TO: Readers of Bar Leader Weekly

FROM: Pamila J. Brown, Chair, ABA Standing Committee on Bar Activities and Services

DATE: May 20, 2020

SUBJECT: A Message from the ABA Standing Committee on Bar Activities and Services

As Memorial Day approaches, and with it the unofficial start of summer, the yearly abundance of bar conferences, board meetings, and gavel-passings has, for the most part, all gone online. Even as bars are successfully transitioning to virtual programming, the flexibility and intentionalness with which bars must act is more than simply moving events to an electronic platform. It seems that as quickly as bar staffs moved to remote work, they are now preparing for a return to the office in the midst of altered strategic plans, overhauled budgets, and modified governance structures and practices, not to mention social distancing measures which change the workplace and how they manage volunteers. How we do things as bar leaders, both volunteer and staff, has changed and continues to do so, but our core mission to be of service to our members and the public remains the same.

And, so it is with the efforts of the ABA Division for Bar Services (DBS) as it continues in its mission to support bar associations nationwide. In the nine weeks since the cancellation of the annual ABA Bar Leadership Institute, DBS converted BLI programming to online webinars—thanks to all those who opted in—and collaborated with the National Conference of Bar Presidents (NCBP) on others; disseminated coronavirus-related news and “how to” information to bar officers and executives through Bar Leader, Bar Leader Weekly, and a new crisis management webpage devoted to COVID-19 resources; and managed clearinghouse questions on topics ranging from reopening guidelines to how to accommodate electronic voting by governance entities. In addition, the staff has facilitated the ongoing executive management and operations of the NCBP, the National Association of Bar Executives and the National Conference of Bar Foundations, all while teleworking.

As we move toward summer and what would have been the ABA Annual Meeting, we share with many of you the disappointment that bar officers and bar executives will be unable to meet in Chicago at the end of July. As a result of the cancellation of the meeting, the Standing Committee on Bar Activities and Services is postponing the application period for and the presentation of the ABA Partnership Award which recognizes bar association programs that support diversity in the profession. We expect to open the submission period for the award in July and hope to present the award at the ABA Midyear Meeting in February 2021. Watch for an announcement in an upcoming issue of Bar Leader Weekly.

In the meantime, DBS and the Standing Committee remain at the service of the bar association community. We look forward to communicating with you in the coming months and to providing you the resources and information that support bar association governance and management. As we take time to celebrate Memorial Day, in whatever fashion feasible, may the sacrifices of America’s military be an inspiration to all of us as we consider our own privileges and responsibilities.