

# *Adoption Practice Today: International and Federal Adoption Issues*

## *Faculty Information*

**Heidi Bruegel Cox, JD**, is the Executive Vice President and General Counsel for the Gladney Center, Fort Worth, Texas, and has worked with Gladney for over 17 years. In addition to being a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, Heidi is a member of the Texas Bar Association, Texas Family Law Council, State Bar of Texas, Tarrant County Family Bar Association, and the College of the State Bar of Texas. Heidi received a B.A. from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas and a J.D. from Texas Tech University School of Law. She has appeared on CBS' 48 Hours, and Miller's Law, with Arthur Miller. A frequent speaker, Heidi has been presenting adoption programs and papers to professionals and the community since 1990. As a child advocate, Heidi is involved with legislative initiatives in Texas to protect children and to promote positive adoption practices. She is also involved with adoption at the national level, serving as a board member for the National Council for Adoption. Heidi is experienced with International adoptions, assisting with agency placements from Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America.

**Steven W. Hayes, JD**, is a partner with the firm of Grady, Hayes & Neary LLC, in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Steve graduated from DePauw University and the University of Illinois College of Law. He has handled more than 3,000 adoptions since 1970 and represents several Wisconsin adoption agencies. He has been lead counsel in numerous contested adoption/termination of parental rights cases in Wisconsin and federal courts. Steve has pioneered assisted reproduction technology court procedures in the State of Wisconsin and has served on the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys ARTS committee since its inception.

Steve has spoken for and written for the following:

- American Academy of Adoption Attorneys
- American Bar Association Journal
- Wisconsin Journal of Family Law
- Wisconsin Lawyer
- Marquette University Law Review
- The Adoption Law Journal

Steve has also served on Wisconsin legislative council committees to revise adoption laws three times and the State Bar of Wisconsin legislative committee on surrogacy. "Super Lawyer," "Leader in the Law," "Congressional Angel in Adoption" honors have been given to Steve in recent years. He has served on the boards of several adoption and infertility organizations.

**Mark T. McDermott, JD** practices law in Washington, D.C. He is a member of the Bars of California, the District of Columbia, Indiana, Maryland and Virginia. He received his J.D. degree cum laude in 1974 from Indiana University where he was a member of the Board of Editors of the Indiana Law Review. Mr. McDermott's area of emphasis is adoption law, and he is an adoptive parent. He is a member of the Board of Families for Private Adoption. He is also a past president of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys. Mr. McDermott currently serves as the Academy's legislative chairman. In 2002, Mr. McDermott received the President's Award from the Academy. Mr. McDermott was selected by U.S. Congressman Chris Van Hollen to receive the Angel in Adoption award presented by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption in September of 2003.

**James B. Outman, JD**, currently practices with Claiborne, Outman & Surmay, P.C. in Atlanta, Georgia. He received his undergraduate education at the Georgia Institute of Technology where he received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Industrial Management in 1967, and he received his Juris Doctor degree from the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, DC in 1971. He was admitted to the practice of law in the state of Georgia in November 1971 and his practice currently emphasizes adoption, estate planning, guardianship, and probate matters including contested matters and appeals, and special needs trust planning. He is a member of the State Bar of Georgia and is a Fellow in the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys. In 2003 he was designated an Angel in Adoption by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. Jim and his wife are adoptive parents of a son now 35. Jim has been actively involved in legislative matters in Georgia and was the principal author of both the Adoption Act of 1977 which first introduced the concept of notice to an unwed biological father, and the Adoption Act of 1990 which was a complete re-codification of Georgia's adoption code – the most comprehensive revision in nearly 50 years. He was involved in the drafting of Georgia's putative father registry in 1997. He has been involved in *every* piece of adoption legislation in Georgia since the 1975 legislative session. In addition he has filed *amicus* briefs with both the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court of Georgia in adoption cases and has served as appellate counsel of record in several adoption cases before those courts. He has authored many articles on adoption law and practice and made presentations to both lawyers and judges as part of continuing legal education programs sponsored by the Institute of Continuing Legal Education in Georgia (ICLE) and the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education in Georgia, and has served as the chairman of, and presented at, the annual ICLE adoption law and practice seminars since 1995. He has made presentations to the Georgia Association of Licensed Adoption Agencies (GALAA) regarding Georgia adoption law and practice. He has served as guest lecturer at family law seminar classes at Georgia State University College of Law. He has appeared on CNN on several occasions and has twice appeared on Georgia Public Television's "Layman Lawyer" program to discuss adoption issues.

**Susan I. Paquet, JD**, practices law in Fort Worth, Texas. Ms. Paquet's law practice is exclusive to Adoption Law and Assisted Reproduction Law. She has practiced in this area of law for over twenty five years. Previous to the practice of law Ms. Paquet studied and worked in social work related fields. Included in her law practice are independent domestic adoptions, agency domestic adoptions, international adoptions, contested adoptions, intrastate adoptions, family adoptions, stepparent adoptions, mediation, adoption involving the Indian Child Welfare Act, drafting of surrogacy agreements and other assisted reproduction work. Ms. Paquet actively practices law, is the supervising attorney of the firm's adoption section and also is active in teaching and organizing continuing legal education programs to promote the conscientious and informed practice of adoption law among attorneys.

**Irene Steffas, JD**, practices law with her firm, Steffas & Associates, P.C., in Marietta, Georgia. She loves practicing law, finding solutions to help children and help teach others so they, too, can help children, both domestically and internationally. An avid writer, she spends at least one day a month, teaching attorneys, adoption agencies, social workers and law students about adoption and immigration benefits for children. She is licensed to practice in Georgia, Florida and Texas. Steffas has contributed chapters to two (2) legal treatises: *Adoption Law Practice and Procedure in the 21st Century*, published by the New York Bar, and *International Adoption Source Book*, published by the American Immigration Lawyers Association. In 1994, a dear colleague and friend asked Irene to write an article on InterCountry Adoptions. Since that time, she has focused on immigration benefits for children: adoptions, special immigrant juveniles, citizenship and violence against women and children. As a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and the American Immigration Lawyers Association, she contributes by writing articles, reviewing statutes and giving presentations. In 2003, the Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs, invited AAAA's President to represent the US at a World Congress, in Spain. Since that time, the State Department has sent Steffas, to Armenia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan (2). When the US sends Irene to meet and discuss adoptions with foreign government officials, she does not go as an employee of the State Department, but a private, good-will ambassador promoting children's needs, domestic and international adoptions and the US form of government. Sometimes, the US government denies children their visas. In such cases, adoptive parents or agencies hire attorney Steffas to represent them in Request for Evidence, Notices of Intent to Deny, Denials or Appeals. In the fall of 2001, the US issued Denials to 12 families trying to bring home the 13 children they had adopted in Cambodia. Attorney Steffas, along with attorney Jody Marten was successful in obtaining Humanitarian Parole for all 13 children. From fall 2006 through the fall of 2008, Attorney Steffas has assisted 18 families with their Vietnamese adoptions. In 2006, a Georgia Superior Court denied a child's adoption, because he was born outside the US. Understanding that the Hague Adoption Convention did not apply to this case, attorney Steffas appealed the case to the Georgia Court of Appeals, In the decision of In Re: Adoption of

D.J.F.M., 643 S.E.2d 879 (Ga.App. March 22, 2007), the Court held that Georgia Superior Courts have jurisdiction over such children who are before them. In 2007, Senator Johnny Isakson and Congressman Tom Price nominated Irene as an **Angel in Adoption™** and the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute recognized Irene as an Angel. Each year the Congressional Coalition honors individuals who have made a difference in the lives of children and families through adoption by giving them the Congressional Angels in Adoption Award.

**Michael R. Voorhees, JD**, is a principal with the firm of Voorhees & Levy LLC, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Mike is a life-long resident of the Cincinnati area and attended Northern Kentucky University, University of Cincinnati, and Chase Law School. He has been a practicing attorney since 1987 and handled his first adoption case in 1992. To date, he has handled over 1,200 adoptions. He is licensed in Ohio and Kentucky and his current law practice is primarily devoted to adoption law and involves all aspects of adoption, including Ohio adoptions, Kentucky adoptions, agency adoptions, private adoptions, contested adoptions, step-parent and other relative adoptions, special needs adoptions, and adoptions involving other states and other countries. He has also represented several Ohio adoption agencies. He is a member of the Ohio Adoption Law Roundtable and is a fellow in the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys. He has served as the co-chair of the ICPC Committee for the Academy for the past several years and he received the Academy's President's Award in 2007, and again in 2008, for his work on the interstate adoption laws. Also in 2007, he received the "Angels in Adoption" award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute in Washington D.C.

**Jenny L. Womack, JD**, is an attorney at Palmer & Manuel, L.L.P., a Dallas, Texas law firm. Ms. Womack practices adoption, family law, collaborative law, and simple estate planning as well as mediating family law matters. She attended The University of Texas at Austin, where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics in 1991, graduating magna cum laude as well as her law degree in 1998, again graduating with honors. Ms. Womack also spent three years working in the brokerage business, an experience she has found valuable in her legal practice as well. Ms. Womack is a Fellow of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and serves on the CLE Committee as well as having served on the Membership Task Force. She is also the CLE Director for the Dallas Women Lawyers Association and a member of the Dallas Bar Association Family Law Section. In addition, Ms. Womack has been named a SuperLawyers Rising Star by *Texas Monthly* magazine in 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2008. She has spoken and written on adoption related matters several times and deeply enjoys her adoption practice.