



## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

DEIRDRE KELLY

# Let's Work Together in 2019

I am thrilled and honored to have been elected this year's OCBA President. In this column, I hope to share my vision for this year, and encourage you to join me by getting involved.

I am the proud daughter of Irish immigrants, a farmer and a teacher, who taught me the value of hard work and education. My dad grew up in rural Ireland with no electricity, no indoor plumbing, and no cars, using horse and plow to work the fields and horse and buggy to get to town. His mother and sister were teachers, and he married one. His uncles immigrated to America to work in the copper mines of Butte, Montana. My mother's mother and aunts worked in England as nurses during WWII. With no lawyers in the family, I somehow set my sights on being a lawyer in seventh grade. (Perhaps when our beloved family cat passed away, dashing my dreams of becoming a veterinarian due to emotional devastation.)

After practicing as a commercial and real estate litigator at large law firms for nearly twenty years (with a two-year stint in-house along the way), I became a law school professor and Director of Externships and Career Services. Although I did not become a veterinarian, I maintained my love of animals, riding my horse, Patrick, and caring for our three Persian kitties at home (and one goldfish, Bob). My husband, a litigator with Pepper Hamilton, Howard Privette, and our wonderful son, Liam, are very patient as they support my endless bar activities and obsession with horses. They are my heart.

**Opportunities to Become Involved in This Year's Vision:** I urge each of you to join at least one of OCBA's divisions, sections, or committees. If you are in your first five years of practice, you can join the Young Lawyers Division. If you have practiced twenty-five years or more, the Masters Division is a vibrant group that hosts interesting programs and events. The OCBA has a section for nearly every area of practice.

The OCBA also has numerous committees, including, Community Outreach (think Beach Cleanup and Pet Adoption); Bridging the Gap (helping new lawyers transition to the practice of law); Mentoring; Pro Bono; Diversity; Professionalism & Ethics, and many more.

Any of these groups provides an opportunity for you to make new friends, gain mentors and advice, improve your substantive legal knowledge, network for job opportunities and clients, and become a leader in the legal community.

With your help this year, I hope to expand and enhance the OCBA's programs. This year's focus will involve hosting programs for law students and young lawyers; supporting our judiciary; monitoring proposed changes being made by the State Bar; and expanding and engaging OCBA membership.

**Programs for Law Students and Young Lawyers:** We will bring back the Law School Task Force to help law students navigate their bright future in our profession. We will continue the popular Bar Waiters Mixer for law school graduates who just took the Bar Exam where they can get support from OCBA members during that nerve-

wracking time period waiting for bar exam results. We will have an annual law student leader mixer where leaders from law schools' student organizations will mingle with OCBA board members, leaders from the OCBA affiliates, and the YLD. We will continue outreach to law students by affiliate bar leaders and section leaders. We will institute a mentorship program for 3Ls to be matched with practicing attorneys early in their last semester of law school.

For young lawyers, we will focus on expanding the role of the Leadership Development Committee to identify and develop the next generation of bar leaders. We will ask the Mentorship Committee to create a "Mentoring Cafe" to provide new attorneys with the opportunity to meet and talk with leaders in the OCBA in an informal group setting.

We will create a New Attorney Academy that will offer classes to help new lawyers develop critical legal and professional skills and engage with experienced attorneys and judges.

**Supporting Our Judiciary:** We will create a task force to work with the Bench Bar Coalition to maintain open lines of communication with the local legislators about the importance of our courts, and including how lack of funding affects their ability to serve the public.

**State Bar Changes:** We will monitor proposed changes by the State Bar affecting our members and the public, and will communicate with the State Bar and legislators about the potential effects of such changes. This year will be the first full year under the State Bar's drastic changes under its new Strategic Plan. The State Bar has discussed or proposed significant changes including considering eliminating practice area specialization, the voluntary lawyer assistance program, the mandatory fee arbitration committee, most volunteer lawyer positions on State Bar committees, and substantially reducing the size of the Committee of Bar Examiners. Additionally, there has been a discussion of raising State Bar dues significantly.

**Expanding and Engaging Membership:** We will direct the Membership Task Force to focus on involving attorneys who traditionally have not been active in the OCBA, such as transactional or government lawyers. We will also work with the Diversity Committee to increase diversity within the bar and the various committees, sections, and divisions.

In closing, I seek to bring together the many constituent parts of our Orange County legal community, from the bench, the bar, and academia, with a view to improving the strength of our communications and of our relationships, and ultimately the excellence of our practices and our service to the community at large. I look forward to working with you this year to make the OCBA and our local legal community stronger and more fulfilling.



*Deirdre Kelly is the 2019 OCBA President. She can be reached at [DeirdreKelly@ocbar.org](mailto:DeirdreKelly@ocbar.org).*