

# It's in Your Hands

By Edward J. Walters, Jr., 2025-26 LSBA President



I was walking through a food store the day I was sworn in as president and I saw a real newspaper.

It wasn't *The Times Picayune*, but I bought it.

I usually read my *Picayune* online, but that day I bought a hard copy.

I thought that day I would address all the great things that our Bar Association does, and what we do to help people in civil areas and criminal areas, access to justice areas, and all that we do to help *so, so* many people and we get *so, so* little credit for.

I was going to address what my plans are to improve the public's perspective of lawyers.

We sure need to improve what the public thinks of us.

Instead, I looked at the newspaper and thought, "Nobody prints, 'Bar Association's Access to Justice Program Helps Families in Need on a Daily Basis' or 'Bar Association Helps Bring Justice to Legal Desert Areas That Need Justice in Louisiana' or 'Bar Association Gives the Public Access to Justice in Courthouses and Local Libraries.'"

You are not going to read that.

It doesn't sell papers.

I was going to address what I plan to do to speak for our judges who get unfairly criticized and can't defend themselves. I have a plan for that, too.

We can be their voice.

I was going to address *all* that and then I looked again at that newspaper and I thought to myself, "We've all watched TV recently and wanted to turn it off and couldn't. We've all looked at what's in the newspaper every day."

For us lawyers and judges, and for the world, the rule of law is so much more important today than it has ever been before.

We all watch people who want to destroy democracy and do what they do to kill civilians and kill babies . . . and post it on social media, or what I call antisocial media.

They burn people up with Molotov Cocktails.

Unbelievably, people who hate our system of justice and rule of law are sending unsolicited pizzas to our judges, to say, surreptitiously, and impliedly, "We know where you live." They are even sending unsolicited pizzas to our judges' children, implying, "We even know where your children are."

Judges and public officials are wearing bulletproof vests.

This is some scary . . . stuff.

I don't mean this to be a downer, but this is the world in which we live.

So what does all this have to do with our Bar Association?

Well, our Bar Association is comprised of some of the nicest, smartest, most well-meaning "do the right thing for the right reason" people that I have ever met.

We – *OUR* Bar – have a duty to protect our judges and our lawyers, AND our system of justice.

I know YOU are proud to be a lawyer, or should be.

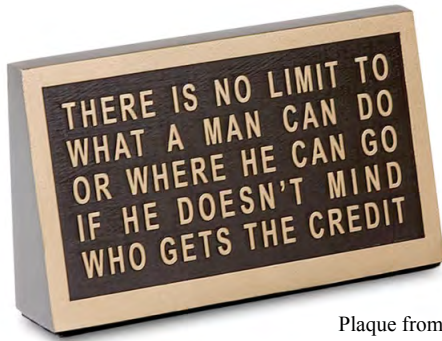
We just WISH we could educate the public . . . the WORLD . . . about the good we do EVERY DAY.

*We* protect the rule of law.

Now, we all worked hard to get here, we're all proud of what we do, and we look at our profession as a *calling* and we look at it as a great asset to our lives and the lives of our families, but it's also a great asset to the lives of our communities, our country and our world.

Feel proud!

Look at our current world, sad that it is. *WE* are the people that defend democracy and the rule of law under very difficult times.



Plaque from  
President Ronald Reagan's desk,  
provided by the Reagan Presidential Library.

Of the 56 people who signed the Declaration of Independence, there were 25 lawyers. Of the 39 framers of the Constitution, 34 were lawyers. Our Bill of Rights was written by a lawyer, James Madison.

Think about what we are and what we do and what we believe in.

We DID this!

WE!

US!

I've been trying jury cases in courtrooms across this country for almost 50 years, and I've been teaching at the LSU law school, with my friend Mike Patterson, for over 30 years.

Invariably, when I ask my fellow lawyers, and my law students, why they became a lawyer, or why they want to become a lawyer, I always get the same answer and the same answer is, "I want to help people."

*I want to help people.*

We hear about other democratic societies of our world – "small d" democratic societies of our world – who depend on the rule of law.

We *wrote* that rule of law. It's *ours*, US . . . lawyers.

We, the people reading this, defend that rule of law. It's us. We watch TV and we say, oh God, I'm glad that's not us. Oh, it may not be us right now, but it could be us.

If we don't take care to fight to protect the rule of law, what happens?

It's fragile. We can lose it.

I recall when I was in high school at Saint Aloysius High School in New Orleans, our teacher, Louis Levy, told us this quote and I'll never forget it: "Wake up, America, wake up. Rome fell. So can you."

That's true. The Roman Empire was the most powerful empire in the history of the world at that time.

It fell.

From within.

We need to wake up and be careful to protect the rule of law because we can look around the world and see what

happens in societies that don't protect the rule of law.

We have built what President Kennedy and President Reagan called "the City on a Hill."

In January 1961, President Kennedy, a lawyer, said, "We must always consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us today.

We are the City on a Hill constructed and inhabited by men and women aware of their great trust and great responsibilities."

The eyes of the world are on *US* today.

How are we doing?

Does this seem bigger than you?

It's NOT!

As President Kennedy said, "to whom much is given (*US*), much is expected."

And so to us – *WE* lawyers and *WE* judges – much has been given, and much is expected.

We, America, are that City on a Hill.

We designed it.

We sent it across the globe, and now we see that some non-democratic societies want to tear it down. We – the people reading this – are in charge of our democracy.

We thought it up.

Believe it or not, we're in charge of our world.

You are an INFLUENCER!

So go INFLUENCE!

Don't wait!

Look at today's news. We lawyers are on almost every page. Mostly good, not all good.

We designed this rule of law. We wrote it. It is ours.

*It is our greatest export.*

When you hear somebody tell you that they want to be a lawyer, or their son or daughter wants to be a lawyer, we're very proud, right?

Why?

Because that means they want to be like *YOU*.

They admire *you*.

They want to be like *us*. We're proud of that.

I'm proud to be a lawyer.

I'm honored to be your president.

We have a lot left to do here.

Let's *get after it* and support the people who protect our rule of law.

You are an Influencer, so go influence!

We can change the world, after all, we created it.

Get after it.