August 8, 2019
Chair’s Message continued:

These attacks were but the latest in a series of mass shootings in America. The non-profit research group, Gun Violence Archives, tracks shootings and their characteristics in the United States. It defines mass shootings as an incident in which four (4) or more people, excluding the perpetrator(s), are shot in one location at roughly the same time. As of August 4, 2019, and excluding the El Paso and Dayton mass shootings, Wikipedia cites that in this time period for 2019 the U.S. has had 256 Mass Shootings, 283 people killed, and 1057 people wounded. Not all the targets are Latinos only. These mass shootings have targeted African Americans, Muslims, Jews, LGBT, school children, and innocent bystanders. No age is excluded from the violence. Mass shootings in the U.S. that have received media attention include: Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburg (11 killed), Parkland School in Florida (17 killed), Sutherland Springs Church in Texas (27 killed), Sandy Hook Elementary School in Conn. (27 killed), Pulse Nightclub in Orlando (49 killed), and the Las Vegas (58 killed) mass killings where people were enjoying a concert. The common denominator is, of course, guns and usually assault weapons which were designed for war most of which were legally obtained. The hateful rhetoric makes many members of diverse communities subject to these attacks.

In the past several years much of this hateful verbal rhetoric has been directed towards the Hispanic community. The intended result of the domestic terrorism directed against select groups is to cause fear and have these communities feel as if they have a target on their backs. Recently, a Hispanic Vietnam Veteran in El Paso said after the recent attack, he was made to feel as if he was not an American. A 17-year-old girl in El Paso, after the mass killings, commented that, “I never before had to come to grips with my own morality for being Hispanic.” No teenager should have to feel this way in America, and no veteran who fought for his country be made to feel as if he doesn’t belong in this country.

This indeed is a moral moment in our country where attacks against Hispanics, African Americans, Muslims, Jewish people, or because of a person’s sexual orientation is now common place.

Pursuant to the deadly weekend of August 3 & 4, 2019, ABA President Bob Carlson tweeted out: “This weekend we saw the tragic results of hate and violence. As we mourn the losses, we need to work together to end them. Our nation’s health depends on them. “

As the ABA Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities is to address the changes and responsibilities facing Hispanics in and within the legal system, our political leaders are urged to adopt the recommendations sponsored by the Section on Criminal Justice and the Young Lawyers Division and approved by the Board of Governors in 1989, which states: “BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association supports laws prohibiting the purchase, importation, domestic sale, transfer or possession of “assault weapon” firearms by private citizens....”

Richard Pena
Chair