Letter From the Outgoing NAME President

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When we are asked to address reasons for the shortage of forensic pathologists, I suspect that most of us would at least mention our vicissitudes as expert witnesses. Date and time changes, long waits on uncomfortable benches in crowded hallways, and snarky attorneys on both sides who apparently have no respect for our packed professional schedules can make our lives miserable. Ultimately, we are pulled repeatedly into a somewhat odd (to us) world in which breaks are still called recess, we are graded on deportment, any past sin or error is fair game forever, and all control is vested in the Judge, not the Doctor.

And yet, despite all those things, we simply acknowledge that it is part of the job, and keep going back—going back perhaps more often than expected, thanks to the continuing fallout of *Melendez-Diaz* and *Bullcoming*. As long as one is engaged in the active practice of forensic pathology, trips to court are part of the mix. For those eschewing the autopsy room, defense attorneys have a need (and really, a right) to expert help as well. Do this job long enough, and you will likely have worked for district attorneys, state's attorneys, federal attorneys, their defense counterparts, as well as both plaintiff and defense attorneys in civil

cases. As much as they would all love to label us as tools of one side or another, it is helpful to regularly remind them that we are doctors and we are there for our patients – period.

This issue of *Academic Forensic Pathology* brings many other fascinating topics to the table as well, such as child death reviews, another mandatory function for many of us, and certainly one at risk of becoming just a *pro forma* rehash of similar-sounding cases, month after month. I think we would all be in favor of a greater emphasis on prevention, were that to be possible. Prevention is also a natural goal of NAME's newest position paper regarding the investigation of

in-custody deaths. This paper, the result of countless hours on the part of lead author Roger Mitchell, his committee, the executive committee, and board of directors, will absolutely prove to be “worth it.” Read it carefully – you will be encouraged to learn just how much you are already doing well!

With that, I bid a fond farewell to this “Letter from the NAME President” space. It has been a most interesting year and our organization has been well-served by this outstanding journal. My thanks to you all, and my best wishes to our incoming officers, President Kim Collins and Vice-President Jonathan Arden.