



## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

LARISA M. DINSMOOR

# OCBA 2021: Half-Time Report

We are halfway through another year of the pandemic, but the future is looking bright. Through all of the continuing challenges this year, we have manifested connection, community, and unity.

**Connection:** As of May 20th, the OCBA had hosted 175 virtual meetings this year. Our 24 committees, 26 sections, 5 task forces, 2 divisions, and 15 affiliate bars have not missed a beat connecting with and supporting their members.

The OCBA continues to maintain a strong relationship with the Bench. I host a monthly leadership meeting with representatives from sections, committees, task forces, and affiliate bars. During these meetings, we share information and find ways to support each other and collaborate. Presiding Judge Eric L. Larsh, Assistant Presiding Judge Maria D. Hernandez, and Civil Panel Supervising Judge Layne H. Melzer have been guest speakers. They provided vital updates, answered questions, and responded to our concerns and recommendations.

The Mentoring Committee matched 31 protégés with an impressive group of experienced attorneys. They continue to promote connection through virtual mentoring cafés. There is now an OCBA Instagram account to connect with more members, particularly those younger than I am.

To encourage lawyers to continue to join the OCBA, I created a Membership Committee to promote, encourage, facilitate, increase, and retain OCBA members. Time and circumstances continue to change our profession. Economic changes, a pandemic, intergenerational views, and changes made by the California State Bar affect the OCBA's sustainability and relevance. The Membership Committee will work to ensure that we remain the premier bar association that we are today.

**Community:** In the face of continued shut downs and shut-ins this year, the Community Outreach Committee did not shy away from helping the community at large. It spearheaded the "Someone Cares Soup Kitchen Donations Drive," "Help our Furry Friends OC Animal Care Center Donations Drive," and "Sunday Dinner Drop Off" at the Friendship Shelter. They have donated approximately 1600 lunches since last year!

The COVID-19 Task Force continues to give us COVID updates. It has provided programs on "The Science of COVID-19 Vaccines" and "Returning to Work."

The Pro Bono Committee is in the process of facilitating pro bono opportunities with the Collaborative Courts led by Supervising Judge Thomas A. Delaney. The Collaborative Courts are "problem solving" courts that address underlying issues that make it more likely people will remain in the criminal system. They are life-changing programs statistically proven to reduce recidivism. Stay tuned for a training in November.

We continue to stay connected with local law schools, including participating in swearing-in ceremonies. During these virtual events,

I convey the many benefits of OCBA membership, including the career center that posts job opportunities. If you have a job opportunity, please email it to Jane Tang at JTang@ocbar.org to be posted on the members-only job board at [www.ocbar.org/For-Members/Career-Center](http://www.ocbar.org/For-Members/Career-Center).

**Unity:** The massive changes at the State Bar have left most of us speechless. The State Bar Task Force led by Nikki Miliband and Mary-Christine (M.C.) Sungaila are monitoring the changes. Importantly, Orange County will be one of the first "testing grounds" to allow "para-professionals" to do legal work without passing the bar exam or having a license to practice law. As of now, this program is slated to roll out in January 2023. The OCBA will continue to voice concerns about these significant shifts in the practice of law.


The OCBA's Legislative Resolutions Committee drafts, reviews, and debates resolutions proposed by other bar associations through the California Conference of Bar Associations. They meet with state senators and assemblymembers to lobby for change in an existing law or propose a new law during "Legislative Day." I was fortunate to participate in it virtually. It is truly a unique experience to witness practicing lawyers and lawmakers work together to create better laws. To get involved, please contact Melissa Petrofsky.

I have tried to promote more unity in our greater legal community by highlighting some of our affiliate bars. I have found that the act of reaching out, asking questions, and learning more about each other creates more unity. I encourage everyone to become a member of at least one affiliate bar.

**Present:** As I write this article in May, all signs are pointing to a more positive future as businesses open up. Most of us are looking forward to in-person events. The OCBA staff and I continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation closely and will make decisions based upon the health and safety of our members. Stay tuned for more information.

**Future:** On July 29, we will host our annual Charitable Fund Golf Tournament at Pelican Hill Golf Club in Newport Beach. We hope to provide an in-person opportunity for members to support the tournament even if they do not golf.

At this time, we plan to host in-person events this fall. These events include honoring retired U.S. District Court Judge Andrew Guilford, thanking volunteers and presenting the Harmon G. Scoville Award at the annual Volunteer Recognition Reception, and the Charitable Fund Annual Benefit on October 28th. Finally, we have secured our traditional venue at the Marriott in Irvine on January 13, 2022, to host Judge's Night & Annual Meeting.

Here's to having connection, community, and unity *in person*. We have much to celebrate. 

*Larisa M. Dinsmoor is 2021 OCBA President, an Orange County Public Defender, and a world traveler when there is no pandemic. She would love to hear from you at [larisa@ocbar.org](mailto:larisa@ocbar.org).*