

President's Message

LAWRENCE R. BACA

Every Active Member Get a Member Active

THE FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION generates itself. As president, I've had the opportunity to attend several chapter and section programs as a speaker, and, of course, my local San Diego Chapter has invited me to participate in all its activities—from brown-bag lunches

with federal judges to the swearing-in ceremonies of the California Bar Association and the U.S. District Court. I was in southern Utah in October and in Washington, D.C., in November, and by the time you read this column, I will have spoken at the Hawaii Chapter's first (and, I hope, annual) conference. In each of these instances, it was important to have a representative from the national leadership attend the event and participate in the program. However, what is most important is the work done by local FBA leaders and other volunteers. It is your fellow FBA members who make those programs happen, including more than 700 hours of continuing legal education programming that the association offers every year. Some FBA programs are presented with the assistance of a very fine national FBA staff, but the majority of the effort comes from your fellow association members.

A program can be planned by a half-dozen people sitting around a table. For the elders among us, we are reminded of the Andy Hardy movies starring Mickey Rooney that included the spontaneous cry of "Let's put on a show!" It is easy to generate ideas. What comes next is the hard part. Inviting speakers means personal contacts, follow-up letters, and usually a couple of telephone calls and e-mails about getting materials submitted in a timely manner to meet the CLE requirements of the various states. Every program that you attended and enjoyed was put together through the work of your colleagues. Those materials that were handed out didn't happen by magic—other members collected and assembled them. Arranging for coffee and tea during the breaks and having the room set up properly are all done by volunteer FBA members.

The other day, I heard a member mention that he'd renewed his membership on time this year. He said to me, "Well, for the benefits I get from the Federal Bar Association, paying my dues on time is the least I can do." The question should not be what is the least that you can do, but what is the most that you can do. After you pay your dues, you need to "pay your dues." Our FBA members can create and re-create our association every day. At the swearing-in ceremony in San Diego, two members sat at a display table for

two hours discussing the FBA, its membership benefits, and its leadership opportunities with the 200 new lawyers who stopped by the table. It's a pretty simple but also pretty important task that volunteers undertake. At other meetings, you see members taking tickets, passing out CLE registration materials, and making sure people sign up for the proper state credit. Someone has to remember to bring the camera, take pictures for *The Federal Lawyer*, and get them transmitted to the staff. None of this seems like heavy lifting, but it is all crucial to the success of the program and to the attendees who receive the CLE credit. These everyday volunteers are the lifeblood of the FBA.

Last year, we worked to increase our membership with a program called "Member Get-a-Member." We believe that most of us have joined the Federal Bar Association because a friend or colleague told us about the benefits of membership. This year, we have launched the "2010 Chapter Challenge," a membership campaign that encourages chapters to increase their membership and offers the most successful chapters prizes (see www.fedbar.org/chapter-challenge.html). I want to institute a companion challenge. Let's call it "Every Active Member Get a Member Active." We want to recruit members to the association, of course, but we also want the members we have to get active. Paying dues should be the first step, not the ultimate goal.

So that is your next assignment from your association president. Within your chapter, section, or division, the next time you work at a program or event recruit a member who has never worked at one of the programs, get them to help organize, contact speakers, or just sit at the table and talk to prospective new members about the Federal Bar Association. Frankly, I think many of our most active members were once benchwarmers themselves until someone said, "Hey, can you lend a hand?" **TFL**



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence R. Baca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, looping initial "L".