Chair’s Message

Lucian E. Dervan

One of the greatest strengths of the American Bar Association Criminal Justice Section is the collaborative spirit created by bringing together members of the criminal justice community with diverse and differing perspectives and roles yet with a collective commitment to justice and fairness. Watching prosecutors, defense counsel, judges, academics, and others in the section work diligently together over the years to understand and address the most pressing issues facing the criminal justice system has been one of the great joys of my professional life. I am incredibly humbled and honored, therefore, to now assume the position of chair of the section, and I take very seriously my responsibilities to ensure that we continue doing this very important and necessary work.

The pressures of holding this position are increased by the knowledge that I follow Sandy Weinberg, who served as chair this last year. Sandy’s service and leadership to the section have been a testament to his commitment to thoughtful and balanced criminal justice reforms. Throughout his year, Sandy faced rapid developments that drastically changed the landscape of criminal justice. Each time, he responded by bringing the collaborative spirit of the section to the forefront through the creation of various task forces and working groups to examine the issues and to craft articulate and reasoned responses. Sandy’s initiatives delved into DOJ charging decisions, separation of powers issues related to marijuana prosecutions, border searches of digital devices, and the independence of the DOJ and state prosecutors from the executive. These timely issues lie at the heart of our criminal justice system, and I applaud Sandy’s work to quickly and thoroughly examine them through the lens of our section’s diverse and collaborative membership.

As we look towards the future, I hope to continue Sandy’s good works and ensure that the CJS remains deeply engaged in the issues that affect our criminal justice system. As this past year has demonstrated, many of the issues that will require our consideration remain, as of yet, unknown. However, I am committed and prepared to bring the rich experience and expertise of our membership to those issues when they arise over the next year. I believe it
is also important to focus on those issues that are not new but have concerned the criminal justice community for many years. During the coming year, I look forward to focusing on at least two such issues. First, we are convening a task force to examine the unique concerns and challenges faced by women in the criminal justice community. Second, we are convening a task force to examine the role of plea bargaining in our current system of criminal justice. As these task forces begin their work, I look forward to our section bringing these issues into the light and adding our voices and expertise regarding the best path forward.

In addition to working with us on various initiatives and projects, I hope you also will join us at our many upcoming events this year. In September, the section will host the fifth Southeastern White Collar Crime Institute in Braselton, Georgia. This is followed by the seventh London White Collar Crime Institute in October. Our Fall Institute in November will feature Judge Jed Rakoff, who will offer a morning keynote address and serve on a panel regarding the state of plea bargaining in our modern criminal justice system. The remaining panels at the Fall Institute will highlight the amazing work of several of our section's committees and include topics such as the role of the media in white-collar investigations, prosecutors as agents of change, and how to reduce implicit bias in the criminal justice system. In spring 2019, we look forward to the National White Collar Crime Institute, which will occur in New Orleans in March. In April 2019, I hope you will join me in my hometown of Nashville, Tennessee, for the CJS Spring Program. The conference hotel is right downtown near Broadway, Ryman Auditorium, and the Country Music Hall of Fame. We'll be enjoying the sights and sounds of Nashville and discussing, among other things, innovations in modern criminal justice and enforcement. Finally, we will hold the Third Global White Collar Crime Institute in Prague, Czech Republic, in June 2019. This successful program has introduced the section and its membership to new parts of the globe over the last several years and will continue to be a cornerstone of our international outreach efforts in the future.

There are many other wonderful programs scheduled for the next year, and I hope you will review them all on the CJS website.

I am excited for all that the next year will bring, and I look forward to working with each of you to advance the mission of our section. I hope you will reach out to me with your ideas on how we can collectively work to make our criminal justice system the best possible vehicle for justice and fairness. My most important role as chair is to empower you in your various projects and initiatives within the section. Therefore, my main goal for the year will be to bring you the tools to succeed. I thank you each for your important work, encourage you to continue in your efforts, and look forward to working with you all.

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