

Planning for Our Future:

An Update on the LSBA Strategic Plan



Louisiana
State Bar
Association

Serving the Public. Serving the Profession.

By Robert A. Kutcher
2019-2020 President
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In 2019, the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Board of Governors, under the leadership of then-President Barry H. Grodsky, adopted a Strategic Plan for the LSBA. Six goals were established.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the adoption of the plan, I would like to share some highlights of what we have accomplished. There is still work to be done, but we have made good progress.

Goal 1: The LSBA preserves self-regulation and self-governance through our mandatory Bar in service to the public and the profession.

The Bar serves both the public and the profession, and our self-regulation is important. Over the course of the year, we have fully integrated the MCLE Department and we continue to coordinate the Legal Specialization Program. We have more than 400 lawyers who have qualified as specialists. We also continue to offer our Practice Assistance, Fee Arbitration and Client Assistance programs. If you are unfamiliar with any of these programs, I urge you to visit our website, www.lsba.org. These programs provide a valuable service to our members and the public.

Our statewide Mentoring Program (including a mentoring program for two- to seven-year lawyers) and our Spot Mentoring Program have gained momentum. In a time when there are more and more lawyers hanging out a shingle, the mentoring programs can be of valuable help.

Also over the past year, the LSBA has implemented a receivership program, established to assist in the event of a lawyer's death or disability. It is important to remember that a large proportion of our members are solo practitioners with no one to handle their practices in the event of catastrophe. This program provides help to both the impacted lawyer's family and his/her clients.

Goal 2: The LSBA cultivates professionalism, collegiality and quality of life among its members to

improve the quality of practice and respect for the profession.

In furtherance of our efforts to cultivate professionalism, collegiality and quality of life, we offer CLEs dedicated to the revised Code of Professionalism. Every issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* has dedicated sections to cover these topics. Among other activities, we continue to support the SOLACE Program, under the leadership of Judge Jay C. Zainey, as well as our Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (JLAP).

In an effort to instill professionalism at the earliest possible time, we also conduct programming at the law schools starting on the first day of class, and we continue to visit the law schools in years two and three. The law schools are our future, and professionalism is the foundation of our profession.

Goal 3: The LSBA helps foster inclusion and participation by the diversity of its members and works to satisfy the unique needs of all members.

Consistent with our professional obligations, it is incumbent for each of us to make the law an inclusive environment. We encourage diversity on our committees and in our sections. The LSBA is an annual sponsor of the Conclave on Diversity in the Legal Profession. In order to promote future leadership, former LSBA President Larry Feldman established the Leadership LSBA Program. This year's Leadership LSBA Class consists of 15 young lawyers from around the state. We seek to educate young lawyers who want to get involved in the Bar and to cultivate the future leadership of our organization.

Our Member Outreach and Diversity Department continues to connect our Bar with local and specialty Bars to encourage the broadest possible participation. We encourage our Board members to engage with their local communities. We strive to have our leadership look like our membership in all respects.

Goal 4: The LSBA expands access to justice.

Access to justice is critical to our mission and our society. There are far too many of our fellow citizens who cannot afford even the most basic legal services. It is our job to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Justice is not a spectator sport and we should not be on the sidelines.

This year, through the efforts of our Access to Justice Commission, we were able to secure \$500,000 in state civil legal aid funding for the first time in a decade. Our thanks especially go to State Senators Beth Mizell, Franklin Foil, Eric LaFleur and Cameron Henry for their efforts.

ABA Day in Washington, D.C., was also a success. Through our efforts, and the efforts of many other Bar Associations from around the country last year, Congress approved national legal aid funding in the amount of \$593,000,000, which represents a significant increase over prior years. While the amount allocated is, in adjusted dollars, lower than it was in the Reagan years, this is still a major victory in today's environment. Our ABA Day is coming once again this year in April, and we hope to exceed that appropriation.

Closer to home, our Modest Means Program, established to address the legal needs of modest means clients and to match them with lawyers performing legal work at reduced rates, is continuing to grow. If this program or our Legal Innovators for Tomorrow (LIFT) Program is of interest to you, I invite you to go to our website and sign up. These programs are the quintessential "win-win."

The Building Bridges Committee has worked in coordination with the Departments of Corrections and Motor Vehicles to make it easier for people released from incarceration to have legal representation for everyday tasks such as obtaining a driver's license. Navigating the legal challenges can be daunting and, without a driver's license, obtaining employment can be difficult. Volunteer if you are able. There are so many ways to help.

Goal 5: The LSBA improves public trust and confidence in the legal system and its participating judges and lawyers.

Public trust and confidence are critical to our ability to not only do our jobs but to give back to our communities. Once again this year, we conducted our Lawyers in Libraries Program. Through the efforts of our member volunteers, we had lawyers in every parish library that invited us. Many of us, with our laptops, iPhones and iPads, do not realize that, in this computer-dependent world, some parts of our population do not have computers, and their only access to the Internet is in the public library. Our goal in this program is to provide free legal advice to those of our citizens who need it the most. We had more than 100 volunteers for more than 120 events throughout the state. Join us this coming October to give back to your communities.

Our Secret Santa Project, coordinated in conjunction with the Louisiana Bar Foundation, made the holidays more enjoyable for more than 800 children. Consider participating this December.

In a further effort to encourage pro bono participation, at the recent LSBA Midyear Meeting, the House of Delegates approved emeritus status for lawyers. This allows lawyers over age 50 who have been practicing for more than 10 years and who no longer want to practice law full-time to elect emeritus status and reduce his/her annual dues by 50 percent. This emeritus status will allow a lawyer to continue to do pro bono work while reducing the cost of dues.

In conjunction with Just The

Beginning Foundation and the Louisiana Bar Foundation, we also conduct our Suit Up for the Future Program, chaired by U.S. Magistrate Judge Karen Wells Roby. The three-week program is designed to give high school students an idea of what the practice of law is all about. We also continue to support and partner with the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education which promotes the practical understanding of and respect for the law. These are just a few of the programs designed to foster trust and confidence in our legal system.

Goal 6: The LSBA has the financial governance and organizational capacity to serve its vision.

It is no secret that mandatory State Bars, like ours, have been the subject of lawsuits alleging violations of freedom of speech and freedom of association. There are currently pending suits in Texas, Michigan, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Oregon, as well as here in Louisiana. In Louisiana, the Bar and the individual members of the Louisiana Supreme Court were sued by one of our members. In January, U.S. District Judge Lance Africk dismissed that lawsuit. As expected, the plaintiff has appealed that dismissal.

We will, of course, vigorously defend the Louisiana suit and monitor the other state actions. We will also continue to ensure that our association continues to comply with the prevailing law.

Over the past year, our membership has voted to require that any new House of Delegates policy be adopted in excess of 75 percent, and, in January,

your House of Delegates adopted new guidelines for any new House of Delegates policy. The Bar will continue to have a direct role in matters impacting the practice of law.

It's Your Bar: Be Part of It!

We are a long way from accomplishing our goals, but we have, through the efforts of our Board and staff, gotten that much closer to achieving and implementing our plan for the future. I urge each of you to get involved in your Bar Association. We strive to have something for everyone. Be part of the experience. It's good for you and for your community. For information on any of our programs, visit our website, www.lsba.org. It's all there. This is your Bar Association. Be a part of it.

Robert A. Kutcher is the 2019-20 president of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). He is the managing partner in the Metairie firm of Kutcher Tygier & Luminais, L.L.P. He received his BS degree in 1972 from Cornell University and his JD degree, cum laude, in 1975 from Loyola University Law School. He served as LSBA president-elect in 2018-19 and as LSBA treasurer in 2014-16. He also has served in the House of Delegates and on the House Liaison Committee, the Legislation Committee, the Committee on the Profession, the Louisiana Bar Journal Editorial Board, the Summer School Planning Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Rules of Professional Conduct Committee and the Audit Committee. (rkutcher@nolacounsel.com; Ste. 900, Two Lakeway Center, 3850 N. Causeway Blvd., Metairie, LA 70002)



LSBA Member Services

The mission of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) is to assist and serve its members in the practice of law. The LSBA offers many worthwhile programs and services designed to complement your career, the legal profession and the community.



In the past several years, the legal profession has experienced many changes. The LSBA has kept up with those changes by maturing in structure and stature and becoming more diverse and competitive.

For more information,
visit www.lsba.org