



By Richard K.
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Words of Advice and Encouragement for Our Newest Attorneys

On Oct. 24, 2013, 407 new attorneys were sworn in to practice in Louisiana, thereby becoming new members of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). That day started a new chapter in their lives as licensed attorneys. The LSBA welcomes each of them to the practice and congratulates them on their accomplishment. They worked hard for it and deserve credit for their perseverance.

They now become part of an important element of our society and the judicial branch of government as protectors of the rule of law. They have proven that they have a body of knowledge that is special to those who hold that license. It is now their obligation, as it is for all of us, to use that knowledge not only to earn a living but also to help those less fortunate in this world who do not know the law and to be their protection and access to justice. It is up to every attorney to ensure that clients are provided justice. We all say a Pledge of Allegiance to the United States as a country that provides “justice for all.” Unfortunately, even though this is an ideal that hopefully we all believe in and strive toward, we know that we are far from accomplishing total “justice for all.” It is now their obligation, as it has been for all attorneys, to help us live up to that ideal and make this a system that does provide equal justice for all, regardless of a person’s social status, assets, station in life, race, religion, connections or any other special factor. These new attorneys will play a large part in making this happen; this system does not work if it is not for everyone and with equal application to all.

I hope the new attorneys take a lesson from some of our older leaders. On the night of Nov. 14, 2013, three Louisiana federal judges, six Orleans Parish district judges, one 4th Circuit Court of Appeal judge and several Louisiana attorneys and business leaders spent the night sleeping

on the street, on the concrete, in support of the homeless children helped by the wonderful work of Covenant House in New Orleans. Led by Patricia A. Krebs, chair of Covenant House and a former president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation, this group of individuals gave up their time and comfort to show the children that people care and that they are, in fact, important to us and the community. The love and care they receive at Covenant House is certainly worth this show of unity. Barry H. Grodsky, LSBA secretary and *Louisiana Bar Journal* editor, recently pointed out in the *Journal* that we as attorneys fail to trumpet much of the good work attorneys provide in the community, often anonymously. We need to tell the public. This effort was a good example of how judges, attorneys and business leaders in our community are willing to show that they care.

We hope that our new attorneys remember that their interest in any matter they handle is secondary to that of their clients. Every attorney must always remember that the client comes first and the client makes the decision on the situation; attorneys can advise but should not dictate. Attorneys must use their knowledge of the law to educate clients so the clients can make their own informed decisions. It is not the attorney’s position to make that decision.

The LSBA is here to help those new attorneys with many services. The LSBA provides the Bridging the Gap program to help in the transition into practice. Fastcase,

an online legal research tool, is offered as a free service to LSBA members. The LSBA provides meeting rooms for use by attorneys, offers many CLE options, negotiates discounts for various services and material, and on and on. There are committees and sections addressing numerous areas of the law, community service activities provided through the Young Lawyers Division, and many opportunities to contribute and make a difference. I encourage new attorneys (and not-so-new attorneys) to take advantage of these and many other services offered by the LSBA.

The LSBA has started the process for a mentoring program in the state. Slated to begin in January 2015, the initial voluntary mentoring program will be operative in the New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Shreveport areas and will offer each new attorney the opportunity to have a mentor during his/her first year of practice. Every attorney is required to be a member of the LSBA and I hope they all take advantage of all the LSBA has to offer.

The pass rate results of the July 2013 bar examination were surprising and not what we had hoped for, and I have been further disheartened by hearing people cite incorrect actual percentages by law school. The results as published on the website of the Louisiana Supreme Court are relative to all who took the test — 763 took the exam. Since the system was revised effective in July 2012, there is no longer a possible result of “conditioned.” A taker either passes or fails the exam. Each of the nine tests forming the examination is provided a number grade between 0 and 100. The sum of the nine test grades must reach 650 to pass the exam. Those who have failed previous tests who decide to retake the exam are required to take the entire exam again. The results for first-time takers may be a better indicator of the application of the test. I have been advised that these pass rates were: LSU, 72 percent; Loyola, 64 percent; Southern, 41 percent; Tulane, 69 percent; other, 47 percent — for an overall pass rate of 60 percent. This is better than when you include those retaking the test.

Those who passed should be proud of their achievement. Those who took the exam and did not pass should keep working toward their goal. Those who will take the exam in the future need to

take it seriously. The attorneys involved in the testing process will continue efforts to improve the process to make this a fair test and be proud to assure the public that it is a true test of competence to practice. We owe that to the public. For those who prefer to claim the pass rate of the bar exam is the result of a conspiracy to keep the number of Louisiana attorneys down, I can assure you this is not the case from my experience. In one area, the LSBA has begun investigating the possibility of the LSBA providing an affordable and hopefully Louisiana-oriented bar review course. We hope the LSBA can be a part of helping students better prepare for the bar exam in the future.

The LSBA was the leader in the United States in initiating a program of address-

ing new law students on professionalism. As the LSBA pointed out to these new Louisiana attorneys on their first day of law school several years ago, their reputation follows each of them. They should be sure it is one of honesty and integrity. Abusing the system will not serve them in the long run. Professionalism is something to be strived for. Professionalism is like a smile; it is contagious. We should each be the first to show leadership and be a professional. Practicing law can be a fulfilling and wonderful career. I hope the new attorneys enjoy it, make a good living, are proud to be an attorney, and do some good for the world.

Pro Bono Heroes: Providing Justice for All

“Volunteering my time to projects that are designed to help make it easier for low income individuals to access our judicial system is incredibly gratifying. I have enjoyed using my skills and experience in a way that has benefitted others as well as provided me with the opportunity to learn something new. In this profession, one person really can make a difference and to do so feels wonderful.”

— Ashley Payne Gonzalez
King, Krebs & Jurgens, P.L.L.C.
and volunteer with Louisiana Appleseed
New Orleans, LA



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