



**John T. Berry**

# Many Voices, One Bar

*Update on Strategic Plan*

**M**any voices, one Bar. That is the concise way to describe both the reality of our profession and the foundation for the State Bar of Michigan's Strategic Plan.

In recent weeks, a number of reminders have reinforced the wisdom of recognizing that truth.

As this article is being written, we have just completed the Annual Meeting for 2003. It was a dramatic shift from previous years.

Instead of costing your State Bar \$300,000, we have saved almost all of that expense. The meeting has shifted from a more elaborate affair to a business meeting that allowed the Board of Commissioners, Representative Assembly, and sections to meet and conduct their work.

In addition, we honored the lawyers who have served this profession for over 50 years. What a privilege to honor them and to learn from them.

Many voices. Some of you (particularly the thousands of you who do not attend such meetings) have expressed pleasure at the cost savings for the Annual Meeting. Some have regretted the reduced time for the lawyers and judges of the state to network and learn from each other. You feel we may have cut a bit too much. *Your* thoughts are solicited!

At the Board of Commissioners meeting, the budget for 2003–2004 was passed, which partially implements the Strategic Plan in

areas where Bar members have most expressed a desire for added emphasis: UPL, ethics, member services, and money set aside to provide you help at your desk with legal research.

Already the Bar has unveiled a tremendous new resource in the *Public Policy Resource Center*. The center and our new approach to public policy reflect the many voices of our Bar.

The State Bar's public policy program requires nourishment from the roots of the profession in order to flourish—from individual lawyers who see problems that need to be addressed, from sections and committees who offer concrete improvements, and from all lawyers who spot flaws and problems in proposed legislation and court rules affecting

tance to lawyers, and facilitates communication about public policy issues between members and the State Bar, and between members and public officials directly.

In this instance, the many voices we have heard are strikingly consistent in praise of this tool.

The resource center reflects a desire for the Bar to provide you with more concrete usable services. It also reflects this new focus of the Bar. No longer is it a Bar with a “top down” mentality.

The Public Policy Resource Center is the result of an analysis that we now apply to all we do at the State Bar. First, we ask whether what we are about to do goes to a fundamental core function of our Bar. Next, we deter-

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the profession and court system. For this reason, our Strategic Plan calls for the Bar to increase opportunities for member input when new policy areas are being considered, and to expand the dissemination of information about issues being closely followed, as well as legislative and regulatory achievements. These goals are based on a simple proposition: the more informed, involved, and sophisticated our membership is about public policy issues, the better our public policy program will be. The Public Policy Resource Center is a powerful tool to realize the Strategic Plan goal. It gives members direct access to the legislation and court rules of impor-

mine whether by taking action we are likely to have an impact. Most importantly, we ask whether the action truly reflects most of our profession. In this way, we avoid inadvertently diving into something that would inappropriately divide us.

We still are a profession with some common goals such as maintaining a competent profession with lawyers of integrity and providing access to our citizens. In those areas we intend to enhance our efforts.

One Bar, with many voices. For that reason we continually need your input. Any thoughts on our Annual Meeting? Let me know at [jberry@mail.michbar.org](mailto:jberry@mail.michbar.org). ♦



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