

# DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

The New Jersey State Bar Association is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive bar association, and bar leaders play an integral role in achieving that goal.

The NJSBA recognizes that the broad concept of diversity includes race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age and disability.

The Association has taken concrete steps to making the NJSBA more inclusive.

In the late 1980s, the association created two at-large trustee positions that were reserved for attorneys from underrepresented groups. Today, there are eight at-large seats on the NJSBA Board of Trustees for these underrepresented groups: Hispanic, Asian-Pacific American, African-American, member of the LGBT community, senior lawyer over 70 years of age, women, or attorneys with disabilities.

More recent efforts to institute systemic reforms to ensure the bar association would attract and retain a diverse membership can be traced to Cynthia M. Jacob, who served as president from 1996 to 1997 and made diversity and inclusion a key theme and major initiative of her tenure. As part of her initiative, she asked the General Council Executive Committee to study ways in which the NJSBA could strengthen diversity in the leadership and membership. From that work emerged the Diversity Committee, a standing committee of the association that promotes and nurtures diversity through relations with the affinity bar associations and all Association sections and committees.

In 2015, the NJSBA Board of Trustees approved an updated diversity and inclusion statement that reflects a strong vision and commitment for long-term sustainable progress, a NJSBA Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and Individual Checklist. All of these items may be found in the appendix to this manual and on the NJSBA website.

Under the plan, each Division, Section and Committee is encouraged to:

- Adopt a diversity and inclusion plan consistent with the objectives of this Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
- Complete an Individual Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Checklist.
- Monitor and track the number of diverse individuals that participate in its respective programs and events as speakers, moderators and panelists.
- Monitor and track the number of its training and education

programs that address diversity and inclusion issues, whether as a sole focus or as an integrated part of their meeting agenda and/or CLE programs.

- Seek out diverse presenters in the Division/Sections/Committees to participate in CLE programs or other bar-related events, including Mid-Year and Annual Meetings.
- The Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement works with the association and extended legal community to develop initiatives that advance an inclusive profession.

Initiatives of the office have included:

- A **Diversity Newsletter** that addresses equity and inclusion issues in the law through scholarly articles, book reviews, and commentary pieces. The publication also highlights and commends notable individuals from the legal profession who have made an impact on the advancement of diversity and inclusion in the profession.
- The creation of a diverse speaker database that may be used by the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education and other entities in programs and events.
- A speaker series that, in conjunction with the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education and the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, brings notable diverse voices to the bar association to share their stories with the New Jersey community. Distinguished speakers have included Carlotta Walls Lanier, John Quinones, James Dale, John Marshall, C. Vivian Stringer, Simon Tam, Sarah Collins Rudolph and Jarrett Adams.
- An educational pipeline program to encourage students to consider a career in the law. The program has run with collaboration from NJSBA sections, committees and division, the New Jersey diverse bar associations and the local county bar associations. Past events were held with Atlantic City High School, Big Brothers and Sisters of Mercer County, Three Doctors Foundation and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Newark and Atlantic City.

If a section, committee or division is interested in participating in any of the above initiatives, or learning more about ways to increase diversity and inclusion within their group, please contact Paula Saha, Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, at [psaha@njsba.com](mailto:psaha@njsba.com).