WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30, 2021 | SERVING CHICAGO'S LEGAL COMMUNITY FOR 164 YEARS | CHICAGOLAWBULLETIN.COM

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

VOLUME 167

LAW BULLETIN MEDIA

Business development, diversity key at ISBA

SPECIAL TO THE LAW BULLETIN

As the 145th president of the Illinois State Bar Association, I am incredibly excited to lead the association as we turn the corner on the COVID-19 pandemic and create a new normal. As such, a number of my presidential initiatives will address how we at the ISBA help the Illinois legal community move forward.

I am excited to announce that the ISBA has found itself in the fortunate position to provide all current, regular dues-paying members with a 15 percent dues credit for the 2021-22 bar year. Although the past year was challenging for the organization in many respects, we were able to reduce expenditures due to a lack of travel and transition from in-person to virtual meetings. The dues credit serves as a "thank you" to all of our members who showed their loyalty throughout a very difficult year.

Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Anne M. Burke administers the oath of office to new Illinois State Bar Association President Anna P. Krolikowska. — Photo courtesy of the Illinois State Bar Association

Another key initiative is the ISBA Business Institute, which will feature a number of programs designed to help new and experienced attorneys enhance their business skills and acumen. Topics will include marketing services to clients; essentials for starting a practice; using business decisions to increase profits; and capitalizing on change. This initiative became more relevant and timely as the legal profession struggled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that these programs will help our members rebuild and strengthen their practices.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) will continue to be an utmost priority for the ISBA during my presidential year. The ISBA is in the process of interviewing and hiring DEI consultants to provide recommendations so the association can implement meaningful changes as quickly as possible. There are numerous components to this initiative, and we anticipate that it will be a multi-year process. As a starting point, I was intentional during the appointment process to the ISBA section councils and committees about increasing diversity representation. We will continue the good work of the ISBA Leadership Academy focused on identifying and teaching the next generation of diverse ISBA leaders. We are also going to host continuing legal education programs on implicit bias and inclusion. Finally, the important work of the ISBA Steering Committee on Racial Inequality will continue.

We are also planning life-work and wellness programming for ISBA members and their significant others, as well as an event for women in the legal profession.

We will incorporate into our best practices the lessons learned from the pandemic. Although many in our profession were hesitant to embrace technology, in some respects the pandemic forced our hands. Attendance and participation in our section council and committee meetings has increased to 90% to 95%. Technology has also allowed ISBA members throughout the state to participate in the work of our association without the need to sacrifice work or family time. We will continue to conduct our section council and committee meetings virtually.

However, we recognize that many of us are ready and yearning for a return to some in-person interaction with our colleagues. Thanks to the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine, and decreased positivity rates, we are able to venture back into some in-person events. I am happy to announce that the ISBA will be hosting a series of in-person member appreciation events. We will kick off this series with an outdoor member appreciation event at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle. We will host our second in-person social event in Springfield this fall.

ISBA members can also expect to see a return of the in-person Midyear Meeting this December in Chicago. We will be closely monitoring health guidelines to ensure the safety of our members and will provide additional information about the meeting as it becomes available.

In closing, I am thrilled to lead the ISBA during a pivotal year that will no doubt pave the way for positive changes within the legal community.

Anna P. Krolikowska is the new Illinois State Bar Association president. She is the owner of Anna P. Krolikowska P.C.

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