

There's No Place Like Home

A wise person once said that Abraham Lincoln was a great president because he knew he was only acting president. I am no Abraham Lincoln, but I will endeavor to keep that in mind throughout the year ahead – I am your acting President for one short year, here to serve our diverse membership with a commitment to making a genuine and enduring difference.

We are all shaped by our earliest experiences and influences. As the second of seven children growing up in a spirited Irish Catholic home, I was blessed with a father who passed on the Jesuit traditions of education as a life-long pursuit, serving others, and making a difference. He also taught me that anything worth doing is worth doing well. These values have motivated and inspired me all my life, especially during my 28 years as an active member of this Association. The State Bar has, in many ways, been my professional home – a place where I have found purpose, value and enduring relationships, and unparalleled opportunities for professional growth and service to our members, the public and our profession. In taking the helm of this great Association as its 110th President, my goal is for every licensed New York lawyer to find a home at the State Bar.

Meeting this goal will require the long view, one that focuses on securing the State Bar's legacy as the voice of the New York lawyer, growing our membership and implementing a long-range strategic financial plan. As stewards of our member dollars, we must judiciously allocate our resources within the Association in order to provide greater value and relevance to our members.

Over the course of my many years as a state and local bar leader and throughout my year as President-Elect, I have met with lawyers across this state and have marveled at your passion for the law and your commitment to serving your clients and your communities. I have witnessed the challenges you face daily in achieving a measure of work/life balance, and how diverse we truly are as a profession. I have listened to your ideas and concerns, what motivates and informs you. I have learned what we, as the largest voluntary state bar association in the country, do well, and what we can do even better.

I want to continue those conversations throughout this year. I hope my *Journal* columns will engage and inspire you to become better lawyers, more effective community and bar leaders, stronger advocates for those who cannot speak for themselves, and defenders of the rule of law.

In order to provide greater opportunities to expand these vital conversations, I will soon be launching our first-ever "Presidential Blog" and look forward to your participation via this new technology.

Together we can continue to enhance our credibility and visibility as New York lawyers, influencing public policy not only here in New York, but in national and international arenas. We are the bellwether state, and we must continue our tradition of being ahead of the wave – tuned in to emerging trends, sharing the extraordinary expertise of our 72,000 members and helping to find solutions to the challenges we face today. A society is measured by the way in which it cares



for its poor, its children and its elderly. And we have miles to go.

We live in a time when half of our college students and far too many voters lack an understanding of the fundamental principles of our democratic republic, including the importance of an independent and fairly compensated judiciary. We can play a significant role in reinvigorating our civic education programs in our middle and high schools, as well as in our community and senior centers. This, in turn, will have the added benefit of modeling law as a career for youth of color, thereby strengthening our ongoing efforts to diversify the profession.

I am committed to building on the leadership of Mark Alcott, his reform initiatives, and the legacy of those who preceded us. Our President-Elect, Bernice Leber, is also committed to this long view, to the importance of continuity and ownership of our Association's future, and to providing greater meaning, service and leadership opportunities for every member.

There really is no place like home, and I can think of no better "home base" for all New York lawyers than our Association.

Welcome home.

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