motivational speaking endeavors including the series of interactive panel discussions that she co-hosts beginning with: *Heal and Rebuild: Introduction to Freedom*. Here is what Attorney Poplawska-Purcha shared with us.



### Why are you a member of the Advocates Society?

For most of my law school career, I was balancing working full-time, and attending night classes and online classes while being a full-time mother, wife and volunteering within the community. This balancing lifestyle wasn't always easy, in fact it was never easy. That is when I became involved with the Advocates Society as a student member, two-time scholarship recipient, and volunteer. Being a part of the Advocates Society helped me keep grounded as my branches weaved and balanced through all of my various obligations, duties, and voluntary involvement. I instantly felt welcomed, and the sense of the Advocate Society's strong community bond cannot be missed from a mile away.

### Give us an example of how being a member of the Advocates Society empowered you as an attorney.

A friend once asked me: *How do you MAKE time?* My answer was simpler than she expected it to be: *building blocks of time*. Time is like a popular video game from the 1980's that we are all familiar with, where various shaped blocks fall from the top of the screen and the goal is to spin them and place them to form a complete row as they fall. It is very applicable in the very chaotic and busy life of attorneys. You can either take it slow and steady and carefully line up the blocks of time to fit as best as you can, or you can embrace the chaos and let the blocks fall as they may. However, I guarantee that the slow and steady careful organization of time blocks will lead to more success and less stress in the long run. Keep in mind that most of the time the blocks fall at the high speed level, and don't always line up quite as we want them to, that when we accept the situation that we have no control over and use that as a learning opportunity to know how to better align the next row of blocks. Being an active member on various committees of the Advocates Society helps me get better at aligning my time blocks while staying involved with our community.

## Advocate SPOTLIGHT: *Attorney Dominika Poplawska-Purcha*

### What are you most looking forward to in the coming year, personally and professionally?

About a year ago, I began motivational speaking. I look forward to continuing to host and be a panelist at these empowering events. I also look forward to growing my book of business, and continue gaining experience in probate, guardianships, and family law. I also look forward to gaining more litigation experience this year, with my first big trial set for February.

### Share any other information about yourself that you think our readers would enjoy.

My favorite pastime is traveling and exploring new places. Whenever I visit a new place, I always bring back a mug and add it to my collection. I would love to be able to do a backpacking trip through Asia one day: Thailand, China, Japan, and tons of other amazing places are on my bucket list.



At the Scholarship Awards reception, Dominika accepting her scholarship, while holding her baby. Besides her, Regina Rathnau, Advocate and President of the Advocates Society Scholarship Foundation.

“Being a part of the Advocates Society helped me keep grounded as my branches weaved and balanced through all of my various obligations, duties, and voluntary involvement.”



“When I was in college I used to ride my motorcycle everywhere. I took a break from riding when I started my family. This past summer I decided to get back on the horse, and loved every minute of that ride!”

# Save THE Date

## ADVOCATES' EVENTS



Welcome Constanica Joy Rakowski, born on 11/11! Congratulations to Advocates **Steve Rakowski** and **Joanna Zagozdon**. Both mom and baby girl are doing great!

## 2024-2025 SLATED BOARD OFFICERS

*Congrats!*

In November, the Nomination Committee presented a report with officer nominees to the Board, and the Board accepted the nominees. Now the officer nominees will be presented at the General Meeting in December for vote and approval. Any competing nominations must be submitted in writing by 10 members in good standing at the December Board Meeting.

New officers will be sworn in at the Installation Dinner in February 2024. Here are the names of the current 2024-2025 nominees.

**President: Hon. Michael Chmiel**

**1st Vice President: Hon. Thomas Nowinski**

**2nd Vice President: Kathy E. Bojczuk**

**3rd Vice President: Roman Drewniak**

**Treasurer: Julia Jensen Smolka**

**Secretary: Hon. Michele Genskie**

**Historian: Alon Stein**

# Mishap While Traveling Abroad and Onboard? A Legal Guide to Abide By

Written by Steven Zdanowicz



“

Ready for that perfect trip down to the Caribbean to avoid the arrival of old man winter? Or a long holiday in Europe to see all the wonders that the Romans left behind? Count me in! But if there's one thing that working in aviation law has taught me, it's that things can go wrong. But what should you know as an international traveler when things go wrong either onboard an aircraft, at the airport, or somewhere in between?

”

Here are some good places to start:

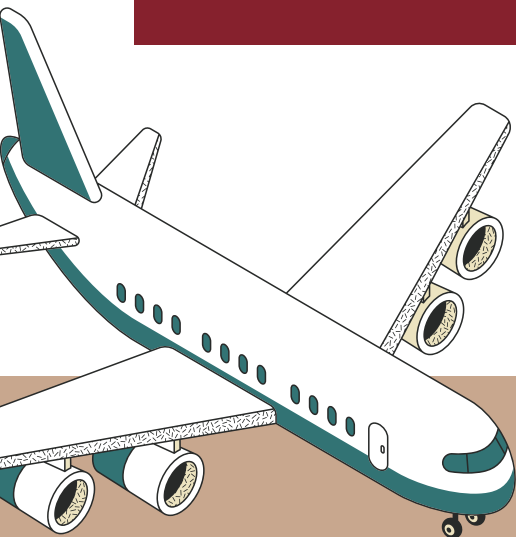
## **Contract of Carriage**

Ever look on the back of a physical ticket with all the small print? Take a look next time you fly. Have an E-ticket? Check your carrier's app or website. The agreement between the passenger and carrier is called the Contract of Carriage. The Contract of Carriage contains all the rights, responsibilities, and terms for your trip between your departure point and the final destination.

## **Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules for International Carriage by Air, also known as the “Montreal Convention”**

This international treaty outlines the liability a carrier has to its passengers – assuming the countries on your booking are signatories – when they are injured or perish aboard international flights and there is damage to or loss of luggage and cargo. This treaty also applies to domestic legs booked on the same itinerary. The Montreal Convention has a strict liability regime for the air carrier. The Montreal Convention also contains strict limits on damages depending on the loss suffered. As a general rule, a Montreal Convention-based lawsuit has a two-year statute of limitations. However, for lost baggage claims, written notice to the air carrier must be made within 21 days. For damaged baggage, a claim must be made within 7 days. Carrying something personal or of increased monetary value? Carry it on!





# Mishap While Traveling Abroad and Onboard? A Legal Guide to Abide By *(continued)*

Written by Steven Zdanowicz

## European Regulation 261/2004

While the Montreal Convention is the first place to look while traveling abroad, the European Union provides additional protections for passengers, regardless of nationality, traveling to and from the European Union. This regulation is more commonly known as EU 261. EU 261 provides passengers fixed damages when their flights are delayed or cancelled. The compensation owed to the passenger is tiered. In essence, the longer the delay, the greater the compensation. For cancellations, hotel and meal reimbursements are also mandated. However, air carriers do not automatically provide damages. Passengers must file a claim with the air carrier or the European Union. The statute of limitations for EU 261 claims is dependent upon the Member State.

## The importance of documentation

While the Montreal Convention and EU 261 provide a legal framework for passengers and air carriers alike, passengers traveling abroad should always document their mishap. Make sure to take photos, obtain a statement, and file a report with the air carrier and relevant authorities as soon as possible. While it can be a letdown to shuffle paper for a few hours on what is a supposed to be an idyllic holiday, taking the time to document and report a mishap is time well spent. It will save you hours of headache later.

*Steven Zdanowicz is an aviation claims attorney with Peter J. McBreen and Associates, Inc. He can be reached at [szdanowicz@mcbreen.com](mailto:szdanowicz@mcbreen.com) and (312) 422-1192.*



## Photos Wanted



## Advocates, send us your PHOTOS!

Traveling abroad? Planning a trip to Poland?  
Attended an Advocates' event? Send us photos to  
include in the Newsletter!

Email:

[Advocatessociety@gmail.com](mailto:Advocatessociety@gmail.com)

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/polishadvocates>

## NEWSLETTER PUBLISH DATES

Spring Issue - March 1st

Summer Issue - June 1st

Fall Issue - Sept 1st

Winter Issue - Dec 1st

## BECOME A MEMBER

***Who qualifies to be a member?*** Any person of Polish descent or affinity, duly licensed to practice law in any jurisdiction, is eligible for membership in this Society, regardless of race or religion. A condition of membership shall be absolute and unqualified loyalty to the constitution of the United States of America.

***When do I need to renew?*** Memberships are renewed every March.

***How do I pay?*** You can visit our website, [www.advocatessociety.org](http://www.advocatessociety.org).

### General Membership

(5 or more years) - \$175

Attorneys who have been admitted to the bar  
for five (5) or more years.

### General Membership

(less than 5 years) - \$150

Attorneys who have been admitted to the bar  
for less than five (5) years.

### Law Student Membership - \$30

Individuals who are not licensed to practice  
law in any jurisdiction, but are a student  
attending an accredited law school.

### Associate Membership (non-attorney) - \$75

Individuals who are not licensed to practice  
law in any jurisdiction. This is a non-attorney,  
non-voting membership.



## Amicus Poloniae Pro Bono Clinic

Volunteers are needed (attorneys and Polish translators)  
for the Amicus Poloniae Pro Bono Clinic Sessions.

**WHEN?** 3rd Saturday of each month - 9am to 1:30pm

**WHERE?** In person at the Polish National Alliance (6100 N. Cicero Ave.,  
Chicago), via Zoom, or by being "on call."

**HOW?** Contact us by emailing: [Advocatessociety@gmail.com](mailto:Advocatessociety@gmail.com), and we will  
make sure you receive a CVLS volunteer registration form to fill  
out prior to the next session so you are all set for the session you  
want to attend and those for the rest of the year. CVLS provides  
legal liability coverage for registered volunteers.

# THANKS!

The PR/Newsletter Committee gives  
thanks to the contributors who  
submitted photos, content and  
information to the current issue of the  
Newsletter. We appreciate your time,  
support and dedication!

Contributors in this issue include:

Hon. Michael Chmiel  
Mark Dobrzycki  
Ann L. Melichar  
Dominika Poplawska-Purcha  
Steve Rakowski  
Federico Rodriguez  
Eryk J. Wachnik  
Joanna Zagozdron  
Steven Zdanowicz



MERRY  
*Christmas*

*Wesołych Świąt!*

2024  
HAPPY NEW YEAR



FROM THE ADVOCATES SOCIETY

### Newsletter Submissions

Please send items to  
[Advocatessociety@gmail.com](mailto:Advocatessociety@gmail.com). Articles  
should be in Word format and pictures in  
jpeg or PDF format. Permission to publish as  
received or edited is assumed when  
emailed. Any announcements such as job  
promotions, awards received or personal  
achievements may also be submitted.