

# President's Message



## "Women Lawyers Continue to Opt Out"

By Meenu Sasser, President

In 1995, when I graduated from law school at the University of Pennsylvania, nearly 50% of my classmates were women. We were considered among the most successful and brightest law students in the country. At graduation, we had the world at our feet and my classmates headed to the best law firms in the country and to Federal clerkships.

Just over twelve years later, over 75% of the women in my graduating class are no longer practicing law with law firms. A significant number of them have opted-out of law firms and instead are working as in-house counsel, in government positions, part-time, or have opted-out entirely and are staying home with young children. While I greatly support all the decisions made by my classmates, I question whether the reason that so many of them have opted-out of law firms is because they have not been afforded some of the same opportunities that I have.

During my first pregnancy, I was pregnant with twins and was put on bed

rest for 3 months. Because of the great support of my law firm, I was able to continue to work from home. My assistant would send a courier to my house with my daily mail and type up my dictated pleadings, which I could then sign and would return for filing. I even managed to take a few depositions via telephone and attend one or two court hearings via telephone. Based upon the support I was given by my firm and my colleagues, I was able to successfully return to work after all three of my pregnancies.

While many law firms have similar policies in place and do promote their successful women attorneys, unfortunately, my situation is the exception and not the rule. Based upon recent studies by the MIT Workplace Center, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Bar Association, Boston Bar Association and the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts:

- Women make up only 17% of law firm partners;
- Women leave the partnership track in far greater numbers than men;
- Women stop pursuing partnership

because of the difficulty in combining work and childcare;

- Nearly 40% of women lawyers with children have worked part-time, compared with almost no men, even though men in the profession have more children than women in the profession do, on average.
- Women are "opting-out" of law firms in significant numbers.

The potential implications of women leaving law firms are significant. Having fewer women remain in firms will mean that there are fewer women who have the opportunity to assume senior legal positions and manage law firms, become judges and obtain leadership positions in the community.

Finally, this trend may affect opportunities for future generations of women lawyers. Just last week, my five year old daughter, Caroline, told me she wanted to be a lawyer when she grows up. We all need to make sure that all of our daughters will have every opportunity open to them in the future.

## MetLife

### Palm Beach County Bar Association Member Benefit Providers

#### Services Offered

- Disability Insurance (10% additional monthly benefit)
- Long Term Care Insurance (Discount available)
- Life Insurance
- Business Overhead Expense Insurance
- Group Health Insurance
- Group Dental Insurance
- Long Term Disability Insurance
- Retirement Planning

#### For More Information Contact

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## Board of Directors Meeting Attendance

	July Retreat	Aug	Sept
Bowden	X	Phone-in	
Doner	McCabe	X	X
Farach	X	X	X
Guari	X	X	X
Howe	X	X	X
Napoleone	X	X	X
Poulton	X	X	
Rabin	X	X	X
Sasser	X	X	X
Schuler	X	X	X
Suskauer	X	X	X