

As I'm writing this letter, the Michigan weather has gotten *slightly* better (I can see the sun!), and it seems as if things are going that way as a nation in general. We now have three vaccines approved to combat the spread of COVID-19, schools are starting to reopen, and the political discourse has gone down from a rolling boil to a strong simmer.

All that said, now is not the time to let our guard down when it comes to staying safe and engaging in social distancing, as well as in holding our elected leadership accountable. The events in Washington in January and February had a lot of us questioning the role and responsibilities of our elected representatives. I'm sure I'm not the only one who put myself into their shoes and thought about what I would have done in their situation.

We, as attorneys, took the Lawyer's Oath when we were admitted to the Michigan Bar¹. We swore to uphold the Constitutions of the United States and Michigan, to maintain causes only as consistent with truth and honor, and to conduct ourselves personally and professionally with a high standard of conduct, among other things. As a reminder of the obligations we place upon ourselves as attorneys, the WCBA held a virtual Oath Renewal hosted by Judge Carol Kuhnke. The event was well-attended and served as a reminder of what is expected from us both personally and professionally.

Every member of Congress, and the elected members of the Executive Branch, took an oath to uphold the United States Constitution. According to a profile of the 116th Congress by the Congressional Research Service, 161 Members of the House (36.6% of the House) and 53 Senators (53% of the Senate) hold law degrees². Presumably, the majority of those members with law degrees passed a Bar exam and took an oath to uphold the Constitution. Whether or not those members have adhered to their oath to uphold the Constitution is going to be the source of debate for decades to come.

My point is, we need to hold our elected officials to the same standard we hold ourselves to. When we expect less, we get less. While political arguments have become heated over the years, it was usually done with a level of respect for the opposing view, and both arguments were grounded in the same set of facts as a starting point. Now, we're not even operating on the same basic set of facts. Bad faith arguments put forth by elected officials and attorneys have skewed some viewpoints so far outside of the truth that it's difficult to even have a discussion on certain topics. One way to get back to a civil discourse is to hold those that spread falsehoods and tin foil hat conspiracy theories accountable for their actions and to push back with actual facts. There's only so much a local Washtenaw County attorney can do to fix Washington D.C., but we can police our own backyards by presenting facts when presented with falsehoods. Not only should we do so, we're obligated to.

¹ <https://www.michbar.org/generalinfo/lawyersoath>

² <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45583.pdf>