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Nevada Lawyer (ISSN 1068-882X) is published monthly by the State Bar of Nevada. State Bar members receive *Nevada Lawyer* as part of their annual dues. *Nevada Lawyer* is available to non-members at the subscription rate of \$60 per year. Back issues, when available, are \$6 each. Periodicals Postage Paid at Las Vegas, NV. *Nevada Lawyer* is available on Westlaw®, LEXIS®, and on microfilm through the Wm. S. Hein Co.

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Message from the President

BY ELANA TURNER GRAHAM, PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA



A HISTORY OF CHANGE

This month, *Nevada Lawyer* magazine celebrates our state's 150th anniversary; as part of that effort, I'm taking a look back at important milestones and changes that have significantly affected our state bar in its 87-year-long history.

On October 31, 1864, Nevada became the 36th state to enter the union. Nevada's sesquicentennial celebration began on Nevada Day 2013, and will conclude this coming Nevada Day, October 31, 2014. Our state has seen massive changes in its 150 years and the changes are still ongoing — just as they are in our legal community.

Looking Back

The State Bar of Nevada's constitution preceded the formal bar by 17 years. It was framed in 1911, when lawyers from all over the state met at the Washoe county courthouse to establish a private bar association, intended:

“to cultivate and advance the science of jurisprudence; to promote reform in the law and in judicial procedure; to facilitate the administration of justice; to uphold and elevate the standard of honor, integrity, and courtesy in the legal profession; to encourage legal education and to promote a spirit of cordiality and brotherhood among members of the bar.”

The fledgling organization adopted bylaws and elected its first president (Hugh H. Brown), that same day.

Most of the early membership was comprised of Washoe County attorneys. In 1922, only three attorneys from Las Vegas were members. Bar membership did not become mandatory until 1928. In this, Nevada was on the leading edge, becoming one of only six states following a proposal by the American Judicature Society encouraging every bar association to integrate through state legislation into a public corporation.

Once the legislature passed the bill officially forming what is now the State Bar of Nevada, things moved quickly. By August 1928, the bar had named a Board of Bar Examiners, adopted rules of procedure and rules of professional conduct, and framed its own bylaws, rules and regulations. Just a little more than a year after its official formation, the state bar held its first Annual Meeting. The first of what has become a huge annual tradition was a small affair by today's standards; it took place in the Washoe County courthouse in Reno on February 15, 1929. By the end of

1929, the bar had 345 active members. Compare that to our 8,530 active members today!

It wasn't until 1977 that the bar got its first president; Loyal Hibbs stepped into that role. As president of the bar, Hibbs (and those who came after him) would work closely with the bar's executive director. Surprisingly, however, for nearly five decades before that time, the bar had no executive director. Instead, attorneys took on the role of part-time executive secretaries, working out of their own offices to help the bar manage its affairs and administer admission applications. By 1977, with 700 members, the bar was just too large for such a solution to be effective and, in 1978, the bar appointed its first executive director.

The Changing Face of Law

Since 1977, the state bar has seen significant growth and has adapted to the changing nature of the practice of law in Nevada. Now, the majority of attorneys — 71 percent — reside in Clark County. The bar's demographics have also changed. For example, in the 1940s, women made up a statistical 0 percent of bar members; today 33 percent of our members are women.

The bar has developed an impressive number of programs and services in that time as well. Today, we have 25 different sections supporting numerous areas of law. We have more than 15 committees supporting critical aspects of law practice, including diversity, professionalism, discipline and much, much more. We're actively looking for ways to grow and improve your bar, just as you likely seek to grow and improve your own practice.

More Change on the Horizon

This coming year, your bar will be actively involved in supporting positive change intended to support and streamline the practice of law in Nevada. Here are just two examples:

- **Appellate Court:** Next month, Nevada voters will consider approving the formation of an Intermediate Court of Appeals for our state, a critical amendment the legal community has been striving toward since 1980. Knowing that this effort is critical for efficiently managing Nevada's appellate caseload, the state bar has been working with the Nevada Supreme Court to encourage voters to approve this ballot measure in November.
- **New Facilities:** After nearly 15 years in an historic building on Charleston Boulevard, in just a few months the state bar will be moving into a larger and more modern facility. The building will feature several improvements, designed with bar members in mind, such as a dedicated on-site CLE classroom, integrated videoconferencing tools and more.

If you have your own ideas about how to encourage positive change for your state bar, I invite you to share your ideas. Reach out to me, or to any of the state bar's Board of Governors members. Our contact information is available on www.nvbar.org. ■

Questions? Comments?

Nevada Lawyer welcomes feedback from our readers! Contact us at nvlawyer@nvbar.org.