



Resolutions Revisited

I was about to draft an article on New Year's resolutions until I started thinking about two things. First, I was reminded that I have reached my five-year anniversary with the State Bar of Michigan. What a great ride it has been! Secondly, I remembered that in January of 2002, early in my tenure, I wrote an article on my resolutions for serving the Bar in the coming year.

It suddenly struck me that I should look at those resolutions and report back to you about how we did. Additionally, I wanted to see if they were the type of resolutions that warrant repeating. In my opinion, the answer to the latter question is yes. As to how we have done, I will leave that to you, but I will share with you our progress since 2002.

1. **I promise to go and listen to any section, local bar, or other gathering of lawyers at your request**—I tried to place a strong emphasis on this in 2002, and I know it continues to be important to do even better. I tried to visit every section, committee, lawyer group, and local bar that would have me, and I again offer to visit and listen to your ideas for our future. Contact me at voice@mail.michbar.org.

2. **I promise to watch our budget in such a way as to demonstrate financial responsibility. That means not only starting with a balanced budget, but doing all I can to keep it that way**—For the entire time since my

resolution, we have kept surplus budgets, and we recently paid off the Bar's entire debt. Despite many financial challenges, we cut certain programs and used your money to create programs you requested, such as Law Practice Management, Michigan Law Online, and the Public Policy Resource Center.

3. **I promise next month to publish in this *Journal* and on the State Bar website the most professional, comprehensive annual report, with audited financial statements, that this Bar has ever produced**—Our financial reporting and oversight have been a focal point of board review and improvement. We added non-board and non-staff members to our finance committee to gain a new perspective, and we adopted many changes in auditing and oversight to make sure everything is in the open and subject to strict scrutiny. These changes include incorporating some of the suggestions following Enron that are not mandated, but make all the sense in the world. We also conduct audit meetings with the board without the presence of either our financial director or myself to ensure all viewpoints are heard before financial decisions are made.

4. **I promise to publish the most thoroughly reviewed *Bar Journal* directory ever in an attempt to ensure fewer mistakes than the last several years**—So far, so good on this one. Mistakes in numbers have re-

duced significantly, but let me say one mistake is too many. To any lawyer who has been the recipient of a typographical error or incorrect member information in our directory, I apologize. This resolution for accuracy remains active!

5. **I promise to champion our strategic plan and to devote my particular expertise to its commitment to help you in the practice of law. In that regard, I personally promise to have readied a new diversion program for the discipline system, which helps lawyers with law office management and handling stress. In addition, I promise to develop within that program practical and useful ways to recognize and deal with reasonable client dissatisfaction**—We resolved to create a diversion program to help lawyers with law office management problems, communication issues, and other problems with clients unrelated to harmful conduct. All evaluations from participants and those doing the regulatory review have been consistently very favorable. We resolve to make it even better and to expand its service to all who can benefit from it.

6. **I promise to work closely with you to bring clarity to our proper roles and to spend more time with you than any executive director has before**—Sections have been and will be an important part of our strategic plan. To any section member or officer who

Share your thoughts/concerns

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reads this, please let us know both where we've succeeded and how we can improve. Invite me to a meeting and let's talk! Contact me at voice@mail.michbar.org.

7. To local bars: I promise to work more closely with you in order to help us both succeed. In short, I promise to treat you as partners in service to our members, not as competitors—I have not had as much contact with local bars as I had hoped when I made my original resolution. I spent time with local bar executives and attended some meetings. Not enough. I resolve to do better. The Board of Commissioners has placed a huge emphasis on this and has recently provided additional resources to help accomplish much more in these areas. One example of how we need to work together to find the best solutions for members served by local bars and the State Bar is in the area of lawyer referral. I am interested to hear about your experiences with the Lawyer Referral Service. Again, contact me at voice@mail.michbar.org.

8. To the staff: I promise to lead by example in work ethic and dedication in service to our members. I promise to speak loudly to get you the help you need to do your jobs and to help each of you to grow professionally. I promise to lead by having a grateful, thankful attitude to our members for our opportunity to serve no matter how hard the challenge—Every day since my first resolution and every day I am here represents a huge component of time and energy devoted to properly hiring, training, supervising, motivating, and empowering talented people to serve you. Anyone involved with management knows that this is one of the most important responsibilities of an organization, and again it is up to you to let us know how we are serving you—our successes and those areas needing improvement.

So this year, no new resolutions. It is important to focus on the ever-important resolutions you asked us to focus on from day one. The common thread is building relationships and working together to meet the needs of our members and citizens.

I do invite your input. I realize you are busy, but if something is on your mind about our resolutions or yours, send it my way. To each of you, a most Happy New Year! ♦

