

## Serving the Profession, Serving the Public



From its beginning in 1876, the New York State Bar Association has had two main objectives: to serve the profession and to serve the public.

In the words of our 1877 Enabling Act, the Association was “formed to cultivate the science of jurisprudence, to promote reform in the law, to facilitate the administration of justice, to elevate the standard of integrity, honor and courtesy in the legal profession, and to cherish the spirit of brotherhood among the members thereof.” These words have stood the test of time, although today we would substitute “spirit of collegiality” for “spirit of brotherhood” to mark the welcome gender diversity of our 21st-century legal profession.

The first president of the State Bar, John K. Porter, said in 1877, again in the terms of the day, “Ours is an undertaking by practical men, and it is designed to be of practical benefit to the profession and to the community at large.”

Part of serving the profession is providing “practical benefit” to our members, helping them to be successful in their practices, to have the tools to serve their clients competently, and to conduct themselves professionally as lawyers. The priorities of our strategic plan are to increase the value

of the Association to members and prospective members; to use technology to communicate more effectively; to deliver products and services more efficiently; and to increase the overall value of membership in the Association. In a time when we hear that everyone must do more with less, our goal is to help you do more with more – more of the best CLE through our CLE Department and our 26 sections; more up-to-date, accurate information through our publications in print form and electronic searchable formats; more networking opportunities through our sections, committees and programs; and more web-based resources for your practices.

We continue to engage in various activities to serve the public interest. The leadership of the State Bar has traveled to Albany and Washington, D.C., to advocate for adequate funding of state and federal courts and to urge our congressional delegation to resist further reductions in funding of the Legal Services Corporation. We have lobbied at the state level for reforms in the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems to avoid wrongful convictions and ensure the fair treatment of young people. We have lobbied to provide access to justice for indigent defendants and indigent parties to civil actions involving the necessities of life,

and to amend the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law as recommended by our Business Law Section. We have provided training and support for local bar associations and lawyers dealing with legal problems in the wake of Superstorm Sandy and for legal services providers throughout the state. We have formed Task Forces on Gun Violence and Criminal Discovery and Special Committees on Human Trafficking, Prisoner Re-entry and Voter Participation.

The New York State Bar Association exists because more than 135 years ago New York lawyers decided that they could do more together to advance the legal profession and the interests of lawyers and to serve the public interest than they could accomplish separately. That remains true today. Together we truly can make a difference.

We invite your ideas and active participation as we continue to serve the profession and the public. Please send your comments and suggestions to me at the email address below. I look forward to working with you and serving as president of your association in the coming year. ■

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