

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SEYMOUR W. JAMES, JR.

# Expanding Our Role on the National Stage

**I**t was a busy and exciting summer for the New York State Bar Association, with the American Bar Association's Annual Meeting standing out as a special highlight. We have been working to amplify our involvement in the ABA over the past several years, and the August meeting in Chicago included some wonderful milestones and special honors for attorneys in New York State.

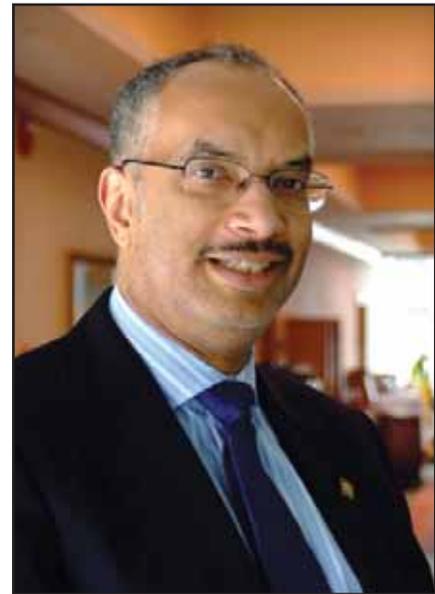
At every Annual Meeting, the ABA names a new president and selects a president-elect. After months of anticipation during his uncontested campaign, New York attorney James Silkenat was officially named president-elect. We are very proud to have a New Yorker, and a leader in our association, assuming the presidency of the ABA in August 2013.

Jim has been active with the State Bar and the ABA for years. He has been a member of the ABA's House of Delegates since 1990 and served as New York State Delegate and chair of our delegation from 2000 to 2009. Jim has chaired the ABA's Nominating Committee Steering Committee, its Section Officers Conference and its International Law Section, as well as its committees on Membership, Constitution and Bylaws, the Latin American Legal Initiatives Council and the ABA Museum of Law. He co-founded the ABA Solo and Small Firm Leadership Coalition and chairs the ABA's Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund for Minority Law Students Fundraising Committee. He has also served on the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession since 2008. In addition to his many ABA activities, Jim has served on the State Bar's House of Delegates since 1998, belongs to our

International Section, and has served on our Special Committee on Association Governance, as well as our Membership and Nominating Committees.

Jim continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to the legal profession through his extraordinary professional accomplishments and his many contributions to the State Bar, the ABA and the greater legal community. He has said that he will work to advance existing ABA priorities including state court funding, legal education, diversity and enhancing access to justice. He also hopes to address some new issues including immigration, gun violence, court reform and the death penalty. I am confident that the ABA will have a phenomenal year under his leadership.

Adding to the excitement surrounding Jim Silkenat's election, NYSBA received an ABA Partnership Award at the Annual Meeting, in recognition of our President's Section Diversity Challenge. The Partnership Award recognizes bar association projects that support the advancement of lawyers of color and other underrepresented populations in the legal profession. Our President's Diversity Challenge, established by then-President Vince Doyle when he began his term in 2011, encouraged our 25 Sections to develop and execute new diversity initiatives and evaluate their results. We were thrilled that the Sections did such a tremendous job embracing the spirit of the challenge and formulating unique and effective strategies for increasing their diversity. This tremendous honor is especially energizing as we enter the next phase of our Diversity Challenge – "Reaching the Next Level" – which will focus on quantifying our results



and further enhancing our inclusiveness.

This and other recent ABA meetings have also placed a spotlight on the achievements of individual NYSBA members and members of the New York State legal community, who have received several prestigious awards: Former NYSBA President Anthony R. Palermo of Rochester was honored with the John H. Pickering Award for distinguished service to the profession and his community; Amy W. Schulman of New York City won the Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award for excellence in her field and for paving the way for other women lawyers; Seth Rosner of Saratoga Springs received the ABA Michael Franck Professional Responsibility Award for his career efforts on behalf of legal ethics, disciplinary enforcement and lawyer professionalism; and Alexander D. Forger of New York City won the inaugural Alexander D. Forger Award for sustained excellence in HIV legal services and advocacy. In addition, the Appellate Division, Fourth Department, was recognized with the Pro Bono Publico

---

SEYMOUR W. JAMES, JR., can be reached at [sjames@nysba.org](mailto:sjames@nysba.org).