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Diagnosing Posttenure Slump Syndrome: A Guide to the Aging of Law Professors

Paul A. LeBel

A diagnosis of posttraumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) is currently offered either as an explanation or as a defense for a variety of antisocial acts. Less well known in medicolegal circles is the legal academic version of PTSS, the posttenure slump syndrome. The following list of symptoms is offered as a public service, to assist in the detection and diagnosis of the syndrome early enough for preventive or curative measures to be effective. The items listed below are not necessarily invariable indicators of the onset of posttenure slump syndrome, but the identification of more than four in any individual suggests the need for prompt professional attention.

You have probably been in your job too long when:

- A parking place close to the front door becomes more important than a pay raise.
- You start to think it might not be such a stupid idea to be a dean.
- Every resumé in the Faculty Placement Register looks like one you've seen before.
- You have to explain to half of your Constitutional Law students why someone might have been offended by the message on the back of Cohen's jacket and, to the other half, what the political message was.
- Your first reaction to the prospect of a sabbatical abroad is to bemoan not having your own washer and dryer for six months.
- You read the Cleveland headline "Tribe Captures First Place" and wonder who is rating law professors.
- You view the end of August as presenting not the first day of classes but rather only twenty-eight weeks of classes until next summer.
- You're convinced that colleagues who win best-teacher awards are merely pandering to students rather than upholding the rigorous standards that you and precious few of your other colleagues require the students to meet.
- You are sure you'll throw up if you see one more round-table discussion on public television with a host trying to act like Arthur Miller.
- After submitting a manuscript to the *Harvard Law Review*, you receive a letter saying that not only will they not publish your article, they will also no longer sell you a subscription.
- You start to think it might not be such a bad idea to be elected to your university's faculty senate.

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- You hope that all the members of the Supreme Court outlive you so that you'll never have to endure another discussion of what the Senate's role in confirmation ought to be.
- The most important feature you want from the new computer system your school is buying is the ability to run your baseball game program without having to switch floppy disks.
- You don't recognize any of the topics listed in the advance notice for the AALS teaching workshop for your primary course.
- Your most recent NEH grant application proposed establishing a Center of Law and Misanthropy.
- You decide not to spend any time on one of the most important cases in your course because you were so pleased with last year's discussion of it.
- The arguments for giving multiple-choice examinations begin to have an aura of respectability.
- The Tuesday night ABC television show that seems most relevant to your life is *Roseanne*, not *thirtysomething*.