

New Year, New Beginnings, Same Mission

As we begin a new year, I am deeply honored to serve as president of the Louisville Bar Association. Over the past decade, I've been privileged to serve as an LBA volunteer in many different capacities, from the Santa's Court Toy Drive to hosting CLEs to serving the Litigation Section to the Board of Directors. In that time, this organization weathered major changes. The pandemic caused a fundamental and apparently permanent shift in how people work and socialize—more is online, less in-person. Meanwhile, we saw the retirement of long-time (and much-loved) executive director Scott Furkin and the hiring of Kristen Miller to take the helm.

There is no doubt these changes created challenges. The pandemic changed not only how we work, but how we connect with one another. Many lawyers now work remotely, attend meetings online and have fewer informal opportunities to build relationships across the profession. In this environment, maintaining engagement—and creating meaningful opportunities for connection—has required creativity, flexibility and sustained effort.

To that end, we're very fortunate to have a dynamic executive director in Kristen Miller and a dedicated staff including Marisa Motley, Kim Kasey, Lisa Murray, John Hardin, Debby Dye and Sonja Brent. I have been privileged these past years to see how hard these individuals have worked—often without any real recognition or thanks—to support LBA members and foster the LBA's mission of promoting justice and excellence in the practice of law. The next time you bump into an LBA staffer, please thank them for their hard work. They deserve it.

I'm also fortunate to have followed in the footsteps of some truly exceptional leaders. My immediate predecessor is Maria Fernandez, who practically embodies the ideal of an engaged lawyer—Maria not only runs her own thriving practice, she devotes countless hours every year to the LBA, Legal Aid (where she also serves on the Board) and many other organizations. Maria was preceded by Bryan Armstrong, Kate Crosby and Seth Gladstein, each of whom gave their heart and soul to supporting the LBA and its membership. I'm humbled to follow in their footsteps.

Without these dedicated staff and leaders, I have no doubt the LBA would be going the same direction as many membership organizations—down. Instead, we concluded 2025—the LBA's 125th year—stronger than ever. Under Kristen's leadership, the LBA has risen to meet the challenges of this new era, including by completely renovating the downtown LBA office space and by engaging in a host of creative and dynamic new initiatives. These have included developing new forms of legal education and programming, as well as improving the LBA's connections with the Brandeis School of Law at UofL. Just recently, I attended a packed event that gave current law students the chance to meet and network

with many local, small and mid-sized firms. Events like these are central to the LBA's relevance and fulfillment of its mission looking forward.

Still, we have a lot of work to do to stay relevant and to remain engaged with our mission. The forms and formats of legal education are changing. The needs of local legal employers are shifting as well. And new law school graduates are entering a legal world and job market that many of us more experienced (i.e., old) attorneys would scarcely recognize, if we saw it from their perspective. So, I want to hear from you. The LBA is strongest when it reflects the ideas, energy and perspectives of its members. If you have suggestions about what the Association could be doing better, new initiatives we should explore or ways we can better serve both our members and the Louisville community, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly at wardle@fbtlaw.com.

Of course, I firmly believe that the best way to get the most out of the LBA is to give back to the organization. I can say from experience that any time you spend volunteering will pay dividends in new relationships formed and competencies gained. So please consider stepping up to chair one of our many sections. Heading into 2026, we are still looking for chairs and/or vice-chairs for the following sections:

Administrative Law: chair and vice-chair; **AI/IP/Privacy Law:** vice-chair; **Criminal Law:** vice-chair; **Environmental Law:** chair and vice-chair; **Health Law:** vice-chair; **Public Interest Law:** chair and vice-chair; **Solo/Small Practice:** chair and vice-chair; **Tort and Insurance Law:** chair and vice-chair.

Section leadership comes with commitments, including drafting a *Bar Briefs* article and hosting a CLE. But these are easy lifts compared to the benefits you'll get from doing them. I hope you'll consider joining and supporting us. If you have questions or are ready to sign up, please contact the LBA's Professional Development and Leadership Director, Lisa Murray, at lmurray@loubar.org.

Additionally, one of the LBA's core purposes is to recognize and support leaders in our community. And right now, the Association is still accepting submissions for the Justice William E. McAnulty Jr. Trailblazer Award, given annually to an individual who has made "a lasting impact on racial and ethnic diversity in the legal profession." If you know someone who deserves this recognition, please take five minutes and nominate them—you can do so on the LBA's website, by clicking the "Explore Membership" tab and navigating to the "LBA Annual Awards" page (www.loubar.org/lba-annual-awards/).

Thank you for your commitment to the Louisville Bar Association and to our profession. I am excited for the year ahead and for what we can accomplish together.



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Samuel W. Wardle
LBA President

INTRODUCING THE 2026 LBA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jennifer Kleier



Assuming the role of president-elect is Jennifer Kleier, a partner at Karem & Kleier Law. She has worked in private practice since 2015 as a litigator and practices in the areas of family law, criminal law, guardianship and estate/probate. Prior to working in private practice, she served as a public defender

for the Louisville Metro Public Defender's Office for five years.

Jennifer received her undergraduate degree from Murray State University and her Masters in Sports Administration from UofL before graduating from Brandeis School of Law in 2010. She is chair of both the LBA's Gender Equity and Health & Wellness Committees. She has been honored as the WLA 2023 Member of the Year and previously honored by the LBA as chair of the Committee of the Year for the Gender Equity Committee. She is a graduate of the LBA's Leadership Academy and was honored to be an associate member of the Louis D. Brandeis Inn of Court from 2016-19. She currently serves as Immediate Past Chair of the Board for UP for Women and Children, a drop-in day shelter in Louisville serving unhoused women, children and marginalized genders. ■

Sean Deskins



Moving up to vice-president/ treasurer is Sean Deskins. Sean is an attorney with the Oldfather Law Firm, concentrating in plaintiffs' litigation including medical malpractice, products liability, employment law and legal malpractice. His practice also includes complex business and trusts and estates litigation. Following law

school, Sean spent a year serving as a Fulbright Scholar in the Slovak Republic where he taught courses on the American legal system and human rights law. Upon returning to Kentucky, Sean worked as a law clerk to the Honorable Jennifer B. Coffman, Chief Judge, United States District Court for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky. Sean received both his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Louisville and is an active UofL alumnus. He previously served as president of the UofL Law Alumni Council and as chair of the LBA's Young Lawyers Section, which was honored as a Co-Section of the Year during his term. Sean also recently wrapped up a two-year term as the LBA's representative to the American Bar Association's House of Delegates and continues to serve as a member of the ABA's Commission on Disability Rights. Sean and his wife, Ashley, live in Louisville with their dog, Forrest. ■

Bill Brammell



Bill Brammell is LBA's incoming Secretary. Bill is the managing partner of Wicker / Brammell, PLLC, a boutique law firm that represents individuals and organizations in federal criminal proceedings, public servants in Section 1983 litigation and businesses facing legal challenges.

Prior to private practice, Bill clerked for the Hon. Gregory F. Van Tatenhove of the U.S. District Court for the EDKY. He also lived and worked in D.C. where he served the Department of State, the Department of Justice, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Agency for International Development as a Presidential Management Fellow. He earned his J.D. from UK College of Law, a master's degree in Democracy and Democratization from University College London and a B.A. from UofL where he served as Student Body President.

Outside the 9-5, Bill serves on the Board of the Home of the Innocents and the Bluegrass Center for Autism. In his free time, Bill likes spending time outdoors with his kids, reading and tinkering in his woodshop. ■