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**President's Report**  
**to the House of Delegates**  
**June 15, 2019**

I am honored to serve as the 122<sup>nd</sup> President of the New York State Bar Association. We have a proud history of serving as the voice of the profession, working to support the rule of law, improve the administration of justice and guarantee the vitality of the legal profession.

On the wall of the 1837 Chenango County Courthouse is an inscription in large Roman Letters: "FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT CAELUM." It means: "Let justice be done though the heavens may fall." The idea of Justice is eternal. We see it in the biblical passage commanding: "Justice, Justice, you shall pursue."

That is the lawyers' credo. It is in our DNA. It is who we are. It is what we do. It is also what the New York State Bar Association has stood for since its founding in 1876.

From the inception, this Association has led. We have fought for things that matter for our profession and the public. Leadership is our legacy. It is also our duty and responsibility.

Why us? Why must lawyers lead public opinion — not follow it? The answer is because lawyers built the institutions that keep us free and fashioned the framework of our government.

As lawmakers in the Legislature, lawyers write laws. As advocates and judges in courtrooms, lawyers administer justice according to law. And, today, more than ever, the voice of lawyers is needed.

There is an ancient curse, “May you live in interesting times.” This expression is intended to be ironic. It reflects anxiety and fear about current events. Well, we are living in “interesting times.”

Don’t get me wrong — wondrous things are happening all around the world. Health, prosperity, peace, and happiness are rising. Starvation and extreme poverty are declining. Plagues that wiped out civilizations have been eradicated.

At the same time, though, there is much about which to be concerned.

Whatever your beliefs, we should all be concerned about the partisanship and tribalization that is dividing our nation.

We should all be concerned about the anger and incivility that has turned public discourse into a blood sport.

We should all be concerned when public officials mock the principles our nation’s founders held to be self-evident.

Some say we live in a “post-truth” world, where facts and experts are no longer trusted. I don’t believe it, but some people do.

But this much is beyond dispute: The public is losing confidence in the capacity of the institutions lawyers built to solve problems.

Worse, untold millions of Americans know nothing about the constitutional history of our government. Too many of our fellow citizens do not know or care about constitutional traditions and norms.

All of this imposes a special duty on our profession. It also provides an opportunity to perform important public service.

Our communities need us. They need our wisdom. They need our expertise. They need our ability to see both sides of an issue, find common ground, and bring people together.

Most of all, our country needs us to remind it why the rule of law has kept us free for over two centuries.

We must explain to the public why we need: an independent judiciary; the apolitical administration of justice; and equal justice under law.

When the cynics say our institutions are failing, here’s what you should tell them: “Look at the American legal system.” It’s working.

Day in and day out, lawyers and judges are defending our rights and protecting the rule of law.

Never forget this: We belong to the most influential, consequential, impactful profession in American life. Lawyers right wrong, improve lives, make society better.

We are society's problem solvers. We are the foot soldiers of the Constitution. The freedom we enjoy means nothing without lawyers to champion it.

This is a great time to be a lawyer. And we, the 72,000 members of this Bar Association, are bound together by the singular purpose of attaining justice.

It is a privilege to represent the profession I love in these challenging times. And, I will do everything in my power to support and strengthen the bench and bar, our justice system, and our Association.

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The New York State Bar Association's strength is dependent on the support of our dedicated members. In the coming year, therefore, we will take steps to improve the practice of law and guarantee the vitality of the profession. In furtherance of that and other goals, we are undertaking the following initiatives this year:

### **Task Force on Autonomous Vehicles and the Law**

Autonomous vehicles raise novel and potentially far-reaching challenges to the law in a variety of areas, including liability and insurance, privacy and data protection, infrastructure and transportation, licensing and regulation. Accordingly, we have created the Task Force on Autonomous Vehicles and the Law — an expert-led task force to study the pressing legal issues raised by the advent of autonomous vehicles and to make recommendations on how New York State and its legal institutions can prepare for this revolutionary technological change.

### **Task Force on Free Expression in the Digital Age**

The decade-long decline in local journalism has been driven by dramatic changes in technology and the economics of advertising. There is a compelling need to consider whether there are appropriate legal responses to this crisis. The Task Force on Free Expression in the Digital Age will examine how changes in the law may help assure local government transparency and accountability even as the economic landscape of local journalism is fundamentally altered. The Task Force will make recommendations on how to maintain and strengthen the public's ability to engage in appropriate oversight of the institutions of local government amidst the challenges of our ever-changing digital age.



### **Task Force on Parole Reform**

The New York State Legislature has undertaken wide-ranging criminal procedure reform in areas of bail, speedy trial guarantees, and the discovery process. These reforms, however, have focused on issues that arise prior to the trial, conviction, and sentencing. The State's parole system continues to present problems of fairness and due process for the thousands of parolees statewide. The mission of the Task Force on Parole Reform will be to study the parole system, focusing on release practices as well as revocation and reincarceration. It will seek to identify problems in the current system and propose reforms regarding the administration of the parole system and changes in the law.

### **Task Force on Rural Justice**

Demographical trends showing the rapid decline of attorneys practicing in rural parts of the state should worry the entire profession. This is a crisis and must be addressed before the situation becomes irreversible. The Task Force on Rural Justice will investigate barriers to access to justice and develop solutions to guarantee that our rural citizens maintain the constitutional guarantees and well-being ensured to all.

### **Special Committee on Association Structure and Operations**

We approach the 150th anniversary of NYSBA in 2026. The legal profession and the practice of law are changing — and we must be positioned to face whatever the future may hold. The Special Committee on Association Structure and Operations will make recommendations for improving the overall effectiveness and functioning of the Association and its constituent parts through a systematic review.

### **Special Committee on Strategic Communications**

Too often the Association fails to speak as a unified voice and advocate at our full strength. The Special Committee on Strategic Communications will assist the Association to speak with one voice as a state, national and global leader for the legal profession. This will be done through coordination of our marketing efforts and a review of our external and internal communication plans.

### **Multi-Disciplinary Working Group to Review the New York Bar Admission Questionnaire**

We will address mental health and wellness issues for attorneys from law school to retirement. In particular, I have requested the chairs of the Young Lawyers Section, the Committee on Disability Rights, the Committee on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, the Law Practice Management's Attorney Wellness Sub-Committee, and the Lawyer Assistance Committee to appoint representatives to a multi-disciplinary work group that will review the potential removal of questions relating to mental health that now appear on the

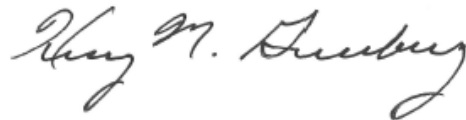
application for admission to practice as an attorney and counselor-in-law in the State of New York. We will also strengthen the Association's resources and services for attorneys in need.

### **Diversity Initiative**

The legal profession is one of the least diverse professions in the nation. Our clients are women and men, straight and gay, of every race, color, ethnicity, national origin, and religion. Yet, the profession is not nearly as inclusive as the people we represent. Indeed, a diversity imbalance plagues law firms, the judiciary, and other spheres where lawyers work.

On diversity, the Association is leading by example. This year, through the presidential appointment process, all 59 standing committees will have a chair, co-chair or vice-chair who is a woman, person of color, or otherwise represents diversity. Additionally, we will develop and implement an Association-wide diversity and inclusion plan.

I look forward to working closely with all of you in the coming year. Please do not hesitate to call or e-mail me with your questions, comments, feedback, or suggestions for how to make our Association more responsive to the needs of the profession and the public.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Amy M. Greenberg". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.