

# Leadership as a Team Sport



Thomas J. Ryan

The leadership of the State Bar of Michigan is a team effort. It combines the vitality of new members getting involved in different roles with the consistency of the executive director and our full-time staff. This gives us the responsiveness and new ideas that come with self-governance and the professional management to implement and maintain the many programs and services that result.

This approach also provides us a special kind of balance that is invaluable in dealing with problems that inevitably arise in any organization of people. To ensure a constant renewal, we have our own "term limits" for every elected official. This allows us to continually strengthen the organization through our diversity.

The variety of our current membership is broader than it has ever been and our leadership team is stronger because it reflects these differences. Today we are represented by men and women practicing in every corner of the state, in every conceivable size of firm, and

every specialty of practice. In my participation in our Bar since 1992, I have been fortunate to see these many different kinds of people come together to lead our organization as a team.

Another real value of our team approach shines when we face inevitable challenges as lawyers, and the practice of law must change to keep up with the progress of business and society. Over the last several months, I have written about the State Bar taking on the issues of multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional practice and of the work of our electronic filing task force.

Most recently, I touched on the State Bar's efforts to use a professional consultant to assess the needs, expectations, and viewpoints of our more than 33,000 members. This process will give the leadership team the kind of feedback necessary for a very realistic review of our goals and objectives. In turn, this review will serve as a basis to adjust our programs and services. It will also give us the information we need to accurately direct and maximize our financial resources.

These efforts, together with the restructuring of our professional staff, are designed to keep our organization up-to-date and rele-

---

The views expressed in the President's Page, as well as other expressions of opinions published in the *Journal* from time to time, do not necessarily state or reflect the official position of the State Bar of Michigan, nor does their publication constitute an endorsement of the views expressed. They are the opinions of the authors and are intended not to end discussion, but to stimulate thought about significant issues affecting the legal profession, the making of laws, and the adjudication of disputes.

---

vant. Although I recognize that it would be virtually impossible to make a perfect fit for everyone in our increasingly diverse organization, that cannot and should not keep us from trying.

So we need your input, whether by the various information-gathering techniques through which the consultant will guide us or by simply sending us a letter. Let us know

what you think and, remember, the best criticisms come with suggested alternatives for real improvement.

We also need you to get involved. My time with the State Bar leadership has been personally fulfilling in a way I never imagined. So I urge you to participate in a program, help gov-

ern a section, join a committee, or run for the Representative Assembly or the Board of Commissioners. It is truly your Bar and it is what you help make it. Come join our leadership team.

## An Ironic, Well-Deserved Award

In 1994, the American Bar Association honored the late Michael Franck, former executive director of the State Bar of Michigan, by naming an annual award in his honor. Because he had dedicated his professional career to advancing legal ethics, professionalism, and judicial regulation, the ABA created the Michael Franck Responsibility Award. This award is given annually by the ABA to an individual whose career achievements demonstrate the best practices and accomplishments in these areas.

The ABA president, Martha Barnett, recently announced that at their August annual meeting our current executive director, John T. Berry, will receive this very special award.

*...remember, the best criticisms come with suggested alternatives for real improvement.*

Congratulations, John! This is not only a well-deserved honor for John, it is a demonstration of just how fortunate we are to have such a quality person on the leadership team of our State Bar.

### LSC Update

The Legal Services Corporation, which provides federal funds for many programs offering assistance to indigent civil citizens in our state, has been working with the State Bar of Michigan, the Michigan State Bar Foundation, and the various legal service providers in our state to consolidate programs. This consolidation effort is to help the legal services programs that receive LSC funds to use economies of scale, technological advances, and to ensure that as much money as possible is spent on the direct service to indigent clients.

All the constituent groups mentioned above spent a great deal of time and effort in attempting to provide a reconfiguration of the LSC funded programs in Michigan.

Michigan seems to be in the forefront of this effort and we are confident that our excellent partnership with LSC will continue to provide the best possible services to the citizens served by these very important programs. ♦

