

President's Message

Greetings Washtenaw County Bar Association members! I hope that you are all starting to thaw out from another Michigan winter.¹ It is difficult for me to believe that we are well over 2/3 of the way through the WCBA fiscal year, as we have already done so much but have so much left to do! On that note, it seems like a terrific time to run-down some of the fantastic membership-wide events that have taken place in the past quarter, and to apprise you all of the wonderful events the WCBA has in store for you through the remainder of my term.

Dating back to last December, members have had the opportunity to attend three organization-wide events: the Holiday Wine Tasting; the January Speakeasy; and the annual Trivia Challenge.

First, members had the opportunity to ring in the festive season with colleagues at the WCBA Holiday Wine Tasting on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at Paesano Restaurant and Wine Bar in Ann Arbor. The always popular event was jam-packed with attendees filled with holiday cheer, enjoying the wonderful hors d'oeuvres and Italian wines. Stephanie Garris and Fawn Armstrong, co-chairs of the New Lawyers Section, presented the annual "Outstanding New Lawyer Award" to Jinan Hamood in appreciation and recognition of Ms. Hamood's wonderful contributions to the section. In addition, representatives from El's Place were on hand to present and answer questions as the designated annual charity recipient.

Next, I hosted a wonderful gaggle of members at the January Speakeasy on January 30, 2020, at Fillmore Bar and Grill in Dexter. The informal event always seeks to bring together attorneys from all over the county in a relaxed setting for after-work chit chat, and this recent edition did not disappoint. It was great to see so many attendees, particularly from the west side of the county!

Finally, as of the date of this publication, the annual Trivia Challenge either has already occurred or is about to take place on March 5, 2020 at Zal Gaz Grotto Club in Ann Arbor. Which reminds me, have you seen the "winners' wall" at the WCBA office with pictures of the past champion teams? Stop by anytime to check it out!

In the coming weeks, the WCBA will be hosting two of its most significant annual events: the Award Dinner and Election and the Bench-Bar Conference.

First, the Annual Award Dinner and Election will take place on April 16, 2020, at the Ann Arbor City Club. Members will vote on the proposed slate recommended by the Nominating Committee (special thanks to Elizabeth Jolliffe for her work chairing the committee this year!) and approved by the board. The new board will take the oath for the upcoming year of service, and Paul Fessler will deliver his inaugural remarks. In addition, the WCBA will present the Liberty Bell Award to a distinguished non-lawyer. Specifically, the American Bar Association established the Liberty Bell

¹ As I write this, I am fully anticipating by publication date that the weather will be on an upwardly warm trajectory, but in Michigan anything goes!

Award to be awarded locally to a non-lawyer for outstanding service in one or more of the following areas:

1. Promoting a better understanding of our Constitution and Bill of Rights;
2. Encouraging greater respect for law and the courts;
3. Stimulating a deeper sense of individual responsibility so that citizens recognize their duties as well as their rights;
4. Contributing to the effective functioning of our institutions of government; and
5. Fostering a better understanding and appreciation of the rule of law.

John Reiser and U. Ashwin Patel are the co-chairs of the WCBA Awards Committee, tasked with receiving the nominations and reviewing the candidates under the listed guidelines for recommendation to the WCBA Board of Directors. As always, we thank Mr. Reiser and Ms. Patel for their time and efforts.

Second, the Bench-Bar Conference will take place on May 1, 2020, at Travis Pointe Country Club near Saline. Judiciary Committee co-chairs Mag. Tamara Garwood and Katherine Sharkey are currently hard at work putting finishing touches on this year's program of local court updates and keynote presentations, which are sure to be stellar. In fact, I understand Justice Elizabeth T. Clement of the Michigan Supreme Court has graciously accepted an invitation to speak to the membership. Be sure to register as soon as possible, as the Bench-Bar Conference is consistently the highest-attended WCBA event on the calendar.

In closing, 2020 will see the electorate head to the polls to vote in not just the quadrennial presidential contest, but to also cast ballots in critical local elections of interest to the bar. As always, the WCBA will play a key role in those local races. For example, the WCBA Criminal Law Section is anticipating co-hosting with the League of Women Voters a forum of candidates running for Washtenaw County Prosecuting Attorney. In addition, this year will see several judicial races at the District and Circuit Court levels in Washtenaw County. As such, the WCBA Judiciary Committee will conduct a poll of the membership for each contested race per Section XIII of WCBA Bylaws. Moreover, as in past practice, the WCBA Judiciary Committee will likely host potential candidates forums for the local judicial races. Keep an eye out for notices on all upcoming election activities.

Thanks for your time, and I'll see you around the County!