



Bar Involvement Is an Investment in Our Profession

BY RANDALL M. KESSLER

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Family Advocate* and the articles on Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). During my year as chair of the section, we will focus on ART and will have significant CLE programs at our fall and spring meetings. I hope you can join us in Las Vegas (October 26–29) and Miami Beach (April 18–21).

Following are my remarks from the ABA Annual Meeting in Toronto, where I “received the gavel” as 2011–12 chair of the ABA Section of Family Law.

Wow, I cannot believe this day is finally here. I have always been a big believer in service to the bar. My early mentors in the legal profession, my first employers and leaders in the bar always encouraged me to be active in the bar and believed that it would give back to me much more than I gave it. That is unbelievably true. From the Atlanta Bar to the Georgia Bar to the American Bar Association, I have gotten back 10 times what I have given. To me, being a lawyer without being active in the local or national bar would be empty. After all, the law is a profession and not just a way to make money.

Family law is one of the few areas of law that, if done right professionally, at the end of our career we can sit back and know that we have helped many people just by doing our job. In how many other careers can this be accomplished? During my year as chair, it is my goal to continue to expand family law attorneys’ involvement in the growth and understanding of family law across the country. Educating lawyers and the general public is the first step in helping families through family law litigation.

The concept of Families Matter, birthed by Mitch Karpf, and pursued by the Families Matter Committee, including Debra Lehrmann, Scott Friedman, Ed Newman, and many others, is a great way to accomplish this. Aside from continuing to pursue the concept of Families Matter and helping spread the message of Families Matter, I would also like for us to continue to explore ways to improve the practice of family law and its impact on families through alternative dispute resolution, collaborative law, and other nonlitigation methods. We also have many issues to discuss and to help bring along, including the development of international custody law, gay marriage, and the rights of same-sex individuals relating to each other and to children.

While I will do my best to expand lawyer and community understanding of these issues, it is all about

a group effort. And what a wonderful group we have. I am so incredibly honored, flattered, and privileged to become the chair of the ABA Family Law Section. Everyone in the section is so dedicated to improving the practice of family law, which ultimately improves the daily lives of everyday folks. It is truly an honor to help all family law attorneys accomplish this enormously important task, improving the fate of families struggling with family law issues.

In addition to the current officers, all of whom have provided tremendous support, I also need to thank, in particular, all of the former chairs who have helped me along the way. All of you up here on the podium with me are truly appreciated. Thank you all and thank you to past leaders such as Gregg Herman, Mitch Karpf, Deb Lehrmann, Jim Preston, Anita Ventrelli, Marshall Wolf, Tim Walker, Linda Elrod (who gave me my first committee chair appointment), and many others, and to leaders in my local community in Atlanta who have always helped me along the way. I also want to acknowledge everyone in my firm, but especially my partner, Marvin Solomiany, who is my secret weapon; and also my “right arm” paralegal, assistant, and dear friend, Nancy Miller, who has worked with me side-by-side and been my biggest supporter since 1991.

My family, my parents and stepparents, Stan and Ellen Kessler and Janet and Victor Brown, my brother Cory Kessler, who has always pushed me to be competitive since he was always better in sports than I was (but I was older, so that evened things out), and to the two most important people in my life, my wife Valerie and daughter Jolie—without whom I would not be who I am or here with you today. You all know how supportive they have been, attending every single ABA event with me, including fall meetings, spring meetings, annual meetings, midyear meetings, SOC meetings, CLE planning meetings, and many others. Without Valerie and now Jolie, I certainly would not be who I am and I want them to know I love them.

Thank you and I look forward to serving. **FA**

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