

Why Should I Join the Suffolk County Bar Association? Benefits of Bar Association Membership

By Hon. Derrick J. Robinson

This year the practice of law is like no other in recent memory. During my June installation speech, I pledged to make this the year of membership because membership is the Suffolk County Bar Association's lifeblood. Many people may ask why should I join the Bar Association, what's in it for me, what will the Bar Association do for me? This message is my response to those questions. Unlike any other times, membership in the Bar Association is essential to the practice of law and professional development.

Bar Association membership is such a vital method to make a meaningful career move. You can meet new colleagues and enjoy the benefit of the collegiality with others in your profession. We do not practice law in a vacuum. Knowing other judges and attorneys pays dividends. You have the opportunity to network and learn from other, more experienced attorneys. Attorneys who want to make an impact on their practice and careers should join the Bar Association. It is probably one of the leading professions where your network is your existing network. To increase your network, join the SCBA because it is one of the largest networks any lawyer could have in Suffolk. SCBA membership can be an inspiring and advantageous experience, no matter what stage you are in your career. Your association with them is a beautiful way to be a part of a vibrant organization and leading bar association in the New York State.

The Bar Association has kept up with the new requirements and developments in the practice of law in addition to the continuing court updates. The use of technology has taken us into new territory. Through the expertise of former President Barry Smolowitz, SCBA Director of Technology, all Executive Orders, and court updates are posted online and are available on the Association website. Also, the vital work of the committees of the SCBA, with the support of Barry Smolowitz, has taken a quantum leap forward through the use of Zoom technology.

You can receive the benefits to your practice with your attendance and participation in SCBA committees. There are so many options here! But to make the most of your Bar Association, you have to participate. You have to get involved. The SCBA offers a variety of committees. From Solo and Small Firm Practitioners to the Commercial Division, these committees serve their members' unique needs. They

offer a platform for open discussion and generate new ideas. You will be able to meet other legal professionals with common issues and opportunities.

As a member of our bar association, you have access to events. From symposiums to social events, the variety and regularity give you a real opportunity to grow your network and work on your leadership and communication skills. But remember, you have to get involved.

This year's COVID-19 pandemic has, in many ways, changed the way we practice law. Yet, important committees like the Family Court, Matrimonial, District Court, County Court, Supreme Court Commercial, Supreme Court Civil, and the Surrogates Court have been active during the pandemic with Zoom meetings. Attendance at these meetings has been phenomenal, in large part, because you can attend and participate from wherever you are. Travel is not necessary; just register and log in. Membership, however, is required to participate in committee meetings. At these meetings, judges and practitioners exchange information and ideas about law practice, court appearances, and filing requirements.

The SCBA has an excellent Lawyer Referral & Information Service (LRIS) that can provide referrals to people who call the SCBA looking for an attorney. The SCBA makes it easier for prospective clients to find you. The LRIS will refer a potential client to you for an interview and possible retainer. We all see the posted signs in the courthouses that say if you are looking for an attorney, contact the SCBA for a referral. Your area of practice guides the referral to a qualified member attorney. To make the most of it, add that listing to your LinkedIn profile and your website if you have one. Think of it as an additional promotional outlet for your firm. Lawyer referrals create an opportunity to benefit your practice by increasing your client base.

The Suffolk Academy of Law of the SCBA offers accredited Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs with valuable content in various areas that may include your specific area of interest in the law. They teach skills to members like law office management and technology. Not only do CLE events enhance your skillset, but they also ensure you keep up with license requirements. Beyond the required CLE, you can keep up to date on the latest trends in the profession. The Academy of Law has also ventured into webinar technology and video conferencing, and they are forging ahead in this era and will likely continue to do so for some time. There is an enthusiastic group of volunteers that work hard to create and promote valuable CLE Programs. The Academy of Law offers

everything from upcoming Evidence Updates to CLEs related to the trial of a DWI Case, Landlord-Tenant Issues, Bankruptcy Decisions to COVID-19 related programs, and many other programs areas.

So, what are the benefits of bar association membership? It depends on who you ask. For most, it's a great way to connect with other attorneys and work to improve the community. But, beyond that, how do members, in daily life, get benefits from membership? There are more than you may think. But you have to take an active approach if you want to get the most out of membership.

As a member of a bar association, you have access to events. From Judiciary Night, conferences, and symposiums to social events, the variety and regularity give you a real opportunity to grow your network and work on your leadership and communication skills. But remember, you have to get involved and participate.

The official publication of the SCBA is *The Suffolk Lawyer*, which provides attorney members the chance to publish articles. That's another excellent way to grow your firm, awareness, and practice. The Suffolk Lawyer has various focus areas, such as Commercial Litigation, Elder Law, Family Law, Ethics and Civility, Diversity and Inclusion, Real Property, and Leadership Development.

The SCBA offers countless resources to lawyers, judges, and law students. There is something for everyone in the SCBA. Get the most out of your bar association membership dues. To do that, you have to get involved. The important question is what can you do for the Bar Association? Claim your membership and make the most of your Bar Association membership