



One on One with Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr., 74th LSBA President:

*On Outreach and “Coming Together” to Meet
the Profession’s Needs and Challenges Today*

Interviewed by Barry H. Grodsky
Louisiana State Bar Association Secretary

Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr., the Louisiana State Bar Association’s 74th president, is a member in the Shreveport office of Bradley Murchison Kelly & Shea, L.L.C. Hereceived a BA degree in 1974 from Tulane University and his JD degree in 1978 from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center (Order of the Coif and Louisiana Law Review executive editor). He was admitted to practice in Louisiana in 1978 and in Texas in 1996.

Shea served as 2013-14 Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) president-elect and has chaired the LSBA’s Ethics Advisory Service Subcommittee and the Multijurisdictional Practice Committee. He also served on the Ethics 2000 Committee. He received the LSBA President’s Award in 2002.

He chaired the Louisiana Bar Foundation’s Northwest Community Partnership Panel and is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates and the Harry V. Booth and Judge Henry A. Politz American Inn of Court. He served as an adjunct professor of business law from 1998-2010 at Centenary College.

He was inducted into the LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center Hall of Fame. He also has been listed in 2009-13 The Best Lawyers in America directories, including as 2013 Shreveport Litigation-Environmental Lawyer of the Year; in 2008-13 Louisiana Super Lawyers directories; and in the 2013 Chambers USA directory as a leader in the field for Energy & Natural Resources: Oil & Gas.

Shea and his wife, Jane, have been married for 40 years and are the parents of two children.

Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. of Shreveport, second from left, is the 74th President of the Louisiana State Bar Association. With him are family members, from left, his daughter Shawn Meyer, his grandson Morgan Meyer, his wife Jane, his daughter Shannon Bamburg and his son-in-law Chris Bamburg. Photo by Kathryn Gaiennie Fine Photography.

Journal: What was your motivation to become a lawyer?

Shea: My wife Jane was my motivation. I was working for an oil company. She thought I was not happy and she applied to law schools for me. So, I went to law school. I had been on the traveling Debate Team at Tulane and she knew I was interested in the practice of law. I always talked about being in law, but I had no family background there. No family members were lawyers. But she knew I had an interest and we decided I should pursue it.

Journal: Do you have any desire to go back to your former position?

Shea: No. I enjoy the practice of law. It's what I should have done from the start. I am happy to be doing it.

Journal: Tell us more about your family.

Shea: My wife and I started dating when she was 14 and I was 16. She is my partner and my best friend. We have two girls — Shawn, who is the mother of my grandson, Morgan, and my younger daughter, Shannon, who just got married last fall. They all live in Shreveport now. At one time, the girls were on both coasts, one in California and the other in Florida. But they both moved back and we are happy with them being close to us again.

Journal: What was your very first legal job?

Shea: I went straight to work with the firm (called at that time) Hargrove, Guyton, Ramey & Barlow, an oil and gas-related firm. I began there and I have never really moved my office. The firm has changed names on occasion and we've changed our physical offices a couple of times, but I've always been with the same group of lawyers since 1978.

Journal: What is the primary emphasis of your practice?

Shea: Oil and gas litigation and contract work. We represent a number of independent producers and some traded companies. I also handle other types of litigation and transactional work, not just production-related litigation and contracts. For example, I do environmental-type litigation.



Larry Shea, Jr. with wife Jane and daughters Shannon and Shawn. *Provided by Shea family.*

Journal: What was your first real job ever, your first paycheck?

Shea: I was a maintenance guy at Bealls (Department Store). I would clean up around the place. I also worked at my aunt's restaurant, a diner. I worked at the diner as a short-order cook and helped her out. Those were high school jobs. I worked offshore with Texaco after my first year of college. I also worked at the Texaco office on Canal Street in New Orleans (across from the Jung Hotel) in the petroleum engineering department.

Journal: You have the reputation now as a good cook. Did the diner give you that training?

Shea: Well, it did teach me a little about how to cook. But I started learning how to do more of it later, as time has gone on.

Journal: What is your super specialty?

Shea: Well, I make a very good scallop dish with a champagne sauce. It is pretty good, if I say so myself. But mostly people who come over want me to grill steaks and maybe a little lobster.

Journal: Who are your heroes and role models?

Shea: I knew you were going to ask me that. Early on in my legal career, my objective was to be a criminal defense lawyer, like F. Lee Bailey (who, of course, was one

of the lawyers on O.J. Simpson's defense team). I had seen some film of him in the courtroom and I thought I would enjoy doing that when I started law school. That was my objective. After entering the practice, I looked up to several of my senior partners, Ray Barlow and Billy Pesnell. They served as great advisors in my career.

Journal: Being from Shreveport, is there a difference being a president from there as compared to another part of the state? A vast majority of Louisiana lawyers practice at the I-10 corridor or south. How does that affect the overall practice of law and you as president?

Shea: It doesn't affect the practice of law. Shreveport is a great place to practice law. We have more sophisticated types of legal work in the Shreveport area than some may think. We are often in litigation and negotiations with major firms from Houston, Dallas, New Orleans and other parts of the country. It is a little easier to practice in Shreveport due to the professionalism and camaraderie displayed by most of our lawyers. We enjoy each other's company. Our firm has an "open-door" policy. Our young lawyers are comfortable stepping in and asking questions. We have a good practice in that sense. It's a culture that we enjoy. As far as being a president from Shreveport, you cannot change the fact

that the Bar offices are at the other end of the state. That poses a challenge, but I have a lot of support from my family, partners and friends.

Journal: As president, how are you going to get more outreach in the northern part of the state and get more members there involved in Bar activities?

Shea: I do have some plans. My primary initiative is to try to bring the Bar out to the other parts of the state. It's an unfair criticism that the LSBA is an I-10 Bar, even though a lot of the workings of the Bar are in New Orleans. I tell people it's the same distance from New Orleans to Shreveport as it is from Shreveport to New Orleans. One idea I have is to create regional panels, where we will have board members selecting volunteers from each region of the state to serve on those panels. One function I want the panels to serve is the identification of "citizen lawyers," folks who practice law but also do many other things for their communities. It will be helpful to get the State Bar involved by recognizing those lawyers who are making a difference by improving their communities. Let's recognize them and get the panels to help us in identifying them.

Journal: As the LSBA's Mentoring Program will be activated in a few months,



Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. in high school. *Provided by Shea family.*



Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. at the Louisiana Bar Center. *Photo by LSBA Staff.*

I've been very impressed and encouraged by the Shreveport Bar's and the Shreveport Inn of Court's responses. Do you see a working relationship with the State Bar and local bars?

Shea: Yes, that's another concept I'd like to bring about. The LSBA used to have a "committee of the bars," consisting of representatives of specialty and local bars, offering a forum to discuss similar problems confronted by all bars. We (as Bar leaders) have the advantage of attending national meetings and learning how to improve local bars. Through the committee of the bars, we can pass these ideas on. The State Bar can assist local bars through the organization of such a committee.

Journal: You have taken a different path to the presidency. Most presidents rise up from the Board of Governors. You have risen through the House of Delegates. Does that change the way you will approach your term in office?

Shea: When I was honored with this nomination and then elected, it changed what I had to do. I had to spend more time learning about other aspects of the LSBA that I had not been directly involved in. True, I had not served on the Board, but I served in the House for a long time, as well as on a number of committees. These committees mostly

involved ethics issues — Ethics 2000, the Multijurisdictional Practice Committee — and I helped rewrite the rules. I served on the committee that wrote the rules on advertising. I served under 10-15 presidents on different committees. I've long been active in the committee system. I've been involved in the creation of the Ethics School. Actually, last fall was the first time that I didn't speak at the Ethics School because of conflicts with my president-elect schedule. I've also spoken at every Bridging the Gap seminar, except for a recent one because of similar conflicts. I've been actively involved as a Bar speaker on ethics issues. I've always felt that the Bridging the Gap and Ethics School programs are important projects to further the ethical development of the Bar as a whole.

Journal: You have been in practice for 35+ years. How has the practice changed? Good or bad?

Shea: Law firms have changed. There is more mobility among young lawyers. These young lawyers don't tend to stay in the same place as long as they used to. When I started, it was rare to see moves to other firms. Mobility has changed the practice. The practice also went through a period of reduction in professionalism. I think we are on an uptick on that, though. I find lawyers are far more professional

today, a lot like the fellows I began practicing with. Yes, there's a business to the practice of law but it's a profession, and attorneys should act in a professional manner when dealing with the courts, clients and other attorneys. I believe there's been an improvement in professionalism overall in the last 10 years.

Journal: The Committee on the Profession has increased professionalism training in the law schools. Is that important? Should it continue?

Shea: Absolutely! As a graduate of LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center, I have been a part of the professionalism orientations for first-year students from its inception. I have not had the opportunity to attend the orientations at the other law schools. But this is an excellent opportunity to engage the students right off — early — and let them know the significance that professionalism has to the overall practice of law. These programs do a lot of good.

Journal: As president, it will be important to maintain a working relationship with the Louisiana Supreme Court and the Chief Justice. Have you had previous experience dealing with the court and chief?

Shea: Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson is an exceptional person. I've had the opportunity to visit with her about Bar matters. She is astute as to what's going on in the profession. She has a great interest in improving the legal profession in Louisiana. I've also had friendships with other members of the court. Justice Jeff Victory and I practiced in similar matters when I first started practicing law. I've known Justice Victory for 35 years. He's a fine person. I had the opportunity to work with former Chief Justice Pascal F. Calogero, Jr. quite a bit when I headed the Attorney Disciplinary Board. I also worked with former Chief Justice Catherine D. Kimball on similar issues. There has always been an excellent relationship from a professional standpoint between the Bar and the court. Our issues and concerns are always of great interest to the court.

Journal: You've had extensive involvement with the Disciplinary Board. Will this past involvement be helpful during your term?



Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson, left, with Larry & Jane Shea.
Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

Shea: I have great respect for Disciplinary Counsel Charles B. (Chuck) Plattsmier. We went to school together and I worked with him in the disciplinary system. He works very hard and does an excellent job. I look forward to working with Chuck during my term and coordinating our efforts to further ethics and professionalism.

Journal: A recent focus of the LSBA has been promotion of the work of the Lawyers Assistance Program (LAP). What are your goals and visions for this program?

Shea: That's an important program. It has become increasingly more evident how difficult and dangerous the situations can be for Bar members suffering from depression and addictions who also must navigate the high-pressure world of a law practice. Statistically, it has been proven that legal professionals suffer more from these types of disabling conditions than other professions and the general population. Significantly more. LAP Executive Director Buddy Stockwell does a great job. He works tirelessly at what he does. As a Bar, we must make sure the program is funded properly. We must provide whatever assistance we can to help Buddy do what needs to be done to address these serious issues.

Journal: You have had extensive involve-

ment in drafting the lawyer advertising rules. How did those rules come about?

Shea: First, because of constitutional decisions rendered, we needed to recognize that lawyers had the right to advertise their services. We wanted to draft some rules that articulated that right to attorneys but also create some rules requiring that the advertising be clear to the public, to make sure the public was not misled by the advertising. We needed to protect the public. That was the primary driving force behind creation of the advertising rules. We went through a substantial process. During the Ethics 2000 project, the advertising rules were the one part of the rules we did not address. But we knew we needed to address them. The group composed of advertising lawyers, plaintiffs' lawyers and defense lawyers developed the rules we thought would be beneficial to the lawyers, the profession and the public.

Journal: Are the lawyer advertising rules a success?

Shea: Yes, they are. Before the institution of the advertising rules, some ads were simply outrageous. I believe these advertising rules have curbed some of that and have resulted in advertising messages that are more straightforward and direct for the public. LSBA Ethics Counsel Richard

Lemmler does a great job in overseeing the lawyer advertising rules program. I believe the rules have benefited the public. That's what the Bar is here for — to serve the public and the profession. Serving the public is a primary objective.

Journal: You also were involved in the Ethics Advisory Service. How important is that service?

Shea: I was head of the Ethics Advisory Service Committee when it was a committee of the Bar. I remained head when it became a subcommittee of the Rules of Professional Conduct Committee (I'm also a committee member). This subcommittee has consisted of people with backgrounds in the disciplinary system, those who have taught ethics or those who have been involved in the practice of law involving ethics. The subcommittee still consists of those people. It offers an exceptional opportunity and service to the profession. Some members don't know enough about it. When you are confronted with a potential ethics situation and you don't know how to handle it, you can call the Bar. Richard Lemmler or Eric Barefield will talk with you and address your problem. Sometimes, members may think problems are unique to them, but many of those problems, more often than not, have surfaced hundreds of times before with other lawyers. Not that this service is an absolute bar to some disciplinary problem down the line, but it's rare to see instances of further trouble after someone had a problem, went to the Ethics Advisory Service, asked for and received advice, and then followed that advice.

Journal: What was the first thing that drew you to Bar activities?

Shea: There was a time when there seemed to be some disconnect between the disciplinary system and the Bar. I wanted to be part of the Bar so I could help to bridge these differences. A lot of lawyers do that and become a part of the Bar. The Bar provides so many important programs for the public and the profession. We need to work with other aspects of the system — the disciplinary system, MCLE, Bar Admissions — all working together to improve the practice. I wanted to be here to get across the views of the



Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. during his interview. Photo by LSBA Staff.

disciplinary system. That's why I was so involved in Ethics 2000 and the Ethics Advisory Service — to help transmit the interests of the disciplinary system into activities of the Bar.

Journal: In addition to practicing law, I know you taught at Centenary College for a dozen years. What was that like?

Shea: I enjoy teaching. I taught business law at the school, 8 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. It was an interesting activity. Many of my students ended up going to law school and some of them worked at my law firm. I think they enjoyed the class. It is a different experience for the students when the person teaching you business law actually practices business law.

Journal: How is your working relationship with your predecessor President Richard Leefe?

Shea: Richard is a very interesting person. His experiences are just grand, all the way from his service to our country in Vietnam to his teaching in different countries. On top of that, he is a nice person. I have

enjoyed working with him and helping him further his objectives. It's been an exceptional experience.

Journal: You also know who your successor will be, Mark Cunningham. Are you working with him?

Shea: Mark and I are working together. That's going to be a good partnership. Mark comes from a big firm in New Orleans so he has those New Orleans connections. It's always good to have someone with a New Orleans connection to know what's going on there. He is supportive of the concepts for increased outreach to the rest of the state. It's important for him. I'm excited about the opportunity. He has a lot of good ideas. This year, we may be able to start some of Mark's initiatives, while continuing my programs as well as those of Richard, John Musser, and the presidents before them.

Journal: How is your working relationship with LSBA Executive Director Loretta Larsen?

Shea: Loretta is a great director. She

is well respected nationally for her contributions to the legal profession. She is knowledgeable about what she does and very perceptive, knowing exactly how to handle issues or other situations as they arise. She is your right hand in all that you do. The LSBA is so fortunate to have someone like Loretta on staff to offer continuity. Presidents do work hard during their year in office to further the legal profession. But we'll come and go. Loretta works hard year after year.

Journal: When you began your law practice, it's likely that your challenges were not the same challenges facing today's lawyers. What are today's challenges? Can the Bar do anything to assist?

Shea: Yes, there are different challenges today. Back then, if you paid attention in law school, worked hard and did well, you would have a place to go. You most likely could go anywhere in the state and find a job. Almost every person who graduated from law school had an opportunity to work with someone in the state. It's not that way now. Economic conditions are such that we have a serious problem. Now graduates come out of law school and can't find a job — and some of these are people who did well in law school. It's a difficult situation. It forces these graduates to hang out a shingle and try to do it on their own. You can go to law school, but it's also important to get some direction in the practical aspects of practicing law once you get out. You need someone with experience to offer guidance in how to do it. That brings me to our Mentoring Program. Shreveport is proud to be a leader in the pilot mentoring program. This is an important step in getting these young lawyers who hang out a shingle in their own practice to receive guidance in "how to practice law" from the more experienced lawyers. Law schools can teach you all about the law, but there's more that needs to be taught, easily accessible from the senior lawyers' perspective. That's the primary difference today than when I graduated law school.

Potential law school students have seen this jobs situation and, as a consequence, we also have a situation where there are a reduced number of applications to law schools. We have some exceptional law



Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr., from left, John H. Musser IV, Richard K. Leefe, James J. Davidson III and Michael A. Patterson at the 2013 Annual Meeting in Destin, Fla. Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

schools in the state, all there to provide quality education to all students. But, to do that, you have to spend some money on your professors and other aspects of law schools — like libraries and other items that cost money to maintain and be available to provide a quality legal education. This puts a crunch on law schools when applications are reduced. It may require reducing class sizes. I recognize that. We as a Bar have to assist the students, the law schools and the profession. We need to protect the profession by offering help to those who need more assistance in the practice. We need to help law schools go through this period where they have these problems. We're doing much to address these issues. Richard (Leefe) has been active in this process, developing ideas and concepts to improve the circumstances for everyone. It's important for me to continue this work.

Journal: I attended, with you and others, the LSBA Sonoma CLE. Not only was it a wonderful multi-topic CLE, but it also offered the chance for camaraderie and companionship among lawyers. Are such events important to the profession?

Shea: Yes, they are. We have that kind of relationship in my law office. We have office get-togethers, with our offices in Shreveport, New Orleans and Baton Rouge. It gives us an opportunity to visit with colleagues in all offices. That's

important, to visit socially and not just through work. The Bar seminars and events also provide those opportunities. The LSBA's CLE seminars give lawyers the chance to spend time with other lawyers, many of whom share common interests. At the recent Solo and Small Firm Conference, there was considerable time to network. It was an exceptional seminar with great speakers. Also, our combined Annual Meeting and Summer School events offer a variety of ways to network with fellow legal professionals... young lawyers, older lawyers and judges, all meet after CLE programs and during several evening functions.

Journal: What do you do to relax?

Shea: Golf. I love to play golf. I have played since I was 9 years old. There was a time when I actually could play. Now I enjoy going around the golf course and hitting the ball, wherever it lands it lands. I have good friends I play with in Shreveport and I have friends I travel with to play. For a number of years, I attended the Masters tournament. I enjoy that sport. My uncles and cousins were golfers. One of my aunts actually taught me how to play when I was young. It was something the family did. It's an activity that has allowed me to share time with good friends.

Journal: As incoming president, you have the unique quality of having the

best wine collection of any Bar president.

Shea: I doubt it. I do have a nice wine collection. I do enjoy a good wine. But I doubt that I have the best wine collection of any president who has ever been... maybe the last couple of presidents.

Journal: Former LSBA President John Musser, as a solo practitioner, had as his theme the "Year of the Solo." More than 50 percent of our membership is made up of solo practitioners. What can, and should, the Bar be doing for solo practitioners?

Shea: When I was president-elect-designee, I had the opportunity to travel the state with John and visit with various bars and bar leaders. I learned that many members didn't know of all the services the Bar provides. We need to do a better job of getting the word out to Bar members of how many services and programs are offered. We can do a number of things for solos. For one, the Solo and Small Firm Conference is excellent and we should continue to have those conferences, not just in New Orleans but in other parts of the state. Solo practitioners face different problems than colleagues in larger firms. One way to first address the problems of solos is to...ask them. What do you want the Bar to do for you? John and I asked the same questions. If there is a way for the Bar to do it, we need to provide the service.

Journal: Are you a better golfer than John Musser?

Shea: I haven't seen John play golf. But I had him describe his game. From the description I received, I might have a chance to beat him.

Journal: How can we get young lawyers practicing 10 years or less (who are getting involved with the federal bar, Inns of Court and local bars) more involved in state Bar activities?

Shea: We do have a Leadership LSBA program and are always looking for young lawyers in different parts of the state to get into this leadership program. Former President Larry Feldman started this program. Great idea! We need young lawyers on our committees and in our sections. The only way to do this is to go out and get them to do it. I have the



Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. on the golf course at the Ridge Runner Golf Tournament. *Provided by Shea family.*



opportunity to meet young lawyers all over the state who would be great assets to the state Bar. If they participate in state Bar activities, they will find it incredibly rewarding. It's an opportunity to do some good for the public and their practices. We do have some good young lawyers involved in this leadership program. If there is a way to organize that committee of the bars I mentioned earlier, then we would get them involved. For instance, the Shreveport Bar has an active group of young lawyers. If we give them the opportunity to get involved on the state level, they will. Our Young Lawyers Division does good work. We could do more for them. In the end, today's young lawyers are the next group of people coming through who will be taking over the reins one day.

Journal: As a litigator, do you have that one great case?

Shea: I had some interesting cases early in my career. Not that they were big trials but they produced law. I have always been interested in, not so much the trial, but the legal concepts produced. One case, *Bondy v. Texas Eastern*, established the rule on recovery of damages for fear of cancer. The rules developed in that matter are still cited in environmental cases today. I was involved in a trial with a partner called *Winterrowd v. Travelers*. We represented a fireman who had a second job to enhance

his income. He had his hands caught in a punch press. The case as decided found liability for failure to warn on the part of the equipment manufacturer. The press involved was over 50 years old. That decision eventually led to products liability laws being enacted to limit the impact of *Winterrowd*. So, I have been involved in cases where we've made law. A notable matter that I handled that went to trial was the New Orleans Tank Car Litigation. That case took 20 years to resolve and the original trial went on for nearly three months.

Journal: As a litigator, have you ever had the desire to be a judge?

Shea: I have had that desire in some cases that I was trying. It might have helped on occasion. I never saw myself as a judge, though. I have very strong views. Successful judges must listen and develop their viewpoints (factual or legal issues) based on what is presented to them and not on some preconception on what it should be. I'll let them do that and I'll try to advocate for my client. I try not to advocate positions that I don't believe in or I don't believe the law will support. (Being a judge) is not in my nature. I might end up arguing with someone. I appreciate a good judge listening to what everyone has to say and then making a decision based on what they've heard, read or studied themselves.

Journal: When you ran for LSBA president, was this the first time you ran for any office?

Shea: I'm not political by nature. I have never really campaigned to win an election. I have successfully run for the House of Delegates many times. I did run for the LSBA Board of Governors once, but I lost.

Journal: You are standing before a law school graduation class. What advice do you have for the graduates in your commencement speech?

Shea: You have now taken one of the final steps toward entering an important profession. It's important to our society. We are a profession that takes pride in seeing that we provide guidance to our society and assist in its orderly development. We assist people who need protection, those who don't have it and need it. The graduates need to know there's a higher order to life once you become a lawyer. I want to communicate that understanding to them. They are going to do important things and they should. I would let them know it won't be easy. There will be a great deal of hard work to do it right. But it is a rewarding time to be a lawyer.

Journal: What was the best vacation you ever took?

Shea: I have taken a lot of fine vacations. Since I'm a golf nut, I have played Pebble Beach four or five times. Those were great trips. It's a beautiful part of the country. I enjoy Carmel and San Francisco. I like the food, the culture and the theater there. My wife and I love theater. It's hard to separate those trips from going to New York and seeing plays. I had a lot of nice vacations with the family, too, with my wife and kids. The best one was to Disney World when the kids were younger. I've never seen bigger smiles. It was a tremendous experience I will always remember.

Journal: If you were not practicing law, what would you be doing?

Shea: I'd probably be in the oil business in some way. That's just where my family was, and is, and it's something I would be doing. I'm kind of still in it as a lawyer.

Journal: Have you fully developed a theme for your presidency?

Shea: If I had to pick one theme, I want us to "Come Together" all across the state and address the needs of the profession and service to the public as much as we can. (That's why I picked "Come Together" as

the theme for the Annual Meeting/Summer School.) There are tremendous, important issues out there...lawyer assistance and access to justice among them. There is the need for us to provide the basic legal services to those who can't afford them, both on the criminal and civil side. We are working with the Louisiana Bar Foundation and legal services programs statewide to help the judicial system. We need to come together and understand that there are needs. We need to provide adequate funding for the judicial system and the judges so they can administer this process. We need to address all of those items and many more. Some of these are aspects of the Bar that I was not involved in before my election. I've been learning more about these issues. There are tremendous needs but also tremendous opportunities. Problems are not problems, but opportunities to do something better. That's what we need to do.

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Barry H. Grodsky interviews Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. at the Louisiana Bar Center. Photo by LSBA Staff.