

The Inaugural Wigmore Awards for Lifetime Achievement in the Area of the Law of Evidence and the Process of Proof

Introduction

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In early 2007, as Chair of the Section on Evidence, I wrote to the Executive Committee of the Association of American Law Schools as follows:

This year's Evidence Section Luncheon was held in honor of the passing of the Hon. Edward Becker, a leading judicial light in formulating and clarifying doctrines of American evidence over the past decades. It occurred to the section officers and members of the executive committee who were present at that luncheon that the section should move to honor the giants of the field such as Judge Becker while they live, rather than after they have passed on. To that end, we propose the following to the AALS Executive Committee.

Proposal:

The Evidence Section of the Association of American Law Schools has, by unanimous vote of its officers and executive committee, decided to establish an award for lifetime achievement in work related to the law of evidence and the nature of proof, to be known as The AALS Section on Evidence John Henry Wigmore Award for Lifetime Achievement in the area of the Law of Evidence and the Process of Proof. The award will be made from time to time as the officers and executive committee of the Section shall determine, but in any event not more often than once every three years (the inaugural awards excepted, as provided below). The purpose of the award is to honor those who have reached what in former years might have been considered retirement age (whether or not they have in fact retired) and who have made leading contributions to the understanding of

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the proof process, or to the administration and reform of the rules of evidence and the process of proof, or both. Such an award is fully consistent with, and in furtherance of, the purposes and ends of the AALS Section on Evidence, in that it gives appropriate peer recognition to signal achievement in the spheres of scholarship and the administration and reform of the law. The process of selection shall be that the Chair of the Evidence Section shall seek nominations for the AALS Section on Evidence in any year when an award might be made under these rules to determine if there are any nominees for the award. The AALS Section on Evidence Officers and Executive Committee shall discuss the nominees and then vote. The nominee receiving the most votes (after run-off between the top two nominees, in the event no nominee receives a majority in the initial polling) shall receive the award, provided that the recipient is then approved by 2/3 of the full body of the Officers and Executive Committee as meeting the criteria set out above. Before the award is announced, the AALS Section on Evidence will submit in writing how the AALS Section on Evidence followed its award procedures and criteria—the AALS National Office will inform the Section that the award can be announced after it has been determined that the Section has followed their award procedures and criteria. The awards shall be announced in advance of the next annual meeting of the AALS, and shall be made at the AALS Section on Evidence meeting or luncheon at the AALS Annual Meeting.

Inaugural Awards

For the year 2007–2008, the Officers and Advisors, acting as directed above, shall be authorized to award up to two inaugural awards, in consideration of the fact that no previous awards have been given to the current cohort of potential candidates, providing the criteria set out above are met as to each award.

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This proposal was approved by the AALS, and the selection process was carried out as described above. The resulting selections, by a wide and deserved margin, were Judge Jack B. Weinstein and Professor William Twining. These inaugural Wigmore Awards were bestowed at a luncheon of the Evidence Section at the AALS Annual Meeting held in New York on January 8, 2008, at which both Judge Weinstein and Evelyn, his wife of 63 years, and Professor Twining and Penelope, his wife of 50 years, were present. It was indeed a memorable event.