

President's Message

WILLIAM N. LAFORGE

The *New* Federal Bar Association

SINGER/SONGWRITER BOB DYLAN got it right when he belted out the tune, “The Times They are a-Changin’.” Without question, I am finding that statement certainly applies in spades to the Federal Bar Association.

In my first President's Message in the October 2006 issue of *The Federal Lawyer*, I wrote about turning a page this year in the Federal Bar Association's history. Now, midway through my term of office, I am amazed at just how quickly that page is turning. Even more exciting are who and what I see on that new page—and on the bright horizon for our association. A new and changing FBA is beginning to take shape in several meaningful ways.

Building on the leadership and program strengths of the FBA's 87-year history, our association finds itself at a critical juncture as it bridges a successful past to the new challenges that lie ahead. Facing an ever-changing climate in the legal workplace and in the association world, we are striving to meet the professional, technical, and practice needs of the FBA membership of both today and tomorrow. Change around us is inevitable. However, key ingredients of the FBA's success in the years ahead will be understanding and responding effectively to those external changes as well as planning for and managing internal institutional and programmatic changes that make sense and bring value to our membership.

As more or less a midyear “State of the Association” address, I am pleased to report that the FBA is in one of the strongest positions it has ever found itself in terms of membership, finances, programs, and governance. And a lot of the underlying activity in those fields of endeavor is new or changing territory for the FBA.

In the area of membership, our numbers continue to hover at an all-time high, but we are still growing. We are instituting new policies to recruit new and involved members and to retain them. The Membership Committee is reviewing the demographics of our membership and helping to plan for a more relevant connection between our members and our programs in the years ahead, especially with respect to the mix of government and private-sector attorneys, and the need to improve the retention of members.

Financially, the FBA is on very sound ground, with excellent new planning mechanisms and effective management practices in place. New to our budgeting

process over the last couple of years has been the long overdue practice of building in contingencies. Our new dues structure, which was approved in 2005, has helped make this change possible, and it has also given us more certainty about revenue, which allows us to make plans and prioritize them. Our financial statements even have a new look, and we have streamlined our accounting system and made our revenue, expenditure, and asset sheets more user-friendly.

Programmatically, we have reached new heights in producing quality leadership training, continuing legal education programs, and other activities around the country. The FBA's leadership training programs for chapter, section, and division volunteers continue to top the list when it comes to innovation and the relevance of the programs we offer. An outstanding program, with a few new twists, will once again be conducted this spring for our volunteer leaders, who repeatedly tell us that leadership training is one of the best programs the association sponsors. Other examples of programs that are “spreading their wings” include the Labor and Employment Law Conference recently held in Puerto Rico and the Criminal Law Conference scheduled for May in New Orleans.

The FBA's national meetings are undergoing a serious makeover. For both our midyear and annual meetings the Board of Directors is considering new formats, program content, and activities that will focus in a more targeted fashion on our chapters, sections, divisions, and committees, while also preserving the concept and need for plenary sessions to discuss major topics and lend consensus to the organization's decision-making and priority-setting. Our national meetings should present a positive showcase of our programming and the good things that the FBA does and also provide an excellent opportunity for professional networking and development. The goal is to make these meetings more relevant, substantive, and meaningful for our members.



MESSAGE continued on page 4

Our new national governance structure is soundly in place, and we are now tweaking the process so that we can serve our members better and take full advantage of the outstanding volunteer leadership the new system has produced. The Nominations and Elections Committee has recently reviewed candidates' credentials and recommended a slate for new national officers, board members, and circuit vice presidents; and our national election for the next fiscal year is just around the corner.

The new leadership that the membership elected to the Board of Directors in 2006 consists of an impressive array of professional colleagues from around the country with whom I am very proud to be associated. The new look and makeup of our board are already paying dividends as we map out the future of the FBA. Although 12 of the board members are elected from four categories of membership representing the FBA's basic core constituencies (chapters, sections and divisions, circuit vice presidents, and younger lawyers), those individuals, just like the three national officers that round out the 15-person board, represent and serve all FBA members and the FBA at large, and they check their candidate category at the boardroom door when they are considering national policy and making decisions for the association.

Because of its diverse, broad-based nature, the Board of Directors is serving the association very well. Of the 15 elected members of the board, eight work in the private sector and seven are government lawyers, representing all three branches of the federal government, including military service. Geographically, board members hail from every section of the country, including Puerto Rico. The ethnic, age, and gender mix of our board is very favorable and representative of our membership. As we see leaders emerge in our chapters, sections, and divisions, we should continue to benefit from new "farm systems" that are beginning to take shape and that should provide a healthy new infusion of national leadership for years to come.

The inaugural Board of Directors has met three times since the 2006 Annual Meeting and Convention held in Las Vegas in August and will meet on three more occasions prior to the next annual meeting in Atlanta. One unique, new feature of each board meeting is the addition of an issue forum—a designated time period for the board to study and discuss a topic of major importance to the association that goes beyond the immediacy of the current agenda.

New to the FBA is a fresh, future-oriented look of our Younger Lawyers Division that is engaging in areas that were unexplored until recently. Historically, the association has challenged the YLD to pioneer and conduct unique programming that resonates with younger lawyers, and our youthful leadership continues the legacy of exceeding those challenges. More younger lawyers are actively involved at every level of

the FBA's operations than ever before. In addition to having five younger lawyers on the 15-member Board of Directors, the YLD has members who are fully engaged in every aspect of the planning, programming, and governance of the FBA, including involvement on our two key task forces studying the future of the association and reviewing our sections and divisions. Today's FBA leadership understands that these younger lawyers *are* tomorrow's FBA.

For the first time in recent memory, the association is undergoing an honest internal evaluation of our current structure, programs, and operations, with an eye toward preparing to meet the new challenges of the not-too-distant future. Spearheaded by a special task force, this approach is totally new, and the national leadership is finding it to be a very productive and refreshing enterprise that should produce some great outcomes. Stay tuned for some amazing results from the FBA's Task Force on the Future, which will be providing its interim report at the midyear meeting on March 24.

Similarly, new in the world of sections and divisions is a thorough organizational and operational review that should result in making the FBA more meaningful and valuable to our members. Ineffective or moribund sections will be eliminated, and only new sections that bring value to the association and our members will be added. The Task Force on Sections and Divisions is giving a whole new meaning to the terms "reform" and "new direction," and it will also be presenting an interim report on its findings and recommendations at the midyear meeting.

And a physical change is coming for the association. We will soon have a new home! With the concurrence of the FBA's Board of Directors, the Federal Bar Building Corporation sold our former headquarters building at 2215 M Street in downtown Washington, D.C. By the time you read this column, the FBA should be in temporary facilities, with the expectation of moving to a permanent location late this year in nearby Northern Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington. This new, bold relocation is a very prudent move for the FBA, because it will preserve and maintain a national headquarters in the greater national capital area (in a major business corridor near a Metro stop and Reagan National Airport) while also wisely applying our capital resources to enable us to own, maintain, and operate a headquarters facility. Not only will our new headquarters be operationally top-notch, it will also be a wise financial investment for the FBA.

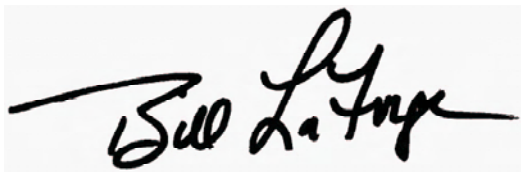
Once the association has settled into a new permanent home, our headquarters operation will be in a position to continue our move toward an upgraded set of computer and communications technologies that will allow the FBA to serve its members, chapters, sections, and divisions much better. With our

improved capabilities and very competent headquarters staff, you may have already begun to notice an increase in the number of e-mails, reports, advisories, planning documents, list productions, generated correspondence, and other features and results of our new computer software, and we are looking forward to rolling out the new FBA Web site in the near future. Remember that we encourage both your engagement with us online and your suggestions for improvement. Go to www.fedbar.org and check us out.

In the area of FBA involvement and outreach in matters of public policy, the association, especially through its Government Relations Committee, has not only maintained the established high level of engagement on several issues confronting federal lawyers and the federal courts but also extended itself in new ways that have increased the FBA's credibility and visibility in the nation's capital. As examples of newly established relationships with key Washington policymakers, FBA leadership has met with officials in all three branches of the federal government, including consultation with the U.S. Judicial Conference and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, and we continue our practice of involving government leaders in FBA programming.

In sum, prudent changes based on a solid historical foundation are resulting in a new look, new governance and leaders, new direction, new ideas and programs, and even a soon-to-be new headquarters facility—all of which make for a *new* and exciting FBA of which we can all be very proud. This year is still very much a work in progress, but the turning of this year's page in FBA history—and a new, refreshing approach to find ways to ensure a bright future for the association—is already revealing dynamic changes and plans for our organization that should serve our membership well for years to come.

Welcome to the *new* and changing FBA! And stayed tuned! **TFL**



THERE IS A BETTER WAY TO KEEP THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE TURNING...



... WITHOUT MAKING ATTORNEYS TRAVEL TO COURT FOR A BRIEF APPEARANCE.



CourtCall[®]
TELEPHONIC COURT APPEARANCES

Find out how COURTCALL[®] can offer your Court a simple and Innovative Solution for TELEPHONIC APPEARANCES at no Cost or Expense to the Court.

Join the hundreds of other Courts that trust CourtCall[®] to handle their Telephonic Appearances.

- Enhance courtroom efficiency • Program tailored to individual Judge
- State of the art technology provided to the Court at no charge
- No change in Judge's schedule • No burden on courtroom staff
- Reduce travel time and save money

YOUR COURT'S SOURCE FOR TELEPHONIC APPEARANCES

Federal, Bankruptcy and State Courts Nationwide

Enron PG&E United Worldcom Aldephla

PUT OUR EXPERIENCE TO WORK FOR YOUR LEGAL COMMUNITY!

Call for Details:
888.882.6878

www.courtcall.com