

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

State Bar Involvement a Good Way to Network

BY PAOLA ARMENI,
PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA



After law school, I jumped headfirst into being involved with bar activities. I became a senior attorney with Trial by Peers. I started judging the high school mock trial competition and joined the boards of Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice (NACJ) and the Young Lawyers Section (YLS) of the State Bar of Nevada. Full disclosure, when I graduated law school, I wasn't married and didn't have children. Over the years, my level of commitment had to change, and how I networked became different. But nonetheless, networking and bar involvement remained a priority.

Like anything else, you get what you put in. We are all part of the state bar, and involvement can only enhance our experience as an attorney and a person. The state bar offers more than 20 sections that you can participate in as well as various committees. The Young Lawyers Section that I was involved with is one of these sections. My involvement in YLS included monthly meetings, community outreach (such as the Goldilocks program, toy drive, poster and essay contest, and Trial Academy), and social events. However, another attorney's involvement in YLS could be limited to attending a social event or CLE, or presenting the trial of Goldilocks one time to a fourth-grade class.

In addition to the state bar sections, there are 13 bar committees.

Some examples of these committees include the Board of Bar Examiners, Disciplinary Boards, Lawyer Advertising Advisory Committee, *Nevada Lawyer* Editorial Board, and Mock Trial. Although, I did not sit on the Mock Trial Committee, mock trial provides volunteer opportunities. Judging the annual high school mock trial competition is yet another way that attorneys can be involved with the bar without a huge time commitment. For example, you could judge the mock trial competition for one day, an approximately two-hour time commitment. Further, the *Nevada Lawyer* Editorial Board is always looking for articles for *Nevada Lawyer*. So, if you want to get involved and love to write this may be a great volunteer opportunity for you.

The ways to get involved don't stop with sections and committees. There are 19 affinity bars that also present great opportunities to network and get involved. These affinity bars include various county bar associations (Clark, Washoe, Elko, and First Judicial District) and specialty bars (some examples include the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association, Nevada Latino Bar Association, Southern and Northern women's associations, Federal Bar Association, and NACJ). All these affinity bars and specialty bars have various volunteer opportunities, community outreach (for example, the Nevada Latino Bar Association does the ¡Andale! 5k run every year – so if you like to walk or run – take advantage of this chance to help raise money for scholarships and network), social functions, and committees/sections. I had mentioned earlier being involved with Trial by Peers and NACJ. Trial

by Peers is a program through the Clark County Law Foundation. NACJ, like other sections and affinity bars, hosts monthly meetings often around lunch time. Many sections and affinity bars have list-serves. These email services are yet another way you can network from the comforts of your home or office, by participating in the list-serves and responding when fellow members who have questions are looking for guidance.

So, being involved does not mean you have to participate in every single function, event, or outreach the state bar offers. Just pick one! For a full list of sections, committees, and affinity bars – See www.nvbar.org/bar-service-opportunities/. The Thursday weekly bar e-News is also great resource to identify opportunities for volunteering and involvement. So, make sure you read that weekly.

An attorney's involvement with the state bar is one way to network, but there are so many other avenues that attorneys can use to expand who they know. Think about the places you currently frequent and daily activities. You can network anywhere, so why not start off at the most organic places. Do you play intramural sports, have children that play sports or are in school, attend religious activities, or frequent the same restaurant? You can network through all of these activities without much work, just through regular conversation. What you do for a living will inevitably come up at some point in the conversation.

The fact that people know you are a lawyer can mean that you will be the first one they come to when they have a problem. Perhaps you cannot be the one to assist with that problem, but based on the networking you did with bar activities, you will know who to send that matter to. In turn, the next time that attorney has an issue that they can't resolve, you will likely be on their list to refer the case.

Networking through bar involvement or daily activities allows you to meet new people resulting in new friendships, new opportunities, client development, referral sources, and support/guidance from others who understand you and what you may deal with daily. How much networking and involvement with the bar is up to you but dedicating even a small portion of your time to this will only benefit you.