

A Year to Remember— A Debt of Thanks

by Michael A. Glasser 2001–2002 VSB President



A little more than one year ago, I was sworn in as president of the Virginia State Bar. The intervening time has taught me two undeniable truths: A year is not a long time, yet much can occur in this short span. Allow me to share with you some of our accomplishments from the past year.

We have implemented the council's decision to further open the bar's disciplinary system to public scrutiny. For the most part, this transition has been smooth. The public approves of open and transparent operations of government agencies. The credit here must go to my predecessor and good friend, Joe Condo, who had the vision and courage to lead the council to its decision, which is a vote of confidence in the integrity of the bar's disciplinary system. During the past year, we have executed that vision. I also appointed Forrest M. "Frosty" Landon of the Virginia Coalition for Open Government as a member of the bar's Standing Committee on Lawyer Discipline, which provides oversight for the disciplinary system and its procedures.

The efficiency and fairness of the disciplinary system will remain the highest priority for the bar. During the past year, we have looked inward and examined our processes and have made suggestions to improve the speed with which we resolve the public's complaints against Virginia lawyers. I am confident the bar's new president, Ben DiMuro, and his successor—the bar's second female president, Jean Dahnk—will keep speedy resolution of bar complaints high on their radar. They are both highly talented and dedicated and will be great leaders of our bar. This continued focus on improving the resolution of complaints will benefit Virginia lawyers as much as the public at large.

Perhaps of all the motions I have made during the last eight and one half years I have served on the council, the one of which I am most proud is the one to charter the Senior Lawyers Conference. This past year, the Senior Lawyers Conference jumped out to a quick start on many fronts. Our colleagues aged 55 and older comprise a large and growing community of Virginia lawyers and have much to offer our profession by mentoring us, teaching us the essential role of civility and professionalism, and helping us all to plan for the later stages of our own careers. The energy and commitment of the organizers and leaders of the

Senior Lawyers Conference, in particular their first chair, Frank O. Brown, Jr., have been wonderful additions to our bar.

Under the inspiring and charismatic leadership of O'Kelly E. McWilliams, III, the Young Lawyers Conference was pressed into much needed assistance in the various calamities that occurred during the past year. Whether responding to the tragedies of September 11 at the Pentagon or to the flooding in southwest Virginia, our Young Lawyers Conference was there. The Young Lawyers Conference also organized the debate on multidisciplinary practice at the council's February meeting and has spearheaded several other great projects encouraging minorities to seek opportunities in the legal profession. On a personal level, O'Kelly and I have become good friends. His future is bright. O'Kelly is the third African-American to serve as our YLC president, and the successful tenure of these individuals in leading the Young Lawyers Conference signals that it is time for other "firsts" to occur in our profession. It is time that an African-American became president of the Virginia State Bar. It is time that a Jewish person served on our Virginia Supreme Court. Our profession has made great strides and the faces of our membership are as diverse as they have ever been.

A low profile, but nonetheless huge advance has occurred this past year in an area of critical need to the bar—a proposed cure to its aging technology infrastructure. Blessed with good timing and the astute leadership of its committee chair, Dana McDaniel, the bar's computer committee and its vendor, i3solutions, of Sterling, are well underway to bringing the bar's information systems into the 21st century within budget. Both the members of the committee and the bar's staff, led by Bill Dickinson, are to be commended. The project will likely continue through the entirety of Ben DiMuro's term as president, and perhaps beyond. The intermediate term goal is a first-rate system that brings the entire bar's databases together in harmony and improves the bar's efficiency in response to requests of lawyers, the public, and other government agencies. The long-term vision is an improved and less expensive medium of communication between the bar and the lawyers and citizens it serves.

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A year is certainly not a long period, but in that time I have criss-crossed the state attending various events proudly representing the Virginia State Bar. The state of our bar is good. Our budget is solid, our professional staff, led by Tom Edmonds, is first-rate, our judiciary is of the highest quality, and I believe our profession is rebounding in the eyes of the public it serves. In an ironic twist, September 11 has focused the public on the rule of law and our profession's essential role in preserving the stability of our democracy.

Serving as president of the Virginia State Bar has been the highest honor of my career. I have many people to thank. Certainly, every lawyer who does his or her job each day to take care of a client, one at a time, has my gratitude—because they have elevated this noble profession. I owe a debt of thanks to my partners and colleagues at Glasser and Glasser, P.L.C., in Norfolk, for permitting me to take a leave of my responsibilities at the firm. I thank my wonderful wife, Lori, for all her help at the office this past year, in addition to her other duties. She was incredibly helpful to the bar and to me. I thank my children, Bern, Jacob and Ross for allowing their daddy to be away from home more than usual. Finally, I am grateful to the Almighty for a year of health.

A year ago, on the occasion of my installation as president of the Virginia State Bar, I accepted a special trust to advance our great profession. I have tried every day to remember this commitment and to do my best to honor it. This has been a year to remember. God bless you all. 🙏