

## ***Voluntary Bar Virtual Town Hall Series – May 8, 2020***

### ***Session I - Voluntary Bar Presidents***

#### ***RESOURCES & RECOVERY AFTER COVID-19***

Vivian Hodz, Chair, Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee convened the Zoom meeting with voluntary bar presidents at noon. She provided a welcome and brief introduction of the Town Hall series. Forty-four voluntary bars were represented on the call.

John Stewart, President of The Florida Bar was introduced. Stewart acknowledged the work of Hodz as both the Voluntary Bar Chair and Annual Convention Chair. He also expressed his appreciation for the voluntary bar leaders and their organizations. Stewart shared that an email would come out later today outlining plans for the virtual Annual Convention from him and Dori Foster Morales, that meetings, CLE seminars, and certain events will be held virtually or remotely the week of June 15-19 rather than holding the in-person annual convention in Orlando due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There will be no in-person events for the 2020 Florida Bar Annual Convention.

Since we are in Orlando, he has asked Vivian and the Annual Convention Committee to “Reimagine the Convention” in this time of creativity and doing things differently.

During these unprecedented times and as we all face new and unforeseen personal and professional challenges, The Florida Bar strives to be here for you. Our 350+ staff are all working remotely and we will continue to do our best to be there for you. We appreciate the voluntary bars and the contribution you make to the legal profession.

**VOLUNTARY BAR ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP SUPPORT** – What can the Florida Bar do to help voluntary bar leaders like you? What existing resources have you benefited from? What has been lacking that would be beneficial?

#### **Jamaican-American Bar Association – Samantha Simone Parchment**

TFB member fee – Need more accommodation for members who are in significant financial stress.

#### **Sarasota County Bar Association - Drew Clayton**

It has been helpful for SCBA to have partnered with other bars to put on programming; Broward County Bar series of webinars; how to work with courts and to continue operating in a remote environment.

### **FL Justice Association – Leslie Kroeger**

When talking with local members, their key concern is having all info on what the courts are doing. She would like to see a Clearinghouse on courts section by locality on webpage so a person could look there instead of having to look several places for this info.

She thinks the ZOOM call with VB presidents is great and should be done on a regular basis, perhaps, once a quarter. She recommends a discussion on maintaining memberships, financial health and mental health.

### **Broward County Bar Association - Michael Fischler**

BCBA has shared their platform B-Connected to allow other organizations to participate in webinars, OnDemand courses, etc. The webinars are featured topics on working from home, remote collaboration and ten other topics. After the webinar it is saved as on OnDemand course on their B-Connected webpage. <https://cle.browardbar.org/us/> Dade County Bar Association, St. Petersburg Bar Association, Sarasota County Bar Association, Hillsborough County Bar Association, Escambia-Santa Rosa Bar Association and Jacksonville Bar Association have all participated in the collaboration. Other bars are welcome to share with their members. There is a modest fee for the courses.

TFB has placed all of the webinars and OnDemand course on the <https://www.floridabar.org/about/volbars/covid19/> webpage.

### **Hillsborough County Bar Association - Grace Yang**

Collaboration among voluntary bars is critical during this time. She would like to see these Town Halls continue. HCBA also hosting town halls with the judiciary in Circuit 13. They hope to continue this format with other judges.

### **Cuban American Bar Association - Frances De La Guardia**

The FL Bar is doing a great job on communications. They forward the info to their VB members. CABA has partnered with MDFAWL on mindfulness and wellness events. They are engaged in a monthly series of virtual yoga classes with Anny Noratto. We hosted a mindfulness and meditation webinar on May 4. On May 7 they hosted a Virtual Courtroom on procedures and proceedings with South Florida judges.

### **Palm Beach County Bar Association – Dean Xenick**

PBCBA has hosted Town Halls with judges. The most recent on May 7 with Civil and Probate Administrative Judges. Also, family and juvenile judges earlier. The programs are recorded and placed on the Association website.

Our members are interested in how the judiciary will be operating when jury trials resume. Is The Florida Bar involved in these discussions? Who will be involved in these discussions on when it will resume and how?

### **Jacksonville Beaches Bar Association - Courtney Walters**

The Florida Bar and the Voluntary Bar webpage has been a great resource during this time. An issue I would like to see discussed is what law firms look like upon reopening their offices to clients. A large majority of our members are solo practitioners and/or have 1-2 associates and staff, who will be trying to determine how to start seeing clients

in the office that are a must i.e. signing documents. Some of us have started talking among ourselves for ideas, so I'd like to see what others are doing, thoughts, etc..

Perhaps a Town Hall on what reopening will be like? Both Dori and John could share their thoughts.

### **Facebook group page – COMING SOON!**

Vivian Hodz shared that the Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee had recommended on our call last week that a Facebook group page be created for voluntary bars. Groups are a place to communicate about shared interests, discuss programs, posts items of concern or challenges, etc. It would be a discussion board type set-up. Different bar leaders could post topics and the group can respond. This is a new tool we are working on and hope to have available soon.

Vivian Hodz posed the question of how are Bars finding the best way to get content to their members? How is best way for us to get content to Voluntary Bars?

### **Florida Justice Association – Leslie Kroeger**

The FJA hosted a zoom wine tasting happy hour for their Panama City members. FJA leaders joined the virtual event to provide a recap of the 2020 Legislative Session and other important updates. Wine was provided via no-contact delivery by FJA staff to members' doorsteps prior to the call to enhance the happy hour experience. Additional virtual happy hours are being scheduled in more Florida cities during the coming weeks.

### **Pinellas Association for Women Lawyers – Shavarne Dahlquist**

Her organization has been concerned with overwhelming members with too much information. They have relied on social media. They have also looked to the Clearwater Bar Association as the larger bar in their area for most information on court procedures, local information about court impacts, etc.

### **Orange County Bar Association - Tony Sos**

OCBA members would be interested in tips on reopening, tips on remote trials etc.

OCBA hosted a virtual event on April 25 featuring Valentino Dixon. Dixon was wrongfully convicted of murder and imprisoned for 27 years. His story is an amazing journey to freedom. Using art, he drew more than 900 pictures while incarcerated. Sos encouraged others to contact Dixon for an inspiring virtual wellness session. He can be reached at 740-324-0570. His fee is \$250

### **Miami Dade Association for Women Lawyers – Elisa D'Amico**

As a way of providing a beneficial member service and supporting local business, MDFAWL provided free Do-It-Yourself haircut tutorials presented by South Florida hairstylist Angelica Grace Corpion. The [virtual sessions](#) were held live and recorded.

On May 13 and each Wednesday in May, MDFAWL is partnering with Gwen S. Cherry Black Women Lawyers Association for WFH: Workout from Home! Members are asked

to download the Peloton- at home fitness app and create an account. (Peloton is giving new users a free 90-day trial for those who signed up before April 30!).

**ACCESS TO COURTS AND JUDICIARY** – How have the Court's in your areas responded to the COVID-19 crisis? How have VBA's been utilized (or not) by the judiciary to improve access to justice and facilitate the practice of law for your association membership? Ideas as to how to better partner with the judiciary?

Hodz began this discussion on the relationship that larger bars have with smaller bars, and the need for the larger bars to support the smaller unstaffed bars who need assistance.

**FL Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (Tallahassee Ch.) - Jessica Yeary**

FACDL had to let the judiciary know that they served more than 100 attorneys and they had a fast way to help get info out. Judges are doing things their own way. The pandemic has upended the criminal justice system. FACDL Criminal Court Task Force has been created sheriff, public defender, criminal lawyers, etc.

**Cuban American Bar Association - Frances De La Guardia**

In South Florida, the judiciary has been helpful. We have hosted a Town Hall with south Florida judges. We did a virtual webinar on the protocol and procedures for virtual courtroom hearings. Chief Judge Bertila Soto has been focused on access to courts for the 80% of litigants that do not have the technology for virtual representation.

**Central Florida Trial Lawyers – Jeremiah Jaspon**

Our organization hosted a Town Hall with a judge. Their member concerns is making sure courts have enough funding. Criminal proceedings will take precedent when the courts reopen. The Florida Bar needs to be engaged to make sure the courts and judges will be available to handle the cases in Central Florida. Funding and the lack of judges is challenge in the Circuit 9 area. It is important that we have relationships with judiciary and the legislature. We need to understand how the funding is now affected with COVID. How do you support the lawyers? TFB needs to get this info to the bar presidents. Congressman Soto – Money is being sent to FL for judges. Technology will impact the practice of law. After COVID some of these practices should continue. TFB should offer a webinar on tips to conduct trials by zoom.

**Florida Justice Association – Leslie Kroeger**

Court funding is paramount. Money to be shifted to the courts. Most legislators are not lawyers. They do not understand. They can't know if we don't tell them. Incredibly important that we keep the legislators informed. Keeping virtual and move through quicker. Jury trials are going to take a while. We all have to do our part.

**TECHNOLOGY** – What technology has helped you lead your bar association during the COVID-19 crisis? What suggestions do you have for improvement in the use of technology as a voluntary bar association leader? Is this changing the face of how voluntary bars operate?

**North Tampa Bar Association – Jared Krukar**

The normal monthly member luncheons are now roundtables via Zoom. We actually have better attendance. One of the great things about being part of a small voluntary bar is how supportive our members are of each other. No better time than the present. Our roundtable give us a chance to be together and have honest, heartfelt, and supportive discussions.

**Hillsborough County Bar Association - Grace Yang**

HCBA has also reverted to webinars and zoom meetings. Our members are missing the face to face interaction. Post COVID-19 we will have a mix of in- person meetings and virtual. Board meetings are being conducted via Zoom. As a member of the HCBA Board, Hodz offered that she felt the Board meeting were more efficient via zoom and they should continue.

**Caribbean Bar Association - Tricia Gaye Cotterell**

In recognition of mental health awareness month, CBA is doing two Sweat the Stress events in May. These are virtual dance classes via Zoom on May 16 and May 30. We are doing an online webinar on May 21. This week we held a Zoom happy hour to catch up with our colleagues and chat.

**Broward County Bar Association - Michael Fischler**

BCBA believes Zoom hearings are here to stay. We have a bench and bar committee in Broward. Our webinars will never be at capacity now that we are doing them virtually. We are finding more people are engaging.

Annual Convention going virtual – engage more people to participate.

**Tallahassee Association for Women Lawyers – Magie Ozarowski**

TWL's April General Membership Meeting and all April events were cancelled due to the current COVID-19 public health crisis. The Board meeting in May was Zoom. On May 13 we are hosting a webinar on "Lawyering in the Time of COVID-19". We are using the platform GO TO WEBINAR, this was used for the FAWL Summit. It is more secure and less likely to be bombed. It has a modest cost - \$60 for 100 participants; \$130 for 250 participants. John Stewart will be one the featured speakers. He will be discussing the Florida Bar's response to the pandemic, what Florida Bar members can expect in the near future, and share other resources offered by the Florida Bar. Judge Steven Everett will also speak on the courts response and go over various orders and what to expect going forward. We will also have a speaker on mental health. The webinar is free.

Hodz offered to share the GO TO WEBINAR information with TFB member services to explore as an additional member benefit. Perhaps the Bar could negotiate a group price that would be a better financial deal for those who subscribe for this technology service.

We will be scheduling a Town Hall on May 22 with the FL Bar leadership. Be watching for information to register for this event.

As a reminder, please send any info that you want to share (webinars, OnDemand courses, virtual events, engagement with other bars or photo, news, virtual events to [jdoran@floridabar.org](mailto:jdoran@floridabar.org)

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## IMPORTANT LINKS ON COVID 19 FLORIDA BAR RESOURCES

- The Florida Bar website [COVID-19 page](https://www.floridabar.org/news/releases/covid19/).  
<https://www.floridabar.org/news/releases/covid19/>
- **COVID-19 Resources for Voluntary Bars**  
<https://www.floridabar.org/about/volbars/covid19/>
- **INFORMATION ON COVID-19 EMERGENCY ORDERS & ADVISORIES**  
Clearinghouse on courts by locality  
<https://www.floridasupremecourt.org/Emergency>
- **The Florida Bar mental health helpline (1-833-FL1-WELL)**  
<https://www.floridabar.org/member/healthandwellnesscenter/>  
Bar News Story  
<https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/helpline-launch/>

### HITTING RESTART: RESOURCES FOR RECOVERY

RETURN TO WORK

#### [COVID-19 Back to Work Checklist](#)

[Guidance on preparing for a return to work and assessing risks](#) based on

Department of Labor and OSHA guidelines

#### [Communicating Your Reopening](#)

- **SideBar As It Happens**  
<https://www.floridabar.org/about/volbars/the-sidebar/sidebar-news-as-it-happens/>