

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Century of Leadership of the State Bar of Nevada

BY RICHARD DREITZER, PRESIDENT,
STATE BAR OF NEVADA



As I prepared my inaugural column as president of the State Bar of Nevada, I recognized that I am the 100th person to hold this office. Having been on the Board of Governors for 12 years, I had always conceived of the presidency as one of the moments that culminate a long period of service to the State Bar of Nevada, its licensees, and the public at large. Of course, that's true.

However, once I recognized that I was the latest in a century-long procession of state bar leadership, I must admit that this moment became something more for me – something both humbling and profound.

It seems to me that good leadership must be both forward-facing and backward-facing at the same time. Good leaders need to embody the lessons and insights of the past, yet also see the world as it is. In essence, leadership exists in tension where we are asked to meet the issues and moments before us with fresh thinking, while never forgetting our history and who we aspire to be.

Thus, when I think about all that my 99 predecessors have dealt with (i.e., the growth of the state of Nevada, our nation, and our profession, not to mention several wars, a depression, a “great recession,” changes in the law and the expansion of rights, freedoms, and roles in our society), I am given perspective.

Those leaders undoubtedly took on the sensitive issues of their day and had to balance diverging (and contradictory) viewpoints, to reach consensus. Their charge was to think creatively and do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. And, though I am certain the debates of their day were hard-fought and the chasms between interests probably seemed insurmountable, life did go on. I believe it is safe to say that mutual respect remained intact and institutional integrity survived.

How do I know this? Because our state bar is constantly improving and always will. In fact, just in the past 25 years that I have been part of the State Bar of Nevada, I have observed tremendous strides in terms of services and benefits on a whole range of issues (such as a range of discounts, practice management education, ethics resources, attorney wellness and pro bono support for the community, among others). So, if we consider where we are, compared with where we were 100 years ago, I believe that we have evolved in ways

that our predecessors could never have imagined – and have done so, for the better. Did they get it right all the time? Perhaps not, since no person or institution is perfect. But they undoubtedly succeeded much more than they failed. The tremendous growth and prosperity of our State Bar of Nevada and its licensees is the best argument that their legacy is one of success and positive evolution over time.

Thus, as our state bar addresses our own issues of the day in the year ahead, I am comforted by the idea that our history is one of compromise, respect, and survival, and that we will reach our own consensus and, in our own way and our own time, find a path to do the greatest good for the greatest number.

This century of state bar leadership has also clarified for me that I am, in essence, simply a caretaker of an old and wonderful institution. I recognize that our state bar's history certainly didn't begin with my presence on the board of governors, nor will it end there. Thus, in my year as caretaker, I hope to focus on doing what I can to generate a fulsome dialog on the strengthening of civility and professionalism. I hope to achieve this through discussions with members of the public, the judiciary, and practitioners of every kind throughout our great state. I also intend to do so, with respect for and consideration of our history and traditions as I try to draw from the collective wisdom of my 99 predecessors.

Lastly, I wanted to encourage all our licensees to reach out to me with any thoughts on the issues of civility and professionalism, or any other topics of concern. My intention is to listen and learn from you in order to be the most effective leader that I can be as state bar president. My email is rdreytzer@fclaw.com and I look forward to getting to know you and addressing any issues you might have.

Thanks!
Rich