



By Dona Kay Renegar

# The Legal Profession: It Is in Our Hands

Over the past few months, I have had the pleasure of traveling our state, meeting a number of our members, and recognizing the creative and meaningful ways lawyers are supporting our profession and serving their communities. As the last self-regulated profession in Louisiana, we alone are responsible for the administration, regulation, and reputation of the legal profession in our state. I have written previously about the great responsibility that falls upon us as lawyers to serve our members and our communities. The last five months have given me the opportunity to see how so many of you are championing our profession and dedicating hours of time and effort to serve your communities.

## Exemplary Pro Bono Efforts

Entergy Corporation's Legal Department, under the leadership of Executive Vice President and General Legal Counsel Marcus V. Brown, has committed to providing pro bono services to the communities it serves since 2012. For its tireless efforts, the Entergy Legal Department was honored in 2016 with the Corporate Pro Bono Partner Award presented by Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO), a partnership project of the Pro Bono Institute and the Association of Corporate Counsel. (Entergy received this award

in partnership with Orleans Parish Civil District Court and the Louisiana Civil Justice Center.)

Hilarie Bass, 2017-18 president of the American Bar Association, recently traveled to New Orleans to recognize the dedication of the 79 lawyers at Entergy Corporation. In 2016, those lawyers donated more than 2,000 hours of pro bono service and had an 85 percent participation rate in the pro bono efforts. Specifically, Entergy's lawyers staffed the Self-Help Resource Center (SHRC) at Orleans Parish Civil District Court. This help desk assisted thousands of unrepresented low-income and vulnerable domestic court litigants in the Greater New Orleans area. The SHRC exemplifies the value and creativity of leadership by in-house legal departments in the area of pro bono service.

Entergy also hosted a pro bono fair and invited several pro bono partners to speak to its legal team about future opportunities to serve citizens who live below the Federal Poverty Guidelines. One of those partners is Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS). SLLS and Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC), together serving every parish in the state, provide free legal representation for individuals whose incomes fall below the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

SLLS is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, recently commemorated

by a ceremony and panel discussion at the Louisiana Supreme Court. SLLS is nationally known as an exemplary legal service provider within the Legal Service Corporation. Under the leadership of its Executive Director Laura Tuggle, SLLS continues to investigate innovative and efficient ways to provide legal representation to as many qualified citizens as possible. SLLS's and ALSC's dedication to providing access to justice for all Louisiana citizens is a shining example to which we all should strive.

## Memorials and Legacies

The Shreveport Bar Foundation recently memorialized its members who have died this year and, at the same time, welcomed to its bar the newly admitted attorneys. I had the great pleasure of sharing in that ceremony with the members of the Shreveport Bar Association. I was struck by the tone of the ceremony. The association truly celebrated both the contributions to the profession each deceased member made and the unique personalities and styles they used to achieve those accomplishments. While tinged with sadness and nostalgia about the losses, the ceremony had a strong sense of hope for those young lawyers who are just beginning their professional journeys.

As I drove home from Shreveport,

I began thinking about what contributions I have made to the legal profession and how I would like to be remembered. While I have attended a number of memorial ceremonies in my years as a practicing lawyer, the Shreveport eulogies about successes and failures in and out of the courtroom and the humorous stories about each of their members touched me. I suspect that is a direct result of my increasing age which is easy to ignore. A young lawyer recently contacted me expressing that she was unhappy with her type of practice and asking for advice about making some changes. As much as I would like to think that I am young, her request for help made me realize that I have now been practicing for more than 25 years and am seen more as a “seasoned” attorney. In that moment, I recognized how I would like to be remembered — as a lawyer who supported the profession and her colleagues. As an experienced lawyer, my job is to reach back and lift up someone entering this honorable

profession. We should reach out to our colleagues, young or “seasoned,” who seek a mentor, advice, or support as they develop their practice or navigate the often rough waters of practicing law.

### **Become a Mentor!**

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) offers a formal mentoring program for newly admitted lawyers, matching them with seasoned lawyers in their area who can offer advice or support. The voluntary Transition Into Practice (TIP) Program, created by the LSBA’s Committee on the Profession, began in 2015 in New Orleans, Shreveport and Baton Rouge, per Louisiana Supreme Court order on May 15, 2013. In February 2017, the Supreme Court signed an order extending the program an additional two years and expanding the program to include new Bar admittees statewide. The LSBA conducts all mentor/mentee pair-

ings and mentor training and is responsible for the administration of the program. We currently have a pool of 256 mentors and 126 mentor/mentee pairings. A reception is conducted at the Supreme Court where mentees receive their certificates at the conclusion of the program. Feedback has been extremely positive and the program is a resounding success. This program strengthens our profession and illustrates the LSBA’s continued commitment to professionalism.

Years ago, many lawyers reached out to mentor me in the practice of law and, to every one of them, I am eternally grateful. I hope that I can return the favor extended to me and help the future legal leaders in Louisiana carry our noble profession onward and upward. I encourage all LSBA members to do the same.

*Dona Fenigan*



# **LSBA Midyear Meeting**

January 18 - 20, 2018 • Baton Rouge  
Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel

**For more information or to register, visit  
[www.lsba.org/MidyearMeeting](http://www.lsba.org/MidyearMeeting)**