

Saint Louis LAWYER

*Our New
BAMSL President . . .
Thomas G. Glick*



1874
THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF
METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS

May 2010 Volume 1

president's message

Thomas G. Glick

BAMSL: 1874 through 2010



Taking the helm of the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis is a bit intimidating. This organization has a 140-year history with many accomplishments to its credit. These accomplishments can be divided into those that affect the community outside BAMSL and our internal accomplishments that directly impact our association.

The three most significant accomplishments of this association normally begin with the founding of the American Bar Association. The charter members of our association went on to found and provide the initial leadership of the American Bar Association. I have been active in both this organization and the Missouri Bar, but prior to last year I had not actively participated in ABA activities. So last year as my duties as president-elect increasingly took me to national ABA meetings and conferences, I was surprised to learn that our voluntary local bar association is widely respected and known nationally amongst a field of both mandatory and voluntary state-wide bar associations. It is my intention to continue to participate actively in those conferences along with BAMSL's other leaders to maintain, and if possible, improve our national reputation and visibility.

Our next major accomplishment was the creation of a method of delivering pro bono legal aid to the greater St. Louis area. BAMSL's first step in this area was the creation of an internal committee in 1911. Then, as today, we realized that a system to dispense justice cannot succeed without some allowance for low and moderate-income people to participate on an equal footing. This committee would eventually

grow and be spun off into the independent organization now known as Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM). BAMSL's creation of LSEM is not only significant because it was a national model in 1911 and because it remains a national model today but also because it was delivering legal services to people in Eastern Missouri more than 60 years before the Nixon administration and Congress created and funded the Legal Services Corporation in 1974.

I have many plans for this year to enhance BAMSL's relationship with LSEM. The prior Board of Governors, under the leadership of President Dale Weppner, has already opted to become a full partner in LSEM's first annual bar fundraising campaign. BAMSL's pro-bono committee has recently been reinvigorated through the efforts of several volunteers in the organization. This committee has requested the opportunity to visit with each section and committee to discuss the individual needs and abilities of their group to enhance our overall pro-bono efforts. Other efforts to assist the provision of legal services to the low and moderate income people of Eastern Missouri will include another trip to Washington D.C. on ABA Day to lobby Congress. This not only represents an opportunity to enhance the administration of justice to the poor, it also significantly enhances the profile of this organization with Missouri's entire Congressional delegation and the ABA.

During these first 140 years, by far our biggest accomplishment was the creation of the Non-Partisan Court Plan. For the first time anywhere on November 16, 1937, our Committee on Judicial Tenure and Selection introduced a draft of legislation

to select qualified judges without the rancor and political pay-offs of partisan elections. This plan came to be known as the "The Missouri Plan." The plan was, and is, unpopular with those who believe they can gain advantage through political control of judges. These people believe that a few wealthy people with political connections should be able to select the judges we rely on to adjudicate our clients' disputes.

It is not surprising that in our current era of extreme partisan rancor we are seeing partisan interests circulating an initiative petition to repeal the non-partisan plan we created. The out of state money that wants to impact this change sees the national rhetorical value in attacking the "Missouri Plan" in Missouri with little regard for the consequence to justice in Missouri. Even those of us who agree with the conservatism of the people behind the amendment, as lawyers we realize that any political advantage gained by political control of the judiciary would be short-term. Politics shift and change over time and, in time, these partisans will come to regret the removal of the judiciary as a hedge against the vagaries of public opinion. BAMSL remains non-partisan but our policy on political reform not only permits, but arguably demands, participation in politics to the extent it impacts the administration of justice. Therefore, we will continue to mobilize our membership in a variety of ways to maintain our association's duty to preserve an independent judiciary.

My presidential agenda cannot involve only matters external to the organization. We must also keep our own house in order. BAMSL like everyone feels the pinch of our current economic situation. The associa-

tion has made substantial efforts to reduce discretionary spending and increase income from non-dues revenue. Those efforts have been successful, but they are not enough. Clearly the economic situation does not currently permit a dues increase; therefore in order to increase income, we must increase our membership. BAMSL like every association, trust or corporation is a legal fiction. It is nothing more than a collection of actual individual members. My single most important goal this year will be to increase the number of BAMSL members. I have several plans for how to accomplish this.

Many years ago our association changed its name from the "Bar Association of St. Louis" to the "Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis." At the time, the principal reason for the change was to emphasize our member's practices in both the City and County of St. Louis. We must now, once again, examine our name and note that Metropolitan St. Louis has grown to include significant portions of Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles counties as well as several counties of Illinois.

The people reading this all know that for BAMSL, the value of membership can never be reduced to a dollar amount. But my experience includes several years managing my own firm, and when the dues bill comes and someone's hand hovers over the signature line of a check, their foremost thought is "What benefit is my law practice getting in exchange for this check?" Even though a great portion of our membership devotes most of their professional lives to reducing abstractions to dollar amounts, there will never be a formula to value respect of our profession, prestige for us and our firms, the appreciation of a child helped by a public service projects, value of our justice system or many of BAMSL's projects. We can however strive to make prospective members more conscious of the invaluable benefits they receive.

For example, you hold in your hands, or perhaps view on your screen, the newly

modernized St. Louis Lawyer with its refreshed look and return to magazine format. But we also need to adapt to the world of new media. BAMSL already has a web



(front row) President-Elect Steve Zack and ABA President Carolyn Lamm (second row) Zoe W. Lyle, Executive Director of Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis; Lynn Whaley Vogel, Missouri Bar Vice President; Bruce E. Hopson, President Elect of the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis; John Johnston, Missouri Bar President Elect; Thomas Glick, BAMSL President; Keith Birkes, Executive Director of Missouri Bar; Nancy E. Kenner, President-Elect of Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association, William R. Bay, ABA Delegate (Bar Leaders Institute in Chicago)

page and social media presence. Now we have to keep these outlets up to date and widely consulted. One example of a way that we can do this appears at the end of this article. There is a citation for a discussion on BAMSL's Facebook page for your comments on this article. I encourage you to get a Facebook account (its free, easy, and no longer just for kids) and provide your thoughts.

This year will also see the publication of our pentennial pictorial directory. Members have long seen the value of both owning and being listed in this directory. I am certain this year will be no exception. This version will mark several technological innovations including the availability of the pictorial directory as an application for use on smartphones, and the ability to submit photographs and information electronically.

These efforts to increase membership will yield our organization substantial benefits even beyond the needed dues revenue. But there are two sides to every balance sheet, and we have, or are, attempting to maximize all sources of revenue. We have thoroughly slashed discretionary spending.

This leaves us to examine fixed expenses. BAMSL's current headquarters are lovely and a dining experience is increasingly rare amongst local bar associations. I was a voting member of the BAMSL's Board of Governors in 2001 when we entered into the lease for our current space. I voted to enter into the lease. Our space includes substantial space for multiple lunchtime meetings and seminars as well as foodservice because surveys of the members prior to the last move overwhelming indicated that they wanted a dining facility. Unfortunately, the additional space for the dining facility atop a business district high rise has proven to be more attractive to a member completing a survey than it is to a member actually choosing a lunch destination.

When BAMSL first opened a dining facility, most of our members worked downtown, and had very limited choices for a lunch with table service. There is no longer a shortage of places to eat a business lunch near the office of most of our members. This lesson has been painfully learned recently by many luncheon clubs, including the Media Club, the Noonday Club and even in the Clayton area by the University Club. Our current lease expires on December 31, 2012, before then our association must chart a course that assures that all of our fixed costs are producing benefits enjoyed by a large number of our members.

This all amounts to ambitious changes to the way the association works and what it does, I have appointed and, you have elected, leaders that that will have to truly take the lead to accomplish my goals. I am excited to take on these tasks and look forward to our next 140 years.

To comment on this article, please use the discussions tab on The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis group on Facebook or email them to tglick@dmfirm.com.