

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Join These Attorneys – Consider Rural Law Practice



BY PAOLA ARMENI, PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

**In honor of this issue, I traveled the state (virtually) to meet some of our colleagues practicing in rural Nevada. Rural Nevada covers most of our state, including 13 of our 15 total counties: Churchill, Douglas, Elko, Esmeralda, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, Lyon, Mineral, Nye, Storey, and White Pine counties. These areas are in desperate need of quality attorneys to help rural Nevadans with their legal needs.**

The attorneys I interviewed shared why they love practicing in the rural areas of Nevada.

### **Wes Villanueva – Nye County**

My friend and former classmate, Wes, graduated from the William S. Boyd School of Law in 2003. He has practiced in the rurals for most of his career. During his time as a collection attorney, he filed matters in all of Nevada's jurisdictions and he noticed the lack of representation in the rural areas. In 2022, he started Pahrump Legal Services in Nye County, which handles probate matters, traffic matters, debt settlement/resolution, debt lawsuit defense and landlord/tenant disputes.

Wes says that working in rural Nevada allows him to meet the diverse population throughout the state. He enjoys

speaking with clients and hearing their stories. Many of their families have been in Nevada for generations.

### **Gabrielle Carr – Humboldt County**

Gabrielle has been licensed in Nevada since 1994 and has practiced in rural Nevada for approximately eight years. She runs Carr Law Resolve and practices in Winnemucca. From November 2017 to May 2021, she served as a magistrate for the Sixth Judicial District Court in Humboldt County, presiding over juvenile, dependency, guardianship, and child support cases. She also mediated family and other civil cases for the court.

Gabrielle loves practicing in a rural county because it provides a broader array of cases than in urban counties. This diverse practice allows an attorney to quickly identify the areas of practice that they may like or not like. Additionally, she says that the “vibe” can be very different in a place where most people know who you are. Winnemucca is a small community where everyone knows everyone, and she says it feels very personal and community-oriented, with many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and see wildlife.

### **Kirsty E. Pickering – Elko, Eureka, and Lincoln Counties**

Kirsty practices in Elko, Eureka, and Lincoln counties. She moved to rural Nevada in 2004 from Vermont to clerk for Judges Dan Papez and Steven Dobrescu and started her own practice after being admitted to the bar in 2005. While running her own practice she also

served as a deputy prosecutor for six years and is now one of three contracted public defenders. She practices criminal law, family law, estate planning, and real estate law.

Like Gabrielle, Kirsty touts the diversity of practice in a small legal community. She can represent someone accused of murder one day and then draft a will the next. According to her, attorneys in the rural counties are welcoming and are always willing to help their fellows in the legal community.

### **T. Jaren Stanton – Mineral County**

Jaren is the district attorney for Mineral County where he prosecutes criminal cases, represents the state in juvenile matters, represents various local governments in general legal matters, and administers the child support enforcement program. Prior to joining the District Attorney's office, Jaren clerked for Judge Jim C. Shirley in the Eleventh Judicial District for two years. That district consists of Mineral, Pershing, and Lander counties.

Jaren said that too often, attorneys get stuck doing the same thing day after day, leading to burnout. In the rurals, everyone wears multiple hats. This variety allows for experience in several areas of law, which keeps the work interesting and requires consistent learning. An additional benefit in the rurals, according to Jaren, is that you get to know the community that you serve, including your clients, stakeholders, victims, and even defendants. With this additional information, you're able to better support common goals and work for justice.

### **Julie Cavanaugh-Bill – Churchill, Elko, Ely, Eureka, and Lander Counties**

Julie is the rural representative on the Board of Governors for the State Bar of Nevada. She is also president-elect and will be the first rural president of the state bar since Judge Andrew Puccinelli's term concluded in 1999.

Julie calls Elko County home, but she practices in various rural counties working in general law, family law, civil rights, and tribal law.

She loves the openness of the land and the smaller-town atmosphere. According to her, practicing in the rurals allows an

attorney to work on a broad span of cases with a variety of unique payment structures (if the trade is equal value to the legal services performed). Julie has provided legal services in trade for a horse!

### ***Pro Bono Opportunities***

There are many opportunities for urban attorneys to participate in pro bono work in rural Nevada. Nevada Legal Services<sup>1</sup> (NLS) helps clients throughout the entire State of Nevada. NLS's Rural Consumer Law Project assists with housing and consumer issues. As of the writing of this article, NLS also had a position available for a staff attorney for the Indian Law-Project (ILP). This attorney will serve the needs of 27 tribes.<sup>2</sup>

Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans<sup>3</sup> (VARN's) Pro Bono Project recruits attorneys to provide free legal services in family law matters uncontested,<sup>4</sup> uncontested name changes and probate, wills, and power of attorney for medial to low-income residents in various rural counties.

### ***Indigent Defense***

The Nevada Department of Indigent Defense (DIDS) was established to assist Nevada's counties in developing quality, equitable, and sustainable indigent defense systems that strengthen local communities and meet or exceed the state and federal constitutional guarantees that protect each of us.

Attorneys with knowledge in criminal law who are interested in appointed work can seek placement on the list of qualified contract and appointed counsel. The rural county application is located on the DIDS website.<sup>5</sup>

#### **ENDNOTES:**

1. <https://nevadalegalservices.org/pro-bono-programs/>
2. <https://nevadalegalservices.org/employment/>
3. <https://www.varn.org/>
4. Adoption, Divorce, Guardianship of an adult, Guardianship of a child, Termination of Parental Rights, Child Custody.
5. [https://dids.nv.gov/Resources/Placement\\_Applications/](https://dids.nv.gov/Resources/Placement_Applications/)

Paola Armeni can be reached at [president@nvbar.org](mailto:president@nvbar.org). For weekly updates from the bar, follow "State Bar of Nevada - Board of Governors Updates" on Facebook.

# MEET YOUR FINANCIAL HEROES

Annually, more than \$600 million is held in Nevada lawyer trust accounts. These financial heroes have agreed to pay favorable rates on all IOLTA accounts under deposit. Leadership institutions pay premium rates.

The Nevada Bar Foundation grants more than 97% of the interest earned on these dollars to statewide legal service organizations serving more than 37,000 Nevada families.

#### **American First National Bank**

Bank of America

Bank of George

**Bank of Nevada**

Bank of the West

Chase

Citibank

City National Bank

East West Bank

**Financial Horizons Credit Union**

**First Citizens Bank**

First Foundation Bank

**First Independent Bank**

**First Savings Bank**

**First Security Bank of Nevada**

**GenuBank**

Heritage Bank

**Lexicon Bank**

**Meadows Bank**

**Nevada Bank & Trust**

**Nevada State Bank**

Northern Trust Bank

Pacific Premiere Bank

**Plumas Bank**

**Royal Business Bank**

**Silver State Schools Credit Union**

**Town and Country Bank**

US Bank

Valley Bank of Nevada (BNLV)

**Washington Federal**

**Wells Fargo**

# NB