



New Orleans Attorney Judy Perry Martinez Installed as 2019-20 American Bar Association President

Judy Perry Martinez, of counsel with the law firm of Simon, Peragine, Smith & Redfean, L.L.P., in New Orleans, was installed as the 2019-20 president of the American Bar Association (ABA) at the conclusion of the ABA Annual Meeting in San Francisco in August. Her one-year term will end in August 2020.

“The American Bar Association will continue to stand up for an independent judiciary and bolster the integrity of our democratic institutions, especially those that depend on due process, equality, civility, respect and fairness,” Martinez said. “As lawyers, advancing the rule of law, which protects everyone’s liberties, is of paramount importance. The ABA also will work to increase public awareness, so more people understand the vital role they can play in protecting democracy. Working together, we can ensure that laws are fair and justly enforced, and our rights are never taken for granted.”

Martinez returned to Simon Peragine in 2015, previously serving the firm from 1982-2003 as a partner, member of its Governing Committee and commercial litigator. In 2003, she joined Northrop Grumman as assistant general counsel for litigation, managing litigation for the western half of the country before becoming vice president and chief compliance officer there in 2011. She retired from Northrop in 2015 to become a fellow in

residence for one year at the Advanced Leadership Initiative at Harvard and then returned to New Orleans.

For more than 30 years, Martinez held various leadership positions at the ABA. From 2014-16, she chaired the ABA Presidential Commission on the Future of Legal Services. She also was a member of the ABA Task Force on Building Public Trust in the American Justice System. In 2011, she was appointed chair of the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary, which evaluates all prospective nominees to the federal bench. She has served as the ABA lead representative to the United Nations and as a member of the ABA Board of Governors and its Executive Committee. She previously served as chair of the ABA Young Lawyers Division, a member of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession and chair of the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence. She has been a member of the ABA House of Delegates since 1991. She has served as a member of the ABA Task Force on Attorney-Client Privilege, the Council of the ABA Center for Racial and Ethnic Diversity and the ABA’s World Justice Project Committee.

Outside of her work with the ABA, Martinez, along with other members of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), established the New Orleans Pro Bono Project and served as its first chair in the early 1980s. Additionally, she

served as chair of the New Orleans Bar Association’s Young Lawyers Section. She chaired the LSBA’s Committee on Minority Involvement in its inaugural year (1989) and chaired the LSBA’s Professionalism and Quality of Life Committee and the Post-Conviction Death Penalty Representation Committee.

She is a member of the board of directors of the American Bar Foundation, a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and the Louisiana Bar Foundation, and a member of the American Law Institute.

Martinez is the recipient of numerous awards. In 2017, she received the LSBA’s David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award and the New Orleans Bar Association’s Presidents’ Award. In 2012, she received the Camille Gravel Pro Bono Public Service Award from the New Orleans Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. She is a past recipient of the Sam Dalton Capital Defense Advocacy Award from the Louisiana Association of Criminal Defense Counsel (1997), the Michelle Pitard Wynne Professionalism Award from the Association of Women Attorneys (1998) and the Alliance for Justice Award from the National Gay and Lesbian Law Association (1999).

She earned her BS degree from the University of New Orleans and graduated from Tulane University Law School, with honors, in 1982.

Judy Perry Martinez. Photo courtesy of Media Relations, American Bar Association.

Remarks by ABA President Judy Perry Martinez ABA Annual Meeting August 12, 2019

Thank you, Chief Justice Johnson. Your presence here means so much to me and is truly an honor for the American Bar Association.

President Carlson, you amplified the Association's voice on the independence of the judiciary, the essential role of lawyers and judges across the globe, and the fair and just treatment of those seeking safety and the hope of a new life within our borders. You made us stronger through your heartfelt insistence that we sound the trumpets for lawyer and law student well-being. You made the ABA better by working closely with our executive director, staff and volunteer leadership on a vast range of Association operations, including our strategy to increase and sustain membership. We are forever grateful. Thank you, Bob.

Our many Association past presidents who have served with distinction continue to be a source of great knowledge and influence for our profession. In fact, 19 past presidents recently gathered by phone at my invitation so that we could update them on the ABA and call on them to work with us in the coming year as we build on their prior work. Please join me as we show our appreciation to our former presidents for their prior and continued service to the Association and our profession.

As we look back to strengthen the present, we also look forward. We are fortunate to have President-Elect Trish Refo on our team. She will be outstanding. Along with our other officers and the Board of Governors working closely with our professional staff led by Jack Rives and with all ABA entities, we will not only promote our four goals — to serve our members, improve our profession, eliminate bias and enhance diversity, and advance the rule of law — we pledge to do so strategically, with a seamless transition of leadership, year after year.

Two weeks ago, Rene and I celebrated our 40th anniversary. He has supported my bar work, my pro bono and my professional career, always with a nudge that I need to give back more. He has provided our four children and their loved ones, our many nieces and nephews, my treasured three brothers and sisters-in-law, the finest example of what enduring love and support means. I am grateful for them and also to have had such a powerfully enabling law firm, Simon Peragine, Smith & Redfearn, and employer, Northrop Grumman Corporation. It means so much to me that my family, dear friends from New Orleans and beyond, and so many of my current and former colleagues have gathered here.

Many years ago, I had the privilege of speaking on behalf of the New Orleans Bar Association at a Naturalization Ceremony at the federal courthouse.

That November day was meaningful to me, in part, because Rene is a naturalized citizen. As a 2-year-old in 1958, he came with his parents to America from Algeria. The reverence with which Rene and my in-laws have spoken about the blessing and privilege of U.S. citizenship awakened me to my own obligation not to take for granted rights and responsibilities I had done nothing to achieve but must do everything to fulfill.

The courtroom where the ceremony took place was filled with soon-to-be new Americans beaming with pride. Many were holding tiny American flags. One, who later introduced himself to me as Obin, was from Laos. More than 17 years earlier, his parents had fled violence and poverty and secured safe passage out of the country for their family. Now, he was a practicing CPA at a major accounting firm.

I asked Obin what he planned to do for his first Thanksgiving as an American. He said he didn't know because he had not celebrated Thanksgiving before. Without hesitation, he accepted my invitation to join our extended family, including Rene's family, at my parents' home. That tradition of inviting those who don't have a place to go has continued for many years in our family — our daughter, Carson, hosted her first Thanksgiving last year in D.C. and invited 10 foreign students to her table.

Just as the exchange of stories, ideas, hopes and dreams at the same table with those of different backgrounds, perspectives and cultures makes our lives richer, the gathering of people from different lands makes our nation stronger. We make room not because we must, but because we can. When they have no place to go because of war, repression or fear



Judy Perry Martinez leads in the Louisiana Delegation to the ABA House of Delegates. Photo courtesy of Media Relations, American Bar Association.



The Louisiana delegation. Back row: Graham H. Ryan, John H. Musser IV, Barry H. Grodsky, Michael W. McKay, Richard K. Leefe, Darrel J. Papillion and Hon. Raymond S. Steib, Jr. Middle row: Ashley L. Belleau, Jeanne C. Comeaux, Jan M. Hayden and David F. Bienvenu. Front row seated: Frank X. Neuner, Jr., Hon. Bernette Joshua Johnson, Judy Perry Martinez and Robert A. Kutcher. Photo courtesy of Media Relations, American Bar Association.

of safety, we bring them home. And our family, our America, welcomes them.

Our Constitution demands, and our laws confirm, that we afford due process rights to immigrants and asylum-seekers who are in or are seeking entry into the United States.

That is the key reason why the ABA is so fiercely committed to due process for asylum-seekers and other immigrants at our border. Moreover, as this House has confirmed, our sense of decency owed to fellow human beings and our American values compel us to insist on “safe and sanitary conditions” and more, for children and all detainees, and against separation of families.

Our commitment is a lasting one, as borne out by the 30th anniversary this fall of the ABA Commission on Immigration’s Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project in South Texas, known as ProBAR. I was honored to join President Carlson there for a week a year ago to do pro bono service, and I look forward to a similar show of support in the coming weeks when President-Elect Refo joins me. We are proud not only of ProBAR but also our Immigration Justice Project in San Diego and our Children’s Immigration Law Academy in Houston. And we value our coordination of lawyer volunteers by

the Commission on Immigration and the Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, with support from the American Bar Endowment.

Our commitment is deepened by so many of you and other lawyers who are stepping up with these projects and in your local communities. Just recently, a member of this House put me in contact with a law student who had an older sibling facing possible deportation. Through the work of a pro bono immigration practitioner who is a colleague of yet another member of this House, the family obtained legal assistance, and steps are being taken toward a likely positive outcome.

Lawyers know no strangers. We are taught to reach deep within ourselves to do the best we can to help those in need, whether the client can pay our posted fees and sometimes even when they can only say “thank you.”

Lawyers are instilled with the understanding that somehow, some way, we must make room at the table of justice. And we can best do so by collaborating with one another and seeing our mission and purpose as a unified pursuit. The ABA’s four goals are listed as separate and distinct, yet they are, in fact, intertwined. We serve our members as we

improve and advocate for our profession. We improve our profession as we work to eliminate bias and enhance diversity. Our focus on diversity is essential to promoting the rule of law by making our profession more responsive to our clients and opening our eyes to, and driving strategies to overcome, systemic injustice. And by promoting the rule of law, we provide a vital benefit to our members who see the legal profession as a calling and share our passion for justice and liberty.

Lawyers want to be the best at their profession they can be, and they expect support from the world’s premier association of lawyers. The ABA is energized by the work of our volunteer leadership and staff to introduce membership to more lawyers, make it easier to join and renew, bring them more educational programs tailored to their needs, and offer opportunities for connection, involvement and leadership. Our newly appointed ABA state membership chairs will further these efforts by deploying to actively recruit and retain members. I will continue to visit law schools, at every opportunity, to foster a deep sense of belonging among law students and faculty in the ABA community. We all know that being an ABA member has enriched our professional lives and is an essential



Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson administered the oath of office for the ABA presidency to Judy Perry Martinez. Photo courtesy of Media Relations, American Bar Association.

of good lawyering. Each of us needs to share that experience far and wide.

A foundation of good lawyering is a deep belief in the rule of law. Our members want the most powerful and influential association that represents their profession to be champions of justice, protectors of democracy, and advocates for the rule of law, at home and abroad.

We will continue to speak out to protect the judiciary from unwarranted and personal attacks. We will raise our voices in unison on the necessity of an independent judiciary to the health of our democracy.

We stand for the rule of law as we leverage our voice with other national organizations to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote and launched the largest expansion of democracy in our country's history. My thanks

go to the Hon. Margaret McKeown, who is serving as chair of the ABA's centennial effort. This historic milestone offers unparalleled opportunities throughout the year for our members to engage in civics education, explore the issues of voting rights and equal rights today, and encourage voting in elections at all levels.

Again and again, we hear from our colleagues that, at the heart of our national challenges, is the imperative for civics education and greater public knowledge about the rule of law. This fall, we will launch an engaging social media campaign on the rule of law in our democracy. Our campaign will leverage the communication power of groups throughout the ABA and beyond, including bar associations represented in this House, to reach people we have not typically reached in the past.

Civics rests on civility, an essential



tool of our trade as lawyers that is so desperately needed in the public square. I call on each of you, individually, as citizen-lawyers sworn to ethics and professionalism, to stand up for civility and respect, and speak out against bigotry and hatred. Each of us must do our part to insist that our public discourse be better.

The preamble of our Constitution contains three words that may lay forth the greatest imperative our nation owes the individuals and families of today: "Insure Domestic Tranquility." If those words are to have purpose and meaning



The ABA presidency gavel is passed to new ABA president Judy Perry Martinez. Photo courtesy of Media Relations, American Bar Association.

today — if we are to be safe in our homes, our schools, our workplaces, our houses of worship and our public spaces — our policymakers must take specific actions that will make mass shootings a historical, not ongoing, tragedy. We must put an end to gun violence — whether handgun violence in our cities and towns or civilian use of military-grade weapons for mass murder.

This body has given our policymakers a roadmap to make that happen through more than 20 specific policies on gun safety adopted by this House over the last 50 years. This House has spoken, and I pledge to you we will act on that authority. It is time to end the repeated destruction of innocent lives.

We have another imperative that is rooted in our Association’s goals and the quest for justice — and that is to understand the breadth and depth of the racial divides that continue to plague our profession and our country. We need to build bridges and seek insights from other professions that similarly struggle with a lack of diversity, but somehow outpace the legal profession’s lagging opportunities for minorities. Working together across professions, we must explore our failures and share our successes so that once and for all the needs of the public in our respective fields are met because all available talent is there to meet their needs.

We will continue to champion gender parity and women’s rights, and welcome our LGBTQ+ colleagues. We will pay needed attention to the challenges faced

by our colleagues and law students with disabilities, focusing on delivering information and tools for law school career advisers and law firm recruiters guiding how they can be more fully inclusive.

This past spring, when the presidents-elect of the national bars of color met at the ABA as they do annually, for the first time ever, leaders of the Disability Rights Bar Association and the National LGBT Bar Association were both at the table, and we all felt the incredible difference their presence made. I urge you to similarly invite them to your table.

We will commit to “No Ladders Up” until each and every person who sees themselves as having the potential to contribute to our profession and to the greater good through the practice of law has no doubt that the profession can be theirs through hard work, competency, discipline and integrity.

We must not be an insular profession, removed from the people we serve. We are a people’s profession that is at its best defending liberty and pursuing justice when we listen to what consumers of justice need. We must continue to actively listen as the profession and beyond explores, examines and tests innovations in both technology and our regulatory framework, through our state supreme courts, state bar associations and affiliated organizations. Our purpose in these explorations and examinations is not to protect lawyers or our livelihoods. Our purpose is to provide access to justice.

Our support for legal aid and pro bono is a signature collaboration between the

ABA and state and local bar associations. Through your leadership back home, once again this October for the National Celebration of Pro Bono, the ABA will boost individual, law firm, law department and bar association efforts to bring pro bono front and center. Our theme this year is service for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Please encourage your colleagues to participate in this effort of lawyers across our country to advocate for people who need us, and literally, protect and save lives.

In the coming year, we will celebrate another important centennial, the 100th anniversary of our Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants.

As we do so, we will leave no room for doubt that the ABA means business when it comes to closing the justice gap. We will stand with the Legal Services Corporation before Congress. We will help state and local bars secure more funding for legal aid and court systems. And we will not say no to innovations simply because that is not the way we, the lawyers and the courts, have always done it; at each and every turn, we will have the public we serve at the forefront of our minds.

Our colleagues and our country, and, indeed, the world, look to us to lead with knowledge of the law and respect for the principles on which our nation was founded. Our finest moments and most enduring contributions have been when we have used our voice and resources for causes about which we can act with authority, and which we can influence with impact. As lawyers, we know equality. We know liberty. And we know justice.

Together, we will honor the words of abolitionist and women’s suffrage leader Lucy Stone who said, “Now all we need is to continue to speak the truth fearlessly, and we shall add to our number, those who will turn the scale to the side of equal and full justice in all things.”

I am honored and humbled to be your president. Thank you for your support as we work together.