

THURSDAY

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Questions and Comments

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Joseph L. Dunn



State Bar of California

Los Angeles and San Francisco

Practice type: Regulatory

Specialty: Attorney regulation

When Dunn, the State Bar's CEO and executive director, gives a talk to a group of lawyers these days, he explains the bar's mission by overstating it. Only half in jest, he tells his audience: "We represent the people of California against the lawyers of California."

Therefore to Dunn, his most significant accomplishment this past year has been the bar's "external relations strategy" to deepen its regulatory efforts by reaching out first to law enforcement and soon to ordinary consumers.

There have been other successes. The Legislature for the second year in a row will this month approve a "clean" lawyer dues bill that doesn't

lay any new duties or requirements on the bar. And in December, the State Bar will move from rented space into its new Los Angeles headquarters, barely 16 months after starting to search for a building to buy.

But it is moving past the bar's former "bunker mentality" to become an organization "proactively meeting its mission of public protection" that Dunn is most proud of.

Over the past year or so, bar discipline officials have ramped up cooperation with state and federal prosecutors and other regulatory agencies on ways to deal with lawyers and faux lawyers who cheat consumers.

At those officials' request, the bar also is focusing on protecting California's 3 million undocumented workers from potential fraud by immigration consultants, "notarios" and some lawyers. Legislation on the issue is moving through Sacramento now.

The State Bar also has reached out to consulates from Latin American countries to explain its offerings to their citizens in California and has hired a former Los Angeles police captain as its part-time diplomatic liaison to the consulates.

The bar's next step will be reaching out to all the other consumers in California. Dunn, a former state senator, has begun working with legislators to put on joint anti-fraud and similar programs within their legislative districts.

Now, he added, the State Bar is "finally directly reaching the people we represent, i.e., the people of California."

- DON J. DEBENEDICTIS

September 11, 2013

September 21, 2011

September 23, 2009

September 20, 2007

September 12, 2012

September 22, 2010

September 17, 2008

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