

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## When There are Nine

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PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA



**“When I’m sometimes asked ‘When will there be enough [women on the Supreme Court]?’ and I say ‘When there are nine,’ people are shocked.”**

—Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

The State Bar of Nevada has been in existence since 1928. Its first president was H.R. Cooke, the grandfather of retired federal magistrate judge Valerie Cooke, and retired Reno attorney, Carol Cooke. It took 66 years for a female attorney to be elected to their grandfather’s position as president of the State Bar of Nevada.

Last year, the State Bar of Nevada established the Trailblazer Award. The first recipient of this award was Bryan Scott, current city attorney for Las Vegas. Scott is also a past president of the State Bar of Nevada. He is renowned for his legal abilities, his political acumen, and his wonderful sense of humor. He is also the first African American to serve as president of the State Bar of Nevada.

This month, I’d like to recognize others who have blazed a trail in Nevada’s legal profession: the women who have served as the president of the State Bar of Nevada.

In keeping with the trial practice theme of this edition of *Nevada Lawyer*, the first woman to be elected as the president of the State Bar of Nevada was a defense litigation attorney from Reno, Nevada, Margo Piscevich. Elected in 1994, Piscevich was the first female Nevada attorney I knew who was elected to the American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL). ACTL is an organization to

which only 1 percent of trial attorneys in the U.S. and Canada are admitted ... that’s how experienced and well respected Piscevich was. She was immediately followed by Franny Forsman, who served as bar president in 1995. Forsman was the federal public defender in Nevada for 21-plus years until her retirement in 2011. Four years later, in 1999, Dr. Ann Bersi, (Ann #1), who at one time served as the executive director of the state bar, was elected as the third female president of the state bar. Dr. Bersi went on to serve as a bankruptcy counsel and, in 2005, was appointed to the Nevada State Tax Commission.

Judge Gloria Sturman became state bar president three years later, in 2002. Like her predecessors, Judge Sturman was a litigator, serving as defense counsel for almost 30 years prior to being elected to the bench in 2011. Judge Sturman was followed in 2004 by another Ann, (Ann #2), Ann Price McCarthy, from Carson City. McCarthy was the first female solo practitioner to hold the office of bar president and the only president to graduate from Old College School of Law. Though now retired, McCarthy’s practice focused on family law, a field that is difficult to balance with the demands of the bar presidency, as well as bankruptcy and personal injury law. Bar president number six was Judge Nancy Allf, in 2007. Like those women bar presidents before her, Judge Allf was a trial attorney prior to her election to the bench, practicing as a commercial litigator.

Two years later, in 2009, the Board of Governors elected Kathy England as bar president. England began her career

working on the MGM fire litigation before she turned her energies to representing plaintiffs in employment cases, most recently limiting her practice to representing victims of discrimination and sexual violence as senior counsel at Gilbert Employment Law. In 2011, Connie Akridge, now a senior partner with Holland and Hart, was elected president of the State Bar of Nevada. Akridge, too, is an experienced litigator, who concentrates her practice on insurance and health care issues. She also serves as the president of the Nevada Bar Foundation. Elana Turner Graham, then deputy director and chief financial officer of the Southern Nevada Senior Law Program in Las Vegas, was elected as president of the state bar in 2014. Graham was the first female state bar president to work for a non-profit at the time of her presidency. Like those who went before her, however, Graham, too, was a litigator. Prior to her service to the Senior Law Program, she served in the Clark County District Attorney’s office as the chief deputy supervising the Family Support Division.

My colleague and State Bar of Nevada President-Elect Paola Armeni (a criminal defense litigator and in line to become the first bar president to graduate from the William S. Boyd School of Law), said that it is a big deal to represent our profession in the state of Nevada and to hold the office of bar president. She’s right. What I didn’t include in my brief shout out to all of the women who have served in this capacity, is that each of these women, in addition to serving their members, governing the profession and protecting the public, donates significant time and money to their community, supporting the arts, libraries, education, youth sports, Girl Scouts, victims of domestic abuse, and access to justice programs.

March is Women’s History Month. Please join me in recognizing these women (and two Anns) who have made history for the State Bar of Nevada.

**For more information on the past presidents mentioned here, see page 23.**