

Our Future



Thomas J. Ryan

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it."
—Yogi Berra, New York Yankees catcher,
philosopher

With this column, a future has arrived that just a year ago, I thought was a long way off—my year as your State Bar president is coming to a close. Yet, in what now seems like a short time, our team has made some important progress and done our part in the continuing building process to improve the State Bar for its members.

In this time, I believe that the State Bar of Michigan has become more focused, now and for the future, on accomplishing the key goals of raising the standards of practice in our state, assisting lawyers in their professional practices so that they become more successful, efficient and productive, and ensuring that the justice system throughout our state will continue to improve and serve the citizens of our state even better.

Perhaps more important, we have made a real effort to plan for the future. This is all

the more vital with the explosive growth of information technology, which is transforming not only our role in society, but also the way we do business every day.

The future of the State Bar of Michigan has been under intense scrutiny this year with our new executive director, John T. Berry, the Board of Commissioners, Dadie Perlov's Consensus Management Group, and the many volunteer members who actively participate in our organization. With the increasing pace of change, the professionals are telling us that the standard for long-range planning has changed from five to ten years out, to just two or three years. So why should we spend so much time planning for a future that is only two or three years

away, and will be here before we know it? As an organization we are the sum total of our past and present experiences. But to keep pace and use our intellect, training, and knowledge to learn from the successes and the mistakes of the past and the present, the faster pace of change makes planning for the future all the more vital. Each and every one of you as members of the State Bar has the opportunity, and obligation, to impact the future of this organization. Our staff and new officers including in-coming president, Bruce Neckers; president-elect, Reginald Turner; vice-president, Scott Brinkmeyer; secretary,

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Nancy Diehl; and new treasurer, Tom Cranmer, as well as the Board of Commissioners and Representative Assembly, are committed to involving everyone in this continuing planning process.

As lawyers, we all know that there is no monopoly on good ideas. Everyone involved in the State Bar's leadership is open to providing as much value and service for our members as possible. It is important that we plan this future together, as a common bond of ethics, education, and profession connects us all.

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During the course of my year as your State Bar president, I have had the opportunity to

meet with, and more importantly, learn from many of you. Throughout the state, I have witnessed exciting and innovative efforts to improve the practice of law and the system of justice. Many of these programs, once tested, will serve as a foundation for changes within our state.

For instance, I think that we are seeing a glimpse of the future that has already begun in Washtenaw County, where the E-Filing Project is under way. Another is in Marquette, where Commissioner Ronald Keefe has launched the Upper Peninsula's Access to Justice Development Fund Campaign. Then there is the new courthouse in Kent County, which will have a fully integrated Legal Triage Center for indigent and near indigent clients. In Lansing, Dean LeDuc of Cooley Law School is working with our executive director, John Berry, on a professional issues curriculum for law students. Earlier, I saw in Grand Traverse County, the bar associations working with the land conservancy groups to preserve valuable natural resources in northwest Michigan. During the course of the year, the

State Bar looked closely at Detroit, where legal aid providers for Detroit and Wayne County are working with constituent groups and adjacent counties under the LSC reconfiguration project.

Recently I spoke with newly appointed Federal District Judge David P. Lawson, who is seeking input through regular contact with local bar associations and practitioners in the Saginaw, Midland, and Bay County areas. It is from this kind of work that we can continually recreate our Bar, while keeping the best from the past and present, to secure a bright and vibrant future for our organization.

During this year, our team has forged an even closer working relationship with the Michigan Supreme Court in an effort to participate even more in the rule making process,

to ensure the highest standards of professional practice and the most effective, efficient, and fair justice system for our citizens. In addition to its many regular tasks, the Representative Assembly has been preparing to tackle for the future the issue of judicial selection/election.

As you can see, there is interesting work ongoing throughout the state, all with an eye toward making the future better—because, as lawyers, we are not immune from the currents that affect modern society. This kind of dedication to maintaining the high ideals of our profession bode well for a bright future for the State Bar of Michigan.

In my opinion, the greatest challenge to our profession will be to maintain our core professional ideals—confidentiality, independence, officers of the court, and ensuring

access to justice—amid the relentless changes in the marketplace so that we remain a profession and not a business subsidiary of a national or multinational corporation. I believe with our future leaders we will thrive and succeed!

It has been a pleasure and a humbling privilege to serve this year as the 66th State Bar president. All year long, lawyers and judges have warmly received me in countless meetings and conferences. I want to thank all of you for the professionalism and courtesy that has been shown to me—I have made many new friends. I have been truly blessed and honored to serve.

P.S. I would especially like to thank my wife and family for the sacrifices they made this year. ◆



State Bar of Michigan Elects Officers for 2001–2002



Bruce W. Neckers

Bruce W. Neckers of Grand Rapids has been elected president of the State Bar of Michigan for the 2001–2002 Bar year. Neckers, who is currently president-elect of the State Bar, will be sworn in as president of the 34,000-member organization at the Friday, September 14 luncheon during the Bar's 66th Annual Meeting in Lansing.



Scott M. Brinkmeyer

Also serving as officers of the State Bar for 2001–2002 will be President-Elect Reginald M. Turner of Detroit (currently vice-president), Vice President Scott M. Brinkmeyer of Grand Rapids (cur-



Reginald M. Turner

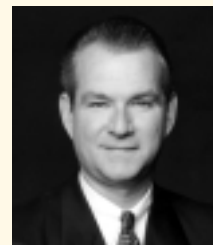


Nancy J. Diehl

rently secretary), Secretary Nancy J. Diehl of Detroit (currently treasurer) and Treasurer Thomas W. Cranmer of Bloomfield Hills.

All officers will assume their new responsibilities at the close of the State Bar's Annual Meeting, which will be held September 12–14, 2001 at the Lansing Center in downtown Lansing.

Neckers is an attorney with the firm of Rhoades, McKee, Boer, Goodrich & Titta in Grand Rapids. Turner is a member with Clark Hill, PLC in Detroit. Brinkmeyer is a member with Mika, Meyers, Beckett & Jones, PLC in Grand Rapids. Diehl is an attorney at the Wayne County Prosecuting Attorneys Office in Detroit. Cranmer is an attorney with Miro Weiner & Kramer, PC in Bloomfield Hills.



Thomas W. Cranmer