

President's Message

Interview of 2013-14 President Leo C. Hamilton

Interviewed by 2013-14 Secretary E. Jane Sherman

Sherman: Tell us about yourself and your family.

Hamilton: I am a Baton Rouge native, *i.e.*, born there, reared there, attended public elementary and secondary schools there, and attended LSU for undergraduate and law school degrees. My wife, Gwen, and I will have been married for 40 years on June 23 of this year. We have three daughters: Malia, Kimberly and Christine. They've all graduated from high school and finished college. The oldest and the youngest of our girls, Malia and Christine, currently reside in New Orleans and our middle daughter, Kimberly, resides in Baton Rouge. Kimberly is the only one of our girls who is married. Her husband is Gary Jupiter, and they have one daughter, Makenzye, who is 4 years old and runs all of our lives.

Despite my earlier pledge to not ever do so, I have practiced law with a major law firm, Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, L.L.P., for more than 20 years and have really enjoyed the experience. My areas of practice are labor and employment, administrative law and constitutional law. I have had the invigorating experience of representing the Louisiana Community and Technical College System since its inception and have really enjoyed the experience of watching it grow. I truly believe that the existence of viable community and technical colleges has greatly improved the postsecondary education options available to Louisiana's youth and enhanced the growth in the state's economic development. Prior to my involvement in the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF), I was very much involved with the Baton Rouge Bar Association (BRBA), having served on its board of directors and in officer capacities, including as president.

Sherman: How did you get involved with the LBF?

Hamilton: I was initially invited to become a Fellow during my term as president of the BRBA; later, Mathile Abramson, a fellow member and past president of the BRBA, suggested that I continue my association with the

Bar Foundation. I was then appointed to the board by Judge Marc Amy, then-president of the Foundation. After serving on the board for a term, I was elected to continue my service by the full board.



Leo C. Hamilton

Sherman: What role does the LBF play in promoting access to the justice system?

Hamilton: The LBF serves a primary and direct role in promoting access to justice through its support of the Legal Services offices and other direct legal service providers throughout the state. Unfortunately, financial support for these programs is dwindling at the state and federal levels. This dwindling support makes the LBF's contribution even more vital. Indirectly, through financial support of educational programs aimed at youth and the disadvantaged, the LBF enhances access by expanding the knowledge of the general public to the rule of law and to their rights as citizens.

Sherman: Are you satisfied by the response of Louisiana attorneys to the call to perform pro bono work?

Hamilton: No, I'm not satisfied. There is insufficient knowledge of the requirements of our oath. By this, I mean there is less of an understanding among members of the profession, especially younger attorneys, regarding the role of attorneys in the maintenance of our social order. When access to justice is denied to the most vulnerable of our community through adequate legal representation, the rule of law is eroded. We must ensure that equal justice under the law is more than simply a phrase. We have to get back to the fundamentals of our democracy.

Sherman: Why is it important for Louisiana attorneys to lend their financial support for the LBF?

Hamilton: The LBF offers the best op-

portunity for Louisiana attorneys to enhance the overall standing of the legal profession in each of our communities. The LBF has programs that touch all Louisiana communities: north and south, large and small, urban and rural. By supporting and participating in the programs of the LBF, Louisiana attorneys help all of us earn the respect of our neighbors and NOT merely become the target of "lawyer jokes"!

Sherman: How can Louisiana lawyers help the LBF beyond giving money?

Hamilton: First and foremost, each Louisiana attorney should consider providing some volunteer time to one of the programs of the LBF. As busy as we all are, there is the time to give a few hours to the betterment of our profession and the community as a whole. Additionally, there are always opportunities to offer suggestions on how we can better provide access to justice for the most vulnerable among us. The LBF is open to new approaches to and resources for the provision of services to the poor, disadvantaged and other individuals or groups unable to secure legal assistance to address critical problems.

Sherman: What are your goals and your vision as LBF president?

Hamilton: After serving in a leadership capacity for some five years, I can only hope to maintain the standards established by past presidents and work toward expanding our membership; enhancing the delivery of crucial legal services to the most vulnerable members of our communities; and improving the image of Louisiana attorneys throughout this country.

LBF Announces New Fellows

The Louisiana Bar Foundation announces new Fellows:

Mark J. Ashby Atlanta, Ga.
Andrew B. Cooper Houston, Texas
Linda Kay Ewbank Monroe
T. Frank Larson Alexandria