

Annual President's Report

It has been an honor to serve this Association as its President. Our officers, board of directors, committee chairs and members have worked diligently this year and accomplished a great many things for our members and their clients.

We began the year with the goal of becoming "Better Together." This started by strengthening, expanding and diversifying our committees. We opened pathways for members to ascend to leadership through service on committees and created two new committees to focus on forensic science and technology. Two working groups were formed to address conditions of confinement and restorative justice.

We sought to become bigger because we became better. Efforts were made to improve member benefits and educate the public on what those benefits were. More benefits were added such as regular free webinars on important matters such as opening a criminal defense practice and a Monday Message from the President each week. We had our inaugural swearing in ceremony at the US Supreme Court at which 12 of our members were sworn in to practice before the Court. A President's Fund was created which funded approximately 70 scholarships for young attorneys with financial hardships. We created a working group to make the listserv more useful to our members. A goal of increasing membership to 2024 in 2024 was established and we are close to meeting that goal with 1900 members as I write this (94% of our goal).

We set a path for the Association to move into the third phase of a not for profit's growth to allow the board to focus more on long term planning and growth. To facilitate this, we launched a new website, began a search for a second employee and organized a Board member call day to speak in person to members. We established written requirements for board members and established the first ever new board member orientation program. The structure of board meeting was changed to allow for more time to be spent on deep dives into important issues. Our strategic plan was moved forward. We started the practice of inviting a young lawyer to each board meeting.

Financial responsibility was made a priority. The finance committee was created, and it implemented procedures for financial planning and investments. Smart Start was added as our principal sponsor.

Our growth in membership furthered the position and reputation we have statewide. This included a meeting with Chief Judge Wilson to discuss restorative justice and issues related to cases heard by the Court of Appeals. We were asked to weigh in on the procedures of the State Commission on Prosecutorial Conduct.

Our committees worked tirelessly. This included the hard work of the PJCC which filed many complaints with the state commission on prosecutorial conduct and submitted

comments on the proposed guidelines of the commission. Our Amicus Committee had many successes including an amicus brief relied on by the Court of Appeals in *People v. Bay*, the first Court of Appeals decision on discovery reform. Our CLE committee produced an incredible year of programming that was successful financially and academically. Our Motor Vehicle Committee worked tirelessly opposing the new DMV regulations and then educating members on their impact. Our Legislative Committee fought in Albany for changes; successfully fought against changes to bail and discovery reform and held off cameras in the courts.

None of this would have been possible without the support of everyone at my firm (Barket, Epstein, Kearon, Aldea & LoTurco, LLP) and my wife Melissa and daughters Alexis and Samantha. None of this could have been accomplished without our Executive Director, Jennifer Van Ort who has now served this Association for more than ten years.

Thank you for trusting and allowing me to serve the Association as its President. It was an honor and a privilege which has been one of the pinnacles of my career thus far. I look forward to remaining active as a past President and watching the Association continue to make the lives of our members and their clients Better Together.