

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FOR JANUARY, 2010

Seasons Greetings!

As we prepare to close the books on 2009, we can reflect on the past year and look forward to the challenges and rewards of the year ahead.

2009 was historic in both good ways and bad. After struggling for a century and a half to overcome the injustices wrought by prior centuries of slavery, our country embraced its first African-American President. The appointment and confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor was another breakthrough of historic proportion. Though there is much more to be done to solve lingering divides among racial and ethnic groups in education, economic opportunity, and social integration, it is encouraging to know we are moving in a positive direction. Our own Diversity Summit held in March under the leadership of President Tim Ravich and which will be conducted again in 2010 is a reflection of the continuing commitment by the DCBA to equality of opportunity and access to justice for all regardless of race, sex, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

2009 also saw the unprecedented failure of our economic markets, hitting Miami-Dade County especially hard with a home foreclosure crisis as bad as any in the country, which affected all socio-economic levels of our community. The deluge of foreclosure cases flooding our 11th Judicial Circuit Court threatened to cripple an already overburdened civil justice system. It has been the committed efforts of our leaders of the bench and bar that has helped manage this crisis. Most notably, Chief Judge Joel H. Brown, former Chief Judge Joseph P. Farina, Civil Division Administrative Judge Jennifer D. Bailey, and our Clerk of Courts, Harvey Ruvlin have provided smart and innovative solutions to help weather the storm.

The DCBA has conducted multiple seminars on the "how to" of handling a foreclosure case. Through the efforts of members like Erik Wesoloski, Chair of our Real Property Committee and Kendall Coffey, we have helped more than 1000 lawyers hone their skills to assist those in our community most in need. We also participated in media sponsored events on the foreclosure crisis, including a Spanish language call-in show on radio station WQBA and a television viewer call-in show, Neighbors 4 Neighbors on CBS4.

2010 will undoubtedly bring new challenges and opportunities. Though we cannot predict what they will be, we can affirm how we will respond to them. Your elected officers, directors, and you, the membership, must remain committed to the ideals that have made us so resilient over time. The DCBA has existed over 100 years (and was officially chartered in 1920). We pre-date the Florida Bar. This month, we adopt a new tag line: "A Century of Service to Miami-Dade." Our mission is simple:

The Dade County Bar Association was incorporated in 1920 to serve the lawyers of this county, to promote the administration of justice, to enhance attorney professionalism, and to cultivate positive relationships among all members of the Bar.

So let us resolve in 2010 to continue the tradition of service that has been our hallmark during the past 100 years. Let us strive to meet each challenge and each opportunity with renewed energy so that no matter what the future may bring, the goals we set and achieve will inspire those who follow us to reach even greater heights and to achieve even more of which we may all be proud.

Speaking of pride, it is with great pride that we present as our January luncheon speaker the President-Elect of the American Bar Association, our own Steve Zack. Steve started his voluntary bar work here at the DCBA where he served as President of the Young Lawyers Section (DCBA/YLS) in 1975-1976. An innovative thinker and natural leader, Steve will be the first Cuban-American to head the largest and most politically influential of our national voluntary bar associations. Come downtown to the Hyatt January 15th and hear about Steve and from him on his plans for his year as President of the ABA. Another bonus...coming to the luncheon will give you the chance "to cultivate positive relationships among all members of the Bar." Please come over and say hello. I hope to see you there.

On behalf of the officers, directors and staff of the DCBA, we wish you all a blessed and safe holiday season and great success in 2010!