

Commitment to Professionalism Critical for All Attorneys



Hate is in the headlines and fills social media feeds almost daily. A great deal of it—at the state and national level—drills in on a few lawyers acting badly or harming their clients.

It would be easy to feel despondent and start to believe that image is all there is to our profession.

I don't buy that notion.

The vast majority of New Jersey lawyers more than deliver on the ideals of our profession every day. They do it as a matter of course. It's simply a part of who we are, what we do, and how we work and live our lives.

These are people who dedicate themselves every day to helping others resolve heart-breaking disputes with grace and diligence, and never lose track of the critical role lawyers play in our society.

I see it in my travels around the state to meet with New Jersey State Bar Association members. It was even more apparent earlier this fall, when dozens of attorneys were honored at the New Jersey Commission on Professionalism in the Law's Professional Lawyer of the Year Awards Luncheon.

As each stood to be recognized, I was reminded of the great things lawyers achieve in our society. These are people who dedicate themselves every day to helping others resolve heart-breaking disputes with grace and diligence, and never lose track of the critical role lawyers play in our society.

As we enter the season where there is a little less light in the sky every day, I share with you the words of a few of those honorees about what professionalism means to them. They shine a light on our profession, and their words provide a bright spot to focus on in this often-chaotic world.

"As a criminal defense attorney, particularly as a public defender, I stand with frightened people in their darkest hour; I am often the only one who does. My duty is my privilege."

Judith B. Fallon

Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

"The thing that inspires me about the legal profession is unity, even during times of adversity. Lawyers have come together, regardless of political affiliations, to support the promotion of diversity throughout the state of New Jersey."

Sharmila D. Jaipersaud

South Asian Bar Association of New Jersey

"I am deeply inspired to be part of one of the very few professions that allows one the opportunity to provide a lifeline to people in difficult situations. I also value working with other dedicated members of the legal profession to foster and promote the fair administration of justice."

Carolyn B. Uliase

Gloucester County Bar Association

"The first thing that inspires me about our legal profession is the important difference we make each day in the lives of the public we serve. The second inspiration is that as professionals, we are equal before the law, and measured only by our abilities and character."

Robert B. Hille

Bergen County Bar Association

These wise words are embodied not just by the honorees, but by so many people in the New Jersey legal community. I urge each of us to double down on the ideals of our profession and be the examples we want to see in the courtroom, across the table at mediations, and at client meetings.

I have concluded all my speeches and articles with the same entreaty: Do good and do well; and to be good to one another. I repeat it here and encourage you to make it your professional mantra because together, we can truly make a difference. Believe it. ☪