

Opinions

President's Perspective

Opportunity and Obligation: My Year in Bar Leadership

By Richard B. McNamara

Serving as the New Hampshire Bar President has been a source of tremendous enjoyment, but it has also been a tremendous responsibility. When I began my year as NHBA President, I believed that it was both an opportunity and an obligation: the opportunity to ensure that all that our profession can bring to civic life and public discourse is heard, and the obligation to advance the interests of our profession.

With the help of this year's very hard-working and active Board, we have been able to accomplish a great deal. A few of the more important achievements are the following:

- The Board of Governors adopted the Work-Life Balance Canons, setting aspirational goals to help create an environment in which members of the profession learn to respect their own personal needs and each other's needs;
- The New Hampshire Supreme Court approved a new rule creating a Professional Lawyers Assistance Program to assist lawyers who have substance abuse and/or mental health issues. The Court approved the Bar's proposal to fund this program by reducing the \$50 Client Indemnity Fund payment to \$40, and having \$20 of that payment go to the Client Indemnity Fund and \$20 to fund professional staffing for the Lawyer's Assistance

Program. This program is on its way to implementation.

- We have worked to streamline the MCLE reporting procedures and to ensure that New Hampshire lawyers have a user-friendly system that makes compliance easier and minimizes the number of lawyers who are fined.
- We have created an award for Public Sector and Public Interest lawyers so that such attorneys can be recognized; the first award will be given out at the Midyear Meeting in 2008. We continue to work with a task force that is examining ways to make the Bar more relevant to those members working in public interest or government law positions.
- Our efforts to develop an expedited entry process for attorneys while preserving the need for courthouse security are finally bearing fruit. Lawyers have always expressed concern about the fact that they, as officers of the Court, are searched as they go through security. This causes problems, apart from delay, because frequently jurors and witnesses see lawyers



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being searched while police officers and, in some cases, prosecutors, are not. We have worked hard with sheriffs in the various counties to understand their security concerns and try to meet them.

On June 11, 2006, a long-awaited pilot project in Hillsborough County South began. At the Nashua courthouse, lawyers who have agreed to comply with security requirements spelled out by Sheriff James Hardy were given a magnetic card that enabled them to bypass the main weapons' screening area to enter the courthouse. (See article on page one.) Sheriff Hardy has been an innovator in this project in partnership with the Bar Association. We hope that a successful demonstration in Hillsborough South will lead to expansion throughout the state.

But by far the most important of all the things the Board of Governors has done this year is our work on promoting the value of the profession.

The NHBA adopted a Statement on the Value of the Profession in 2006. It appears on the NHBA's Web site. It says in part that "the legal profession is the institution which society turns to as the repository of legal knowledge and the history and development of the law, giving context and meaning to the letter and to the spirit of

the rule of law." These words are of vital importance to all of us. In a world that is becoming smaller every day, and in which values American lawyers take for granted – free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association, freedom from torture – are considered radical in parts of the world, the role of our profession is ever more important.

Over the last year, the Board of Governors and staff has worked tirelessly to help explain our profession, and to educate the public about the importance of the rule of law, and the value of lawyers. This critical task will, and must continue.

When I became President, I believed that I was taking on a stewardship. I was grateful for the hard work done by the preceding presidents – Rich Uchida, Jim Gleason, Russ Hilliard, and many, many more. They did their part to advance our profession and the rule of law. I know that in upcoming years, President-Elect Eleanor Dahar and Vice President Ellen Arnold will do their part. In my last column as President of the New Hampshire Bar Association, I ask all of you: Will you do yours?

Richard B. McNamara, a member of the Wiggan & Nourie law firm, turns over the NHBA President's gavel at the NHBA Annual Meeting, on Saturday, June 23, to Eleanor Wm. Dahar, of Dahar Professional Association, in Manchester.

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E-mail your letters and article ideas to Beverly Rorick, managing editor, at brorick@nhbar.org or call her at 603-224-6942.

Public Sector Award Will Recognize Service in the Public Interest

In response to a recommendation from the Public Sector/Public Interest Task Force appointed during the tenure of NHBA president Richard B. McNamara, a Public Sector Award has been created. The award, which will recognize the contribution of an attorney from the public sector/public interest area of law, will be presented at the award

luncheon at the Midyear Meeting. The Task Force has yet to establish the criteria for the award and the method of nomination, but both will be available soon. NHBA members are encouraged to start thinking about likely candidates and to watch Bar News and the NHBA Web site for further information as it becomes available.

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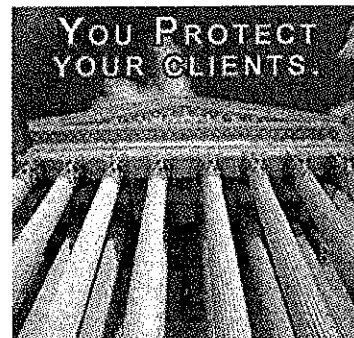
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