

Change is in the Air

Let's start with the proposition that change can be difficult and for some, it's especially hard. For a long time, I was one of those people who reacted negatively to people who would encourage me to embrace change. Why would I want to do that? If things are humming along nicely and I'm comfortable with the status quo, why implement change?

Someone once told me that life is what happens when you are planning it. And life is what brings us change, whether or not we are ready for it. I have also learned that sometimes a big, widespread change is much easier to accept than those smaller tweaks we make or experience. But as I have put some life experience under my belt, I have come to understand that change can definitely be a force for the positive.

This year has undeniably been a year of change. Just as I was settling into my term as LBA President, Scott Furkin let me know that he would be retiring at the end of 2021. As most of you know, Scott has been the LBA executive director for over 14 years and has led the organization through thick and thin and some significant challenges. Having experienced changes in leadership in my professional life, I knew Scott's decision would be impactful for both him and the LBA. So, the Executive Committee rolled up its proverbial sleeves and worked to make this transition as easy as possible for Scott, for the LBA membership and for Scott's successor.

We needed a definite strategy for this endeavor. The LBA Executive Committee created a search committee tasked with pulling the laboring oar on this project. My many thanks go to Angela Edwards, Seth Gladstein, Susan Phillips, Leo Smith and Peter Wayne for all the hours they volunteered and spent serving on this committee with me. It will come as no surprise to anyone who knows them that the process was much smoother and better for their involvement and I greatly appreciated their thoughts and insights as we soldiered through it.

The search committee engaged an executive search consultant and gathered input from several different stakeholders within the community regarding qualifications and skills for a new LBA executive director. We received numerous applications for the position from across the country from candidates experienced in not-for-profit leadership, including a couple who had bar association experience, and slowly winnowed down the candidates through a series of interviews. The final two candidates, both highly qualified, met with the Executive Committee and the LBA staff for a presentation and interview before a final recommendation was made to the Board of Directors. After this six-month process, I am happy to announce that Kristen Miller has accepted our offer and will begin as the LBA's new executive director on November 8, 2021. You can read more about Kristen and her journey to becoming the LBA's newest executive director on page 12 of this month's *Bar Briefs*.

As Kristen begins her tenure, members should expect to see some changes at the LBA, just as you would when executive leadership changes within a business. Different leaders lead differently and approach issues and concerns from different perspectives. The COVID pandemic has changed how the LBA delivers its services to its members, and we are still learning from those initial changes and determining what additional adjustments we may want to make in order to provide valuable and meaningful membership to you. That said, the changes will not be sudden and wholesale, but there will be gradual changes in how the LBA approaches things like communication, CLE, membership and public service, some of which is driven by our pandemic experiences but a lot of it by changing and different membership needs.

As Kristen takes the reins, Scott will not be riding into the sunset, at least not yet. Scott becomes our executive director emeritus and will continue to serve as a resource for Kristen over the next few months to make the transition much more seamless. I cannot thank him enough for the steady guidance he has provided to me and the Executive Committee over the past year, especially during some definite head-scratching, what-do-we-do-with-this moments that the pandemic brought us.

There are other changes on the horizon for our legal community. In 2022, we should expect to see a slate of new candidates for Jefferson County's judicial elections; next year all of the judicial seats in Jefferson County will be on the ballot. Many of our experienced judges have either already retired or plan to do so within the next few months, which will create vacancies at all levels of our local judicial system. The upcoming election season will be a busy one and the LBA will once again conduct its judicial candidates evaluation survey and is in the nascent stages of planning candidates' forums to better educate Jefferson County voters on these judicial races. I'd be remiss if I did not take a

moment to thank all our judges for their service to our community — it is easy to forget that their jobs are not necessarily glamorous and often times can be quite stressful. They are responsible for making decisions in cases that can and do change people's lives each and every day and I am grateful that Jefferson County has some of the best judicial officers in the Commonwealth.

After 17 months of the pandemic, a welcome change is in-person LBA events. Approximately 50 LBA members enjoyed a beautiful evening on the outside patio at Rabbit Hole Distillery last month where we were able to gather and greet each other face to face. The next in-person LBA event will be the annual Awards Luncheon, which will be held at the Ice House on November 17, 2021. Still mindful of the pandemic, we have moved the luncheon to the Ice House which allows us to have increased ventilation by opening windows and doors and thereby providing a safer environment for our guests while we still can be in person. Similarly, after discussion with the LBA Board, the Executive Committee has decided to change the date for our annual Bench & Bar Social from January to March 2022, which will allow us to appreciate and enjoy the warmer and more spring-like weather in a to-be-determined venue that will allow us to socialize in more of an open-air environment.



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Change is inevitable, growth is optional. I believe that it's better to acknowledge a change is happening and then consider what you'll do with it. Will you accept the change or challenge it? There are times to challenge change, especially when that change may have a negative impact on segments of our society. The key, as my mother would remind me, is to know what fights to pick and then have a solid battle strategy. And perhaps most importantly, consider change as a positive force that brings good things even if it isn't immediately apparent.

So, while I may not give change an embrace every time we meet, I think I can probably agree to a handshake and an occasional meet up for a chai latte at Heine Bros. while we get to know each other a bit more. In the meantime, please take some time to get to know Kristen and if you have some ideas on things you'd like to see changed at the LBA, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Be well,

Deena G. Ombres
LBA President