



By Richard K. Leefe

Participate in the LSBA and Be a Part of the Solution

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that I have accepted the responsibilities and obligations of this job as president of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). I consider it an honor to have been selected by my peers and acknowledge that it comes with an obligation to lead the Bar in a way that leaves it better than when I started.

It has been to my very great advantage to have served for five years on the LSBA's

Board of Governors and as an officer (secretary and then president-elect). This experience has opened my eyes to the good the LSBA does and the problems that it faces for its members and those we serve as attorneys.

During my time as secretary, the LSBA made an effort to explain what the Bar does for its members and dedicated the June/July 2012 issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* to this purpose. In putting that issue together, it became even more apparent to me that the LSBA does, in fact, provide a myriad of services — but with some members unaware of them, the services are often underutilized. I hope that issue of the *Journal* took at least a small step toward putting some of the LSBA's programs and services on display. I also urge attorneys to access the LSBA website at www.lsba.org and take advantage of all that is there.

These services and benefits are the result of the hard work and dedication of those who have preceded me and to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude. The LSBA has had a progression of men and women holding office who have all worked tirelessly for the betterment of the practice of law. Whether you agree with all that they did, their dedication, effort, great intentions and accomplishments cannot be questioned. They have served without compensation and given their time gratefully, often without credit for

having sacrificed their time for the good of the profession. I thank them and hope that I continue that effort moving forward.

A major key to making serious progress in improving the practice is the involvement of Bar members. It is easy to not participate but merely criticize. The LSBA is willing to address any issue that involves the practice, but it takes time, commitment and numbers to accomplish change. The LSBA leaders can, and do, give their time and effort to addressing the issues facing the practice, but the more members who participate, the better and faster we can accomplish improvements in the practice for attorneys and the public. I feel certain that each LSBA member has an issue in his/her mind that he/she wishes the LSBA would address. The fact is that each individual member can address that issue; each member just needs to get involved.

Court costs, attorney discipline, access to justice, admission to practice, legal education, MCLE, local bars, cost of the practice, services and benefits provided by the LSBA, group health and malpractice insurance, Bar governance, Young Lawyers Division, Seniors Lawyers Division, criminal practice, civil practice, and on and on — these are all areas we hear about day after day and we are willing to deal with them, but we need your help. You can choose an issue you are interested in and get involved. Show your passion

and make a difference. Get on an LSBA committee; our committees are active and progressive. They desire the input in terms of new ideas and work from you. Give it to them; make this a better practice as you see it. A committee cannot consider your input and thoughts unless you participate. The LSBA president appoints the members of the association's standing committees (which can be reviewed on the LSBA's website) and creates special committees and task forces to address specific issues. As a Bar, we are regenerating our former committees to identify and propose solutions for systemic problems within the practice of law in Louisiana and you can be a part of this effort. Please make known your desire to participate and we will try to get you involved.

Years ago, I was appointed to several boards and found the work and effort to be very rewarding. As time went by, I became more and more involved and eventually ran for and won a seat on the LSBA's

Board of Governors. I had no thought of becoming the president of the LSBA, but I could see we were making a difference. Often our efforts were unseen by the Bar, but rewarding in that we were resolving major issues and bettering the practice, step by step. Sometimes these were small steps, but in the good direction and to the general benefit of LSBA members. It is often surprising and invigorating to hear the ideas and opinions of others. It can be challenging; actually putting aside feelings of infallibility and considering the input of others can lead to solutions that no one had previously considered.

My wife and I have both found great new friendships in dealing with those who participate in the Bar. We have recognized that generally these are the individuals willing to give their time and effort, without compensation, to improve the practice and be a part of the solution to issues. It is inspiring to see attorneys devote their time necessary to deal with

issues without expectation of any special credit or personal gain.

We as Bar members should be grateful for the education and knowledge we have that gives us the ability to make a good living and help people through tough issues at the same time. We need to remember the obligation we have to protect the professionalism of the Bar and to maintain, and in many respects regain, the respect of the public. It is our obligation to show that we are professionals in the way we practice and, importantly, how we deal with the public and each other. I plan to listen to those who will participate and put forward their ideas. Be one of them. It can be a great and productive year with your help.

LSBA Member Services

The mission of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) is to assist and serve its members in the practice of law. To this end, 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. As the premier organization serving Louisiana's legal profession, the LSBA is working to advance its members' goals and interests through unparalleled programming and a comprehensive benefits package. Listed below are a few benefits of membership:

Bar Center Services

Louisiana Bar Center
www.lsba.org/GoTo/BarCenter
mike.montamat@lsba.org

Louisiana lawyers are invited to reserve any of the three Bar Center conference rooms for depositions or other meetings. The building is equipped with wireless Internet access as well as desktop computers available at no charge to members. Contact Operations Coordinator Mike Montamat at (504)619-0140 with any questions.

LSBA Professional Programs Department Services

Client Assistance Fund
cgrotsky@lsba.org

This program helps consumers by providing compensation to clients who have been defrauded by their lawyers. For more information, contact Associate Executive Director Cheri Cotogno Grodsky at cgrotsky@lsba.org or (504)619-0107.

Lawyer Advertising Filing and Evaluation • rlemmler@lsba.org

This program provides screening of proposed lawyer advertising to confirm compliance with the Supreme Court's advertising rules. For information/inquiries, contact LSBA Ethics Counsel Richard P. Lemmler, Jr. at rlemmler@lsba.org or (504)619-0144.

Practice Assistance and Improvement
bking@lsba.org

As mandated by the Louisiana Supreme Court, the Bar's Practice Assistance and Improvement Program offers alternatives to discipline via its Attorney-Client Assistance Program and the Diversion Program. The Office of Disciplinary Counsel diverts eligible matters enabling these members to avoid disciplinary proceedings. For more information, contact Professional Programs Counsel for Practice Assistance William N. King at bking@lsba.org or (504)619-0109.

And much more!



Serving the Public. Serving the Profession.

**For more information,
visit www.lsba.org**