

A Closing Statement

Dean Dietrich reflects on his experience as State Bar of Wisconsin president during the year that ended June 30, 2024.

BY DEAN R. DIETRICH

While this might not be my final word, it is an appropriate time to talk about my year as president of the State Bar of Wisconsin.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as State Bar president and I thank you all for the opportunity to do so. My focus was to positively affect the future of the legal profession, and I hope there was at least a small degree of success.

Many people ask whether I would do it again. My response – yes. Serving as State Bar president has been a unique and fulfilling experience. I would relish the opportunity to speak on behalf of the profession and Wisconsin lawyers again.

Was the experience enjoyable? It has certainly been fulfilling, and I have loved doing it. Interaction with people at the Board of Governors, section, and division levels and with affinity groups, Bar staff, and so many others has been very fulfilling. However, sometimes it was not enjoyable. I spent many sleepless nights worrying about the legal profession and the governance of the State Bar. I worried I was not doing my best to ensure the success for each initiative.

At times, I was disappointed. There will always be dissenters, those who challenge the State Bar's actions. Differing viewpoints and contrary opinions are aired in every meeting of the Board of Governors, with 52 members. But dissenters should always present themselves in the form of civility and professionalism, especially after the meeting ends, and a decision has been made. I strive to be an example of civility and professionalism, and I hope I did that, despite the urge to respond differently at times.

There is always more to be done. I believe we have made progress in addressing the enhancement of legal services in rural areas

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of Wisconsin, recognizing the importance of lawyer wellness, providing tools for lawyers to function in a healthy manner within the legal profession, and assisting the profession to be welcoming and receptive to all people. Civility and professionalism, however, must continue to be addressed. Much work is required to help create habits of dealing with others in an appropriate and meaningful fashion. I hope to be part of a group focused on that topic while also helping to address lawyer wellness and availability of legal services throughout the state.

What's next? Well, I recently purchased a new briefcase. Meaning? I need to continue to be active and focused on the future of the legal profession until I wear out the new briefcase! This column is called a final thought – but it is NOT my final word! **WL**



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