

Nassau Lawyer

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How the President Serves the Association

Bar associations serve a variety of purposes. Like many professional membership organizations, they provide members with networking opportunities, professional development through continuing education, and discounts on goods and services. However, because lawyers have a state-enforced monopoly on the practice of law in our nation of laws, and indeed have the only profession referenced in the U.S. Constitution, bar associations have a special and perhaps unique responsibility to also support our system of justice and to serve the community at large.

As President, I have several responsibilities.

First, I serve as a steward of the Association, with the obligation to leave the Association and my successors with a stable and vibrant organization. This responsibility involves ensuring that the Association meets the evolving needs of its members, is governed properly and secure financially, and protects its home, Domus, for future generations.

On this last point, the Board of Directors earlier this year authorized a comprehensive engineering inspection of Domus. The report of this inspection concluded that many areas of the building are in need of repair and replacement at considerable expense. As of this writing, the Association is in the process of engaging a Construction Manager to work with the Domus Committee in advising the Board of Directors on the costs, scope,

timing, and sequencing of this work. Once the scope of the work to be performed and the plan for payment for the work is determined by the Board of Directors, the Construction Manager will facilitate the bidding and contractor selection process and thereafter supervise the work in conjunction with the Domus Committee.

Second, I serve as an advocate and ambassador for the Association, advancing the Association's message, mission, and priorities. In recent years, we have seen mandates placed upon the profession without prior consultation or dialogue, while the prospect of new requirements, including mandatory pro bono service for admitted

attorneys, is on the horizon. I will continue to deliver the Association's message on these issues, as expressed in Board resolutions, and be vigilant in assuring that the Association's voice is heard on matters affecting the legal profession.

Third, I serve as a facilitator, bringing together members of the Association, its Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and staff to discuss and address issues of importance to members of the Association and to the legal profession generally. While it is nearly impossible to predict the issues that will arise, the Association has a wealth of talent and resources to resolve any issue.

Aside from fulfilling these responsibilities, I will work to restore and expand the Lawyers Assistance Program, a fund

within the Nassau Bar Foundation, while supporting and publicizing the good works of its sister funds within the Foundation, the We Care Fund and the Access to Justice Fund.

The Lawyers Assistance Program, or LAP, provides support and counseling to attorneys struggling with emotional, physical, and mental challenges. Until several years ago, LAP was supported by funding from the New York State Office of Court Administration. When that funding evaporated overnight due to budget cuts, the scope of the program was scaled down, with the Association scrambling to find funds to pay for a diminished program. During the past year the We Care Fund has stepped forward to provide annual funding for LAP of \$40,000, sending the powerful message that it cares for the health and well-being of the members of the Association. I am grateful for this generous support. Recently, OCA has received funding for Lawyer Assistance Programs throughout the state. I am hopeful that we will receive a portion of these funds to supplement the We Care contributions so that we can begin to restore and expand the availability of the vital services LAP provides to our members.

In closing, I congratulate Peter Mancuso on a wonderful year as President and am grateful to the membership for giving me the honor of serving as the 112th President of the Nassau County Bar Association. I look forward to all of the challenges of the office, knowing that with a dedicated Executive Committee and Board of Directors and a talented Executive Director and staff, all good things are possible.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

John P. McEntee