

News & Events

CBA Hosts Sixth Annual Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Summit

More than 170 people attended the CBA's sixth annual Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Summit: The Collaborative Blueprint, held on October 20. The interactive and engaging virtual summit explored strategies for increasing retention in legal organizations and creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive legal community within Connecticut.



corporate counsels. The Diversity & Inclusion Pledge & Plan reflects a reaffirmation of the legal profession's commitment to approaching diversity and inclusion strategically, collaboratively, and with accountability.

Neeta M. Vatti, one of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee co-chairs, introduced plenary workshop speaker Dr. Arin N. Reeves. Dr. Reeves's workshop allowed for interactions between participants and focused on solutions and best practices for retention, emphasizing the difference between retention and attrition and how organizations can implement best practices to account for each.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee co-chair, Kean Zimmerman, welcomed the summit's keynote speaker, Dr. Robert Livingston of Harvard University. Dr. Livingston spoke about the PRESS model—Problem Awareness, Root Cause Analysis, Empathy, Strategy, Sacrifice. This model set a foundation for best practices to move beyond biases in organizations and help members become more vocal and active with diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

The summit received positive responses from all attendees and enthusiasm from the speakers. Thank you to the presenters and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Summit Committee members for organizing an interactive and engaging event and to all our sponsors for making the event possible.

CBA president and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee co-chair, Cecil J. Thomas, welcomed participants to the summit. "The work we do here and throughout the year is incredibly vital," stated President Thomas. "It speaks to our professional and personal commitments to advance the ideals and principals that this country was founded upon: equality, equity, and justice. A more equitable and inclusive legal profession is one that increases confidence in our system of justice and the rule of law, so that the law and those of us who are sworn to serve it reflects the diversity of our society and confirms that the law works for all people and not just for some."

Similar to years past, President Thomas presented the data from the Connecticut Legal Community's Diversity & Inclusion Pledge & Plan Signatories, which showed changes in the diversity of signatory organizations. The signatories represent varying legal sectors from solo and small firms to large firms, as well as public/non-profit legal professionals and

DONATION DRIVE HELD DURING 2021 FALL SHRED TRUCK EVENTS



Donations to Connecticut Foodshare provided by attendees of the fall shred trucks events.

This fall, the CBA continued hosting its seasonal shred truck events, where members had the opportunity to bring their files for free, confidential shredding. This season's shred truck events were expanded to include three locations in Fairfield, West Hartford, and New London and were held the first three Wednesdays in November. Young Lawyers Section members and several past and present board officers assisted with the events. Those who registered for the events were encouraged to bring food items and household supplies for donation to Connecticut Foodshare.

In total, 111 CBA members attended the three shred truck events. Attendees provided a variety of donations, including canned and boxed foods, paper towels, and toiletries for those in need. The CBA thanks everyone who attended this fall's shred truck events and generously provided these much-needed donations to the Connecticut community.

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Virtual Pro Bono Clinics held during National Celebration of Pro Bono

On October 26-28, the CBA Pro Bono Committee, in coordination with Statewide Legal Services of CT, hosted a series of Pro Bono Clinics virtually. The clinics took place as part of the National Celebration of Pro Bono, an initiative that shines a spotlight on the amazing pro bono work by lawyers, paralegals, and law students across the country, which occurred from October 24-30.

During the CBA's clinics, 25 attorney volunteers met with and assisted a total of 39 clients over Zoom meetings. Prior to the clinic, 30 volunteer law students completed client intake forms and asked follow-up questions to help the attorneys prepare for the meetings and provide the best possible legal advice.

On the days of the clinic, the volunteer attorneys provided free legal guidance to the clients in the areas of family law, landlord/tenant law, immigration law, tax law, consumer law, bankruptcy,



employee rights/unemployment, and pardons. Four law students sat in on the meetings to learn more about the process of providing pro bono services.

“The legal quagmires facing the neediest of our residents have exponentially increased during the Pandemic,” stated CBA President-elect and Pro Bono Committee Chair Daniel J. Horgan. “These free clinics provide a significant way to assist those in need that face serious challenges, such as looming evictions or increasing debt. The CBA will continue to offer these clinics throughout the bar year, creating more opportunities for access to justice in these difficult times.”

Additional opportunities for participating in pro bono work through the CBA include CBA Pro Bono Connect, CT Free Legal Answers, and Lawyers in Libraries. Learn more at ctbar.org/probono. Thank you to all those who volunteered at this important event that supports the public's access to legal representation.

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FEBRUARY 2022

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
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This free Bar service funded by local members of NADN - see www.NADN.org/about



CBA Releases Policing Task Force Report

The Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) Policing Task Force has released its public report and 23 recommendations, which were unanimously approved by the CBA. The report was released on November 4, ahead of the Constance Baker Motley Speaker Series on Racial Inequality Event, “The CBA Task Force’s Recommendations on Policing in Connecticut.” The 22-member task force is comprised of attorneys and academics with varied practices and work experiences, current and former members of state and federal law enforcement, and a diverse group of community members and activists. The mission of the task force was to bring together a group of informed people with varied backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences in an effort to provide some practical suggestions regarding policing in Connecticut. The task force was created by CBA past president, Judge Ndi Moses, and has been continued under the support and guidance of successive Presidents Amy Lin Meyerson and Cecil J. Thomas.

Since June 2020, the task force met on a weekly basis, attended community listening sessions, and elicited the advice and counsel of the state judiciary, individual police officers, and representatives of police unions. The report documents the work of the task force and the recommendations are the product of respectful but rigorous debate, and informed by legal and other research. The task force partnered with the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force created by the General Assembly (“PTATF”). With the permission of the CBA, draft recommendations were shared with the PTATF to ensure they had the benefit of the work of the CBA Task Force on a timely

basis. A number of the CBA Task Force’s recommendations have been adopted by the legislature.

The task force is chaired by Deirdre M. Daly, the former United States attorney for the District of Connecticut and a partner at Finn Dixon & Herling LLC; Reverend Keith King, senior pastor at Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church and a former federal prosecutor; and Alexis Smith, executive director of New Haven Legal Assistance Association. The task force membership also includes representatives from the affinity bar associations and the NAACP, leaders within the CBA, former and current federal prosecutors, the chief state’s attorney, two police chiefs, and other respected individuals and community activists from throughout the state.

The CBA Policing Task Force was divided into four committees that also met regularly, often weekly, and focused on the following:

1. The Data Collection Committee reviewed in detail approximately 86 incidents since 2001 in which Connecticut police officers and state troopers used deadly force. Relying on the information contained in public investigative reports, the Committee prepared a comprehensive dataset that documents critical facts relating to these incidents. The public sharing of this data is critical to any meaningful assessment of police work. A link to the dataset is included in the Report.

2. The Oversight Committee examined how police departments, local communities, and state governments resolve allegations of systemic and individual instances of police misconduct. They

reviewed internal affairs divisions, civilian review boards, hiring practices, consent decrees, and pattern-or-practice lawsuits; evaluated police department accreditation standards; and surveyed how citizen complaints are recorded across the state.

3. The Moral Recognition Committee focused on the understanding that there is often distrust of the police, with deep historical roots, among African Americans, other people of color, and their communities. Through reconciliation initiatives; diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings; and community conversations, the Committee believes police departments can build more just, equitable, and effective police-community relationships, and address the past and present impacts of structural and systemic inequality.

4. The Reimagining Police Committee examined the appropriate scope of police responsibility, considered calls for deploying alternative responders and related support proposals, and examined relevant police training and policies. The Committee also explored redefining public safety and combating systemic inequality by investing in programs that address the root causes of violence and crime (e.g., lack of employment opportunities, housing, quality education, or health care) by creating economic ecosystems in under-resourced communities.

For more information on the CBA Policing Task Force, including the report and dataset on which it is based, visit ctbar.org/policing-task-force.



CBA CLE Programming

Whether you prefer to attend in-person or from the comfort of home, with the CBA you can access high-quality CLE seminars covering the latest updates in numerous areas of legal practice.

Visit ctbar.org/CLE to learn more.



Save the Date!

Monday, June 13, 2022 | 7:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Connecticut Convention Center | Hartford

Featured National Presenter: Jan Schlichtmann

Environmental Lawyer & Author, Subject of the Film *A Civil Action*

Be a part of the largest annual gathering of legal professionals in Connecticut!

Connect and collaborate with the leaders of our community at networking breakfasts, the annual meeting luncheon, and the President's Reception.

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* Full-day member registrants can earn six CLE credits at the conference, and will receive access to on-demand versions of more than 15 conference seminars for full CLE credit.



President Cecil J. Thomas with fellows in attendance at the event: Paige M. Vaillancourt, Aigné Goldsby, Andres D. Jimenez-Franck, Johnny Ross III, Jeffrey D. Bausch, and Samim Jabarkhail.



CBA President Cecil J. Thomas introduced and congratulated each of the fellows.



CBA Past Presidents Karen DeMeola, Jonathan Shapiro, Hon. Ndidi Moses, and Amy Lin Meyerson (who attended virtually) during their panel discussion.

2021 Presidential Fellows Dinner: Together for a Stronger Profession

On November 18, the Connecticut Bar Association hosted this year's Presidential Fellows Dinner, which featured the theme of "Together for a Stronger Profession," as a hybrid (virtual/in-person) event at Grassy Hills Country Club in Orange.

The 2020-2022 and 2021-2023 CBA Presidential Fellows were individually introduced and congratulated by CBA President Cecil J. Thomas at the start of the event, which served as the launch for this year's fellows programming. The

event also served as a reunion for prior graduates of the Presidential Fellows and allowed members of the CBA Presidential Fellows Committee, as well as leaders of the CBA sponsoring sections, to meet and network with the current fellows.

During his opening remarks, President Thomas highlighted the importance of developing the future leadership of the CBA, noting the importance of bar association involvement and leadership to professional development as well as the strength of the legal profession.

"The CBA Presidential Fellows Program creates an opportunity for all of us gathered here to stand up with and for you tonight," stated President Thomas. "As you grow and develop as future leaders of the bar, you too will stand up with and for others, towards a stronger legal profession for all of us."

A panel discussion held during the evening featured CBA Past Presidents Karen DeMeola, Amy Lin Meyerson, Hon. Ndidi Moses, and Jonathan Shapiro. The panelists each discussed

their path to CBA leadership, the CBA initiatives they helped to launch, and the challenges and emerging trends they faced during their service as CBA officers.

The CBA Presidential Fellows Program was launched in 2015 as a prestigious leadership development program for the future leaders of the Connecticut legal profession. New Presidential Fellows are selected each year and assigned to the executive committee of a sponsoring CBA section. Graduates of the program have gone on to hold prominent leadership positions within the Connecticut Bar Association and the Connecticut legal community at large.

The CBA congratulates all the current Presidential Fellows and looks forward to seeing their development and achievements within the association.

2021-2023 Presidential Fellows

Aigné Goldsby

Goldsby Law PLLC

Andres D. Jimenez-Franck

Pullman & Comley LLC

Thomas Lambert

Pullman & Comley LLC

Yamuna Menon

State of Connecticut—Office of the State Comptroller

Johnny Ross III

State of Connecticut—Connecticut State Division of Criminal Justice

Megan Wade

Sexton & Company LLC

2020-2022 Presidential Fellows

Jeffrey D. Bausch

Udpike Kelly & Spellacy PC

Jenna T. Cutler

Ryan Ryan Deluca LLP

Samim Jabarkhail

Nuzzo & Roberts LLC

Paige M. Vaillancourt

Rescia Law PC

NEW JUDGES APPOINTED TO THE DISTRICT COURT

Hon. Sarah A. L. Merriam

On October 6, the United States Senate confirmed the Honorable Sarah A. L. Merriam as a United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut. President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. signed her commission on October 8, and she was sworn in by the Honorable Stefan R. Underhill, Chief United States District Judge, on October 12. She fills the vacancy created by the Honorable Janet C. Hall, who assumed senior status in January 2021.

Judge Merriam is a 1993 graduate of Georgetown University and a 2000 graduate of Yale Law School. In 2018, she earned her L.L.M. in judicial studies from Duke Law School. Prior to becoming a district judge, she was appointed as a magistrate judge for the District of Connecticut on April 3, 2015, and served over six years in that position, handling both civil and criminal matters. Judge Merriam is the first magistrate judge to be seated as a district judge in the District of Connecticut's history. Prior to serving as a magistrate judge, she served as an assistant federal defender from 2007-2015; as an associate at the law firm of Cowdery, Ecker & Murphy in Hartford; as a law clerk to Judge Thomas Meskill of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals; and as a law clerk to Judge Alvin W. Thompson of the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut.

Hon. Sarala Vidya Nagala

On October 27, the United States Senate confirmed Judge Sarala Vidya Nagala as a United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut. She received her commission from President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. on November 3, and was sworn in that same day by the Honorable Stefan R. Underhill, Chief U.S. District Judge. She fills the vacancy created by Judge Vanessa L. Bryant, who assumed senior status in January 2021.

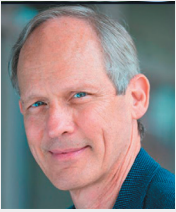
Judge Nagala is a 2005 graduate of Stanford University and a 2008 graduate of the University of California Berkeley School of Law. She began her legal career as a law clerk to the Honorable Susan P. Graber of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Following her clerkship, Judge Nagala was an associate attorney with the law firm of Munger, Tolles & Olson, LLP in San Francisco before joining the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut in 2012. During her tenure with the U.S. Attorney's Office, she prosecuted cases dealing with human trafficking, child exploitation, hate crimes, identity theft, and fraud; served as deputy chief of the Major Crimes Division since 2016; and served as both the human trafficking coordinator and hate crimes coordinator. Judge Nagala was a visiting lecturer in law at Yale Law School from 2017 to 2019, where she taught a prosecution externship course.

Hon. Omar A. Williams

On October 28, the United States Senate confirmed Superior Court Judge Omar A. Williams as a United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut. He received his commission from President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. on November 12, and was sworn in by the Honorable Michael P. Shea, U.S. District Judge, on November 22. He fills the vacancy created by Judge Alvin W. Thompson, who assumed senior status in August 2018.

Judge Williams is a 1998 graduate of the University of Connecticut and a 2002 graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Law. He began his legal career as an assistant public defender for the State of Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services where he served for over 11 years. In 2014, he was nominated by Governor Dannel P. Malloy to serve as a superior court judge and was unanimously confirmed by the Connecticut legislature in January 2015. In this role, Judge Williams presided over housing and criminal matters in the New London judicial district. In 2017, while sitting in the Hartford G.A. court, Judge Williams was appointed by the chief judge administrator as the presiding judge for criminal matters.

IN MEMORIAM



Richard W. Parker passed away at the age of 65 on October 3. He received a BA in Politics from Princeton University and was elected as a Rhodes Scholar. He went on to receive a D. Phil. in Politics from Oxford University and a JD from Yale University. Attorney Parker worked at the Office

of the US Trade Representative, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the law firm of O'Melveny and Myers prior to his appointment in 1995 as professor of law at the University of Connecticut, where he taught and wrote in the fields of environmental law and administrative law. He served as consultant to several national and international organizations, including the European Commission on the

Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership talks, and participated in the work of the American Bar Association, most recently as chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee in the Section on Administrative Law & Regulatory Practice. His areas of expertise included negotiated rulemaking, regulatory cooperation, and the use of trade leverage to advance environmental goals.

PEERS AND CHEERS

Biller Sachs & Robert is pleased to announce that **Brianna Kastukevich Robert** has become a named partner with the firm. Attorney Robert has been with the firm for almost a decade and her primary focus is insurance coverage litigation on behalf of policyholders and representation of victims of serious personal injuries. The firm is also pleased to welcome **Cileena Terra** as an associate. Attorney Terra joined the firm as a law clerk in 2018 while attending law school and joins the firm's insurance coverage and personal injury practice.

Cummings & Lockwood is pleased to announce that **Joseph Cessario** has joined the firm as a principal in its Private Clients Group and Commercial Real Estate Group. Attorney Cessario practices in a residential and commercial real estate and is based in the firm's Stamford office.

Lisa Stefano has been named a partner at the litigation law firm of Gfeller Laurie LLP, based in West Hartford. Attorney Stefano has extensive experience managing insurance coverage, underwriting, and claim and bad faith litigation for insurers.

Kahan Kerensky Capossela LLP, a full-service law firm with offices in Vernon and Storrs, has named **Michael J. Kopsick** as managing partner. Attorney Kopsick has been with the firm for over 31 years and manages the Litigation Department. He focuses on business disputes, debtor/creditor rights, foreclosure, and employment law. Attorney Kopsick takes over the position from Attorney Michael Bars, who will continue to lead the firm's Business & Corporate practices.

Murtha Cullina LLP is pleased to welcome **Alyssa R. Ferreone** and **Julie A. Lavoie** as associates in the firm's Litigation Department. Attorney Ferreone was previously a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Robert J. Devlin, Jr. and the Honorable Melanie L. Cradle at the Connecticut Appellate Court; she is resident in the firm's Stamford office. Attorney Lavoie was previously a judicial

law clerk for the Hartford Superior Court and for the Honorable Eliot D. Prescott at the Connecticut Appellate Court; she is resident in the firm's Hartford office.

Gretchen G. Randall, principal with the law firm of Neubert Pepe & Monteith PC, has been appointed as a member of the New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Inc. (NHLAA) Friends Board of Directors. The NHLAA relies on private donations and grants for support and members of the Friends Board of Directors focus on fundraising for the organization. NHLAA, founded in 1964, offers free, high-quality legal services to those living in poverty and strives to provide equal access to the justice system, enhance the rights and living conditions of their client community, and help their client community protect their own rights.

The law firm of Neubert Pepe & Monteith PC is pleased to welcome **William C. Sherman** as Counsel to the firm. Attorney Sherman practices in the areas of estate planning, trust and estate administration, commercial finance, and real estate law.

Robinson+Cole is pleased to launch its Environmental Law + blog. The latest addition to the firm's network of blogs is dedicated to providing a timely and thoughtful forum for discussion of developments in the environmental, health and safety (EH+S), and energy landscapes. The Environmental Law + blog is produced by Robinson+Cole's Environmental, Energy + Telecommunications Group, one of the largest and most diverse in the Northeast, with Jonathan H. Schaefer serving as editor. Several posts have already been published to the blog covering the areas of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG); environmental compliance and permitting; environmental enforcement; and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliance. Visit environmentallawplus.com to access the blog. ■

PEERS and CHEERS SUBMISSIONS
e-mail editor@ctbar.org