

**T**he Society of Attorney Generals Emeritus (SAGE) began as an effort to help members of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) who were leaving office and entering a period of professional and personal transition.

The creation of SAGE goes back to 1990, to a meeting of NAAG in Williamsburg, Virginia. Three former attorneys general—LeRoy S. Zimmerman of Pennsylvania, Francis X. Bellotti of Massachusetts, and W. J. Michael Cody of Tennessee—were discussing the trials and tribulations of adjustment. One of their other colleagues had recently left office and was worried about handling the transition. They wondered how best they could help.

The answer they came up with was the Society of Attorneys General Emeritus.



*Former  
Massachusetts  
Attorney  
General  
Francis X.  
Bellotti, left,  
and former  
Pennsylvania  
Attorney  
General  
LeRoy S.  
Zimmerman*

## **SAGE contributes**

SAGE was not formed for a public purpose. Its core purpose is to serve its members, former attorneys general, not the general public. But in an indirect way SAGE does contribute to the public good by helping to organize and sustain a unique body of legal talent. To the extent that SAGE helps to facilitate further contributions by its members in law, business, education, or politics, it succeeds in enabling their knowledge and experience to be put to use for the benefit of many others.

Certainly the members of SAGE enjoy the social aspects of their organization, the chance to continue friendships and be mutually supportive, but in the end they understand that SAGE is also a way for them to continue to contribute to their profession in the larger sense.

In recognition of this, NAAG every year gives the Francis X. Bellotti Award to a member of SAGE who has done an outstanding job of supporting and working to further the goals and mission of NAAG. “The award is aptly named for Frank Bellotti,” Zimmerman says in reference to his long-time friend. “Frank’s career is an example of the positive role and importance of law in our system of government.”

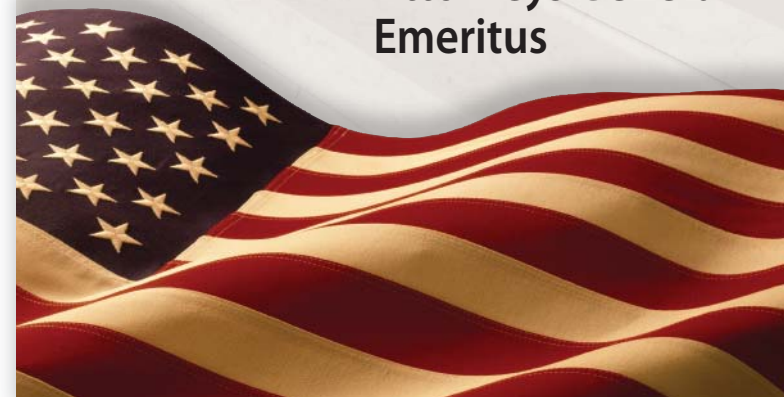
Even now, long after helping to establish SAGE, Zimmerman remains an enthusiastic member. “Our calling to the law has been good to all of us. We’ve been privileged to serve,” he says. “Membership in SAGE is one of the fruits of that service, one that I truly appreciate and take pleasure in.”

## *The* **Society of Attorneys General Emeritus**

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*Network of  
Colleagues,  
Circle of  
Friends*

*The*  
**Society of  
Attorneys General  
Emeritus**



## Helping each other, maintaining relationships

Bellotti, the longest out of office of the three, sums it up this way: “We wanted to be a resource. We wanted to help others make the transition.”

The transition from office-holder to a new role sometimes comes as a shock. “You’re in a high-level position where people always answer your calls and then all of a sudden you aren’t at the top of the list to get your calls returned anymore,” Cody explains.

Zimmerman says they all appreciated and enjoyed the collegiality of NAAG and wanted to find a way to “continue the connection.”

Cody says they decided that creating SAGE as a NAAG-affiliated organization would “allow us to stay friends and get together at NAAG meetings and tap into our position as retired attorneys general for any help or advice.”

Zimmerman, a Republican, and Bellotti, a Democrat, became the initial co-chairs of the nonpartisan group. Cody took on the task of supervising the production of an annual directory to help the members stay in touch.

The mission of SAGE, as it has evolved, is to promote camaraderie and mutual support among former attorneys general who were members of NAAG, to continue to support the goals of NAAG, and to provide former attorneys general with an avenue to engage in networking, share experiences, and exchange ideas

## Operating in alliance with NAAG

SAGE convenes twice a year, in conjunction with the NAAG spring meeting in Washington, D. C., and with NAAG’s annual meeting, which is held at varying locations throughout the country each summer. SAGE is so popular that sometimes its members outnumber NAAG members at joint events.

Members of SAGE often get together at the regional level as well. For example, members in the Northeast meet for an annual dinner in Boston every September. “It helps us keep our relationships together,” Bellotti says.

NAAG handles the annual dues billing, produces a newsletter, and takes care of other administrative chores for SAGE. The SAGE directory is a prized resource. It’s updated and distributed annually so everyone knows who’s doing what, where they are, and how they can be reached.

C. Raymond Marvin was executive director of NAAG at the time SAGE was formed. “SAGE has worked and has become a viable, ongoing institution,” he observes. “It is a mother lode of talented people who combine one-of-a-kind law practice as their state’s highest lawyer, with successful political relationships at the local, state, and federal levels. There really is nothing like it, anywhere.”

## Highly valued by its members

“SAGE is highly regarded and valued by the participants,” Marvin says. “It nurtures something in the legal, political, and social animal.”

The organization now has close to 250 members. The group includes former attorneys general who have gone on to become governors, judges, senators, congressmen, corporate executives, and even a college president, not to mention a former U.S. vice president and president.

Cody says, “It’s the nicest group of people I’ve ever been involved with on a long-term basis.” Zimmerman adds, “The friendships and associations I’ve experienced have been one of the greatest side benefits of my professional career. If we didn’t have it, we’d have to invent it all over again.”

It’s easy to assess the value the members themselves place on SAGE. You need only go to the Internet and Google any number of former attorneys general. Naturally, you’ll turn up a long list of resumes and news releases about their activities—but you’ll also find that nearly every one of them includes a mention of membership in SAGE.



*From left: former Massachusetts Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti, former Pennsylvania Attorney General LeRoy S. Zimmerman, former NAAB Executive Director C. Raymond Marvin, and former Assistant U.S. Attorney General and Massachusetts Governor William F. Weld*

## The professional perspective

Marvin explains that the position of attorney general is “an amazing, unique point of service to the public. The legal leverage on government is very substantial.” He likens the role of the attorney general to “oil on the gears of government.”

The men and women who have held this position at state and federal levels become peers and share a bond on multiple levels—a mutual commitment to the public good, familiarity with a range of legal issues and challenges, and a willingness to serve as a resource for each other. More often than not these bonds supersede politics.

SAGE doesn’t take positions on legislation or public issues—debating the issues is the province of the current NAAG members. However, SAGE members are always available to offer informal counsel and the benefit of their experience.

What SAGE does give its members is a framework to continue the valuable associations they established while serving in office and serving as members of NAAG. SAGE gives them not only a means to keep their friendships alive and to provide encouragement and support to each other as they move through transitions in their careers and lives, but also a way to share their wealth of experience, to be available to mentor those who follow, and to network with each other in their after-office pursuits.