

Welcoming the 114th President of The Mississippi Bar



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In 2018, The Mississippi Bar Board of Bar Commissioners adopted a Strategic Plan to guide our professional organization for the next three to five years. The Strategic Planning Committee, appointed by then Bar President Rick Barry, included twenty lawyers from all regions of the State, with different levels of legal and life experiences, diverse in age, race, gender, and practice areas, who spent months developing a strategic framework for the Bar to implement. Over the last year as President, Pat Bennett has been implementing the Strategic Plan. As I have prepared to take the oath and lead The Mississippi Bar this year, I have often referred to the Strategic Plan as a guiding resource. Just as a ship's captain maps his course before he begins a voyage and continually refers back to it to make sure he stays on course, I view the Strategic Planning process as mapping our course as an organization and the Strategic Plan that the Board adopted as our map for the future. So before we embark on this journey together, let's look back at our map, remind ourselves of the Bar's mission, be inspired by the Bar's vision, and renew our commitment to our organizational values.

MISSION:

The Mississippi Bar shall serve the public good by promoting excellence in the profession and in our system of justice.

VISION:

The Mississippi Bar is an invaluable partner in every attorney's practice and a trusted community leader that ensures the justice system is evolving to meet the needs of all Mississippi residents.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES:

These core values direct how The Mississippi Bar will conduct itself as it works to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission.

Integrity	Collaboration
Professionalism and civility	Compassion
Civic responsibility	Innovation
Diversity and Inclusion	Excellence

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President's Message

As you read the mission and vision of the Bar, did you agree? Were you reassured by those core values? The Bar aspires to be your partner in the practice of law in whatever form that takes – whether you are a solo practitioner, work in a small family firm, in a big law firm or are corporate in-house counsel, or whether you work in state or federal government as a prosecutor or public defender or as an advisor to agencies, boards and commissions, whether you are in public service, work for a non-profit organization or run your own business or even a family household. As partners in this profession and members of the Bar, we must work together to ensure that The Mississippi Bar fulfills its mission, stays true to its vision and achieves its goals as set forth in the Strategic Plan. Below are The Mississippi Bar's goals, and after each goal I have provided examples of concrete plans, programs or opportunities for how we as the members of the Bar can help achieve them:

Goal 1:

The Mississippi Bar promotes the highest standards of competence and professionalism and fosters a legal profession equipped to serve the legal needs of clients and the larger community.

We will be working toward Goal 1 in several ways this year. First, the new Future of the Profession Committee will examine issues identified during the Strategic Planning process, such as reasons why fewer and fewer Mississippi law school graduates are taking the Mississippi Bar Exam, the growing trend of new attorneys leaving the state to practice law, the impact of retirements on the profession, the potential opportunities to match new attorneys with rural areas that have very few lawyers, today's need for mobility and remote practice, and other challenges ahead for our profession. Second, the Professionalism Committee will continue to study developments in the area of professionalism and make recommendations to the Board of Bar Commissioners on ways to promote the highest standards of competence and professionalism, to improve client-attorney relations and the image of the profession

as well as the quality of life of lawyers as they relate to professionalism. I have also tasked the Professionalism Committee and the Lawyers and Judges Assistance Committee with studying the Report from the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being and making recommendations to the Board of ways we can encourage greater well-being, increased competence and greater public trust in our profession. Speaking of wellness, the Mississippi Bar Young Lawyers Division, under the leadership of former YLD President Ann Marie Pate, has focused on and implemented multiple wellness initiatives over the last year. Jaklyn Wrigley, as the newly installed YLD President, plans to continue YLD's emphasis on wellness during the 2019-2020 Bar Year. I look forward to collaborating with Jaklyn and the YLD in expanding some of those great YLD wellness programs and offering new ones to the entire membership.

There are a host of other member benefits and discounts that you can find under the "For Members" tab on The Mississippi Bar website.

Goal 2:

The Mississippi Bar cultivates members' professional success with valuable practice resources and opportunities for meaningful member engagement.

We will continue to offer the CLE on the Road program in each Supreme Court District in the state. Last year, I learned from the Technology Committee's speaker at the the CLE on the Road about one of the Bar's new member offerings – Identillect Technologies – which provides secure communications that work with your existing email platform. Did you

know that the Bar's Technology Committee also vetted the various legal research services available and recommended the Bar contract with Fastcase? This free legal research tool is available to all members as part of our membership dues. There are a host of other member benefits and discounts that you can find under the "For Members" tab on The Mississippi Bar website. Additionally, there are currently sixteen Sections of the Bar that members can join that focus on particular areas of the law or that are made up of lawyers with special interests in particular substantive areas of practice. There is likely a Section in your area of practice that offers seminars for CLE credit and that will help you stay abreast of any developments in that area of the law.

Goal 3:

The Mississippi Bar fosters diversity and inclusion among members of the bar community.

The new Diversity Committee will lead and coordinate diversity and inclusion efforts within the Bar, create more intentional pathways for involvement and leadership for all members, and strengthen relationships with local and statewide affinity bars. Be on the lookout for new initiatives from the Diversity Committee with which you can get involved.

Goal 4:

The Mississippi Bar strives to increase access to legal services and to promote and support a justice system that affords prompt and fair resolution.

The Mississippi Bar's Access to Justice Committee, created in 2018 as part of the Strategic Plan, will continue to work closely with the Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission in its endeavors and activities and to strive to accomplish its goals by raising awareness among members about the justice gap and its implications for the profession, supporting and providing opportunities for members to participate in traditional access to justice initiatives and continuing legal education seminars on representing low-income individuals, collaborating with the judiciary to improve the admin-

istration of justice, and leading innovative efforts to address gaps in legal services.

Goal 5:

The Mississippi Bar builds public trust in the justice system through education about lawyers and the law.

The Public Information Committee is updating the Bar's video on jury duty and civic engagement this year, which will be available to Mississippi judges for juror education prior to jury service. The Bar will continue to introduce children and young adults to the justice system and legal careers through the Mississippi High School Mock Trial Competition now in its 37th year. Lawyers of all ages will again have the opportunity to volunteer to serve as judges. The Young Lawyers Division's "Lawyer in Every Classroom Program" is also open to all lawyers, young and old, affording us the opportunity and resources to make a presentation on the legal profession or justice system to students in our local communities.

Goal 6:

The Mississippi Bar sustains a responsive, flexible organization that advances its mission and the strategic plan.

The Mississippi Bar is continually developing a technology infrastructure to flexibly deliver services and information to members across the state. The staff and leadership at the Bar are regularly evaluating the Bar's programs, processes and communications to adapt to the changing needs and expectations of all members of the profession and the public. I hope that this column informs you of The Mississippi Bar's Strategic Plan and helps equip you to fulfill your role and responsibility as a member of the Bar and as a member of this great profession.

This year, with your help, The Mississippi Bar will stay true to its vision and conduct itself according to its core values as it works to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission to serve the public good by promoting excellence in the profession and in our system of justice. ■

Watkins & Eager Welcomes Emily R. Sumrall To The Firm's Family Law, and Probate, Trusts and Estates Practices



Left to right: Lewis W. Bell, Susan L. Steffey, Clark C. Luke, Emily R. Sumrall, and Jamie G. Houston III.

Watkins & Eager is pleased to announce that Emily R. Sumrall has joined the firm as an associate. Emily received a B.A. in Journalism from the University of Mississippi, and a J.D. from the University of Mississippi School of Law, where she graduated *cum laude*. After being admitted to the Mississippi Bar in 2016, Emily served for over two years as a staff attorney with the Honorable James C. Walker of the 11th Chancery District of Mississippi. Emily's practice is focused primarily in the areas of Family Law, where she works alongside Susan L. Steffey and Lewis W. Bell, and Probate, Trusts and Estates, where she works closely with Jamie G. Houston, III and Clark C. Luke.

Watkins & Eager has extensive experience handling divorces, prenuptial and postnuptial agreements, estate matters, and related mediations.

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