



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY VERNON "GENE" LEVERTY, ESQ., PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

REFLECTIONS ON DIVERSITY AMONG LAWYERS

I pondered over my message on *Nevada Lawyer's* October diversity theme. My concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our differences. These differences can include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities and religion.

It is my belief diversifying the bench and our profession is critical to the legitimacy of our legal system, which should reflect our diverse community. If it doesn't, it loses credibility for, and respect from, those who feel their views and circumstances are not being fairly represented. Connecting with other lawyers and judges with diverse backgrounds allows us all to learn their perspectives on the law and life.

In the hazy time when one ponders just before dreaming, I realized how little I knew about the Nevada bar's diversity. I determined a good starting point was to review past editions of *Nevada Lawyer*; I found some topical editions: issues about "Pioneering Women in Nevada Law" (March 2011), "Diversity in Nevada Legal Community" (May 2012) and "Working with LGBT Clients" (July 2015).

These *Nevada Lawyer* articles demonstrated various aspects of diversity in the bar. The Pioneering Women in the Law issue reminded

me that I have had the pleasure of knowing many women lawyers who were the first to serve in numerous roles, including Hon. Miriam Shearing, Frankie Sue Del Papa, Patricia Lynch, Margo Piscovich, Hon. Sally Loehrer, Barbara Buckley, Hon. Johnnie Rawlinson, Janet L. Chubb and Robin Wright. Each created a path for other women lawyers to follow, and many female attorneys *have* followed these firsts. In 1994, Margo Piscovich became the first female president of state bar—67 years after the first bar president was sworn in. Since her appointment, eight women served as president—there will be more. We are currently lucky to have excellent, talented female members on the Board of Governors (BOG): Paola Armeni, Julie Cavanaugh-Bill, Catherine Mazzeo, Ann Morgan and Kari Stevens.

Former state bar President Rew Goodenow established the state bar's Diversity Committee; it was first chaired by Immediate Past President Bryan Scott. Although the Diversity Committee is no longer active, it has three legacies: establishing minority scholarships for the William S. Boyd School of Law, establishing baseline diversity statistics of our membership through surveys conducted in 2007 - 2009, and the creation of an excellent mission statement, "to increase diversity within the membership and leadership of the State Bar of Nevada and the profession, raise awareness among bar members of the benefits of diversity, encourage opportunities for current and aspiring attorneys from the underrepresented groups and increase cultural competence in the profession."

The diversity surveys in 2007 - 2009 were mailed to active bar members with their dues notices. Because the surveys were voluntary, many attorneys

didn't respond, adversely affecting the results. One of my first acts as president was to ask Bryan Scott, my immediate predecessor, to continue his diversity efforts, including regular communication with and participation at the numerous specialty bar events in this state. The collection of information related to state bar members' current ethnic diversity is essential, and we will explore undertaking a new diversity survey and endeavor to get everyone's responses.

Various justices of the Nevada Supreme Court have expressed a desire for diversity reflective of the bar membership on the BOG and committees of the State Bar of Nevada. The BOG is also very interested in diversifying its boards and committees. The consensus is that an attorney should never be elected or selected solely on the basis of diversity; only the most qualified candidate should be selected. We hope to increase our pool of applicants by encouraging attorneys of diverse backgrounds to consider volunteering for bar service.

I found the most heartfelt and interesting article: "Diversity in the Nevada Bar?" written by Bryan Scott for the Clark County Bar Association. He wrote:

I am honored to have been selected as the 88th and first African American President of the State Bar of Nevada. ... As the President of the State Bar of Nevada, I am one of more than 11,000 Nevada attorneys, the majority of who don't look like me. It is very likely that when I leave ... in 2018, after my presidential and ex-officio member terms end, there will be no lawyers of color serving on the Board of Governors.

I look forward to working with Bryan and others, exploring how to obtain statistics and encourage attorneys with different backgrounds and perspectives to become active in the State Bar of Nevada. I hope that this work will ensure that Bryan Scott will not be the sole or last African American to serve on the BOG. Just as Nevada's women lawyers have made great strides as full participants in the Nevada bar, we want persons of all backgrounds to get involved *now*.

ATTORNEY SPOTLIGHT:

Judge John F. MENDOZA

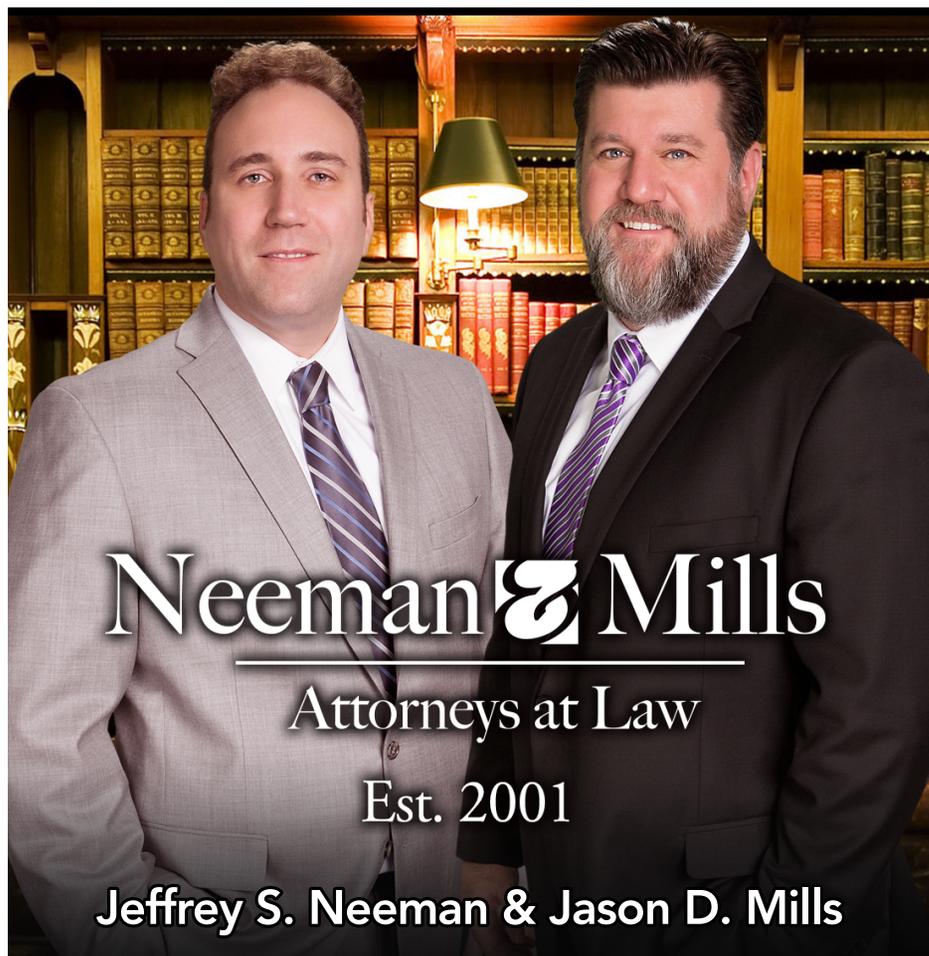


Each month, I want to call attention to the significant contributions made by lawyers who have played an important role in

the Rule of Law. In October, we highlight Judge John F. Mendoza, who was the first Hispanic attorney licensed in Nevada. He was the first Hispanic attorney to hold several key roles within Nevada's legal community, including the first Hispanic person to become a district court judge in Nevada.

Among his numerous accomplishments, Mendoza worked to support the needs of children within the legal system. He served as president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, was the national director and president of the Las Vegas "Aid to Adoption of Special Kids" and co-founded the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program.

Workers' Comp is not PI

A photograph of two men, Jeffrey S. Neeman and Jason D. Mills, standing in a law library. They are both wearing suits and ties. The man on the left is wearing a light-colored suit, and the man on the right is wearing a dark suit. They are both smiling at the camera. The background shows bookshelves filled with books and a lamp.

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