



By Kim M. Boyle

LSBA's Commitment to Diversity in the Profession

Two years ago, on Jan. 12, 2008, the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), through its House of Delegates and Board of Governors, approved the LSBA Diversity Statement for this association. In this milestone statement, the LSBA recognizes that “achieving diversity in the legal profession is an evolutionary process that requires the Association’s continued effort and commit-

ment.” Moreover, the Diversity Statement makes clear that “[t]hrough increased diversity, the LSBA and its members can bring more varied perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, talents and interests to the practice of law and the administration of justice.” (*Review, download and sign the statement online at www.lsba.org/diversity/diversityprinciples.asp.*)

As we are all aware, the legal profession has been a leader in ensuring access to the courts as well as equal opportunities for all, which are specifically part of the LSBA’s mission. Diversity is one of the specific goals of the LSBA’s five-year strategic plan. Consistent with this goal, for the past two years, the LSBA has hosted, along with local and specialty bar associations, an annual statewide diversity conclave for attorneys, judges and business leaders to discuss the importance of diversity and possible strategies for continuing to foster inclusive environments throughout our profession. Another conclave is scheduled in New Orleans in March 2010. Because of the importance of this LSBA goal, the LSBA expanded the diversity conclaves to other parts of Louisiana. A mini-diversity conclave was held in Lafayette on Oct. 14, 2009; in Baton Rouge on Nov. 3, 2009; and more will be scheduled in other parts of the state. I am proud to say that the Lafayette and Baton Rouge bar associations, as well as the Lafayette and Baton Rouge Louis A. Martinet Legal Societies, were co-sponsors of these mini-diversity conclaves and their members were active participants in these discussions.

The importance of these conversations in our profession is further reflected by the notable participants in the conclaves who have continued to address “the business case” for diversity. In addition to the participation of a number of judges on the

trial and appellate benches, law school professors, managing and senior partners at law firms, solo and small firm practitioners, as well as attorneys who are in government service, these panel discussions also included the Secretary of Economic Development for Louisiana, who is the former head of the Baton Rouge area Chamber of Commerce, as well as the vice president/general manager of Cox Communications in Louisiana. Both Stephen Moret and Jacqui Vines discussed diversity and inclusion from the standpoint of the economic impact on companies and industries in Louisiana, as well as recruiting companies to Louisiana. As the United States Supreme Court noted in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 123 S.Ct. 2325, 2340 (2003), the benefits of diversity “are not theoretical but real, as major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today’s increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas and viewpoints.”

Again, our goal is not for everyone to agree on all issues related to this important topic; the goal is for us to continue to engage in dialogues and not monologues, and continue to address these important issues. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that “good thoughts are no better than good dreams, unless they be executed.” Your LSBA continues to strive to execute our good thoughts and good dreams as our association grows and becomes stronger. “America is at its best when talent triumphs over precedent, when preconceptions make way for excellence—in whatever package excellence arrives.”

Louisiana State Bar Association Diversity Statement

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) recognizes that achieving diversity in the legal profession is an evolutionary process that requires the Association’s continued effort and commitment.

The LSBA is committed to diversity in its membership, Board of Governors, staff, House of Delegates, committees and all leadership positions. Diversity is an inclusive concept that encompasses race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability.

The LSBA is a richer and more effective Association because of diversity, as it increases our strengths, capabilities and adaptability. In addition, a diverse group of talented legal professionals is important to the success of law firms, law departments, public service organizations and other organizations that include attorneys.

Through increased diversity, the LSBA and its members can bring more varied perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, talents and interests to the practice of law and the administration of justice.

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