

Don't Wait! ...but, wait.

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

It's here.

TODAY is YOUR day.

Hemingway was right.

Having been around this block many times, I can tell you that it's gonna happen to you: You will have to make a very important decision that will affect you, your life, your career and, of course, your family.

I have been asked many times by many people, "What do **YOU** think I should do?"

I always give the following two pieces of advice.

Piece 1: Any decision you make after a careful, exhaustive "losing sleep," analysis with input from people whose opinion you trust and discussion with your loved ones is usually the right decision.

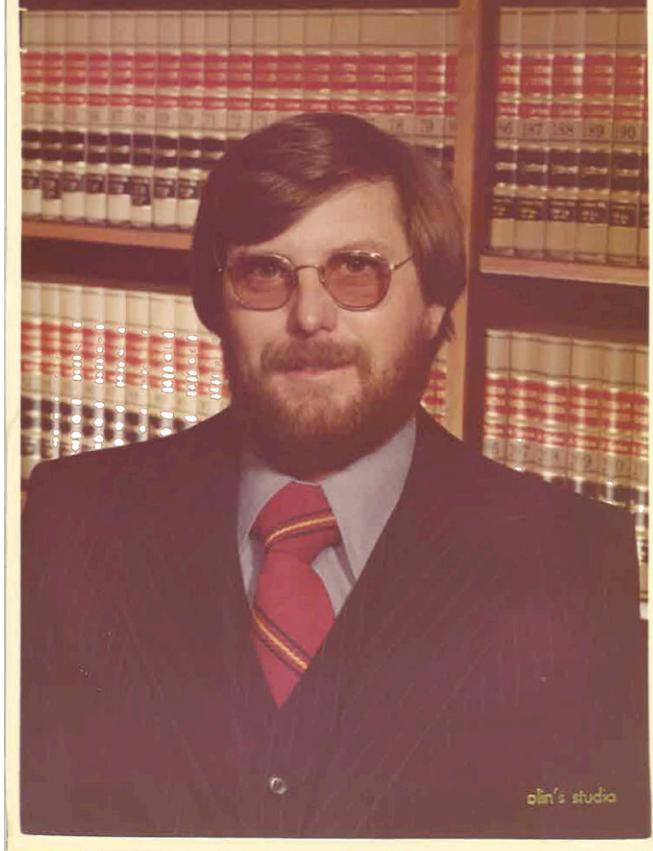
Trust that decision.

Piece 2: Once you make that decision, never look back. NEVER LOOK BACK. You made a well-thought-out personal decision. Move on. Hindsight is 20-20.

Unbelievably, while writing this article, I got a call from Minor Pipes, our LSBA President in 2021–22 (and one of my favorite students at the LSU Law School). I told him what I was writing and he suggested that I add this piece of advice:

Piece 3: But you gotta MAKE a decision!

True story.



1976 Era Edward J. Walters, Jr.

Yeah, you can anguish over a decision forever and ever and NEVER make one. Don't do that. You will always regret what you decided to not decide.

Not deciding IS a decision.

The "what ifs" will haunt you forever.

Here's how it happens.

You get a chance to make a change.

You look at it.

It sounds great, right?

You know some folks who are wildly successful because they have had the intestinal fortitude (courage) to make a change.

You also know some folks who are as dumb as a post who are very successful because they stayed where they were.

CAVEAT!

What if you are a legacy? Your dad or mom are at Wilson and Crusher. You HAVE to go there, right? It's where you MUST go.

Or you DID go there, right?

What now?

How can you leave Wilson and Crusher when your grandfather was Wilson, and your mom is a Crusher?

Back to the exhaustive analysis.

Speak to who left Wilson and Crusher. Speak to who stayed at Wilson and Crusher.

Why did they stay?

Talk to who left.

“ Today is only one day in all the days that will ever be. But what will happen in all the other days that ever come can depend on what you do today. ”

—Ernest Hemingway
For Whom the Bell Tolls

Why did they leave?

How did that work out for them? Why?

Family connections are strong, VERY strong. And compelling.

How strong are they considering your future and the future of your family?

You never want to disappoint your family, but you are seriously thinking about this change.

You've seen it almost every day. You know that lawyer. He or she is only successful because of who they are related to.

So what is my advice here?

Do it?

Don't do it?

Wait?

Don't wait?

Hey, ask around. You know people who left. You know people who stayed.

You know people who are happy with their decision to stay.

You know people who are happy with their decision to leave.

Find out why.

I know dozens of lawyers who have made this decision, including myself.

Actually, I know very few who have not made this decision.

I know very, very few who are where they started.

I am very happy for the ones who are still where they started. It means something about where they are and why they stayed.

I am very happy for the ones who did an exhaustive analysis and left.

It takes courage.

... but EDUCATED courage.

There's a reason they left or stayed.

They will tell you why.

They will be happy to tell you why, confidentially, if they trust you, which they should.

Ask.

MAKE the decision.

... but don't look back.

You will be proud of it.

... or you should be.

Here's how it happens again.

It will happen to you several times in your career.

You have to make a crucial decision in a legal matter.

You have to decide TODAY what to do.

One decision is best for your client.

One decision is best for your firm.

One decision is best for your future in your firm.

One decision is best financially for you.

... and if you do it "no one will know."

... but **you** will know.

You will have or have had these "opportunities."

You know you CAN do it. But SHOULD you do it?

You will sleep better if you make the right, ethical and professional decision.

If you have to think THAT hard about whether a decision is ethical or professional, it's probably not.

Ask someone whose opinion you trust.

Then MAKE THE DECISION and DON'T LOOK BACK.

Remember:

Ethics is what you HAVE to do.

Professionalism is what you OUGHT to do.

CHARACTER is what you do when no one is looking.

Have character.