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In Service to Members

I harbor a suspicion that the first notice many of you received that you had a new Bar President was when the July/August issue of this magazine arrived in your in-boxes. Well, you do, as of July 1. That would be me. Last month's issue told you a few things about my background and experience. This column, my first, will tell you a few things about what you can expect as the ensuing year unfolds.

I, and the other members of your Board of Governors, remain highly cognizant of the fact that, while not astronomical, the annual dues you pay to belong to the State Bar of Arizona are not insubstantial, and that you have little choice about paying them. By Supreme Court rule, all of us must belong to this organization if we want to pursue our chosen profession in Arizona. That places on us a special responsibility to attempt to provide value commensurate with the amount of the annual dues you pay. It is that goal that will guide my decisions in the coming year.

With that in mind, you will hopefully see the initial rollout of our statewide lawyer referral service. This service will be coordinated, and not compete, with the existing services operated by the Maricopa and Pima County

Bar Associations. In fact, representatives of those two organizations have attended all the planning sessions for our service, and they are currently engaged in discussions to establish operational protocols that will make sure that it complements their existing services. Although the primary focus of our service will be on counties other than Maricopa and Pima, through collaboration with the Maricopa and Pima County Bar Associations, the service will be a vehicle for serving the needs of members of the public requiring legal services, and of lawyers in need of clients to serve on a statewide basis.

We will also continue our diversity initiatives, as outlined for us by our Diversity Task Force, which has already accomplished a truly astounding amount under the leadership of Sal Rivera and Herb Zinn, and will continue to function. By the time this column appears, the Bar will have hired a full-time Diversity Director, and the Task Force will be on the

verge of conducting the opening session of the Bar Leadership Institute, due to the Herculean efforts of Mari Valenzuela. The Institute is an intensive year-long program designed to provide a select group of interested young lawyers with the tools to become effective leaders in the profession. We hope it will be an annual exercise. Our commitment to diversity remains strong. This organization exists to serve all of its members; there should be no artificial barriers to participation in it. It really is that simple.

I also hope to put in place a structured vehicle for soliciting and receiving input from all members concerning what services you want and need this organization to provide. In the past, surveys of the membership have been occasional and issue-specific. We need to have in place a system for learning from our membership what services they want the Bar to provide so that we can make informed decisions concerning our future course.

There are other challenging issues on the near horizon. The composition of our membership is changing. It has been estimated that, by the end of my term, we will have more than a thousand members over age 70. For the first time in our history then, we will have an active membership that includes five generations, each of which has particularized needs that may require customized solutions. On a different subject, should we require the registration of the currently unknown number of lawyers practicing as in-house counsel? Finally, how should we respond if the Supreme Court authorizes admission of lawyers from other states on motion?

All in all, it looks to be an interesting year, so stay tuned. If you have any thoughts about these issues, you can reach me at daniel.mcauliffe@azbar.org. 

