

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Everyone Ought to Have to Write a Column

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PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

**Having to write a monthly column has been a wonderful exercise in active listening. No longer do podcasts serve as background noise when I'm getting ready in the morning. Reading newspapers and articles offered up on my email are not something to check off or clear out of my inbox. Conversations with friends are not "I talk, you talk, I talk, you talk." Now, I listen and read intently, ask follow-up questions, scan for inspiration, and search for connections or enlightenment, all with an eye to writing a monthly column. Indeed, in writing this paragraph, I stopped blow-drying my hair and paused a podcast midstream (it was only 3.46 minutes), and, with hair still wet, I pulled out my iPad to jot down this observation. Listening and reading this intensely has added a richness to my life.**



For the past 12 months, it has been my honor to serve as president of the State Bar of Nevada, an organization dedicated to serving its members, administering the profession, and protecting the public. This mission cannot be accomplished through the efforts of one person. One attorney alone cannot protect the rule of law. One attorney alone cannot ensure that the attorneys practicing law are qualified and obey the rules. One attorney alone cannot ensure that everyone who needs an attorney has access to one. It takes the collective action of the entire association.

Your State Bar of Nevada has been led by many talented attorneys licensed to practice in this state: 96 to be exact. Nine of those are being recognized as recipients of the 2022 Bryan K. Scott Trailblazer award—the nine women who have served as presidents of the State Bar of Nevada before me: Margo Piscevich 1994-95; Franny Forsman, 1995-96; Ann Bersi, 1999-2000; Judge Gloria Sturman, 2002-03; Ann Price McCarthy, 2004-05; Judge Nancy Allf, 2007-08; Kathy England, 2009-10; Connie Akridge, 2011-12; and Elana Turner Graham, 2014-15. I thank each of these trailblazers for the paths you carved for women attorneys in Nevada.

The elected representatives of the state bar are a diverse group representing all areas of the state as well as all areas and sizes of practice. I am a director

of the regional law firm, Fennemore. Thank you, Fennemore, for allowing me to serve the State Bar of Nevada. The president-elect of your bar association is Paola Armeni, the managing partner of the Las Vegas office of Clark Hill, an international law firm. The vice president of your bar association is Julie Cavanaugh-Bill, of Cavanaugh-Bill law offices, a small law firm in Elko.

The State Bar of Nevada, which is frequently a leader among bar associations, is a trailblazer in leadership. Not only did we set a diversity goal for our bar membership, we also achieved that goal among our officers. This is the first time in the bar's 96-year history that all officers are women.

Including me, Armeni, and Cavanaugh-Bill, the state bar is also led by another 12 very talented and widely respected attorneys throughout the state: Richard Dreitzer, Doug Clark, Kari Stephens, Cathy Mazzeo, Gene Leverty, Jeff Albregts, Andrew Craner, Terry Coffing, Joel Locke, Seth Adams, Brittnie Watkins, and Marisa Rodriguez. Our meetings and discussions are also attended by and conducted with our immediate past president, Eric Dobberstein.

These attorneys are your Board of Governors: those charged with keeping us on mission. And I tell you that we wrestle with meeting that goal. George S. Patton said: "If everyone is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking." Your Board of Governors is a diverse group of very good thinkers. We engage in vigorous debate on the issues facing attorneys, the profession, our association, and the rule of law, and we continue that debate until we are ready to vote. We engage in the civil discussion we swore we would engage in when we became governors of the state bar, and we model the civility required of each of us by the oath we took to practice law in this state.

But we only meet five times a year as a group, so we couldn't stay on mission if it weren't for the terrific skill and talent of our professional staff.

Our staff is led by Kimberly Farmer, our executive director. She is nationally recognized by those in both state, local, and national bar associations as the “dean” of bar associations ... and she leads the bar staff in Nevada. Farmer is helped in her efforts by a terrific group of directors: Lisa McGrane, our deputy executive director; Marc Mersol, our chief financial officer; Jennifer Smith-Pulsipher, our director of publications; Dan Hooge, our bar counsel; Eric Johnson, our director of CLE; Dean Gould, our director of bar admissions; Mary Jorgensen, our membership services director, Brad Lewis, our director of Access to Justice, Sheri Long, our Practice Management director, and all of the other 40-plus staff members of the State Bar. Every time you call with a question, have a complaint, or submit a suggestion, this board and this staff are committed to answering, responding, and reacting, and they do so with grace and dedication.

I am particularly grateful to Gale Skala, who came out of retirement to assist this year when Administration Manager Manny Botello, a member of the U.S. Army Reserves, was deployed to serve our country. Thank you so much for jumping back in to help us, Gale.

I also want to thank my husband, past state bar president and now retired bankruptcy judge, Bruce Beesley, and my two children, Elizabeth and Robert, for being my test audience all year. My legal assistant and long-time friend, Debbie Sorensen, kept me on track and on time with deadlines, speaking commitments, and ever-changing travel arrangements, and I thank her for her support. But a special shout-out goes to my sister, Sara Beth Brown, who has been my editor for every column and article I have written. Thank you, SBB!

The strategic priorities set by the Board of Governors do not change with the change of officers. Rather, the officers and each incoming president are tasked with continuing the work of the state bar to achieve those priorities.

In 2021-22, the State Bar of Nevada did this by expanding its “Attorney Well-being” goal, providing its free therapy benefit to law students at the William S. Boyd School of Law at UNLV in an effort to remove the stigma of asking for help when law practice or life seems overwhelming. We continued our efforts to provide excellent customer service to our members—familiarizing ourselves with our member benefits and the rules governing admission to the bar, and examining how to deliver relevant, cost-effective CLE. We

also applied consistent, persistent effort to our goal of identifying and removing barriers in the profession to minority members, hosting a DEI summit, reaching out to law firms to learn about their DEI efforts, and supporting pipeline programs that help diverse and underserved members of our community consider the law as a profession. Mindful of our fiscal responsibility, we ensured that our strategic priorities furthered the regulation of the profession and the improvement of the administration of law, and that our goals were reflected in how our bar dues are spent, reviewing all of our activities to ensure they are germane to our mission.

Writing a monthly column has provided me the opportunity to focus my attention and that of our board and staff on our strategic priorities and mission. Please know that every action taken by the Board of Governors and state bar staff is dedicated to meeting that mission, one we can all say without missing a beat: to serve our members, govern the legal profession, and protect the public.

We do this with professionalism;

We do this with enthusiasm;

We do this with pride...

Because we ARE the State Bar of Nevada.

Thank you.