



It Has Been a Privilege to Serve You

The State Bar of Michigan has accomplished a lot in the 2002–2003 Bar year. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to serve as your president in these exciting times. Through our Board of Commissioners and all of our volunteers and staff we have advanced the mission and goals of the Bar in many important ways.

My first *President's Page* in October 2002 described the Strategic Plan we adopted in 2001. The Strategic Plan is designed to maintain our core values and focus our resources in the areas most relevant to our members, the courts, and the public. The Plan calls for the Bar to employ sound fiscal management of the Bar's resources; to address public policy issues that are central to the administration of justice, not unduly divisive, and on which the Bar can achieve significant impact; to produce cost-efficient services to help members be more effective and efficient in serving the public; and to support Justice Initiatives, including Access to Justice and Open Justice. We have made progress this year in all of these areas.

Fiscal Management

We have balanced our budget for three straight years, for a remarkable total of ten years without a dues increase. Moreover, we will carefully prioritize the additional services we offer to members with the modest rate increase for the Bar year beginning October 1.

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.

This improved stewardship of your resources arises from faithful adherence to the Strategic Plan; the end of the "Presidential Agenda," which previously caused the Bar to add new programs each year, sometimes without due regard for fiscal impact; and the internal discipline imposed by Executive Director John Berry, Finance Director James Horsch, Human Resources Director Kathleen Fox, and the entire staff.

Public Policy

The Strategic Plan calls for the State Bar to advocate aggressively for issues that support its statement of purpose, minimize divisiveness, and where success is achievable. It calls for the Bar to increase opportunities for member input when new policy areas are being considered, and to expand publication and dissemination of information about issues being closely followed, and legislative and regulatory achievements. This year we created a Public Policy Resource Center on the State Bar website, which offers members direct access to the bills and court rules the Bar is following, to legislators and public officials, and to the positions of the Bar and its sections. The PPRC also encourages and facilitates direct member input through the web. The e-Journal now updates members regularly, by practice area, about new legislation and court rule proposals of interest. Members can now subscribe to a weekly newsletter on current public policy events. At the same time, the bylaws governing public policy activity have been re-written to provide better service to sections, more ac-

countability, and greater clarity about public policy positions taken by the State Bar, its sections, and committees.

These improvements result from our leadership's commitment to the Strategic Plan and from the hard work and creativity of Janet Welch, our general counsel, Nancy Brown, our director of communications, and all of the staff members who work with them.

Member Services

Our Strategic Plan mandates more attention to lawyers' needs in their offices, at court, and wherever they practice law, so we can serve the public more efficiently and effectively. One important aspect is our accelerated prosecution of the unauthorized practice of law, which benefits members, and more importantly, protects the public. The Public Policy Resource Center described above is also a great advance in member services. A new Bar service that every member will receive is our upgraded membership card. Similar to a credit card, it will be more durable and it will allow the Bar to position itself and members for far more electronic transactions, like secure entrance to courts, for registration at Continuing Legal Education seminars, and many other uses. We are actively meeting with court personnel over the next two weeks to introduce them to the new "look" of the card and to explain its future applications. Also new this year is a State Bar partnership with OfficeMax that will provide substantial discounts to members on office equipment and supplies. The experienced leadership of Lisa Allen-Kost and her

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staff can be counted on to continue to discover ways to increase tangible, practical benefits of State Bar membership.

Professional Standards

Maintaining the high standards of our profession is at the core of the State Bar's mission, and we do so vigorously through programs such as our Ethics Hotline, prosecution of the unauthorized practice of law, and Character and Fitness reviews for membership applicants. This past year, the Professional Standards division, under the leadership of director Tom Byerley, has been responsible for the complex and important task of guiding the State Bar's consideration of the American Bar Association's comprehensive re-write of the Model Rules of Professional Conduct through the Bar's Ethics Committee. The committee's proposal will be considered by the Representative Assembly in September and again in November.

Justice Initiatives

The Strategic Plan calls for the State Bar to strengthen its Access to Justice and Open Justice programs. Access to Justice is the Bar's award-winning program to enhance the network of civil legal services providers for poor people and promote lawyers' fulfillment of the voluntary standard for pro bono contributions. Our award-winning Open Justice program, arising from the work of two Supreme Court task forces, has sought to foster a justice system that is free of bias in the administration of justice and which embraces the tremendous diversity in our great state. To date, we have pursued these efforts through committees that have operated outside of the Board of Commissioners, often with inadequate communication and mutual support. After careful consideration of the needs of these programs, we decided to add them to the responsibilities of the Board of Commissioners, working with additional volunteers on relevant subcommittees, in order to ensure that we are more effective in achieving our goals.

The successes of our Open Justice and Access to Justice efforts have come through the hard work of so many volunteers and staff that it is probably folly for me to begin singling out individuals. I must, however, name

a few leaders who helped to shape these wonderful programs. Supreme Court Justice Marilyn Kelly and then-Court of Appeals Judge Harold Hood led the Open Justice Commission during its five-year mandate with enthusiasm, creativity, and immense dedication to the goal of an egalitarian justice system. *Kudos* also to all who served on this Commission for their important work. We hope that they will continue to work with our Board of Commissioners' Justice Initiatives committee.

Past State Bar President Alfred Butzbaugh, the first Chair of our Access to Justice Task Force, conceived our pioneering Development Campaign and made a substantial leadership contribution to inspire others to help fund legal services to the neediest people in Michigan. Since then, lawyers too numerous to name have raised over \$3,000,000 for this worthy cause, and 2003 could be the first year in which the campaign will raise over \$1,000,000 in a single year. Our Development Director, Candace Crowley, deserves tremendous credit for our success, which leads the nation. I urge you to visit our website to find out more about the lawyers in Michigan who have given generously from their hearts, and to learn how you can join them.

Thank You

I want to thank all of the lawyers who volunteered this year to help the State Bar pursue its mission. You are the epitome of professionalism. Thanks also to all of the affinity bars, sections, and committees that invited me to join you for meetings, seminars, and social events. You received me warmly, and you challenged me to think about many important issues facing our justice system and our society. I will always appreciate these encounters.

My travels around the state would not have been possible without the support of my law firm, Clark Hill and my faithful assistant, Paula Proffitt. My partners made their commitments to the Bar apparent throughout my tenure as an officer. The firm's gift of \$10,000 in my name to the Access to Justice Campaign is truly remarkable for a firm already in the campaign's leadership.

The staff of the Bar, who really make all things possible, have my eternal gratitude, es-

pecially Executive Coordinator Glenna Peters, who manages the life of the president. My *President's Pages* were greatly improved by the assistance of State Bar General Counsel Janet Welch, Managing Editor Amy Ellsworth, and two Clark Hill colleagues, Danon Goodrum and Evelyn Sullen.

Of course, I am deeply indebted to the members of the Executive Committee of the Bar. We have much to celebrate, but we who endured many long discussions of difficult issues know, as someone once said, that "the perfect can be the enemy of the good;" we also know that even "excellent" is rarely pleasing to all. Throughout the year we were all grateful for the Strategic Plan, because when we were in doubt it provided a beacon of light to guide us as we sought to make wise decisions.

Finally, I thank my wife, Marcia, and my daughters, Nia and Imani, for their patience, support, and cheerful companionship during my service to the State Bar of Michigan. ♦