

News & Events

CBA Young Lawyers Section hosts The Current State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Over 60 Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) members gathered at Café Fiore in Cromwell on February 27 for the Young Lawyers Section (YLS) Diversity Dinner, The Current State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The event featured a panel discussion moderated by Cromwell Mayor James Demetriades. Panelists included Sharon Brown, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion partner at Barclay Damon, and State Representative Jack Fazzino of Connecticut's District 83. The discussion explored the challenges of navigating DEI programs and initiatives, particularly in light of new executive orders from the U.S. government.

The evening began with CBA LGBT Section Chair and YLS Executive Committee Diversity Director Jenna Cutler introducing the panel. Mayor Demetriades opened the discussion by asking each panelist to define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Representative Fazzino explained, "People think that D, E, and I are all the same thing. I see them as three very different things for a common goal that's rooted in fairness and making sure the very best people are doing the jobs they should be doing." Attorney Brown expanded on this idea, emphasizing that diversity means "acknowledging and valuing the difference among different people," while equity involves "meeting people where they are and giving them the tools they need to succeed." She further highlighted the importance of inclusion, stating that it's about ensuring people not only feel included



(L to R) YLS Secretary Jermaine A. Brookshire, Jr.; YLS Chair Vianca T. Malick; YLS Chair-elect Paige Vaillancourt; and YLS ABA District Representative Alison J. Toumekian

but also have a true sense of belonging.

As the panel discussion continued, Mayor Demetriades asked Attorney Brown about the impact of the November presidential election on DEI efforts. Attorney Brown shared that, even before the election, her firm had discussed the legality of DEI initiatives following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to bar the use of affirmative action in college admissions. She clarified that DEI initiatives were not illegal before the ruling, nor are they now. She further noted that law firms are currently in a period of uncertainty as they await further clarification on how the current administration's executive orders will be enforced.

Representative Fazzino addressed how the Connecticut State Legislature is responding to recent federal executive orders, explaining that efforts are underway to use state funds to cover some of the losses in federal funding for nonprofits focused on racial and LGBTQ+ justice issues. The panelists and moderator also encouraged attendees to support DEI initiatives by getting involved in local government boards and committees. Mayor Demetriades emphasized, "Your voice is your impact."

Following the discussion, the panelists took questions and comments from attendees, with several CBA members expressing support for using their voices to advocate in defense of DEI at local and state levels. ■



(L to R) Sharon Brown and State Representative Jack Fazzino



(L to R) State Representative Jack Fazzino, Sharon Brown, Mayor James Demetriades



CBA Leaders, the presenters, and event attendees gathered for a photo following the dinner.

Governor Lamont Announces Numerous Judicial Nominations, Including Eleven CBA Members

On January 27, Governor Ned Lamont announced several Connecticut judicial nominations, including Connecticut Appellate Court Chief Judge William H. Bright, Jr. for the vacant associate justice seat on the Connecticut Supreme Court and Connecticut Superior Court Judge Robin L. Wilson for a seat on the Connecticut Appellate Court.

Chief Judge Bright has served on the appellate court since 2017 and as its chief judge since 2020. Prior to his appointment to the appellate court, he served as the chief administrative judge for the Civil Division and as the administrative and presiding judge for the Tolland/Rockville Judicial District. Before being appointed as a judge, he served as the managing partner of McCarter & English's Hartford law office and was a shareholder and board member of Cummings & Lockwood LLC.

Judge Wilson is currently assigned to the Waterbury Complex Litigation Docket. She previously served in the Civil Division of the New Haven Judicial District. Prior to being appointed to the superior court, she served as an administrative law judge on the Workers' Compensation Commission and was an assistant attorney general in the Connecticut Office of the Attorney General.

Seven of Governor Lamont's 13 superior court nominations, made on January 27 to fill vacancies in the Connecticut Superior Court Bench, are current CBA members.

Tracie C. Brown is the chief operating officer for the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. She previously served as the assistant legal director for the Connecticut Department of Correction and as a principal attorney and commission counsel for the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission.

Michael C. D'Agostino is a partner at Morgan Lewis and Bockius's Hartford office and previously served the 91st Assembly District of Hamden in the Connecticut House of Representatives. He is a member of the CBA Federal Practice Section.

Diana M. Gomez is an assistant public defender in the Ansonia-Milford Judicial District, specializing in criminal defense of indigent defendants. She has worked in the Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services for the past eleven years. She is a member of the CBA Criminal Justice Section.

Kevin C. Kelly is the owner of Kevin Kelly and Associates in Stratford, where his practice focuses on elder law, estate planning, probate administration and litigation, and municipal law.

He previously worked in the Connecticut Department of Social Services and represented Connecticut's 21st Senatorial District in the Connecticut State Senate.

Kevin C. Shea is a partner with Clendenen and Shea LLC in New Haven. He has practiced at the firm for the past 24 years, engaging in a broad range of civil litigation. Attorney Shea is a member of the CBA Federal Practice Section.

Latonia C. Williams is a partner at Shipman and Goodwin LLC, where she practices within a range of commercial litigation matters in state and federal courts. She also serves on the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Client Security Fund Committee, the board of directors for Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, Inc., and as her firm's hiring chair. She is a member of the CBA Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section.

Yonatan Zamir is a staff attorney at New Haven Legal Assistance Association, where he focuses on housing law and eviction prevention. He also co-teaches the Reentry Clinic at Yale Law School, supervising students in serving clients facing barriers to reentry in areas such as housing and employment, as well as in assisting those clients' seeking pardons or criminal conviction erasure. He is a member of the CBA Consumer Law Section.

Benedict R. Daigle was nominated by the governor to the position of family support magistrate. Attorney Daigle serves as an assistant public defender, legislative/family magistrate for the Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services. He previously held roles with the City of Hartford, the Connecticut Association for Community Action, and other government and nonprofit entities. He holds several roles within the CBA, including as a member of the Board of Governors and House of Delegates; co-chair of the Legal Aid and Public Defense Committee; and a member of the Government and Public Sector Committee, Standing Committee on Professional Ethics, and the Family Law Section.

Governor Lamont also nominated three Connecticut Bar Association members to positions as workers' compensation administrative law judges

Michael L. Anderson is a trial lawyer with Anderson Trial Lawyers in Norwich, where he represents injured workers in the Workers' Compensation Commission and those seriously injured due to the negligence of others. He currently serves as chairman of the

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Upcoming Education Calendar

Register at ctbar.org/CLE

APRIL

- 1** Recent Developments in IP Law
- 3** Enhancing Financial Security: Best Practices for Attorneys
- 11** Ethical Considerations in Residential Real Estate Closings ♦
- 15** Commercial Law and Bankruptcy
- 17** Financial Wellness for Lawyers
- 22** FOIA: The Law and Making a Request
- 23** HR Law Basics for Solo and Small Firms

30 Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) for Lawyers: Building Calm, Clarity, Resilience, and Pleasure in Our Legal Practice

30 State of Affairs in Immigration: Truths, Updates, and Resources

MAY

- 1** Effective Advocacy and Management in Arbitration: Managing a Successful Arbitration for Litigators ♦
- 2** More Effective Writing Makes More Effective Lawyerst
- 6** Elder Law

7 Succession Planning: The Path Out ♦

8 Advanced Residential Real Estate Closings

18 2025 Workers' Compensation Retreat ♦

JUNE

13 2025 Connecticut Legal Conference

♦ *Ethics credit available*

CLE PASS ELIGIBLE: For more information about the CLE Pass, visit ctbar.org/CLEPass.



CBA Members, Family, and Friends

SUMMER OUTING

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, June 22 | Holiday Hill, Prospect, CT

Join the Connecticut Bar Association for a fun-filled outing with family and friends! Enjoy a day of relaxation, great company, and exciting activities.

Learn more at ctbar.org/SummerOuting.



President's Message *Continued from page 5*

some would say that hampers the ability of the third branch of government to flex the muscle that the Constitution gives it. Is there a role for the bar to play in helping the Branch defend its independence by taking those decisions and perhaps adding the "editorialization" the court has not done? Absolutely. In my view, I think that is one of the roles of the bar. They can and have an ability to speak in a way that we do not, and I think the bar is viewed by the public as, I won't say aligned with judges, but as part of that club, that system. Lawyers understand what decisions say and what they do not say in a way that sometimes journalists reporting on a case or a lay person reading it does not understand. So, I may read a story about a case, and say, "Let me see what hap-

pened there," and then conclude that is not quite what happened. Lawyers have the ability to set the record straight and, in a sense, advocate. I think that does strengthen or help strengthen the rule of law because lawyers are a party of upholding the rule of law.

How do you unwind? It used to be golf, but I do not find much time to do that anymore. My youngest son is ten years old, and he just discovered basketball. So, if we are not playing outdoors when the weather permits, we are playing Nerf basketball in the house. I also played soccer in college, have coached my daughter's team, and enjoy playing with her. Between the two of them and the rest of my family, I stay pretty busy and enjoy every minute of it. ■

Wellness *Continued from page 31*

To register and view the full event schedule, go to ctbar.org/Well-BeingSummit.

A Call to Action for the Legal Community

The legal field has long emphasized success, productivity, and client service, often at the expense of personal well-being. However, studies show that lawyers who prioritize their mental and physical health perform better in their roles, demonstrate improved decision-making abilities, and experience greater job satisfaction. Additionally, firms and organizations that invest in well-being initiatives benefit from increased retention, higher morale, and enhanced workplace culture.

The CBA encourages all legal professionals to take proactive steps toward their own wellness, recognizing that a balanced, healthy lawyer is an asset to clients, colleagues, and the justice system as a whole. This summit provides a crucial opportunity to learn strat-

egies for reducing stress, fostering resilience, and achieving a fulfilling career in law without sacrificing well-being.

Join us in prioritizing well-being and celebrating a healthier, more balanced legal community! ■



Joan Reed Wilson is the managing partner of RWC, LLC, Attorneys and Counselors at Law, where she practices estate planning, elder law, probate, and real estate closings. She holds a Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology from Penn and is a Certified Adult Chair® Coach.



Sara Bonaiuto is an associate at Shipman & Goodwin LLP, where she is a member of the firm's Commercial Finance and Business and Corporate practice groups and the Cannabis Industry Team. Her practice is focused on assisting businesses and individuals with equity and debt financings, term and revolving credit facilities, entity formations, mergers and acquisitions, construction financing, real estate joint ventures and general contract matters.

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Town of North Stonington Board of Finance. He is a member of the CBA Workers' Compensation Section.

Christine M. Conley is an attorney with McGann Bartlett and Brown LLC, where she represents employers and municipalities in defending work-related injuries. She previously served the 40th Assembly District of Groton and New London in the Connecticut House of Representatives. She is a Connecticut board certified workers' compensation specialist and a member of the CBA Workers' Compensation Section.

Colette Griffin is a partner with Strunk Dodge Aiken Zovas LLC and serves on the workers' compensation legal advisory and medical advisory committees. She is a member and past chair of both the CBA Workers' Compensation and Animal Law Sections and is also a member of the Women in the Law Section.

Governor Lamont also nominated attorneys David G. Bothwell, Jesse Giddings, Donald R. Green, Kaitlin A. Halloran, Angeline Ioannou, and Daniel Shapiro to the Connecticut superior court as well as Attorney LeAnn Neal for the position of family support magistrate.

CLASSIFIEDS

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