



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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An Open Letter to Generation Y

If you were born between 1978 and 2000, this letter is to you. Some of you are brand new lawyers, while others of you have been doing this a while. But you all fit into what has been labeled Generation Y—also referred to as Millennials.

The purpose of this letter is to offer you the opportunity to join the Orange County Bar Association. But not just to join it. To embrace it. To own it. We don't want you to think of the OCBA as your parent's or grandparent's bar association. It is your bar association.

The OCBA board and I recognize the need to make the OCBA appealing to lawyers of all ages, including you. Around the country, even before we found ourselves sheltering at home, volunteer bar associations were seeing their membership numbers decline, much of which is attributed to the notion that members of Generation Y don't like to join organizations. But I reject that notion. I know you will join and become active in an organization as long as that organization is relevant to your professional and personal needs.

While the OCBA certainly is a home for Generation X and Boomers, we also offer programs and services that should be attractive to you. Among other things, we have boosted our social media presence, put on an increasing number of programs geared to newer lawyers, supported a mentoring program, and have worked with our Young Lawyers Division to develop a sense of community among new lawyers. In addition, nudged by COVID-19, we have become nimble at hosting webinars. We also know there is so much more to do.

To tackle this issue, we have formed an Inter-Generational Task Force, co-chaired by Teresa McQueen and Generation Y member Josh Ji. The task force's goal is to find ways for our bar association to evolve so you in your twenties and thirties see the benefits of active membership, while at the same time maintaining the interest of our more experienced lawyers.

Understanding the needs of Generation Y is critical to evolving as a bar association. Of course, those needs vary from lawyer to lawyer, and may be very different for those of you in your first few years of practice than for those of you who have been practicing ten years. But some real changes in our world and in our economy permeate so much of what is on your mind that they must be considered as we look to evolve.

For example, many of you were just starting to figure things out when the rug was pulled out from under you in the form of the Great Recession. A decade later, some of you had barely moved into your offices when shelter-in-place became the phrase of the day. Both of these events have led to weaker job markets, forcing many young lawyers to hang their own shingles. At the same time, student debt and housing prices are at record high levels. We cannot—and will

not—ignore these economic factors that impact what you need from a bar association.

You in Generation Y have called for prioritizing personal and family well-being, even while focusing on ambitious careers. The burden of trying to find the right work/family balance previously fell almost exclusively on women, and, to a large extent, still does. But young fathers and husbands now increasingly seek ways to balance the competing obligations on their time. That is the new reality with which the legal community is grappling, and it, too, is something the Inter-Generational Task Force will consider.

The OCBA's Mission statement is: "To Enhance the System of Justice, To Support the Lawyers Who Serve It, and To Assist the Community Served By It." We want to support your growth and development as members of our legal community. The Inter-Generational Task Force is here to figure out how to best do that. Your input is vital to this process.

But we are not just here to support lawyers in Generation Y or any other generation. As our mission statement says, we also are here to "assist the community." One of the things that has been written about Generation Y is that you feel a huge sense of obligation to better our society. Fortunately, the OCBA has felt that same sense of obligation, and has been acting on it for years, even decades. We do this through our Community Outreach Committee and our Pro Bono Committee. We do it through our Homeless Task Force and our Collaborative Courts initiative. We also do it through our Charitable Fund's tireless support for dozens of Orange County public service organizations. So, if serving our community, and in the process bettering our world, is important to you, then the OCBA is here for you.

Finally, although I may be a member of Generation X, not all OCBA leaders are. Look at our list of Section and Committee chairs and you will see the names of many members of your generation. So too with the OCBA board of directors. These individual chairs and board members are not just the future leaders of the Bar; they are the current leaders. They are embracing the OCBA, while at the same time trying to help us evolve. If you would like to help or offer ideas, please email me. The OCBA is not, and will not be, your parent's or grandparent's bar association.



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