

President's Message:
The Case for Raising the Bar

As most of the OAG nation knows by now Georgia House Bill 241 the optician apprentice/trainee MBE (minimum basic education) and registration bill was signed into law on 5 May 2K8 by Governor Sonny Perdue. This bill which was nearly unanimous (there was only 1 dissenting vote each in both chambers of the General Assembly of 215 total votes cast) in its support by a bi-partisan conservative legislature underscores and punctuates the merit of this OAG sponsored initiative. As a result of this hard fought victory for Georgia optician apprentice/trainee educational progress, OAG has received well deserved acclaim and congratulations nationally from throughout the organized profession. At the same time, recognizing that dissent is the purest form of democracy, a faint undercurrent of resentment resonates as to why this was necessary. As with most things where you stand on an issue depends on where you sit. Accordingly, where OAG officially sat on this issue of apprentice/trainee training and development, was based on official documented information from the state of Georgia that revealed a dismal pass-fail rate on state board licensure issuance. The failure rate for apprentice/trainees was approximately 70% over a 10 year period roughly between 1995-2005. This data conclusively indicated the current apprentice/trainee system was inadequate, substandard, and a total disservice to the hundreds of earnest hardworking trainees who sought to use the apprentice/trainee method as a vehicle to licensure. It is estimated approximately 80 – 85% of Georgia opticians choose the apprentice/trainee route to licensure. Therefore, as stewards of the professional interests of the state's opticians, it is the OAG's fiduciary responsibility to promote and advance the best interests of the profession. This responsibility clearly and unequivocally includes concerns for the education, training, and development of future licensed opticians. A careful and deliberate review by well educated and credentialed optical professionals revealed serious systemic flaws in the current system that needed to be reformed. What was concluded, was that there was a need to set in place a more comprehensive and structured i.e., MBE approach to apprentice/trainee training. By outlining training criteria and objectives to properly motivated trainees, as precisely as possible at the commencement of training, it is rightly anticipated there will be the expectation of seeing

the license issuance rates increase over time to the benefit of the apprentice/trainee, the profession and the public as well.

Whether you agree or disagree on this issue, respect the fact many people of professional goodwill and concern invested countless hours and effort over many years to address this issue. Ultimately, and wisely the Georgia legislature agreed.

Cordially,

**Thomas Blair, Jr., LDO, ABOM
President, OAG
770 348-9955 (vm)
Tblair3@bellsouth.net
June 2K8**