

Reflections and Ideals



Edward H. Pappas

“The law is the last result of human wisdom acting upon human experience for the benefit of the public.”

—Samuel Johnson

“No organization of lawyers can long survive which has not for its primary object the protection of the public.”

—Roberts P. Hudson,

First State Bar of Michigan President

I want to take you back in time—for some, like me, way back—when you first decided to become a lawyer. What attracted you to this honorable profession? For many of us, it was the ideal of helping and serving people, improving the justice system, and doing something meaningful with our lives. But the day-to-day business of the practice of law can sometimes get in the way of our ideals and prevent us from accomplishing what we set out to achieve as lawyers.

An excellent avenue for you to pursue your ideals is the State Bar of Michigan. The mission of the State Bar is set forth in the Supreme Court Rules:

The State Bar of Michigan shall aid in promoting improvements in the administration of justice and advancements in jurisprudence, in improving relations between the legal profession and the public, and in promoting the interests of the legal profession in this State.

During the past year, the State Bar, in accordance with its strategic plan, continued its efforts to promote the professionalism of lawyers; advocate for an open, fair, impartial, independent, and accessible justice system; and provide services to members that enable them to best serve their

clients. Among the many programs initiated or continued last year are:

- **State Bar of Michigan Professionalism in Action Program**

The State Bar piloted the first professionalism orientation program at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School Auburn Hills campus. The program paired more than 20 prominent lawyers and judges with small groups of incoming law students to discuss the importance of professionalism in the practice of law through a series of ethical and professional hypothetical situations. This fall, the professionalism orientation program will be expanded to incoming students at all four Cooley Law School campuses and Michigan State University College of Law. In the future, we anticipate that this unique program will be offered at all Michigan law schools.

- **“A Lawyer Helps”**

This important program was initiated this year to celebrate lawyers who make a difference for people and society and to provide tools and resources to help lawyers continue to do so. “A Lawyer Helps” is focused, first, on lawyers who provide time and money to counsel those who cannot otherwise afford legal services and, second, on lawyers who volunteer time and money to other efforts that benefit society. You can learn more

about “A Lawyer Helps” by visiting www.alawyerhelps.org. If you know of an inspiring story involving lawyers, don't keep it secret. Send it to us so we can post it online for all to read.

- **Access to Justice**

Access to justice continues to be one of the State Bar's top priorities. The State Bar and its partners, the Michigan State Bar Foundation and Michigan legal aid organizations, have raised more than \$9 million since the inception of the Access to Justice Fund in 1997 to fund legal services for those who cannot afford them in civil cases. Michigan lawyers also devote thousands of hours each year without charge to help low-income individuals. Additionally, State Bar leaders and I traveled this year to Washington, D.C., to join bar leaders across the country in a successful effort to increase Legal Service Corporation funding for civil legal aid to the poor.

- **Law-Related Education Summit**

In March, the State Bar sponsored its first Law-Related Education (LRE) Summit. Educators, lawyers, judges, and other professionals who are committed to LRE met to develop a plan to promote, expand, and deepen LRE in Michigan. The plan goals include developing an online clearinghouse for use by local and specialty bars, individual lawyers, and educators

The State Bar provides many important programs, initiatives, and services to improve our justice system.

to access quality materials and tools for LRE; building lawyer/educator relationships; and communicating the value of LRE in a manner that reaches educators and legal professionals.

- **Judicial Crossroads Task Force**

The State Bar has formed a special task force to identify how Michigan's justice system can meet the needs of the public in the face of transformational changes underway in the state's economy. The task force will include 27 prominent lawyers and judges and will be supported by four committees: Court Structure and Resources, Access to Justice, Technology, and Business Impact. The task force's work is scheduled to be completed within one year.

- **Diversity**

Through its many justice initiatives programs, the State Bar advances efforts to provide high-quality civil legal services to all Michigan citizens. This past year has seen a number of notable developments on this front, first and foremost in the area of diversity. The State Bar partnered with Thomas M. Cooley Law School to hold two public symposia entitled "We Can, We Will, We Must: Creating Opportunities for the Next Generation of Lawyers," which explored ways to increase the number of lawyers from underrepresented populations. Another important diversity effort led by a disabilities work group conducted a comprehensive survey and focus groups to develop crucial baseline information that will point the way for better support of lawyers with disabilities and lawyers who provide service to disabled populations.

- **Member Services**

The State Bar provides a number of valuable services to our members, and I would like to highlight two of them. First, on June 1, the Practice Management Resource Center launched its Customized Training and Consulting Program. It's designed to offer a variety of resources to help lawyers manage their practices, including consultations in practice management, risk management, technology, and software applications. Second, in col-

laboration with the Michigan Supreme Court, the State Bar will post video on its website of oral arguments, administrative conferences, and administrative hearings before the Michigan Supreme Court. This video will be a valuable tool for attorneys practicing before our appellate courts.

- **Criminal Public Defense Reform**

The State Bar has worked diligently with a coalition of broad-based stakeholders including the Michigan Campaign for Justice to improve the delivery of public defense services in criminal proceedings in Michigan. This effort, although daunting, is necessary to uphold the constitutional right to effective representation by counsel in criminal proceedings.

The State Bar provides many other important programs, initiatives, and services to improve our justice system; serve, educate, and protect the public; and help lawyers and our profession, but there is not enough space to describe them all. The State Bar's accomplishments are attributable to its dedicated and talented staff and to the dedicated and talented lawyers and judges who serve on the Board of Commissioners, Representative Assembly, and State Bar committees and sections. Many excellent bar associations around the state have also contributed to these accomplishments, and I thank them for their partnership with us in this work. The State Bar will be in good hands next year with Executive Director Janet Welch and President Charles Toy, who are committed to continuing and expanding the State Bar programs, initiatives, and services discussed in this column.

I thank you for the privilege of serving as your president during the past year. As president, I have visited thousands of lawyers and judges around the state and relish the relationships that I have developed. I encourage all of you to pursue your ideals—the same ideals that led you to become a lawyer. As I stated in my first President's Page:

It is a privilege to be a lawyer. With that privilege comes the responsibility to act professionally with truth and honor. We should all be proud to be a part of this noble profession. ■