



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

MICHAEL A. GREGG

Two Minutes Left in the Fourth Quarter

I chose to use football terminology to analogize my last President's Page despite my USC Trojans football team falling short of expectations for the 2023-2024 season. For those who don't follow college football, USC is currently 7-2 (as of the writing of this column), and its chances of making the college football playoffs are negligible. Despite USC's failures on the field, the OCBA continued its amazing "blocking and tackling" in 2023. Reflecting on my term as OCBA President, I am appreciative of the individuals who have supported me along this journey and who have given of their time and energy to support the mission of the OCBA.

In January 2023, I had the great privilege of being sworn in as OCBA President by the Honorable Martin J. Jenkins, Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court. I met Justice Jenkins in February 2020 when he visited the OCBA to discuss the judicial appointment process. I was immediately inspired by his journey, authenticity, and level of excellence. Justice Jenkins is a role model to me and many others, and I greatly appreciate his support of our bar, courts, and the Orange County legal community.

As president, I have seen up close the diligent and dedicated OCBA staff that "move the chains." Trudy Levindofske, our amazing CEO/Executive Director, is the driving force that allows us to stay on schedule and was instrumental in guiding me through the year. Trudy made me feel like family and always puts the interests of the OCBA first. She started with the OCBA over thirty years ago and is the longest serving Executive Director in OCBA history, having served in the role for sixteen years and counting. I can't imagine having served as OCBA President with any other person as Executive Director. Dennis Slaughter, the OCBA's Director of Operations & Technology, was instrumental in helping to transform ideas into reality—revamping the OCBA's mobile app, developing an OCBA podcast, and creating a video portal to provide OCBA members with additional resources to better represent their clients. It's been a pleasure working with the entire OCBA staff in 2023. They do the hard work behind the scenes that allows the OCBA to hoist its many accolades. A few OCBA staff members also had milestone work anniversaries in 2023. Olivia Torres, LRIS/Membership Coordinator, celebrated her thirtieth year with the OCBA in 2023. Dennis Slaughter celebrated his fifteenth year with the OCBA, and Dana Mullin, Public Services Coordinator, celebrated her tenth year with the organization. Thank you also to Gialisa Gaffaney, Editor-in-Chief of the *OC Lawyer* magazine, for editing my columns and for the great job you do as editor of the magazine.

In early 2023, the OCBA rolled out a new and improved mobile app to allow members to more readily access the resources of the OCBA on their smart phones. Unlike a native app, which must be downloaded from a platform such as the App Store, mobile apps are automatically

accessed through a web browser on your smart phone (e.g., typing ocar.org in Safari) without having to download anything. The mobile app provides members with access to the OCBA's entire events calendar, the ability to register and pay for programs, access to the OCBA's member directory, and many other features. The OCBA also created a video tutorial (available on the OCBA website at www.ocbar.org/appinfo) to assist members in using the app. Many thanks to the OCBA's App Development Task Force (which included Dan Robinson, Christina Zabat-Fran, Josh Ji, and Kelly Galligan) and Dennis Slaughter for their work on this project.

In 2023, we also built upon the work of 2001 OCBA President Danni Murphy in highlighting Orange County's rich and unique legal history. In preparing for the role of OCBA President, I wanted to learn more about the history of the organization and its prior leaders. Once I started down that road, and gained a deeper understanding of the role the OCBA played in the Orange County legal community and the rich history of our legal community, I was drawn to finding ways to preserve and disseminate our history in an audio/visual format.

In September 2023, the OCBA launched its own podcast entitled *Raising the OC Bar*. The podcast spotlights the rich and unique history of our Orange County legal community including stories about landmark cases, impactful institutions, and legal trailblazers. To date, we have recorded episodes on OCBA history (including the role the OCBA played in the development of legal institutions in Orange County), PLC history (including its genesis and impact in providing free legal services to low-income residents since 1981), CLA SoCal history (including its genesis and work serving the legal needs of low-income people in Orange County and beyond since 1958), and an in-depth discussion with Justice William Bedsworth about his personal and professional background, including his first legal job with the Orange County District Attorney's Office, path to the Orange County Superior Court bench, appointment to the California Court of Appeal, and groundbreaking decisions, among other things. Our 2023 Legal History Task Force (which includes Alan Crivaro, Nikki Miliband, Alan Slater, Dan Robinson, Christina Zabat-Fran, Judge Andrew Guilford, Dean Zipser, Dimetria Jackson, Justice William Bedsworth, Mei Tsang, Shirin Forootan, and M.C. Sungaila) is working on many other ideas that illustrate the breadth of accomplishments and innovation that originated in Orange County.

In 2023, we also formed a task force to develop videos on discrete legal topics to assist OCBA members practicing before our courts, including the Superior Court panels. The platform for the videos was named the *Practice Pointers Portal*. The goal is to develop a wide array of videos on topics of relevance to OCBA members to help them better represent their clients, such as litigating before the Orange County Superior

Court Complex Panel, Family Law Panel, and Probate/Mental Health Panel, among others. Building a comprehensive library of videos will take time but should be a valuable resource to OCBA members and help improve efficiencies in our courts. Thank you so much to our PPP Task Force members Alan Crivaro, Josh Ji, Tom Pistone, Hon. James J. Di Cesare, Ret., Howard Privette, Vikki Vander Woude, Caroline Djang, John Glowacki, Sharon Oh-Kubisch, Arjun Sivakumar, Andrew A. Wood, and Stacy Campuzano. These individuals, and many others, have selflessly given of their time to further the mission of the OCBA. I would also like to thank the Orange County Superior Court, including Presiding Judge Maria Hernandez, Assistant Presiding Judge Cheri Pham, Judge Erick Larsh, CEO David Yamasaki, Public Information Officer Kostas Kalaitzidis, Community Engagement Liaison Catalina Roger, and many others, for their support of this valuable program.

I also want to thank the leaders of our sections and committees for graciously giving of their time to enhance justice, support our members, and assist the community. The OCBA has twenty-six different Sections and twenty-two Committees that carry out the bar's mission. Their work includes providing resources for attorneys with children, monitoring and assessing significant proposals coming out of the State Bar, and developing programs to help members stay up-to-date with constant changes in the law. Our section and committee leaders play a huge role in the success of the OCBA and often do so without recognition.

I would also like to thank our Executive Committee and Board of Directors for your hard work and dedication in 2023. Our 2023 Executive Committee (Dan Robinson, Christina Zabat-Fran, Mei Tsang, and Shirin Foorootan) worked well together and are all top-notch individuals. The OCBA is in great hands and I'm looking forward to the leadership of Christina, Mei, and Shirin over the next few years. I also enjoyed working with a thoughtful and diverse board full of high character individuals. Through our board retreat, meetings, and team-building exercises, I have learned more about you all on a personal

level and greatly appreciate having had the opportunity to work with you in 2023.

I also want to thank our past OCBA Presidents for their support and guidance. Before running for OCBA Secretary, I was apprehensive about having to reach out to former OCBA Presidents as I considered myself an outsider to some extent. I have been thoroughly impressed by the accessibility and guidance I have received from former OCBA Presidents and that they still selflessly give of their time and energies to support the mission of the OCBA. This is something I believe further separates the OCBA from other bar associations. There are so many amazing OCBA Past Presidents, but I would like to say a special thank you to Past Presidents John Trotter, Eugen Andres, David Price, Andrew Guilford, Tom Malcolm, Michelle Reinglass, Steven McCracken, Jennifer Keller, Joel Miliband, Dean Zipser, Joe Chairez, Lei Lei Wang Ekvall, Dimetria Jackson, Todd Friedland, Nikki Miliband, Deirdre Kelly, and Scott Garner. Thank you for taking the time to share your insights.

There is no way I could have served as OCBA President without an understanding and supportive family. Thank you to my wife (Angela Gregg) and daughters (Isabelle, Audrey, and Angelica) for your understanding and for being my foundation. I also want to thank my Littler colleagues for their encouragement and support.

Pete Carroll, former USC Football coach, once said “[y]ou’re either competing or you’re not.” While there are only seconds left on the figurative “game clock” to my term as OCBA President, the competition is not over. Christina Zabat-Fran is a dynamic and unifying leader who will guide the OCBA to many victories in 2024. I look forward to supporting Christina in 2024.

Michael A. Gregg is the 2023 OCBA President and a shareholder at Littler. He represents companies in all aspects of labor and employment law. You may reach him about these or other issues by emailing michael@ocbar.org.

