

## Remarks to the 2015 Annual Meeting of the New York City Bar

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the City Bar Annual Meeting.

My name is Elchi Nowrojee. I am the current Chair of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee has had a busy and fruitful year. Our activities have focused on strengthening the Association institutionally and on increasing our external impact in New York, across the country and internationally.

With regard to internal governance, we have:

- Approved proposed updates to the Association By-Laws and Constitution\*, bringing these into conformity with changes in the NY State not-for-profit laws.
- Reviewed and extended the terms of 10 special committees and councils\* , further strengthening our core Committee structure.
- The Executive Committee has also approved the recommendation that the Committee on Diversity Pipelines Initiatives become a Standing Committee\*, one of several important diversity initiatives that we have taken this year.
- We nominated a slate of 10 delegates to run for 5 positions on the 2015-16 Nominating Committee.
- After careful consideration, the Executive Committee approved a dues adjustment, which consisted of raising some dues while lowering others. The changes included moving existing categories of membership under the Public Service dues structure, allowing many attorneys to receive a dues reduction. We also created new dues categories such as an in-house attorney designation. The Executive Committee also determined that there should be a periodic evaluation that keeps our dues structure current and responsive. \* We believe that these changes will allow us to balance the need to attract and retain a broad range of members, while responsibly sustaining the Institution and meeting our financial obligations.

- The Executive Committee has reviewed and approved Operating and Capital budgets for FY 2015/16
- Finally, we have also reviewed and approved proposed salary increases for the eight highest- paid employees.

Facing out from the Association House:

- We appointed a City Bar designee to the Board of Directors of Legal Services NYC
- We also reviewed and rated candidates for two vacancies in the New York State Court of Appeals (in September and December of last year)\*
- This year, the Executive Committee moved from a three tier to a two tier rating system for candidates for the New York State Court of Appeals, by eliminating the Exceptionally Well Qualified rating. The Executive Committee did so because it has been difficult to clearly delineate the fine line between Well Qualified and Exceptionally Well Qualified. \*
- Over the course of the year, the Executive Committee deliberated a number of substantive issues of importance to the Profession, including amongst many others, the issue of mass incarceration in the United States. We will be forming a task force to review the issue, and make recommendations\* Prior to action being taken by the relevant authorities, we also considered how the City Bar should respond to the failure of the Governor and the NY State Legislature to appoint a committee to review the NYS Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) by June 1 of last year, as required by law\* These are just two examples of the convening power that the Association can exercise on issues of concern and importance to the membership and the larger Profession.
- I am delighted to report that the Executive Committee approved the proposal of the Honors Committee to award Jack Greenberg an Honorary Membership in the Association\*, recognizing his sustained contributions to civil and human rights in this country and abroad.

As always, we have this year deliberated and supported the work of our many active and substantive Committees, the City Bar Justice Center and the Cyrus R. Vance Center for

International Justice, on critical issues affecting the Profession, including: legislative reform; administration of justice issues, diversity in the Profession and the promotion of human rights around the globe.

In these efforts we have remained true to our finest traditions and steadfast in our defense of the Rule of Law.

Finally, I would like to end with a word of thanks:

First, to Debby Raskin, our President, who has provided gracious leadership and lent a wonderful sense of humour to our deliberations.

I would also like to thank my fellow Executive Committee members. I think that we have had a productive and engaging year and that is in large part due to their active involvement and contributions.

Bret Parker and the entire staff deserve our appreciation for their continuing efforts to improve the Association in both tangible and intangible ways. They continue to do outstanding work across the organization and we are truly fortunate to have such a committed and talented staff.

And finally, I would like to make specific mention of our General Counsel, Alan Rothstein, who will be retiring this year after more than 30 years of sustained service. We will be honoring Alan at other events this summer but wanted, this evening, to acknowledge his many, many contributions to the Association. Alan's wise counsel, institutional memory and calming presence will be missed by us all.

\* \* \*

I will now hand over to Judge Allan Gropper, to provide the Report of the Treasurer.

Thank you.