

# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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## In the Year Ahead, the NJSBA Will Focus on Key Issues Facing Legal Profession



I am honored to serve as the 116th president of this great association.

I have been a proud member of the New Jersey State Bar Association for decades, but my journey to serving as president began in 1997 when I became the Sussex County trustee. In the ensuing 17 years, I have been repeatedly asked one question: “What does the State Bar

Association do for me?”

This is my abbreviated answer.

I belong to the NJSBA because it has made me a better attorney. It is that simple. My involvement has enhanced my practice in ways I never imagined. I have been privileged to create personal and professional relationships with judges, justices and talented attorneys far from my northwest corner of the state. I have enjoyed world-class continuing legal education taught by the absolute best and brightest.

Through our *amicus* efforts, we have been involved in every significant legal issue to face our state. We have earned the respect of the Court. We serve as the proud voice of all New Jersey attorneys. Whether you are a solo practitioner, a member of a small firm, a large firm or work in the public sector—whether you are from Cape May, Newark or Sparta—it matters none. We shy away from no issue. No matter your practice area, it is likely we have intervened to address an issue that helps you.

Arguably one of our most important committees is our Judicial and Prosecutorial Appointments Committee. This committee is comprised of leaders from every county. These unsung heroes volunteer countless hours to help ensure we continue to have the most qualified attorneys represent us as prosecutors, judges and justices of our Judiciary.

And as your president, I am committed to continuing the proud and important fight so masterfully fought by Immediate Past President Ralph Lamparello, together with the hard-working members of the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees, to preserve the independence of our precious Judiciary.

While we have achieved an important victory with the recent announcement that Gov. Chris Christie will reappoint Chief Justice Stuart Rabner, our work is not done. We will urge the Senate to expeditiously provide the necessary advice and consent for his reappointment and the adoption of the constitutional amendment proposed by former Justice Gary S. Stein. Both acts are necessary to preserve the independence of this third co-equal branch of government—the crown jewel of democracy.

Beyond these noteworthy accomplishments and grand goals, the citizens of our state and the attorneys who represent them deserve a Judiciary where partisan politics does not artificially create vacancies in the rank and file of our bench. Judicial vacancies hurt people and tear at the fabric of our civilization.

Andrew Jackson once wrote that: “All the rights secured to the citizens under the Constitution are worth nothing, and a mere bubble, except guaranteed to them by an independent and virtuous Judiciary.”

It is that fragile bubble that we must vigilantly protect.

### Reaching Out to Help

In keeping with the proud tradition of helping our brothers and sisters, this year I asked the board to approve the creation of a Lawyers in Transition Committee. This committee will help those among us who are in the midst of professional transitions. For many in our industry, these are still challenging times.

To assist our colleagues confront these changing realities,