



Jonathan M. Shapiro is the 95th president of the CBA. He is a partner in the Shapiro Law Offices PC in Middletown, where he practices in corporate transactions, employment matters, and complex commercial and general litigation, as well as in arbitrations and mediations. He regularly serves as “local counsel” for non-Connecticut-based firms that are admitted to practice pro hac vice.

I KNOW I AM SOMEWHAT PREACHING TO the choir as most of the people reading this column are members of the CBA. But if I am a betting person (and generally I am not), I am betting most of you do not know everything that the CBA has to offer you.

This is both a positive and a negative. On the positive side, it may be a reflection of the many different benefits we offer. On the negative side, it may be a reflection of the need for greater communication or appreciation for what is available to you. So I wanted to take this opportunity to write about what I find particularly beneficial for all of you.

The CBA is dedicated to aiding you in advancing your career and to promoting the public interest through the advancement of justice and the protection of liberty. Our many benefits are designed to satisfy these goals.

Sections, sections, sections. Our sections are the lifeblood of the CBA. They help you stay

Ask Not What You Can Do for the CBA, but What the CBA Can Do for You

By Jonathan M. Shapiro

on top of, and hopefully ahead of, the game by providing professional development and networking opportunities. There are more than 40 substantive sections in different areas of the law. There is something for everyone. Don't belong to a section? Now is the perfect time to join. At the end of January, we launched “Test Drive a Section,” which allows all of you to join up to three sections for free for the remainder of the bar year.¹ It is a great opportunity to start seeing what you are missing. We are giving you the section for free for the rest of the bar year, but you must do your part too by attending section events. (In full disclosure, you get the section for free, but certain events may still require a fee.) This offer ends March 31.

Do you like causes? We have causes too. Our committees focus on public interest, legal, practice-related, and professional issues in various areas, including civics education, diversity and inclusion, human trafficking, immigration, legislative policy and review (more on this one in a moment), medical marijuana, membership, pro bono, professionalism, and more. If you are interested in an appointment to one of our committees, please send me an e-mail at jshapiro@ctbar.org for more information or contact any of our staff in the Member Service Center at (844)469-2221 or msc@ctbar.org.²

The CBA is your voice at the Capitol. We are a lobbying organization and, in my opinion, our lobbying efforts are an under-appreciated benefit. Our legislative team works diligently to enhance and protect the practice of law for you and your clients, and improve the administration of justice. You may see

e-mails from your section leaders or Bill Chapman, our government and community relations director, containing links to proposed legislation. This is your opportunity to weigh in on matters. Our Legislative Policy and Review Committee then vets positions, and approved positions are submitted to the House of Delegates or Board of Governors for ultimate approval. We have an incredible track record of success at the Capitol, and this legislative session should be no different. And if a sales tax is proposed on legal services, you can rest assured that we will lead the charge in opposing it.³

As you all know, we offer robust continuing legal education. From administrative law to planning and zoning, your educational needs are at the forefront of our work so that you can stay on top of new developments in the law and better serve your clients. At the Connecticut Legal Conference, you can satisfy all your MCLE requirements in a single day while networking with your colleagues. Registration will be available soon so keep your eyes open! Concerned about cost? With your membership, you have access to a full library of on-demand courses for NO ADDITIONAL COST!⁴ You can satisfy all of your CLE requirements just by being a member. Beginning next bar year, the CBA will offer 12 hours of CLE through six complimentary in-person seminars (worth two credits each) that will be scheduled to take place throughout the state.

And did you know that our CLE Tracker records your CBA programs automatically in your member profile? The transcript can be searched, e-mailed, and printed. The

tracker even allows members to add CLE credits earned elsewhere.⁵

Have a fee dispute with a client? Our Resolution of Legal Fee Disputes Program provides a forum for attorneys to resolve fee disputes with their clients through mediation and/or arbitration, rather than litigation. The dispute resolution process is free, informal, and impartial.⁶ The procedures for the program were revamped at the end of last year and it is running better than ever.

I know you are all aware that our profession is not always easy. We work long, intense hours, skip vacations, and have a tendency to place our needs last—including our health and well-being. Under Immediate Past President Karen Demeola, we developed the CBA Lawyer Wellbeing initiative to provide our members with the necessary resources to prioritize and maintain their wellness, in all its dimensions, and to prevent the materialization of serious health problems. In order to most effectively take care of others, you have to be able to take care of yourself!⁷

Did you know that every CBA attorney member has the opportunity to be placed into Find a Lawyer CT? Find a Lawyer CT is a publicly searchable online directory that allows the general public to tap into our network of attorneys and learn more about our members who may be able to assist them.

Need office space? The CBA offers members free and discounted conference rooms and work spaces at the CBA Law Center in New Britain. We can serve as a temporary or remote office while you are in the area or a convenient location for meetings with colleagues or clients.⁸

And of course, all members have access to Casemaker—our comprehensive research library that is free for all CBA members. It includes access to federal and state materials from every state, and is also used by the Judicial Branch.⁹

This only scratches the surface of everything the CBA has to offer you. There are countless discounts available on a variety of services, access to insurance and retirement programs, and other programs de-

signed to help you succeed in your practice. A comprehensive list is available on the CBA website, and we continue to work to enhance the value of your membership. If there is something you need that we are not doing, let me know and we will see what we can do to make it happen! ■

Notes

1. Beginning next year, first-year attorneys will be able to join up to three sections for free throughout the bar year.
2. A list of all of our sections and committees is available at ctbar.org/Sections.
3. A list of all of our current legislative positions is available at https://www.ctbar.org/docs/default-source/legislative-affairs/meeting-agendas/legislative-agenda_2-1-19.pdf?sfvrsn=ba7750_4.
4. You may access the education portal at: ctbar.org/EducationPortal.
5. Access this benefit by clicking “CLE Tracker” in the top right corner of the ctbar.org homepage. You must be logged in to view your CLE history.
6. Learn more about the Resolution of Legal Fee Disputes Program, including its rules, at ctbar.org/FeeDisputes.
7. For more information on attorney well-being, visit cbalawyerwellbeing.com.
8. To take advantage of this benefit and for more information, visit ctbar.org/OfficeSpace.
9. Casemaker can be accessed from the ctbar.org homepage or directly at ctbar.org/casemaker.

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