

President's Message

JAMES S. RICHARDSON SR.

Parting Words

IT HARDLY SEEMS like a year since I drafted my first column as president of the Federal Bar Association. In that message, I discussed the necessity for continuity as we completed the first year under the association's then "new" governance structure. In the succeeding

months we have continued to explore the workings of the Board of Directors and have had two members join the board and make immediate contributions arising from their backgrounds with the FBA.

I have had the pleasure of attending FBA chapter functions in San Juan, Boston, New York City, Providence, New Orleans, Tulsa, Chicago, Sacramento, Cleveland, Boise, Norfolk, and Charleston as well as numerous functions in the District of Columbia with our three "local" chapters. In addition, we have had Board of Directors' meetings in Phoenix and Minneapolis, and I have attended judicial conferences for the U.S. Courts of Appeal for the Sixth, District of Columbia, and Federal Circuits. At the invitation of one board member, Hon. Gustavo Gelpi, I also had the unique experience of participating in the naturalization of about 400 new American citizens. These experiences have served to remind me of the breadth of the association and its role as the bar association best suited for the federal practitioner.

We have new headquarters space, which is efficient and "right-sized" for our staff. The building that houses this facility is located in a vibrant section of Arlington, Va., and will serve our needs for years to come, because the association's executive director designed the spaces for appropriate expansion. It should be noted that the move to this facility was accomplished with no diminution of service to our membership, chapters, sections, and divisions.

On the legislative front, we continue to be recognized as honest brokers for issues dealing with good government by the Congress. Our views on legislation are not merely accepted but requested by numerous committees during the drafting and hearing process. We continue to be the voice of the judiciary, ensuring that the third branch of government remains independent and adequately compensated. Even though we have not achieved the level of success for which we had hoped in the latter area, we are recognized as the "go to guys" on this issue—a tribute to our Government Relations Committee under the leadership of its chair, Larry Westburg, and our counsel, Bruce Moyer.

Looking to the future, I see great things for our association. Along with our new headquarters, we are about to launch our new information technology system. When this system is completed, we will be able to initiate new memberships and renew existing ones, members will be able to sign up for events, and we will all be able to communicate with one another in a secure online environment. Past President Kent Hofmeister has agreed to chair the Task Force on Sections and Divisions to examine each of the sections and divisions to see what works and what activities will make sections and divisions stronger.

My one concern is our membership, the number of which has remained stagnant at 16,000 members. We continue to recruit new members. However, our attrition rate appears to be about the same as our intake, and we need to examine why this is happening. In the coming months, my successor will determine whether a membership campaign is needed, or whether other activities will assist our retention rate. In either case, I believe that we stand on the verge of great growth as a bar association, notwithstanding the economic factors buffeting our country.

I now turn the office over to Juanita Sales Lee. She has been a great friend and longstanding supporter of both me personally and the Federal Bar Association. She is fully prepared to assume the mantle of the presidency, having served in many roles over the past years. I have every confidence that the association will continue on the path of success it follows today and will be stronger for her leadership in the coming year.

I wish to thank all of you for your work during my year as president. It has been a joy to visit with you. In the words of the Naval Service, I wish each of you "Fair winds and following seas." **TFL**



A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "James S. Richardson Sr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.