

Voluntary Bar Virtual Town Hall Series – May 15, 2020

Session II - Voluntary Bar Executive Directors

RESOURCES & RECOVERY AFTER COVID-19

Vivian Hodz, Chair, Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee convened the Zoom meeting with voluntary bar executive directors at 3 p.m. She provided a welcome and brief introduction of the Town Hall series. Twenty-seven voluntary bars were represented on the call.

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 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.

Dori Foster-Morales, President-elect – Foster-Morales joined the call after having attended The Florida Bar Board of Governors meeting earlier in the day. She reiterated The Florida Bar Annual Convention will be entirely virtual. Hopefully, it will give more people the opportunity to participate and to help people connect.

Foster-Morales recognized the ongoing communication effort of The Florida Bar during the health crisis. She offered that it was better to err on the side of communicating more frequently than you need to with members during the pandemic. Members want to know what is going on and that you are there for them. It also shows them that you are staying on top of things and that is always comforting to a member.

The Florida Bar has a lot of resources for attorneys. The new 24-hour Mental Health Lawyers Helpline (1-833-FL1-WELL) is a free and confidential service that connects members with professional counselors. We appreciate the voluntary bars helping to get the message out that this resource is available.

Foster-Morales, John Stewart and The Florida Bar Leadership are interested in what the Bar can do that is within our control of what we can do to assist the voluntary bars. We want to understand and be responsive to voluntary bar needs. The voluntary bars are the backbone of the big Bar and we are interested in hearing what you are hearing from your members. We are also interested in what is going in your courts.

ACCESS TO COURTS AND JUDICIARY – Craig Shoup, Leader

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?

Several of the Association executive directors expressed that they had piggy backed on The Florida Bar COVID-19 communications/social media to try and stay relevant to their members. Most associations have served a vital communication role as a hub for local court information. They have hosted virtual updates with judges and posted important court information to social media and websites. The larger bars have also provided important information to smaller bars.

Volusia County Bar Association, Kathie Selover – Our Chief Judge Zambrano reached out to schedule a Zoom meeting with VCBA members regarding the state of the courts during this pandemic. The Judge is hosting a Q&A Zoom meeting on May 21. Members submitted questions before hand. Also, we will be reaching out to circuit and county court judges with the offer to set up meetings in other areas of the law (family, dependency, criminal, etc.)

Jacksonville Bar Association, Craig Shoup – There is no public information officer in Circuit 4 so the JBA is the pivot point for distributing court information. JBA has used social media to keep members up to date on court orders, administrative, etc.
<https://www.jaxbar.org/page/JBAUpdates>

Broward County Bar Association, Braulio Rosa – The BCBA has been the communication hub for local court info. They have listed all relevant information from Chief Justice and local judges. <https://www.browardbar.org/covid-19-announcements/>

Hillsborough County Bar Association, John Kynes – The HCBA has been the communication hub for court information. They created a COVID-19 webpage early on in the pandemic to keep members informed. They have also posted regularly to social media pages and shared with other local bars.
<https://www.hillsbar.com/news/493477/Coronavirus-COVID-19-HCBA-Updates-Information-and-Resources.htm>

Escambia Santa Rosa Bar Association, Jeff Nall – Their association also pushed out information from the court; They were cautious of overloading members with too much info. They opted to post things on Association website and social media pages.
<https://www.facebook.com/esrbafl/>

Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Becky Barlow – COVID-19 has changed and will continue to change the practice of criminal law. When the pandemic occurred, FACDL set up a special COVID-19 Committee. We added links to orders, motion, etc. to our webpage. We just had our first virtual Yoga session at noon today. We are encouraging our members to take time to relax and rejuvenate during this stressful time. <https://www.facdl.org/>

TECHNOLOGY – Braulio Rosa, Leader

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?

In the voluntary bar world, generally, face-to-face live events have been canceled or postponed, to minimize exposure to the coronavirus. As a result, forecasted revenues for events, meetings, activities in the second quarter are declining. More associations are collaborating with others who already have the technology and infrastructure in place to deliver timely webinars and CLE opportunities.

Broward County Bar Association, Braulio Rosa – All voluntary bars depend on revenue streams from events, CLE, sponsorships, etc. These have all been interrupted by the COVID crisis. Technology has become an important vehicle to keep us connected to our members. We are approaching this as Zoom meetings, zoom hearings are here to stay. We have been able to recoup some lost revenue of live events from the virtual webinars and CLE courses. <https://cle.browardbar.org/us/>

The BCBA has been the technology hub for virtual CLE courses, OnDemand video, etc. BCBA formed a partnership with other voluntary bars to work together to deliver high-quality, timely virtual events. Thirty-four webinars, CLE etc. has been conducted. The other voluntary bars include: 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.

Most recently they hosted a Mock Evidentiary Hearing. Six judges from six different circuits were online for the webinar. This gave the 500 participants the opportunity to meet other judges in other parts of the state. Technology expands the boundaries and enables hearings to take place without physically being there.

Escambia Santa Rosa Bar, Jeff Nall – Thanked Braulio for including them in the course offerings partnership. The partnership has provided CLE and educational opportunities for our members without any extra expense on the Association. <https://www.facebook.com/esrbafl/>

Hillsborough County Bar Association, John Kynes – Bar leadership are having discussions regularly about finances. We are trying to engender good will with our members. Instead of coming up with new programs, we are trying to collaborate with other bars to avoid recreating the wheel. We are happy Braulio offered the partnership opportunity. We also depend on TFB to keep us informed. TFB has done a great job of communicating, especially with the COVID updates and the health and wellness statewide platform. https://www.hillsbar.com/events/event_list.asp

VOLUNTARY BAR ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP SUPPORT – Melissa Byers, Leader

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?

Membership is expected to take a downward turn during the next renewal period. Several are anticipating member engagement in the association to also decline. But some voluntary bar associations are repurposing their associations to be a part of the

recovery. Virtual events are gaining ground. Sponsorships for canceled events are being retained by repositioning sponsor promotion and recognition to virtual and other digital platforms offered by the association. Some associations are extending sponsor contracts an extra quarter to provide more opportunity for exposure. Some anticipate engagement will increase with a combination of in-person events and continuing virtual programs.

Escambia/Santa Rosa Bar Association, Jeff Nall -Voluntary bars operate on different business models than mandatory bars. Most voluntary bars are expecting a dip in membership fees paid due to the virus impact. All revenue streams for voluntary bars, events, CLE, etc. are impacted. Since we have different business models than a mandatory bar we don't always do things the same way. We ask for mutual respect so our financial support will less impacted.

Jacksonville Bar Association, Craig Shoup - We would encourage the Voluntary Bar committee to offer some webinars on intro type topics that would have been presented at the summer conference. This would also give the new officers a chance to begin a dialogue with other bar leaders from across the state who tune-in to the Zoom meeting. It could be a half-day program or something where basic voluntary bar information is presented. Braulio offered to help facilitate these webinars. Craig offered the support of other voluntary bar executive directors to facilitate the program.

Florida Defense Lawyers Association, Ana Ramos – The FDLA has offered webinars since April. They are considering different sponsorship opportunities they can offer at reasonable rates considering that vendors now have fewer travel expenses and may be looking for ways to use those budgeted funds to reach potential clients. This is the first time Ramos has met with other executive directors. She would like a list of contacts of the executive directors. Staff also shared other resources available on the voluntary bar center.

Manatee County Bar Association, Graceann Frederico – Frederico favors this Zoom conferencing approach. It might be helpful for the executive directors to be grouped by bar size. She enjoys the breakfast at the conference when bar leaders are seated at a table by the size bar they serve.

For annual sponsorships affected by the pandemic, MCBA has extended the sponsor contract for three months to provide more opportunities for recognition. The organization had to postpone or cancel many of their in-person events, so they have enhanced their exposure of sponsors by including logos in correspondence, on the MCBA website and social media pages. They are also spotlighting sponsors to the membership. They hope to host a special happy hour for all volunteers who have graciously donated their time, resources etc. during this pandemic.

Tallahassee Bar Association, Christen Perry – Perry is new to the scene. She was hired in October. So far TBA has been able to maintain the sponsorship support by working with our sponsors to connect members with relevant resources.

<https://tallahasseebar.org/Resources> . Perry posed the question to others about the "value added propositions" they're offering sponsors

VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON MEETINGS

A few of the larger bars have surveyed their membership to help determine the comfort level attorneys have for in-person meetings. It looks like late summer or early fall will be the first time most lawyers will consider showing up for an in-person event. There still remains a large percentage of members who are unsure.

Palm Beach County Bar Association, Carla Tharp Brown – Virtual meetings are here to stay. In person meetings will be a gradual phase-in. PBCBA conducted a survey and 55.5% of the respondents are unsure of when they would feel comfortable attending an event with 100 people or more; 16.8% said August-September; 11.7 percent said October-November. PBCBA is focused on maintaining their registration and financial support from a March Bench and Bar that has now been scheduled for August 14.

Escambia/Santa Rosa Bar Association, Jeff Nall – The results of their member survey showed 28% comfortable with in-person meetings in June; 32% in August. Nall felt that ESRBA would likely not offer an in-person event before September.

Jacksonville Bar Association, Craig Shoup – JBA is doing its first in-person event in with their Board of Governors on May 20.

Dade County Bar Association, Jacqui Kiviat – DCBA has rescheduled its June Installation of Officers and Directors for August 29. This will be their first in-person event. The venue is following social distancing guidelines and their organization is expected to adhere.

Florida Defense Lawyers Association, Ana Ramos – FDLA feels marketing in-person events to our members right now would seem tone deaf on our part to the current state of things.

Other comments

-Is anyone aware of any general operating grants. Our bar has a budget of less than \$100k. Membership dues, sponsorship of events, CLE is a big part of that.

-Are the small bars going to be able to ride this out?

-I would like to see more town halls (organized discussion on topics that are important to help us get through this crisis) and after.

RESOURCES

The Florida Bar Voluntary Bar Center has a resources list to assist voluntary bars in the recovery effort.

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/>
- **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/>
- **COVID-19 Resources for Voluntary Bars**
<https://www.floridabar.org/about/volbars/covid19/>
The page also includes a list of shared CLE, OnDemand and Wellness resources being offered by voluntary bars during the pandemic.

HITTING RESTART: RESOURCES FOR RECOVERY

ASSOCIATION RECOVERY

Resource articles written by seasoned association management practitioners that might provide some helpful recovery information for your bar association.

[Plan to Recovery – Association Strong](#)

[Managing In A Crisis for Nonprofits](#)

[Adjusting Budgets Impacted by Crisis](#)

[Recovery Plans for Associations](#)

[How Associations Can Support Members When the World Stops](#)

- **SideBar As It Happens**
<https://www.floridabar.org/about/volbars/the-sidebar/sidebar-news-as-it-happens/>
- **INFORMATION ON COVID-19 EMERGENCY ORDERS & ADVISORIES**
Clearinghouse on courts by locality
<https://www.floridasupremecourt.org/Emergency>