

A Year of Service and Successful Connection

By AMY LIN MEYERSON

I am honored to have served as the first Asian American and 97th president of the Connecticut Bar Association. We have accomplished much together towards advancing our mission of promoting justice and strengthening our profession. It has certainly been a year of unprecedented challenges—the COVID-19 pandemic, great social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd, threats to our democracy at the US Capitol, and overt hate crimes against Asian Americans, to name a few. The CBA met these challenges through perseverance and innovation. With your safety, health, and overall wellbeing in mind, we adapted, shaped a better legal landscape, and made great strides to serve our members and the community.

The 2020-2021 Bar Year

This year's theme was **Connect to Succeed** with the Connecticut Bar Association as we **Championed** our Communities, **Broadened** Our Networks, and **Advanced** Justice together. Thank you for the opportunity to lead the association that is the voice of the Connecticut legal profession, both within the organized bar and with the public. CBA members embraced technology, re-examined the status quo, and collaborated to find creative solutions, despite the year-long lockdown. Today, we are stronger, more connected, and more inclusive than ever.

National Response

We were one of the first bar associations to speak out against troubling current events, to demonstrate the CBA's unwavering commitment to protecting the rule of law, democracy, and our justice

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system. On January 6, 2021, the CBA issued a statement condemning the storming of the US Capitol and the attempts to disrupt democracy. After the Atlanta spa shootings, on March 18, 2021, we denounced acts of violence and against Asian Americans and called for solidarity to support the victims and prevent future incidents. In order to ensure our right to vote in federal and state elections, our members volunteered at polling places across Connecticut in November 2020.

New Rules

The CBA also pursued a very active legislative agenda advocating for several rule changes, including three Practice Book Rule amendments that were approved at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Judges of the Connecticut Superior Court and will go into effect on January 1, 2022:

- 1) Rule 8.4 (Misconduct) of the Connecticut Rules of Professional Conduct adding a provision to the Rule making it professional misconduct for an attorney to engage in discrimination or harassment in the practice of law;
- 2) Rule 5.5 permitting non-practicing

or retired out-of-state licensed attorneys to engage in supervised pro bono services through a legal aid organization, law school, or bar association program; and

3) Rule 1.8(e) allowing a lawyer representing a client pro bono to provide modest gifts to the client to pay for basic living expenses.

Judicial Update

Our judges are the backbone of an independent, fair, effective, and efficient judicial system. It was therefore our privilege to testify before the Connecticut Judicial Compensation Commission in support of fair and appropriate judicial compensation to enable the state to attract and retain qualified, experienced, and diverse lawyers, from every segment of the legal profession, to a career in judicial service.

Pro Bono Works

The *CBA Gives* campaign, newly launched, encourages members to donate time or money to legal and social service programs that align with our mission of advancing the legal profession and principles of law and justice or meet the needs

The Connecticut Bar Association is the preeminent leader in the legal profession in Connecticut and beyond. Our members are connected and have achieved collective and individual success in a diverse, equitable, and inclusive profession in service to society.

– CBA Vision Statement

of Connecticut's most vulnerable residents. The programs include Project Feed Connecticut, The DeMeola Fund, CBA Pro Bono Connect, CBA Lawyers in Libraries, CBA Virtual Pro Bono Legal Clinics, and CT Free Legal Answers.

Professional Development Events

We have a proud reputation for providing high-quality professional development and networking opportunities crucial to equip CBA members with the ideas, information, and resources to serve their clients while staying connected, resilient, and motivated. Using virtual platforms, our speakers offered valuable and relevant content in over 280 continuing legal education programs (CLEs), including the 2020 and 2021 Connecticut Legal Conferences and Celebrate with the Stars; Constance Baker Motley Speaker Series on Racial Inequality; Bankruptcy Series; Federal Tax Institute of New England; Young Lawyers Series; and CLEs presented during meetings of our 70+ sections, committees, and task forces. As a result, the CBA was voted the #1 CLE Provider and #1 CLE Provider—Online by *Connecticut Law Tribune* readers for the fourth straight year!

To better serve our members, we enhanced member benefits in these innovative forums:

- (1) The CBA In-House Counsel Committee provides cost-effective, high-quality, relevant content and resources for general counsel and other in-house attorneys;
- (2) The CBA Solo and Small Firm Resource Center focuses on starting a

practice, growing a practice, and leaving a practice; and

- (3) The new Experienced Lawyers Committee leverages skill sets, accumulated knowledge, and judgment of experienced lawyers to promote the public interest and the legal profession.

Future of the Legal Profession

To create a sustainable pipeline of students from high school to college, law school to law practice, CBA offers budding lawyers programs like Pathways to Legal Careers, CBA Future of the Legal Profession Scholars, L.A.W. Camp, and Civics First Mock Trial competitions. Additionally, we joined the Connecticut Judicial Branch to congratulate candidates who passed the CT bar exams administered in February and October 2020 and to welcome new attorneys admitted to practice law here.

Lawyer Well-Being

For over a year, we have experienced life as shut-ins, still not knowing exactly when we will be able to move about freely without having to consider COVID-19 safety protocols. Let's take our time to ease back in as we establish new routines in the "new normal." Our Lawyer Well-Being Committee has cared for our emotional and mental health, sharing insights and tips in CLE programs, "Be Well" in *The CBA Docket*, articles in the *CT Lawyer*, Well-Being Challenges, and the Well-Being Pledge campaign. We are excited to reopen the CBA offices and bring back in-person events at outside venues. The CBA staff and leadership team stand ready to assist you. Please do not hesitate to reach out.

Final Thoughts

We are truly fortunate to have so many good and special people in our CBA membership, as sponsors, and throughout our legal community, who are dedicated and committed to the Association's causes and the vitality and health of the legal profession and our communities.

Many thanks to CBA leadership on our Executive Committee; Board of Governors; House of Delegates; and Sections, Committees, and Task Forces; members and other volunteers; our partnering entities; and our phenomenal CBA staff.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to members of our CBA family who have contributed to our success for their guidance and friendship, including my fellow officers on the presidential track: President-elect Cecil J. Thomas, Vice President Daniel J. Horgan, and Treasurer and Incoming Vice President Maggie Castinado.

The love, support, patience, and accommodation of my husband, Brandon, and my children, Garrett and Ashley, have made it possible for me to successfully complete my year as CBA president. I am so very thankful for each of you every day. Best wishes to Cecil J. Thomas, our incoming CBA president, who will do a fantastic job leading our association. I look forward to continuing to support the CBA as the Immediate Past President, and in my new roles as a member of the ABA Board of Governors (beginning in August) and co-chair of Governor Lamont's Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council.

Stay safe and be well. ■