



A Busy Year Comes to an End

Improving the profession's image, promoting diversity, providing practice resources – the ISBA's important work advanced this year and will continue in the years to come.

“But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;...
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run”

Andrew Marvell,
To His Coy Mistress

This is my final President's Page. As I expected, it was a busy year and it went by quickly.

Sometimes I wonder – and I am sure some of my friends and relatives do – why I wanted to serve as president of the ISBA for a year rather than take a more traditional sabbatical (traveling throughout Italy for a year, would have been good!). Don't think the thought hasn't crossed my mind. But like the poet Andrew Marvell lamenting the coyness of the woman he loves, since I cannot make the time spent with the profession I love stand still, I chose to make it run.

I have truly enjoyed my service as president. It has given me a special opportunity to do things for the profession and the system of justice beyond what we as lawyers do day in and day out for the clients we serve, and I am thankful for that opportunity. It made me think about broader issues and reflect on the importance of the system we administer. It made me look at that system more objectively, with a view toward making it better and more efficient, not only for the lawyers who administer it but, more importantly, for the citizens whom it serves. And it allowed me to think about what would make our profession more fulfilling in the long run.

In that regard, I repeat and summarize here some of the themes I have expressed over the past year in this column and at various events across the state.

Improving the image of the profession

It is critical that we feel good about who we are and what we do and that we be respected for it. It helps us do our jobs

well and increases the public's respect for the system of justice and the rule of law.

Although the legal profession has always suffered from negative stereotyping – something that is to some degree inevitable in an adversary system of justice – we can and are making progress in improving our image. We can do so by policing ourselves better, removing some of the incentives for less than positive behavior, and publicizing our good works.

The ISBA continues to be involved in numerous endeavors designed to improve our image, including the following:

- Formulating strategies and specific programs to enhance professionalism and civility. The ISBA's partnership with the Supreme Court's Commission on Professionalism, including participation in the joint conclave on professionalism at the ISBA Midyear Meeting in Chicago and this year's Allerton House Conference, are examples.

- Encouraging a greater emphasis on the role of lawyers as peacemakers, problem solvers, and counselors. The ISBA continues to support the increased use of alternative dispute resolution methods, rather than the traditional adversarial court process, to resolve client disputes where possible.

- Educating the public about our good works and our importance to a free society, as we are doing through our strategic marketing campaign and our Committee on Law Related Education's civic education initiatives.

Providing practice resources

The legal profession is facing difficulties, from both an economic and personal standpoint. The growing trend economically seems to reflect that of our country as a whole – an increasingly wide disparity between the haves and the have-nots, and increased competition

within each sphere. And there are serious issues of appropriate “work/life balance” for all lawyers in private practice. There are no simple answers here.

But most of the resources of the ISBA continue to be devoted to its fundamental mission of doing whatever it can to support its members' practices. This includes our outstanding publications, including this journal, the *ISBA Bar News*, the section and committee news-

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letters, and almost daily E-clips, among others; our quality, affordable, and convenient CLE programming; free legal research from Fastcase; and a wide variety of other member benefits.

Promoting diversity

Very simply, the system of justice must reflect the people it serves to maintain its relevance and credibility. The same is true of the ISBA itself if it wants to remain the most important bar association in the state.

The programs I have supported regarding diversity in the profession are an important step forward in that regard. My successors have committed to continue those programs and to support the ongoing work of the Task Force on Diversity and the civic education initiatives.

Highlighting professional fulfillment

To some degree, professional fulfillment as a lawyer must be defined not primarily by economic rewards but by other incentives. Our fulfillment can be derived as much from our status as people who are called upon to help others solve difficult problems.

It is probably a mistake to pursue a career in the law if economic reward is your primary motivation. There are much easier ways to achieve financial rewards with much less work. We must have a true passion for what we do and find fulfillment in the honor and self-esteem derived from knowing that people vest us with the awesome responsibility of helping them solve their most difficult economic and personal problems.

And when our day-to-day practices do not provide the fulfillment we need, we can supplement it through work with the organized bar.

A final thanks

I would be remiss in not publicly thanking the entire, superb staff of the ISBA, from executive director Bob Craghead on down. (I am constrained to mention them all, and the important work they do, in the space I am allotted, and fear I would miss someone if I tried.) To a person, they are outstanding, talented, and hard working.

Serving as President makes one keenly aware of their dedication, and that the important work of the bar would not get done effectively, or at all in most instances, if not for them. They make the officers, including the president, look good even when they don't necessarily deserve it.

As you know, the ISBA recently welcomed attorney Charles J. Northrup of Springfield to the important position of ISBA general counsel, to replace the talented Mary McDermott, who left to pursue her dream of teaching. We all look forward to working with Charlie and predict great things from him.

Then there are the many others who contribute so much to the work of the bar, including the members of the Board of Governors, the Assembly, and the officers and members of the numerous section councils and committees. Their volunteer work is the lifeblood of the ISBA.

I have received much more from the ISBA than I have contributed. The value of the many friendships I have cultivated and experiences shared cannot be measured. I can only hope that in some small way I have left this great institution in at least as good a condition as I inherited it. It was truly an honor to serve.

I look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting in St. Louis, where the presidency will be placed in the capable hands of Jack Carey. Jack will have the enviable job of presiding over the ISBA during our country's celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of our own Abraham Lincoln, and I will enjoy celebrating it with him and all of you as immediate past president. ■