

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

BY TERRI L. MASCHERIN

The Reward From Service Is In The Doing

I am honored to take the reins of this wonderful association. The Chicago Bar Association has a long and storied history—it is the third oldest City Bar Association in the United States, formed as the City rebuilt from the Great Chicago Fire—and its history is intertwined with the history of Chicago.

One of the earliest proponents of the Chicago Bar Association was someone who could not qualify to be a member—Myra Bradwell. Bradwell's case seeking to be admitted to the Bar of the State of Illinois famously went to the U.S. Supreme Court which affirmed the Illinois Court's decision denying Bradwell admission to the Bar:

[I]n view of the peculiar characteristics, destiny, and mission of woman, it is within the province of the legislature to ordain what offices, positions, and callings shall be filled and discharged by men, and shall receive the benefit of those energies and responsibilities, and that decision and firmness which are presumed to predominate in the sterner sex.

Bradwell v. People of the State of Illinois, 83 U.S. 130, 142 (1872) (Bradley, J., concurring).

I'd say America has come a long way from Myra Bradwell's time!

In its first 100 years, no woman served as President of the Chicago Bar Association. Since then, six women have served, and I am the seventh. This is the first time that one woman President of the CBA has passed the gavel to another woman. And, I am pleased to say, both the recent leadership and the future leadership of the Chicago Bar Association reflect the diversity of the legal profession in modern Chicago in every respect. I think that Myra Bradwell would be pleased, too.



While she could not be admitted to the Bar, and thus could not join the new Chicago Bar Association, Bradwell chronicled the work of the fledgling Association (as well as all the legal goings-on in Chicago) in the newspaper that she founded, *The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*. Bradwell wrote of the newly-formed Association in 1874: "Let its affairs be administered with a view of making our laws better, elevating the profession, aiding our judges in the administration of justice and bringing about a better feeling between the professional and non-professional citizen...."

As the 134th President of the Chicago Bar Association, I pledge to work toward those same goals.

A Profession, not a Job

I firmly believe that the practice of law is not a job—it is a profession. For that reason, I cringe when I hear commentators refer to the profession as "the legal industry." In the United States, only two professions are commonly referred to as "callings:" ministers are "called" to a church, and lawyers are "called" to the Bar. That similarity is not

mere coincidence, because both professions are service professions.

I believe that to be "called" to the Bar means that we are called to serve the public. Our democracy is a nation of laws, and lawyers are entrusted with enabling the public to negotiate their way through those laws. As members of the profession, we are called to work to establish good laws and, when needed, to change the law for the better of society. We are called to give back to our community in exchange for the privilege of being admitted to the Bar—to give back by representing those who can't afford to hire a lawyer, by taking on positions of public service and by working for the improvement of the profession through the organized Bar.

Over the next year, I aim to keep the CBA engaged in each of these important professional obligations.

We will work for the adoption of important legislation. In the past legislative year, the CBA has sponsored eleven bills in Springfield and lobbied in support of dozens more. But our legislature is paralyzed by a State financial crisis that no one appears to have the courage to tackle. I would like to see the CBA take a leading role advocating for important issues like pension reform to break the financial logjam, and ethics reform to restore confidence in our electoral process. You can get involved by working through our committees to draft and support proposed legislation.

We will serve the community. As we recover from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, our court systems are swamped with foreclosure cases, and many homeowners are unrepresented. The Chicago Bar Foundation and the Chicago Bar Association are taking a leadership role in addressing that problem. The CBF, in partnership with Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, has created a program to provide pro bono representation to homeowners to participate in mediations of foreclosure cases. We hope that this first-of-its-kind program will provide quality representation while resolving cases to relieve the burden on our courts. We are working on creating a similar program to provide pro bono representation to indigent pro se litigants in

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the Municipal Court. You can get involved by volunteering in these programs.

We will educate the public about the legal system. We will create a new public service segment of the CBA web site to educate the public about legal topics. And we will continue our public education television programming on WYCC Chicago, "Law and Justice Weekly."

We will work to help lawyers who have been impacted by the recession. Many lawyers have been laid off from their jobs in recent years, and many new lawyers just graduating from law school face a daunting job market. Meanwhile, legal services organizations are being stressed by reduced funding and increased demands for their services. We are working on a plan to provide training for lawyers who are interested in redirecting their careers into public interest work so that they can help these organizations and their clients.

And, we will be doing a few things for lawyers in Chicago, too. Our committees are more active than ever, with many members receiving MCLE credits for attending committee meetings, either live or online. We are establishing an online survey to permit our members to provide information about judicial candidates online so that our Judicial Evaluation Committee can access as much information as possible about candidates. In March 2010 we will be traveling to Rome for our annual CLE trip abroad. And on the evening of September 15, we are

throwing one of the best retirement parties ever for a Chicago lawyer, as Justice John Paul Stevens returns to Chicago. Join us at the Chicago Hilton and Towers, the old "Stevens Hotel," for an evening of dining and dancing, with entertainment by the CBA Symphony and Chorus, the Barrister's Big Band and the Scales of Justice.

As we enter the second decade of this century together, think about what you can do to give back. Take on a pro bono case. Work with the CBA on important legislative reform. Volunteer to work on a CBA public education program. Get involved with the CBA. I promise you'll be happy that you did—the reward from service is in the doing. ■