

## **2017 ANNUAL MEETING REMARKS**

### **Bret Parker, Executive Director, New York City Bar Association**

Good evening, I'm Bret Parker, Executive Director of the New York City Bar Association and I am so pleased to be here tonight. Getting up here for the Annual Meeting is always a great experience because it's like preaching to the choir -- most of you in the audience already know what an amazing institution this is because you've either served on a committee, or several, or chaired a committee or more than one. And I see former President Carey Dunne and immediate past President Debra Raskin. Can I ask anyone who fits in any of those categories to raise your hand.

I see that's almost everyone. As for the rest of you, I assume you've found other ways to be involved here, perhaps doing pro bono or speaking on a panel or attending a diversity program. Or maybe you're just members here to get an update about the Association, join us for a reception and to see the portrait of Debby, which will be hung in the reception area following this meeting.

Regardless of which category describes you, every person in this room is an ambassador of this institution. We don't have to explain the City Bar value proposition to you. Some of you believe strongly and selflessly in the importance of the organized bar, which benefits the profession and society generally. Some of you appreciate the enormous and concrete personal and professional benefits you receive to develop your practice or make you a better lawyer-- and that's great too. People are involved in the City Bar for different aspects of what we do -- committees, programs, policy work, networking, etc. Some of you have even made the commitment to become sustaining members of the City Bar and will enjoy an opportunity this summer to network at a reception especially for people who give a little extra love back to the Association.

What's shocking to me is that there are some people out there – and I don't know how anyone could live life this way – who don't get it and aren't members. As our most committed ambassadors, you are needed to spread the word back at your firms, companies and offices. And while it may feel like you're asking them to do something, you're actually offering them a gift by opening their eyes to the City Bar. Thanks to all of you and our 24,000 members.

You heard Damian's financial report – even with challenges, especially in CLE and LRS (which are businesses and operations with very different models and environments than 5 or 10 years ago), our overall financial strength is strong with an investment portfolio of over \$14 million. We have a lot of activity aimed at keeping things that way and serving the needs of our members, including work on our next strategic plan.

This all would have been a lot easier if the air rights deal that we discussed last year had happened, but it fell through. It had nothing to do with the City Bar, but there were issues with the underlying deal of the developer. We remain open to discussing the sale of our air rights if we think it's in the best interests of the Association and the membership.

Now let me turn to the best piece of news – Flik has assumed responsibility for our food service. For years, we did a nice job without many resources or cutting-edge knowledge in this field. Now we have a world-class catering service. From bagels and coffee at your breakfast committee meeting to a full hot dinner with a beef tenderloin carving station, Flik can meet all of your needs. They are experts in food preparation, cooking technology, healthy menu options, presentation, etc. They work at many of the big law firms in the city.

But don't take my word for it – after Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg spoke here recently, she sent me a note thanking us for the dinner that was prepared for her and a small group of her

friends and colleagues in the profession and she described it as – and I quote, these are her words – a “festive buffet!”

For committees, Flik can give you the same food options you’ve always had for basically the same price, or can provide you with a wider selection while accommodating all kinds of budgets. For those committees that haven’t had a catered meeting here with Flik, give it a try. Frank Carlisi is there in the back and he runs the operation along with some new staff and Linda Kemble is still here. And this summer we’ll be rolling out online food ordering. Think Seamless at the City Bar. For committee meetings and other events, you’ll be able to go online and pick your menu selections, quantities, see prices – it’s all very modern.

And as you’ve heard, we have been renting the space and providing catering for business events and social occasions, which can help fund many of our activities because member dues and our other revenue sources don’t cover it all. We’ve created a special website and promotional materials with the separate brand -- “42West44.com.” And members get access to this for a discount, so if any of you (or your colleagues) need to throw an event, think of the City Bar.

Liz already discussed the important activity of the Executive Committee over the past year. John will talk about some of the amazing work of our over 160 committees.

But speaking of committees, applications to join them have risen for the 3rd year in a row. And for the first time ever, we have over 5,000 committee slots filled. We’re still selective, looking at experience and interest, and diversity in every sense of the word (practice setting as well as the usual categories of race, gender, etc.), but we are making sure we keep a broad view as to what people might be able to contribute and have been using the affiliate committee

member category etc. (in fact, affiliate committee membership has gone up every year and now there are approximately 540 of them).

And the leadership of our committees continues to be diverse. Of the new chairs that were just appointed, approximately 25% are from ethnic minorities, identify as LGBTQ or are disabled. And the newly constituted Executive Committee of the Association is even more diverse. With 22 members, it's almost evenly split among male-female; and approximately 45% are from historically under-represented groups. As we've done for the past few years, we'll have their photos up in the entrance to the building so we can showcase the impressive folks who constitute our senior leadership.

Committee membership is only one part of the benefit of being involved in the City Bar. Just by way of example, our new select solo CLE is up and running, giving solo practitioners access to flat-fee all-you-can-eat CLE. The Virtual Law Firm, which gives attorneys an address and presence in New York, is fast approaching 200 members. We have recently partnered with Lockton Affinity, the global leader in insurance, as the new administrator of our program to provide professional liability insurance and other products designed specifically to meet the unique needs of our members. And the City Bar now works with SoFi, the largest provider of student loan refinancing, who may be able to reduce the cost of student debt, saving the average attorney \$31K.

As usual I want to mention the City Bar Fund, which is the 501(c)(3) sister organization of the Association. It's through the City Bar Fund that we operate the City Bar Justice Center, the Vance Center for International Justice, the Office for Diversity & Inclusion and the Lawyer Assistance program. They rely on the generous support from numerous sources including all of you. Last year we published our first-ever combined annual report highlighting the work of all

of these projects as the “do-good” charitable arm of the City Bar. If you haven’t seen the annual report, grab one on the way out from the table at the back.

I feel incredibly lucky to be working with our talented staff. I’m going to ask them all to stand, including Martha Harris, who this week celebrates 25 years working here at the City Bar.

Finally, many thanks to the members of the Executive Committee, both the ones whose terms are ending and the ones who are continuing. Sadly, Liz Donoghue ends her term as Chair of our Executive Committee (but remains on the Committee as a Vice President). Liz, I’ve enjoyed talking about some extremely important legal matters as well as comparing notes on raising teenagers during the college admission process. Thank you for everything you do and for doing it with a smile. And congratulations to the new Executive Committee members and to the new Chair, Sarah Cave, who is so wonderful, thoughtful and is involved in so much here even beyond the Executive Committee -- I’m also pretty sure she has never lost her cool.

Finally, to John Kiernan. This guy works day and night (note that this seems to be a requirement for City Bar Presidents who somehow hold down their busy day jobs while doing all of this) and juggles a million things, but he focuses on each report, each committee chair meeting, each issue like it’s the most important thing on his plate. Your President, John Kiernan.