

Continuity



Charles R. Toy

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

—John F. Kennedy

During the State Bar of Michigan Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids at the end of this month, W. Anthony Jenkins will be sworn in as the State Bar's 76th president. President Jenkins will be a robust, attentive, bright, and dedicated leader committed to the State Bar's Strategic Plan to promote the professionalism of lawyers; advocate for an open, fair, impartial, independent, and accessible justice system; and provide services to members to enable them to ethically and professionally serve their clients.

When I wrote my first President's Page, titled “Continuum,” last October, I reinforced the State Bar's challenge to make inevitable change consistent with the Bar's mission. I pledged to stay the course that has guided the State Bar for 75 years and to advance its goals as reflected in the Strategic Plan.

The State Bar offers many great programs to its members and the public. I've had the pleasure of being directly involved in many of them, including Professionalism in Action, A Lawyer Helps, access to justice for indigent parties in civil litigation, law-related education, the Judicial Crossroads Task Force, diversity, member services, and criminal public defense reform. With today's rapidly changing legal landscape and this state's historical shift in demographics and economy, the need for consistency and focus to accomplish our goals is paramount.

Many past presidents of the Bar know this and have stayed involved to see an initiative through to completion. As an example, 73rd State Bar President Ronald D. Keefe has worked steadily to organize and serve attorneys over 60 years of age. At the 2010 An-

nual Meeting, the State Bar's newest section, the Master Lawyers Section, will be launched. Edward H. Pappas, the 74th State Bar president, has served as the co-chair of the Judicial Crossroads Task Force, which will issue its report later this year.

I will remain involved in the pro bono efforts suggested in my July 2010 President's Page, titled “Attorney-Law Student Collaborations: Expanding Pro Bono Services.” In this program, experienced attorneys will be matched to law students seeking clinical experience to assist Michigan's underserved population. This mentoring and pro bono initiative has the potential to effectively draw together several programs of the State Bar—the Master Lawyers Section, Professionalism in Action, and Access to Justice. President Jenkins has asked me to continue working on this initiative and determine whether it is replicable in every law school. It is a request I enthusiastically accept.

In reviewing this year and the remembrance of the last 75 years, I hope you have found new strength and hope for the future because of the faithfulness of attorneys who came before us with ideals of commitment to competence, professionalism, service, and the rule of law. By remembering the challenges that have faced our profession and the ways those challenges were addressed, we are drawn closer to the heritage of and membership in our honorable profession of helping and serving people.

This is a good year to renew or reaffirm your Lawyer's Oath:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm):

I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Michigan;

I will maintain the respect due to courts of justice and judicial officers;

I will not counsel or maintain any suit or proceeding which shall appear to me to be unjust, nor any defense except such as I believe to be honestly debatable under the law of the land;

I will employ for the purpose of maintaining the causes confided to me such means only as are consistent with truth and honor, and will never seek to mislead the judge or jury by any artifice or false statement of fact or law;

I will maintain the confidence and preserve inviolate the secrets of my client, and will accept no compensation in connection with my client's business except with my client's knowledge and approval;

I will abstain from all offensive personality, and advance no fact prejudicial to the honor or reputation of a party or witness, unless required by the justice of the cause with which I am charged;

I will never reject, from any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the

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defenseless or oppressed, or delay any cause for lucre or malice;

I will in all other respects conduct myself personally and professionally in conformity with the high standards of conduct imposed upon members of the bar as conditions for the privilege to practice law in this State.

I also urge you to sign on to the Michigan Pledge to increase diversity and inclusion in the legal profession:

We believe that diversity and inclusion are core values of the legal profession, and that these values require a sustained commitment to strategies of inclusion.

Diversity is inclusive. It encompasses, among other things, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, nationality, language, age, disability, marital and parental status, geographic origin, and socioeconomic background.

Diversity creates greater trust and confidence in the administration of justice and the rule of law, and enables us to better serve our clients and society. It makes us more effective and creative by bringing different perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, talents, and interests to the practice of law.

We believe that law schools, law firms, corporate counsel, solo and small firm lawyers, judges, government agencies, and bar associations must cooperatively work together to achieve diversity and inclusion, and that strategies designed to achieve diversity and inclusion will benefit from appropriate assessment and recognition.

Therefore, we pledge to continue working with others to achieve diversity and inclusion in the education, hiring, retention, and promotion of Michigan's attor-

neys and in the elevation of attorneys to leadership positions within our organizations, the judiciary, and the profession.

During this year as I have met thousands of attorneys at Bar meetings and other functions, I have thanked you for your day-to-day service to the public and encouraged you to continue in your important roles on community boards and social committees and in service organizations. I will thank you one more time—this time for the special privilege of serving as your 75th presi-

dent. I have strived to exhibit servant leadership, but the heavy lifting for the many State Bar programs, initiatives, and services are directly borne by the committed State Bar staff and the devoted attorneys and judges who serve on the 68 State Bar sections and committees; Board of Commissioners; Representative Assembly; Michigan State Bar Foundation; and affinity, special-interest, and local bar associations. I will always cherish the friendships that have been formed and I pledge to continue serving, in some capacity, the attorneys and people of Michigan.

I will invoke one moment of personal privilege to thank President and Dean Don LeDuc and the board, staff, and faculty of Thomas M. Cooley Law School for enthusiastically supporting me during this year as president of the State Bar of Michigan. I also thank my wife, Mary Ellen, who has been an inspiration, helper, and companion during many of my State Bar trips. ■