

# PREFACE

This is the seventh *Green Bag Almanac and Reader*. For a reminder of the reasons why the world needs our almanac and our reader, read the “Preface” to the 2006 edition. It is available on our web site ([www.greenbag.org](http://www.greenbag.org)).

## OUR DILIGENT BOARD

Our selection process for “Exemplary Legal Writing of 2011” was, like past years’, not your typical invitation to competitive self-promotion by authors and their publishers and friends. We did not solicit (or accept) entries from contestants, charge them entry fees, or hand out blue, red, and white ribbons. Rather, we merely sought to:

- (a) organize a moderately vigilant watch for good legal writing, conducted by people (our Board of Advisers) who would know it when they saw it and bring it to our attention;
- (b) coordinate the winnowing of advisers’ favorites over the course of the selection season, with an eye to harvesting a crop of good legal writing consisting of those works for which there was the most substantial support (our “Recommended Reading” list);
- (c) ballot our advisers to identify the cream of that already creamy crop; and then
- (d) present the results to you in a useful and entertaining format — this book.

The nitty-gritty of our process for selecting exemplars is a simple but burdensome series of exercises:

Step 1: Our advisers read legal writing as they always have, keeping an eye out for short works and excerpts of longer works that belong in a collection of good legal writing. When they find worthy morsels, they send them to the *Green Bag*. “Good legal writing” is read broadly for our purposes. “Good” means whatever the advisers and the volume editor think it does. As one experienced scholar and public servant on our board put it, “there is good writing in the sense of what is being said and also in the sense of how it is being said.” Our advisers are looking for works that have something of each. “Legal” means anything written about law — opinions, briefs, articles, orders, statutes, books, motions, letters, emails, contracts, regulations, reports, speeches, and so on. “Writing” means ink-on-paper or characters-on-screen.

Step 2: The *Green Bag* organizes the advisers’ favorites into categories, and then sends a complete set to every adviser. Advisers’

names are not attached to the works they nominate. In other words, everything is anonymized. Advisers vote without knowing who nominated a piece. Similarly, their rankings are secret. No one but the volume editor ever sees individual advisers' rankings or knows who voted in which categories. And the editor destroys all individualized records once the *Almanac* is in print.

Advisers are free to vote in as many categories — or as few — as they desire. That is, although there may be scores of nominated works in total, they are free to select the types of writing they want to evaluate. Almost all — but invariably not all — advisers vote in each category.

Step 3: The volume editor tallies the rankings and compiles the "Reader" portion of the *Almanac* based on the results, reserving, as editors tend to do, the right to add, subtract, and reorganize within reason. Nominated works not published in the book are listed in the "Recommended Reading" section.

Step 4: The advisers and the editor start over for next year's edition — a process that has been underway since last Halloween (recall that our cycle for selection of exemplary legal writing begins and ends on October 31), with dozens of nominees already in the queue for the next *Almanac*.

Despite the substantial work involved in this business, most of our advisers seem to enjoy participating. Those who don't enjoy it appear to view it as some sort of professional duty. Either way, we're glad to have them. But these are people with day jobs, other commitments, and at least a little something in the way of sleep requirements. So not everyone can pitch in every year. Being listed as an adviser implies that a body has done some advising, however, and it doesn't seem right to burden someone with a slice of the collective responsibility (or credit, if there is any) for a project in which they did not participate, at least this time around. So the list of board members in this *Almanac* has changed since last year and will, we expect, continue to change from year to year. The fact that people come and go from the board does not necessarily indicate anything about their ongoing commitment to the *Almanac*, other than when they have had the time and inclination to participate. Of course, we hope they always will.