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H. Thomas Wells Jr.

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You will give brief welcome remarks.

*** Glad to be here at "my" regional conference of bar presidents. Thank you for all your support—I hope to pay it back with my support for continued improvements in collaboration and cooperation with the state and local bars.**

*** I've spoken with many of you at National Conference of Bar Presidents and elsewhere about my areas of focus for the year, so I won't go into much detail here. As always, however, feel free to contact me with your thoughts and suggestions.**

*** Instead of launching brand-new initiative, I decided to focus on what the bar is already doing to promote our common core values—what we call our "knitting initiative," as in "stick to our knitting."**

*** Four common core values I've identified—values that resonate whether you practice on Wall Street or Main Street, values that all of our state and local bars are focusing on—are access to justice, independence of the bar and judiciary, diversity, and the rule of law.**

*** Access to justice: Glad for the participation we get every year at ABA Day in Washington to lobby for legal services funding and other core values of the profession. I look forward to seeing you this year for ABA Day April 21-23.**

*** Independence of the bar and judiciary: Celebrating 100th anniversary of the ABA's code of ethics this year. Need to stay vigilant: don't want to follow in accounting profession's loss of independence in Enron's wake. Need to watch proposed regulations on financial services and their effect on the profession. Staying vigilant on attorney-client privilege.**

*** Independence of the judiciary: Summit on Fair and Impartial State Courts. State Supreme Courts are forming delegations, which involve state bar presidents and the need to work across branches to ensure legislative funding. Summit will be May 7-9. Honorary chair and keynote speaker is Sandra Day O'Connor. Chairs are Mark Martin and Ned Madeira.**

*** Diversity: Working on Summit in June to spread word on best practices to promote diversity in the bar—focusing on the business case for diversity. Chairs are Jim Wynn and Eduardo Rodriguez.**

*** Rule of Law: Free, fair, and accurate elections are a key element of the rule of law. www.abavoteinfo.org. Spread the word on mobilizing the bar for volunteering to be election judges and to serve on Election Protection Project—and on training materials and state-by-state statutory guides on handling election disputes.**

*** Lincoln bicentennial: Focus of Law Day 2009 and celebrations throughout the year. Law Day chair is Allen Tannenbaum.**