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2008

2008-09-19 H. Thomas Wells, Jr. ABA Presidential Speech

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Thank you. For many reasons, I appreciate the opportunity to be here. A big reason, quite frankly, is the chance to look back wistfully on my own days as a section officer.

Now that I've reached what many folks imagine is the pinnacle of the presidency, I have some advice for you:

Enjoy your *section leadership* while you can. Things get more complicated the further up the ladder you climb. But they also get more fun.

One thing I recognize is how much you all mean to the operation of what some of us call the U.S.S. ABA.

As you know, our executive director, Hank White, is a former rear admiral, and I'm an Air Force veteran. But try as I might to stoke our interbranch rivalry, I simply can't wrap my mind around the metaphor of the ABA as a fighter jet. A battleship or carrier seems to work better, don't you think?

In some respects, this sums up why the search committee I was on brought Hank into the operation. It's been two years

since he came on board, after being a dedicated rank-and-file member for so many years while serving in the Navy and, later, in New York City government and association management. I'm not the only one who's impressed with the improvements he's initiating—with your help, I might add—in communications, collaboration, and clarity throughout the Association and the *esprit de corps* he encourages among the staff.

While our staff's *management* task is huge, it's fueled by the power and example of our *leadership*. We are a

complex organization with 900 smart and dedicated staff—and nearly *450 times* as many members. Aside from our *individual* members, most of whom do not participate as leaders, the ABA needs to mobilize all its *institutional* players.

First we have all of you, the entities that make up the SOC. We have our standing and special committees, commissions, task forces, and other groups. We have our state, local, and other affiliated bars and organizations. And, encompassing them all, we have our House of Delegates.

But there's a strong case to be made that the sections, divisions, and forums are the ABA's lifeblood, where so much of our core work takes place:

*** You lend your expertise to crafting the policies adopted by the House, which we then leverage to improve our profession and our society.**

*** You produce the publications and CLE programs our members appreciate—and purchase—day after day to improve their expertise and service to clients. And I'm happy to point out that this adds quite a bit to our non-dues**

revenue line, giving promise to the goal of stabilizing or even lowering membership dues.

*** You feed and nurture the leadership tracks that keep our volunteer association going and lay the foundation for the ABA's future.**

*** You drive diversity throughout the Association, which we desperately need to remain competitive in our evolving society.**

*** And, like no other mechanism, *you bring in and retain members.***

**I can assure you of one thing:
Membership development—with your
help and supported by our Standing
Committee on Membership, our Board of
Governors, and the example set by Hank
White and my successor Carolyn
Lamm—is *Job One* throughout the ABA.**

**Thank you for taking the time to be
here and gather ideas on enhancing your
leadership. I also appreciate the many of
you who have met with me to share what
your sections are doing and thinking—
which, quite frankly, impresses and**

energizes me tremendously. And I thank you especially for your offers of support.

I'm also grateful for your nominations for presidential appointments. Given the size and complexity of the job, I am *sure glad lad they are over*. As former president Jerry Shestack told me, for each appointment he made, he earned one ingrate and nine irates.

Seriously, our appointments committee, chaired by Trish Refo, was fortunate to have the valuable nominations that many of you in the sections submitted. Carolyn and *her*

**appointments chair, Barbara Mayden,
should be as fortunate.**

**Others I'd like to thank are Deborah,
Lametrea, and the planning committee
members for all their hard work in
producing this meeting—not to mention
all *your* efforts to make the SOC such an
integral part of the ABA's success.**

**So, what are we focusing on for this
year, and how can you help? Actually,
we're mostly prepared to help *you*, as
we're focusing on and prepared to
spotlight so many of the important issues
and activities you're already working on.**

Throughout the years, we've had many outstanding presidential initiatives that have shaped the ABA and led us into important new directions. The most recent ones are living on in the World Justice Project, which we're transitioning into a separate but allied organization; the Commission on Youth At Risk, which is now a permanent commission; and the Second Season of Service, whose resources for retiring and transitioning lawyers are distributed in appropriate places throughout the ABA and the web site.

For my year as president, I decided to undertake something we hadn't done in a while. Some refer to it a knitting initiative—as in "stick to our knitting." Basically, we're focusing on the common core values of our profession.

We're promoting values that resonate whether you are a lawyer on Wall Street or a lawyer on Main Street. Values that Unite us as a profession. Values that Inspire us to work together. Values that Enable us to make a difference as a profession.

As I see them, these values include those that every section, every division, every forum is working on in some form or another.

The first value that unites us, inspires us, and enables to make a difference us is access to justice. We all agree that there is no viable justice if there is no access to justice. On this issue we all stand together, whether it's at ABA Day in Washington lobbying for Legal Services funding, or whether your entities are contributing to pro bono projects in your particular areas of specialization.

Access to justice is one core value that unites us, inspires us, and enables us to make a difference. A second core value is independence: Independence of the Bar and of our Judiciary.

Through our vigilance, we remain a self-regulating profession—a common core value that we all share. Indeed, this year we celebrate the Centennial of the first ABA Code of Ethics.

But self-regulation is not self-sustaining or self-perpetuating: Just look at the accounting profession and what happened in Enron's wake. Some would

say that the auditing side of accounting is now a federally regulated trade.

So, with your watchful eye, we must remain attentive and continue not only to set, but also to enforce, our ethics rules.

And, relying on you, we must continue our important and effective work on other independence issues, such as fighting erosion of the attorney-client privilege and related doctrines in federal investigation policies. As I've learned from many of you, there are other emerging issues affecting independence of

the bar, such as the effects of proposed financial and anti-terrorism regulations.

The flip side of independence of the bar is independence of the judiciary. Next spring, we will host a national summit for state bar, judicial, and legislative leaders to share best practices and strategies for promoting fair, impartial, and independent state courts. Ned Madeira from Philadelphia and Justice Mark Martin of the North Carolina Supreme Court are volunteering their signature energy and leadership as co-chairs of this exciting and crucial project. Retired

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has agreed to serve as honorary co-chair and will be the keynote speaker.

A third core value that unites us, inspires us, and enables us to make a difference is Diversity. We all know that it's important to keep strategizing about these issues for a simple reason: When gifted women and men of diverse backgrounds face systemic barriers to entering law school and climbing the ranks of our profession, it's not just a *lack of opportunity* for them. It's a *lost opportunity* for all lawyers as we're called

on to serve an increasingly diverse and complex society.

Next year, most likely in June, we will host a national diversity summit, chaired by Eduardo Rodriguez from Texas and Judge Jim Winn of North Carolina, to share resources and best practices that promote this common core value of the profession. We're especially interested in the *business* case for diversity: that we as lawyers cannot continue to serve our clients effectively and—for those of us in private practice—lucratively if we do not improve our profession's diversity

statistics. The term "business case" is used loosely, as lawyers in nonprofit and government also have a stake in serving clients effectively.

Our fourth common core value that unites us, inspires us, and enables us to make a difference is the rule of law.

Promoting the rule of law will be especially important this year as we face a watershed election and an inevitable change of administrations in Washington.

One defining aspect of our rule of law is the fact that we are blessed to live in a society in which election disputes are

handled by judges and lawyers in courts of law and not by generals and mobs in the streets.

How can we make a difference in this area, to be the "public citizens" Thomas Jefferson encouraged lawyers to be?

Policy passed by the House in August gives us one idea. As it notes, there is a large, unmet need for official poll workers on Election Day, and lawyers are perfectly suited for this task. Our legal training and expertise makes us practical, analytical, attentive to detail, and able to craft solutions to disputes. So, to

implement that policy, please encourage your members to volunteer as election judges and poll officials in their communities.

You and your members also can serve as public citizens with the Election Protection Project, a program of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law supported by our Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities, the Section of State and Local Government Law, the Council on Racial and Ethnic Justice, and the Standing Committee on Election Law. Volunteer

lawyers and law students nationwide are staffing voter-assistance hotlines and doing other valuable work to protect and expand the franchise. Volunteer forms are being distributed here at SOC, and I encourage you to sign up.

Information on the Election Protection Project and other ways the bar can get involved are brought together on the ABA's recently launched voter web site, www.abavoteinfo.org, produced by the ABA Division for Public Education and Standing Committee on Election Law.

A really valuable set of resources that have just been added to abavoteinfo.org are training materials for state trial court judges who hear election law disputes—perhaps for the first time. Let me thank the Section of Administrative Law, the Judicial Division, and the Standing Committee on Election Law for bringing our attention to these materials from the National Center for State Courts and the College of William and Mary, and for compiling state-by-state statutory resources for judges and counsel in election law cases.

Again, that web site is abavoteinfo.org. I'd appreciate it if you'd consider linking to abavoteinfo.org on your entity's home pages.

For my part, I plan to spend a lot of time in Washington with our Governmental Affairs Office advocating our common core values with the new Administration and with Congress. We are able to advocate only on those positions adopted by our House of Delegates—policies, I would add, that largely come from the sections, divisions, and forums.

As lawyers, we can at times be pretty good at making a dollar. But we are at our dead level best when we are making a difference. Well, one thing is for sure for me this year, but I won't be making many dollars this coming year. I will – no, let me rephrase that – we, all of us, will be doing our dead level best to make a difference.

And we'll be doing so as we anticipate a historic election and debates over the common core values we hold dear as lawyers. We'll be inspired by our greatest lawyer-president, whose bicentennial

we'll celebrate in 2009. As providence would have it, we'll all be together for Abraham Lincoln's birthday, February 12, during our Midyear Meeting in Boston. And in August, we'll meet again in Chicago, the Land of Lincoln, where many of his clients and legal cases were based.

The irony of celebrating Lincoln's bicentennial with an ABA president from Alabama, a chair of the House (William Hubbard) from South Carolina, and a Law Day chair (Allen Tannenbaum) from Georgia has not escaped me.

Is America a great country, or what?

As lawyers who share President Lincoln's proud profession, let's stand up, speak out, work together, and make a difference on advancing our common core values.

We have a lot of work to do. I look forward to doing it in collaboration and cooperation with the SOC, and with all of you.