



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

MICHAEL L. BARONI

One for All, All for One Another

Thank you. It has been an incredible honor to serve as your president. Humbling and priceless. Theologian Arthur C. Custance stated, “It is better to travel well than to arrive.” That is certainly true of my feelings as my presidential journey ends.

For thirteen years, my OCBA activities have been a labor of love. I’ve savored every step of my “adventures in the law,” knowing that I am endlessly blessed by my interactions with all of the astoundingly talented, caring, interesting, zealous, and principled people I have met along the way. (And none of it would have been remotely possible without the faithful, patient, and loving support of my wife, Lisa—thank you, my precious companion.)

A Year of Soaring Success

2017 was marked by success for the OCBA:

- Over 11,000 CLE hours were provided via 300+ CLE programs, and 70+ non-CLE special events and programs.
- The Lawyer Referral & Information Service gave nearly 7,000 referrals.
- Record-setting charitable funds were raised from both the Judge Kenneth Lae Charity Golf Scramble, and the Raise Your Glass Annual Benefit (thank you to Todd Friedland, Nikki Miliband, Jordan Steinberg, and everyone else who so selflessly contributed to these charitable efforts). We also implemented robust procedures to vet charitable grant applicants.
- Over twenty community outreach events were held.
- The *Orange County Lawyer* won a MAGGIE award for Best Association/Trade Magazine. (Congratulations to Gialisa Gaffaney, Editor-in-Chief, and Andrew Hart, Graphic Designer!)
- The Legislative Resolutions Committee achieved unparalleled success—every one of our resolutions passed! Congratulations to Chair Sarah Nowels, Melissa Petrofsky, Kelly Ernby, Suzanne Chamberlain, and Alan Crivaro, and to Jason Turner and Dena Sites whose bills passed into law. (Dena’s bill requires the posting of human trafficking notices at hotels/motels.)
- Financially, the OCBA is stronger than ever (reserves, cash-flow, a perfect audit, investments exceeding benchmarks, and the re-financing of our building mortgage to save money). Thank you to your next president-elect, Deirdre Kelly, for overseeing the money in 2017!

Your Board at Work

The OCBA Board was extraordinary: an absolute dream team for me as president. They are collegial folks with character and compassionate zeal in their hearts. We worked with dedicated diligence and stamina into many late nights, discussing a vast array of topics, from genocide legislation to bar exam scores.

- The OCBA submitted an *amicus* brief (Thank you, M.C. Sungaila, for your brief-writing brilliance!), which helped our court system to successfully defend itself against an action by Courtroom News.
- The Board sent a letter of support for Legal Services Corporation to maintain its federal funding of Legal Aid.
- A mountain of ethics rules were reviewed and proposed. (Thank you to Scott Garner, our long-time Professional & Ethics Committee Chair and

your 2018 Treasurer).

- We worked with the courts to establish a grievance procedure for those who wish to complain of judicial bias.
- The OCBA implemented low/no-cost LRIS programs, which included provisions for those seeking help with immigration laws.
- We implemented stronger election/campaigning guidelines to ensure civility, and bylaws for the Editorial Advisory Committee. (Thank you, Larisa Dinsmoor, EAC Chair and your next OCBA Secretary!)
- I appointed an Integration & Inclusion sub-committee. Under the leadership of Richard McNeil, Diversity Chair (with Michael Gregg, Adrienne Marshack, and Shirin Forootan), we took several actions to build stronger ties with our affiliate members.

Human Trafficking Task Force

With devoted chairs Jennifer Tennant and Jessica Springer, and an energized committee, we launched successful CLE events, collected a truckload of necessities for over fifty human trafficking survivors, launched an awareness campaign to the sections, and partnered with the Angels baseball team in their Strike Out Slavery event. (Thanks to Susan Kang Schroeder of the District Attorney’s office for connecting the OCBA with this major event.)

Amicus Alo

As lawyers, we must do a better job of caring for one another. Our profession is highly hazardous to one’s health—with higher rates of suicide, heart attacks, depression, alcoholism, divorce, and health ailments linked to stress and exhaustion. The OCBA 2017 task force, *Amicus Alo*, was formed to assist lawyers with mental and emotional wellness, disabilities, substance abuse, and serious illnesses. Thanks to Chair Shirin Forootan’s fiery passion for the cause, and a devoted committee, we had a powerful launch event, produced successful CLE programs, published an informative web page, and spread outreach to law schools.

Personal Relationships

Happy ten-year anniversary as OCBA Executive Director, Trudy! And congratulations on your new title as CEO! The board, past presidents, and OCBA staff came out *en masse* to celebrate Trudy’s superlative leadership. Trudy’s multi-faceted excellence is outstanding, as is the talent, kindness, and work ethic of OCBA staff—including Dennis, Shannon, Carole, Andrew, Grace, Michelle, Leanne, and Jane. Each and every member of the staff deserves recognition for the OCBA’s operational excellence.

As OCBA President, I also sought to expand the OCBA’s reputation and goodwill, by reaching out to all Orange County police chiefs, elected officials (congressional representatives, Board of Supervisors, Assembly members, etc.), and community leaders. All of them were interested to learn about the OCBA’s excellence and influence, and were keen on wanting lasting connections and synergies.

Final Words

Civility. Inclusion. Tolerance. Anti-Discrimination/Bias. I pray we can all practice these values with kind hearts and noble intentions. We are only made strong if we focus most on the shared values that bind us. This year, I have endeavored to bridge gaps in understanding and appreciate differences in opinion within the OCBA. As we move forward into 2018, I hope different groups continue to work together for the benefit of our entire community.

There is a timeless saying: “Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” I hope to have done justice to that saying, to the benefit of all within the OCBA. All of you certainly have left me in a better place, and I thank you for it.

Michael L. Baroni is the 2017 OCBA President. He can be reached at united@ocbar.org.

