



# TBA news

## To Practice Law as Part of a Community

### The President's Briefcase

**W**hen I was admitted to the bar in 1982, I was relieved to have law school and the bar exam behind me, excited to begin practicing, and horrified at the realization that clients were going to depend on me right away. I had to hide my inexperience in order to instill calm and confidence in them. Huge responsibility!

I managed—but could not have done it without the help of colleagues. Not being from Toledo, I had no client base here, so I began by taking every criminal court appointment I could get. I was one of only a handful of women who practiced criminal defense law. I remember the first time one of my clients was sentenced to prison, and I was more upset than the client. I remember my first jury trial, feeling soooo insecure. I remember the time a judge (not in Toledo) asked me in front of opposing counsel why I was in his court rather than “in the kitchen barefoot and pregnant.” (I assume he was kidding, but it was a hurtful and embarrassing joke.) I remember the first time I was locked in a room at the jail alone with a client charged with rape, who also had mental health issues. I remember the first time I appeared in Muni Court and learned that the next time I needed to pay attention to the duties rotation before I scheduled a Prosecutors Pretrial. And I remember the first time I got burned by a client who promised to pay me—later—and never did. The beginning was rough. But in each of those situations I received support, encouragement, and advice from more experienced members of our bar.



Hon. Connie F. Zemmelman  
President

The smartest thing I did after I took the oath was to join the Toledo Bar Association. It was the vehicle for me to become part of this wonderful profession, and to get to know lawyers—both new and experienced—who were critical to my success and my mental health.

As time went on, I developed my practice through referrals, which often came from colleagues who had helped me get started. I eventually could afford to narrow my practice to my favorite areas of law. I still sought advice from peers and colleagues, but I was also pleased and proud when new lawyers began seeking advice from me. I realized that I had finally arrived—and I wanted to give back.

There are two ways to practice law in Toledo—in a vacuum or as part of the community. In my opinion the second way is more fulfilling and definitely more fun. It is too easy today to be insulated with the increasing use of impersonal social media. There definitely is a place and a need to be able to communicate through e-mail, Facebook, text messaging, and LinkedIn. Even CLE requirements can

be met without attending group discussions at live presentations. I submit that as a result it has become more important for ALL lawyers to be actively involved in the TBA.

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The TBA is a community, as well as a professional association. It affords every lawyer the opportunity to interact personally with other members of our profession. The importance of participating in the TBA community is difficult to articulate unless you have experienced it. We all have reasons that we first joined the TBA and continue to renew our membership year after year. I challenge each of you to tell a lawyer who is not a member of our bar association one positive experience that made you feel part of a community. It is the personal experiences that best explain the benefits of membership. And if you are not currently active on a TBA committee, I encourage you to become active. Whether you are a fairly new lawyer or a seasoned practitioner, there is always plenty to learn, people to teach, and experiences to share.

You are very fortunate to have a dedicated and talented Board of Directors. Remember—they are donating their time for you because they know how important the work of the bar is. Sarah Corpening and the TBA staff are receptive to your thoughts and concerns. They work hard and really care about the organization's success, which is measured by its members.

I look forward to the coming year as your president and seeing you at the TBA!