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NEW YORK, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2008

VOLUME 239—NO. 36

## NEWS

### IN BRIEF

#### Report Finds Fewer Law Firm Mergers Last Year

There were 55 law firm mergers in 2007, slightly fewer from the year before, law firm consultancy Hildebrandt International said in a report issued last week. The largest merger last year was that between New York law firms Dewey Ballantine and LeBoeuf, Lamb, Greene & MacRae, a combination that created Dewey & LeBoeuf. Other major mergers included Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham's merger with Preston Gates & Ellis and Drinker Biddle & Reath's combination with Gardner Carton & Douglas. Hildebrandt said there were 58 law firm mergers in 2006, but said the trend was still up from 2004 and 2005. The group said it expected merger activity in 2008 to remain robust, noting that a number of large combinations had already become effective. — *Anthony Lin*

#### State Denies Charges Committee 'Whitewashed' Complaints

New York state last week denied charges that top officials at the disciplinary committee overseeing lawyers practicing in Manhattan and the Bronx had "whitewashed" complaints against "certain select" attorneys. In its answer in *Anderson v. State of New York*, 07 Civ. 9599, the state denied the claims of Christine C. Anderson, a former staff attorney for the First Department disciplinary committee who said she was fired last year after complaining about favoritism to her superiors. Discovery, which is proceeding under a negotiated confidentiality order, is required to be completed before the next scheduled court conference on Sept. 3. — *Daniel Wise*

#### Panel Finds County Did Not Violate Rights of Union Members

Nassau County did not violate the due process rights of corrections officers by deferring a portion of their salary until their employment with the county ended, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled Friday. "Because defendants provided pre-deprivation notice of the lag payroll, and the grievance procedures of the collective bargaining agreement that was in effect at the time of the layoffs,"

### IN THE COURTS

## Judges Take the Reins In Brooklyn Foreclosure

BY MARK FASS

IN 2003, four years before the word "subprime" entered the vernacular, Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Carolyn Demarest approached her colleague Herbert Kramer to discuss a number of issues she had encountered during a recent uptick in foreclosure applications.

"We saw rather early on what has now come to light and is a daily source of news: the predatory lending, people who could not possibly pay the rates they have contracted for, straw bidders, fraudulent transactions, fraudulent conveyances," Justice Demarest recalled in a recent conversation.

Over the next few years, the informal conversations between Justices Demarest and Kramer and a handful of other Brooklyn Supreme Court judges evolved into a formal group, the Brooklyn

closure Committee, which regularly to address the problem the judges encountered in the ever-growing stacks of foreclosure applications.

And when the rate of foreclosures soon began to accelerate, the judges found themselves ahead of the curve in terms of judicial response.

"All of these things, as started to look at it, we can see what was going on," Justice Demarest said. "You could see patterns—that the applications were not being qualified properly that the property was priced disproportionately. You know your community and you know what the property is, you know that something's wrong here—there's a disconnect, the banks are not screening these people."

The court's efforts, which have included streamlined procedures

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Continued on p

	2007		2006		2005
Brooklyn	528	18%	547	14%	7
Bronx	299	62%	185	-36%	2
Manhattan	17	14%	103	-29%	1
Queens	121	70%	200	17%	0
TOTAL P. 02					