



L. E. BELARDO
ATTORNEY

LCBA Member Lee Belardo Announces Candidacy for Ohio State Bar President-Elect

At the first meeting of the LCBA held in June, Magistrate Rick Schwartz (Elyria Municipal Court) announced that local Avon sole-practitioner and member of the LCBA, Lee Belardo, was seeking election to the position of President-Elect of the Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA). Lee was happy to provide some time for the LCBA for some Q&A.

LCBA: What exactly is the position you are seeking?

Lee: The President-elect of the OSBA. The person elected to this position ascends to the position of president the next year. This position is elected every year at the Annual Meeting and Convention.

LCBA: Tell us about your involvement with the OSBA.

Lee: I have been involved with the OSBA from the beginning of my legal career in 1995. I have been past chair of the Young Lawyers Section (now the New Lawyers Section) and was the OSBA young lawyer delegate to the American Bar Association (ABA) as well.

I have also held the position of delegate to the Council of Delegates for our District (District 10 includes Ashland, Erie, Holmes, Lorain, Medina, Richland, Huron and Wayne counties).

I have recently completed a three year term as the OSBA Board of Governors (BOG) representative for our District (retired Judge Joe Cirigliano now holds the position). During my term I was able to help the OSBA find an appropriate means to recognize its first African-American president, John Howard, with a contribution by the OSBA toward artwork that now appears at the new John Howard Elyria Municipal Courthouse.

I was also on the Advisory Committee for the OSBA's OfficeKeeper project which won the E. Smythe Gambrell Professionalism Award from the ABA Standing Committee on Professionalism. Officekeeper helps attorneys with a myriad of issues from starting a law office, managing a practice and closing/selling a practice to quality of life, time management and hiring employees. It is accessible online to member of the OSBA.

I am also an appointee to the recently formed OSBA Task Force on Advertising and Marketing. OSBA President Gary Leppa has delegated to this committee the task of reviewing the current state of advertising in Ohio, the impact of the recently enacted Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct Rules 7.1-7.6, and the public's perception of the profession.

In addition, I am currently a Board of Trustee member for the Ohio Center for Law Related Education (OCLRE). I, along with Tim Lubbe, have coordinated the regional mock trial competitions for this organization for the past two years and will do so again in 2009.

I am also a 2008 Fellow of the Ohio State Bar Foundation (OSBF), the charitable arm of the OSBA, whose mission is to promote public understanding of the law and improvements in the justice system throughout Ohio. Our class project hopes to address the hurdles and obstacles faced by those persons re-entering society after completing a term of incarceration.

I also serve on the Commission on Professionalism for the Supreme Court of Ohio. Through the Commission's efforts a statewide mentoring program has been established to address the gap between law school and practicing law. The mentoring program gives new lawyers an alternative means of completing their required new lawyer training by matching with a mentor they choose. Mentors can receive CLE credit for mentoring the new lawyer as well. The Commission is also turning its attention to the way law school is taught to see whether changes can be made to produce attorneys trained to the highest professional standard.

LCBA: Why do you want to be the next OSBA President?

LEE: I would like to see another minority be President of the Association. We have had many women in the role, but not since Judge Howard in 1981 has there been a minority candidate.

I also hope to bring my perspective as a sole practitioner and general practitioner of law to the office and believe it will help the OSBA better understand its similarly situated members.

Finally I envision the future of the OSBA benefiting by my youth to inspire tomorrow's attorneys to be involved with the business of the state bar, its traditions and the professionalism it embodies.

LCBA: When is the election?

LEE: The election will be held during the 2009 OSBA Annual Convention scheduled for May 13th – 15th at the Renaissance Hotel in Cleveland. In order to vote, an attorney must be an OSBA member. In the past, attorneys needed to pay and register for the convention to cast a vote in a contested election for the Association's President-Elect. However, a recent change in the OSBA's Constitution has done away with that requirement. This will be the first contested election under the Association's new bylaws. I am excited to be a part of this process and encourage all lawyers to become involved with OSBA. Your membership can be more than Casemaker research and reduced CLE prices; it can make a difference in the administration of justice and it can improve our most honorable profession.

I attempt to conduct myself to the highest standard of professionalism in all that I do. My opponent, Mr. Carmen Roberto from Akron, can rest assured I will do so in this campaign as well. I appreciate the Lorain County Bar Association's support in my efforts to become the next President-Elect of the OSBA.