

It's my first President's Message, and the world is in such upheaval that it's hard to know where to start - there are so many issues affecting all of us on a daily basis. During my time as a WCBA member, I've watched and admired each of our past presidents and what they've done during their terms. Each President has focused on a theme for their year, whether it be bringing the WCBA up to speed technologically through the upgrading of the website, or increasing membership, or focusing on diversity and inclusion. Despite having a year (as President Elect) to think about what I wanted to focus on, I hadn't settled on a theme. I had a few ideas, but then COVID-19 occurred and changed everyone's life overnight. From that life-altering event, the theme emerged: uncertainty. Uncertainty whether we are an attorney or a lay person - COVID-19 has put us all in a state of uncertainty.

Every single aspect of our lives, personally and professionally, has been drastically affected by the COVID-19 virus. A pandemic will do that. The entire world, including the legal profession, had to learn on the fly how to stay safe, distance, and work remotely when possible. It has been a wake-up call to the entire world about what's possible when we work together to address something bigger than ourselves. Most of us have stepped up to the plate and recognized that we need to work together for the greater good. Thankfully, Michigan has been a leader for the nation in showing what the results can be if we follow the direction of the medical experts. Unfortunately, some areas of our country appear to have chosen the wrong path, and will most likely delay recovery for the country as a whole.

No one can entirely predict when the pandemic will pass, or what toll it will take on us as a society, if or when it does subside. What we, as the WCBA, can do for our members is assist by providing up-to-date information about the state of practice in our Circuit and District Courts. Procedures for all courts have changed radically since March 2020. The WCBA is changing to adapt to the new normal. First and foremost, we want to provide information to our members on the state of our Courts. Normally, this would have been done at our Bench-Bar Conference in May. We had to cancel the 2020 Bench-Bar, and we don't want to wait until next May to hear from our Bench so we're going to have a virtual Bench-Bar Conference on August 7, 2020 via Zoom. Attendance is free to all WCBA members. Our current plan is to have an update from each Chief Judge and their court administrator, and then open it up to questions from the membership. We envision the entire event will take about 90 minutes. We won't be providing drink tickets this year, but feel free to bring your own drinks to your desk.

We have also tentatively scheduled the annual golf outing for August 28<sup>th</sup>. We're going to schedule the outing for earlier in the day and end up with a light lunch outdoors, as opposed to a large indoor reception. Like all things, this is subject to change.

The WCBA also intends to hold Bias Awareness Week. Given all that's happened, and continues to happen, this event is more important than ever. The long overdue social awakening for certain parts of society is something to be embraced and discussed, and there are none more qualified than our members and community at large to lead the way. Our county has the opportunity to provide leadership for a pathway that will lead to a more just society. Let's not let the moment slip away from us. Please get involved and lend your expertise and experience to the quest for that more perfect Union we are constantly striving for.

We can't discuss the WCBA without thanking our tireless Executive Director, Kyeena Slater, and our Assistant, Kelley Lindquist. They kept the WCBA office open and running remotely for our membership during the entire shutdown. They found a way to keep in constant contact with members and the Courts, and have been relaying information to the membership on the Court's behalf. We foresee the WCBA playing a crucial role in getting information from the Courts to our membership, and have made it a top priority. I cannot overstate the role Kyeena and Kelley have played during these past few months acting as our eyes and ears at the Trial Court. Sadly, Kelley took a new position outside of the WCBA, and while we're sorry to see her go, Livingston County made her an offer that she just couldn't refuse, and congratulations are in order. Thank you for your many years of dedicated service, Kelley. We will miss you!

Lastly, I want to thank Mark Jane, our Immediate Past President for his steady, practical, and calm presence during the last year. The pandemic hit under his time as President, and he provided stellar leadership at the most chaotic of times. It brings me great comfort to know that I can continue to depend on Mark's support as we navigate the challenging year ahead.

Things aren't going back to the way they were in February 2020 anytime soon, if at all. And that's not necessarily a bad thing on some levels. We don't know where we're going, but we'll all get there together.

*Paul*

Paul C. Fessler  
[paul@fesslerlawpc.com](mailto:paul@fesslerlawpc.com)