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AS THE OLD SAYING GOES: TIME FLIES when you are having fun. This year has flown by serving this amazing organization as president. As I joked at last year's legal conference, my primary agenda for this year was not to screw anything up. This is a reflection of the tremendous upward path the Connecticut Bar Association is on. During this journey, we have remained true to our purpose by promoting the public interest through the advancement of justice, aiding our members in the development of their practices, promoting diversity and inclusion, and lobbying our legislature and Congress on matters benefiting the public interest and our members. I am proud to say we continued our upward path this year.

I leave this stewardship as president comfortable that the CBA is in an even better place than when I began my tenure. We are

A Privilege to Serve

By Jonathan M. Shapiro

both taking care of our internal business and serving as an example in the community. While many volunteer organizations, including bar organizations, are struggling with membership, the CBA continues to thrive. Membership remains steady and our finances are strong. On the important business side of things, the CBA refinanced its mortgage on our headquarters at 30 Bank Street in New Britain, with a fully amortized 15-year mortgage. This refinancing will help guarantee financial security for the CBA for years to come.

We remain a forward thinking organization, never resting on our laurels, and trying to find ways to provide more value to our members. I am proud that the Board of Governors approved a measure that will allow first year attorneys the ability to join up to three sections for free when they join the CBA. Our sections are the lifeblood of the organization. This will hopefully help introduce our newest members to the incredible work of the sections and get them actively engaged in the CBA from the outset of their careers.

We are continuing our long-term commitment to making the profession a more diverse and inclusive one. In October 2018, the CBA held its third Diversity and Inclusion Summit: The Collaborative Blueprint. This year's summit was designed to empower attendees by outlining the importance of pipeline initiatives and providing the necessary tools to improve the successful recruitment and retention of diverse talent. In addition, the CBA is continuing its own pipeline initiatives by expanding Law Camp, introduced last summer, to include Hartford and New Britain in addition to New Haven. We cannot make these changes overnight. It is only through our ongoing efforts for many years to come that we will create a profession as diverse and inclusive as our society.

Lawyer well-being also remained on the forefront of our efforts. In addition to providing educational programs to help members address their own well-being, the CBA launched its well-being website, which contains resources to aid our members in taking care of themselves. The Well-Being Task Force also started its well-being video series, which provides a forum for members to share their inspirational stories and help members with similar experiences know that they are not alone.

The CBA continues to address the educational needs of our membership by providing award-winning continuing legal education and resources for our members. While all of our sections and committees did tremendous work, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the outstanding work of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Section and, in particular, Co-chairs Lynda Munro and Bridget Gallagher, and the ADR Section fellow, Jennifer Shukla, in revitalizing the CBA's Resolution of Legal Fee Disputes Program. This program provides our members with an important alternative in resolving fee disputes with clients in an expeditious fashion.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention the work of the Task Force on the Unauthorized Practice of Law that I established. The Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee, with the Standing Committee on Professional Ethics, is created by the CBA Constitution and is charged with investigating issues related to the practice of law by non-lawyers. After the United States Supreme Court ruled in the 2015 case of *North Carolina State Board of Dental Examiners v. Federal Trade Commission* that trade regulation efforts by market members might violate antitrust law, bar leadership put the committee on hiatus status while the law settled out and we were able to see how other states handled the mat-

ter. Our task force examined these issues and determined that the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee should resume its work and continue its efforts to help safeguard the profession and the public from those who would engage in the unauthorized practice of law.

For what I believe is a first for the CBA, we organized a trip to Cuba where members were able to learn about the Cuban legal system, history, and culture.

On the legislative front, the CBA continued its lobbying efforts on a wide variety of issues. However, perhaps no legislative issue was more important to our membership, and our profession, than the proposed tax on legal services introduced by Governor Lamont. We came together as a profession in lobbying against the tax on legal services. In addition to testifying against the proposed tax, the CBA coordinated a joint letter to our legislature, which included over 20 different bar associations, opposing the proposed tax. Due to these coordinated efforts, the sales tax on legal

services was ultimately removed from the governor's budget, which was signed into law on June 26, 2019. We are confident we will prevail on this front.

Finally, in a time when the Rule of Law is under unprecedented attacks in this country, the CBA stood tall in defending it. In collaboration with the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors, the CBA hosted its third Rule of Law Conference and the first such conference since 2012. At this year's conference, we brought together politicians, members of the media, and students to examine the challenges to the Rule of Law, their role in its advancement, and how we can safeguard the Rule of Law for the future. The conference was enlightening, and if you have not done so already, I encourage you to read the January/February 2019 issue of *Connecticut Lawyer*, which contains an article dedicated to the conference. As a result of the Rule of Law Conference, the CBA is establishing a Rule of Law Committee committed to protecting the Rule of Law—a bedrock of our democracy.

I must thank all of you for your support over the year, and your dedication to the bar association. This organization would not be where it is without the energy, enthusiasm, and initiative of our members. A special thank you to my fellow 2018-2019 officers, President-elect Ndidi Moses, Vice President Amy Lin Meyerson, Treasurer Vincent Pace, Secretary Dahlia Grace, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Aidan Welsh, Immediate Past President Karen DeMola, Executive Director Keith Soressi, and the entire CBA staff for their ongoing support and counsel. This is not a job you can do alone.

I look forward to seeing the CBA continue to serve as an example for our membership, the entire bar, and the public in promoting justice. As I look down the line of officers that follow, including incoming President Ndidi Moses, I see we have an incredible team of leaders. I know the best is yet to come.

It has been my privilege and joy to serve, and I thank you all for the opportunity. ■

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