

Getting Involved with LACBA Barristers

YOU NEVER KNOW where a cup of coffee can lead. Five years ago, my former boss asked me to join him for a quick meeting over coffee with an officer of the Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA). I can't remember all of the details of the meeting, but I do remember that it quickly turned to a cross-examination about my involvement (or lack thereof) in LACBA. Fast forwarding to the present, I am president of the LACBA Barristers Section. I am still not sure how this happened (and neither is my eternally patient husband), but what I do know is that my openness to discussing an opportunity changed the trajectory of my career and paid immeasurable dividends in the process.

For many of us, the transition from law school to the practice of law is somewhat akin to being dropped in an unknown location without an iPhone. What we learned in law school has, at best, a nodding acquaintance with what we do now. And, after excelling at every level of school, the first year of practice can be humbling.

In a region where many of us drive to work, go home, and do it all over again (and again), it is easy to fall into a rut. Monday becomes Thursday becomes Sunday, and suddenly years have passed and you have not broadened your legal network. That, in part, is when the Barristers come in. Dedicated exclusively to new and young attorneys, the Barristers Section provides opportunities for its members to make meaningful connections they would otherwise not make. I experienced this firsthand, as many of my best professional relationships began at Barristers programs.

Barristers Section eligibility is limited to attorneys under 37 years of age or within their first five years of practice, assuring a membership of similarly situated colleagues. Our membership includes attorneys working at prestigious firms of all sizes; ambitious public sector attorneys at local, state, and federal levels; in-house counsel at major corporations; public interest attorneys at local and national legal services organizations; and others. These are the people you will find at our events, which are always free and often offer complimentary adult beverages.

The Barristers Section has more than 11,000 members and is the largest of LACBA's 26 active sections. Our size brings opportunities to meet new friends and colleagues in venues other than offices and courtrooms, to learn from the brightest minds in our profession, to help members of our community in direct and tangible ways, to teach, and to write articles in publications like *Los Angeles Lawyer* magazine.

Each January, we host the Barristers Bench Meets Bar event with more than 30 esteemed members of the judiciary—an event that allows and encourages young attorneys to meet and mingle with judicial officers in an informal setting. We also host quarterly “socials” where more than 100 Barristers meet and form connections to their peers in other practice areas. Both events are

free to Barristers.

We also host educational events offering continuing legal education on topics specifically aimed at newer attorneys. A program on different legal career paths, for example, may feature a distinguished panel including the general counsel of a major company, chairs of major law firms, and prominent public officials.

We also offer pro bono training by partnering with LACBA's Veterans Legal Services Project where experienced attorneys train Barristers on expunging tickets, warrants, and other infractions, in addition to assisting veterans in need of these legal services at

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a monthly clinic.

Finally, our committee dedicated to law student outreach offers local law school students a long list of Barristers willing to conduct mock interviews. We would love to add even more of you, so please let us know if you are willing to be on this list. The committee also partners with local law schools on social events.

This year, I am excited to introduce two new committees: a Membership Committee and a Social Media Committee. The Membership Committee is charged with putting on at least three fun social events—a curling tournament, for example, or a comedy show of lawyer-comedians. The Social Media Committee will manage our social media accounts and promote our events online. For more information about these committees, please contact me directly at jgordon@thompsoncoburn.com or by phone at 310-282-2507.

Involvement with the Barristers can break up your routine and connect you to people you would otherwise never meet and push you to do things you would otherwise never do. We are all busy, and while the default position is to save your limited free time for known quantities like Netflix, I would encourage you to begin building your professional network as soon as possible. You are not in law school anymore, and the legal community, outside of your firm, is no longer handed to you. Make the time to start participating in organizations like the Barristers. Start with one cup of coffee with someone in the Barristers and, who knows, maybe you will be writing this article in five years. ■

The 2018-19 president of the Los Angeles County Bar Association Barristers Section, Jessica G. Gordon is a trusts and estates attorney at Thompson Coburn LLP. She also serves on the Executive Committee of the LACBA Trusts & Estates Section.