

Law Letter

SINAS, DRAMIS, BRAKE, BOUGHTON & McINTYRE, P.C.

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Sinas Dramis' Senior Partners Honored

George Sinas receives Professional Service Award from Brain Injury Association

GEORGE SINAS, who is a senior partner in the law firm, received special recognition from the Brain Injury Association (BIA), which awarded him the 2005 Legacy Society Professional Service Award, an award that is usually bestowed upon physicians or other medical providers. George was honored by the BIA for his advocacy on behalf of brain-injury victims and his efforts to protect the auto no-fault system. George has also played an integral role in developing the Coalition Protecting Auto No-Fault (CPAN), an advocacy organization, which includes not only groups such as the BIA,

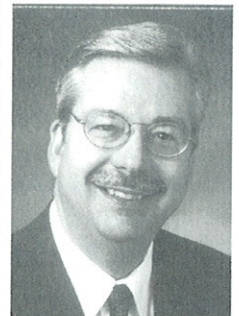


GEORGE T. SINAS

but also associations of medical providers whose members provide care and treatment for brain-injured persons. "Brain injury affects 5.3 million people each year, with an additional 1.5 million people sustaining injuries each year," said Michael Dabbs, President of the BIA of Michigan. "Changes in the auto no-fault law will dramatically affect these individuals and will significantly impact the nation's economy. That is why George's work is so important." Currently, George serves as the legal adviser to CPAN. He devotes his law practice to representing seriously injured people. His expertise has been repeatedly recognized by his peers in the legal community. He has been named in every edition of *The Best Lawyers in America* from 1989 to the present. He also was recognized as one of Michigan's "Ten Lawyers of the Year" in 2003 by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*. "George pours his heart and passion into client advocacy and protection," said Dabbs. "His tireless effort to raise community awareness for the rights of persons with brain injury is admirable."

Jim Graves receives Outstanding Attorney Award from Ingham County Bar

The Ingham County Bar Association (ICBA) awarded **JIM GRAVES**, a senior shareholder in the law firm, the 2004 Leo A. Farhat Outstanding Attorney Award. His recognition marks the second consecutive time the ICBA has honored an attorney from our law firm, with George Sinas having received the same award in 2003. Like George, Jim has devoted his more than 30-year career as a trial attorney to handling plaintiffs' personal injury and wrongful-death cases. He also has served as the President of the Ingham County



JAMES F. GRAVES

Bar Association. Currently, he is the President of the Ingham County Bar Foundation, which is a charitable, public service organization he helped to found for lawyers and other interested citizens, whose mission is to promote access to justice locally. In nominating Jim, his colleagues described him as "an extremely polite, yet strong, strong advocate for his clients" and as being "one of the most ethical and well-respected members of the legal profession." One local attorney noted that Jim is known for "possessing a sharp legal mind and continually demonstrating the highest levels of integrity and civility." As the ICBA recognized, Jim is truly outstanding both as a trial lawyer and as a leader in our community.

Congratulations to both George and Jim!



Boating safety

According to the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) Boating Statistics 2002, Americans have registered 13 million recreational boats at coastal, river, and lake waters.

Although many boat owners practice serious watercraft safety, nearly 6,000 boating accidents were reported in 2002. More than 4,000 people required emergency care, and fatalities increased to 750 from the previous year's 681.

Boaters can take several safety steps:

- ☞ Wear Coast Guard-approved life jackets.
- ☞ Never drink while boating.
- ☞ Obey all navigation and speed guidelines and rules.
- ☞ Monitor weather.
- ☞ Obtain complimentary USCG boat-safety inspections.
- ☞ Equip vessels with carbon monoxide monitors.
- ☞ File float plans.

Speed hurts

A boater and his wife were thrown from their skiff and underwent surgery for broken bones and damaged connective tissue after a speeding bass boat struck them without warning. They sued the other boat's driver for failing to keep a lookout, traveling too fast for conditions, and navigating on the wrong side of a channel. Insurers reached settlement.

Motorcycle safety

Motorcycling has grown in popularity over the past several years. Whether a rider is new to motorcycles or has been riding for a long time, safety is of paramount concern.

Rider safety depends on five guidelines:

1. Read the vehicle's manual to fully understand operations and all safety features.
2. Take a safe-rider's course to hone mental and motor skills for safe street and highway motorcycling. Become proficient at shifting, braking, turning, and responding to emergencies.
3. Wear high-visibility protective clothing, concentrating on protective helmets, eyewear, gloves, boots that cover the ankles, sturdy pants, and a jacket.
4. Always have a valid driver's license and adequate insurance coverage.
5. Conduct good pre-ride checkups and routine maintenance.

Driver negligence

Cars rank among motorcyclists' most serious risks. No matter how diligent a rider may be about safety, problems can always crop up. When two cars collided in front of an experienced rider, he struck the rear of one, suffering leg injuries that required surgery. He also missed ten months of work and will experience future lost income. He sued the driver of one car as well as the driver's employer for negligent vehicle operation. The parties settled prior to trial.



Whether a rider is new to motorcycles or has been riding for a long time, safety is of paramount concern.

Sinas Dramis firm welcomes two new attorneys



Already, 2005 has been notable for two valuable new additions to the tort division at our law firm. **STEVEN A. HICKS** rejoined the law firm in January 2005, having started his personal injury practice with us 11 years ago, and **JAMES M. HOFER** joined the firm in May 2005, having practiced law for roughly the same period of time with another reputable personal injury law firm here in Lansing.

Steven A. Hicks

Steve is a trial lawyer and appellate specialist who will handle mostly appellate litigation for the law firm, while also maintaining an active trial practice in no-fault, personal injury, wrongful death, and insurance claims. Steve is a graduate of the University of Michigan



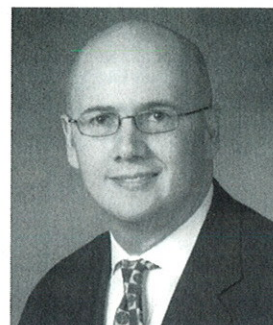
Law School. He is licensed to practice in Michigan and Illinois. He started his law practice with us in 1994 and was a member of the firm until 1996, when he formed his own law firm. Recently, he rejoined our law firm to focus his practice on no-fault and appellate litigation. Steve currently serves on the

Executive Board of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association. He is also a member of the State Bar Negligence Law Section, the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, and the Ingham County Bar Association.

James M. Hofer

Jim is an experienced trial lawyer who has handled more than 50 jury trials in personal injury cases.

He is a graduate of the Thomas M. Cooley Law School, where he was Assistant Editor of the *Cooley Law Review*. Like Steve, he is admitted to practice in both Michigan and Illinois. Jim practiced law for more than ten years with the same personal injury law firm in Lansing before joining us in



May 2005. He will focus his practice on wrongful death, auto negligence, and premises liability claims. Currently, Jim serves on the Executive Board of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association. He is a member of the State Bar Negligence Law Section, the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, and the Ingham County Bar Association.

For your safety. Recalled product roundup

Here are some recently recalled products you may have in your home or at work:

✓ **Hasbro, Inc.**, has recalled 230,000 Super Soaker Monster Rockets with water tank caps that can pop off and tailpieces that can harm users.

✓ **Lexmark International, Inc.**, has called back 39,000 Lexmark, Dell, and IBM Laser Printers, which can short-circuit and cause electrical shock to consumers.

✓ **Pelagic Pressure Systems** asks scuba-enthusiast consumers to return 11,600 Oceanic-brand Reliant Buoyancy Compensator Inflators and AERIS-brand AW3 Inflators. The Power Inflator Buttons can stick, resulting in uncontrolled inflation of the buoyancy compensator, which may cause divers to ascend too

quickly and suffer decompression sickness as well as incur greater risk of an embolism.

✓ **IBM Corporation** recalled 225,000 computer AC Power Adapters, which can overheat, damage circuit boards, melt through equipment housings, and shock consumers.

✓ **General Electric Appliances Company** has asked for the return of 28,300 General Electric, Hotpoint, Kenmore, and Americana-brand freestanding electric ranges and double-wall ovens, which were wired incorrectly. The appliance may short-circuit, stop working, and pose a shock hazard to consumers.

In the pursuit of justice since 1951.

George T. Sinas
Timothy J. Donovan
Bernard F. Finn
Michael E. Larkin
Deborah A. Depez

James F. Graves
Bryan J. Waldman
L. Page Graves
Steven A. Hicks*
James M. Hofer*

Barry D. Boughton
(of counsel)
Kenneth G. McIntyre
(of counsel)
*also licensed in Illinois

Thomas G. Sinas
(1922-1985)
Lee C. Dramis
(1922-1981)
Richard J. Brake
(retired)



Accidental death insurance policies

No matter how careful we try to be, accidents happen. Accidental death insurance provides coverage when an insured dies from unexpected injuries, but not illnesses. Insurers make payment to the policy beneficiary upon the insured's passing. Many death insurance policies also provide coverage for bodily injury, known as dismemberment insurance coverage, such as the loss of a limb or vision in an eye, in which the insured receives a predetermined amount. Combined policies are commonly called AD&D coverage, which stands for accidental death and dismemberment insurance.

AD&D exclusion

When insurers refuse to pay on policies, consumers can obtain satisfaction of their rights through our justice system. When a policyholder's illness contributed to a fall and his death, his accidental death insurer balked. It argued that the death by accident resulted from illness and should be excluded from coverage. The insured's beneficiary sued, and an appeals court held that accidental death insurance policies should provide coverage even when a fall and the resulting death were caused in whole or in part by an illness.

The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for consultation with an attorney.
Specific conditions always require consultation with appropriate legal professionals.

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