

Greetings WCBA Members!

In my first President's message, I have the chance to reflect on all the changes we have undergone as a profession and as a county bar, and how we're moving forward.

Before I go into the changes, I would like to take a moment to recognize our outgoing president S. Joy Gaines. Joy did a tremendous job helping the Bar through a difficult second year of the pandemic. At a time when we could have seen members drift away, we saw the opposite. Our membership is strong, and we continue to hold great events that keep our members engaged. Thank you, Joy, for all your work as President and your contributions in the years leading up to that role. I have inherited a very strong Bar Association from you.

As for changes: so much has changed over the last two years. From everything we do at the Bar, to how we attend court, to how we socialize with friends and family. Our profession has adapted well. We are now pros at appearing in court by Zoom. By switching to remote hearings, the pandemic has exposed some of inefficiencies in how we work.

With Zoom court, we no longer spend time driving to court or sitting in the courtroom waiting for our case to be called. Zoom court has certainly improved my productivity and ability to help clients. Some mornings I go to court in three different counties without leaving the office! My clients appreciate the ability to Zoom into their court appearances, especially when they don't have to take a day off work for a five-minute court hearing.

But with greater efficiency through technology, we don't want to lose focus on what we're missing. As a younger lawyer, I would often meet lawyers in the community when I would sit around in court waiting for my case to be called. Back then, you would strike up a conversation with the lawyer next to you and build a relationship based on those chance meetings.

We're probably going to find a new way forward, one that will hopefully be better for everyone. The WCBA can help serve as that better way forward. Our Bar can help ensure we all continue to build relationships in the community. After all, that what the Bar is about: meeting new people and seeing old friends.

The pandemic at times feels like it is subsiding. Slowly, in-person Court has been picking up, though Zoom court may be here to stay for long haul. I don't like the phrase, "return to normal." Who knows if things will ever be "normal" again? And maybe the courts have found a pathway for hearings that's better than what we've been doing in the past.

There is no way to tell what the future looks like for the WCBA. I don't even know what the next year will look like. There may be times when we can hold in-person events and there may be times where it's prudent to rely on technology to keep us safe and productive. I do know that we came together these last two years to make the changes work, and now we can get through anything.

Updates and Events:

After a long two years, the Washtenaw County Bar Association held its Annual Meeting and Bench-Bar Conference. We had a packed house with over 150 people in attendance. It was wonderful to see people connect with old friends and people we hadn't see in what feels like forever. I'm hoping this is what the future looks like for the WCBA!

Our judges gave us updates on the states of their courts. As with everything in our world, the courts are in a state of transition. Will we continue with Zoom court or move back to in-person? That issue remains up in the air as COVID cases rise and ebb.

Our Golf Scramble is coming up on July 15 at the Lake Forest Golf Club. This outing is another event we haven't held in the last two years. Come on out! No skill level necessary. I've been practicing every Friday and will still need a Mulligan or two (or five). Keep an eye out for my first Speakeasy in early fall and plan to grab a drink with friends, new and old.