



By Patrick A. Talley, Jr.

# Legacy of Leadership: Reflections on the Bar Year

*Editor's Note: As his term as president of the Louisiana State Bar Association comes to an end, Patrick A. Talley Jr. reflects on a year defined by progress and the collective efforts of a dedicated legal community. Under his leadership, the LSBA has remained steadfast in its mission of service—expanding member resources, strengthening its Access to Justice programs, and navigating an evolving legal landscape.*

*In this final Louisiana Bar Journal president's message, Talley sits down with LSBA Secretary and Louisiana Bar Journal Editor Valerie T. Schexnayder for a thoughtful discussion on his tenure. From key initiatives to lessons learned, he shares insights on the association's accomplishments and his hopes for its future.*

*As he passes the gavel, Talley expresses gratitude for the privilege of serving and confidence in the LSBA's continued success. Here, in his final message, he looks back on the journey and the road ahead.*

**Schexnayder:** Congratulations on a successful year as LSBA president. Reflecting on your tenure, how would you describe the past year for the association?

**Talley:** Thank you, Valerie. It's been a dynamic and productive year. I'm particularly proud of our work on

the new strategic plan for the Louisiana State Bar Association. While it's not officially approved yet, we have a solid draft that the Board of Governors will finalize soon. Of course, there have been many other accomplishments that I'm eager to discuss.

**Schexnayder:** Absolutely! How has the Bar addressed emerging legal issues like Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the practice of law?

**Talley:** AI is a transformative topic. I noticed its growing relevance a few years ago at national bar meetings. Since then, the ABA concluded that the existing regulatory framework sufficiently addresses AI concerns. In response, I formed a task force to evaluate AI's impact in Louisiana. The task force includes judges, practitioners, and experts from both local and national levels. Although their report is forthcoming, initial findings align with the ABA's position that the current regulatory framework is sufficient. I hope this initiative evolves into a standing committee to continue monitoring AI's role in the legal field.

**Schexnayder:** That's proactive leadership. What about access to justice? How has the Bar advanced this priority?

**Talley:** Expanding access to justice has been one of my primary goals. Our

flagship initiative, the "25 in 2025 Pro Bono Program," challenges every lawyer to commit 25 hours of pro bono service. This program will significantly benefit underserved communities, particularly in legal deserts where attorney access is scarce. Additionally, the upcoming ATJ Conclave in April will address ongoing challenges and explore solutions for legal service gaps.

**Schexnayder:** That's impactful. Lawyer well-being has also been a critical issue. How has the Bar supported attorneys in this regard?

**Talley:** Lawyer well-being is a top priority of mine. With over 25% of legal professionals experiencing burnout and depression, we've strengthened our collaboration with the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (JLAP). JLAP is developing a comprehensive wellness program including managing the stresses of the practice of law and juggling work-life balance issues. We're also looking at successful models from Texas and Florida to implement similar initiatives here.

**Schexnayder:** In your June/July 2024 Bar Journal interview, you highlighted lawyer wellness, access to justice, and AI regulation. Which initiative do you think resonated most with members?

**Talley:** Lawyer wellness has been especially well-received. There's a growing recognition of the importance of well-being within our profession. The JLAP program's development is promising, and I'm confident it will offer vital resources for judges and attorneys. AI remains an evolving challenge, and our proactive approach ensures Louisiana lawyers are prepared. And, of course, our access to justice efforts will continue to make a meaningful difference in underserved communities.

**Schexnayder:** Looking ahead, what legacy do you hope your initiatives will leave at the LSBA and what priorities would you like to see continuing to shape our future?

**Talley:** I hope the strategic plan we've initiated serves as a lasting guide for the LSBA. I've worked closely with Ed Walters, the incoming president, to ensure continuity. While I won't see everything completed during my tenure, I'm confident we've set a strong foundation for continued progress.

**Schexnayder:** Speaking of continuity, the "25 in 2025" initiative will extend into the next presidency. How do you envision its impact?

**Talley:** If attorneys commit to it, the initiative will create substantial positive change. Just 25 hours of pro bono work from each lawyer could significantly reduce the justice gap, particularly in legal deserts. It's a chance for our profession to demonstrate its commitment to community service and make a real difference for those in need.

**Schexnayder:** CLE programs are a significant LSBA offering. How does continuing comprehensive CLE programming benefit the LSBA members, and why is it important for you as the president to champion these opportunities?

**Talley:** Continuing education is vital to maintaining our profession's integrity and competence. I'm particularly passionate about ensuring professionalism and ethics remain central to our CLE programming. Additionally, I believe all attorneys, including those 65

and older, benefit from lifelong learning. Maintaining an active commitment to education strengthens our legal community.

**Schexnayder:** With so many initiatives reaching beyond the New Orleans and Baton Rouge metro areas—from the free Seven Points CLE seminars traveling across the state to specialized workshops—how do you see these programs collectively advancing our mission as an association? Was it surprising to learn that the LSBA president travels so widely?

**Talley:** The amount of travel has been surprising and demanding but it is also incredibly rewarding. Programs like the Seven Points CLE ensure that resources and educational opportunities are accessible statewide. Engaging directly with members in Houma, Baton Rouge, Covington, Monroe, Shreveport, Lake Charles, and Lafayette has been invaluable. It fosters a sense of connection and community within the LSBA.

Although this wasn't officially part of my presidential travel, the LSBA offered members the opportunity to participate in a Danube River Cruise CLE, and I opted to attend (at my own expense). It was my first time traveling internationally, and while I was a bit nervous about the long flight, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I'm now looking forward to more opportunities to participate in LSBA CLEs abroad in the future.

**Schexnayder:** As you know, I also attended that CLE and agree it was a great experience! It is wonderful that you embraced change, and you enjoyed it.

**Schexnayder:** Pat, during your presidency, did you have the opportunity to meet any notable or interesting leaders?

**Talley:** As president, I've had the privilege of meeting with influential leaders, including U.S. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett. While on a business trip to Washington, D.C., for my firm—unrelated to LSBA business—I arranged a meeting in her chambers. Justice Barrett was incredibly gracious and welcoming, generously extending

our conversation to twice the originally scheduled time. During our visit, I invited her to Louisiana to meet with the Bar, and she immediately accepted. We are honored to host her on April 7, 2025 for a lecture at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, followed by a reception at the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which the Louisiana Bar Foundation has graciously offered to co-host with us.

I also had the pleasure of meeting with Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry to introduce LSBA President-Elect Ed Walters and myself as LSBA leaders. We had a productive and engaging conversation, and we invited him to speak at the LSBA Annual Meeting & Joint LJC/LSBA Summer School in June. He enthusiastically accepted, pending his availability with the legislative session and his gubernatorial responsibilities. It will be an exciting opportunity for our members to hear from him.

**Schexnayder:** Reflecting on your presidency, what has been the most fulfilling aspect of your leadership?

**Talley:** The connections I've made with members across the state have been the most rewarding. While the responsibilities required me to spend less time practicing law, the opportunity to serve and collaborate with passionate legal professionals has been worth it. The experience has broadened my perspective and strengthened my dedication to the legal community.

**Schexnayder:** As you wrap up your presidency, do you have any final thoughts?

**Talley:** I'm deeply grateful for this opportunity. I've grown personally and professionally, particularly in patience and perspective. I leave this role with a renewed appreciation for the legal profession's role in serving the community. The initiatives we've launched will continue to make an impact, and I'm confident the LSBA will remain a strong advocate for its members and the public. Thank you for the opportunity to reflect on this incredible journey