



## Message From the Executive Director

How fitting that my first two weeks at the New Hampshire Association for Justice coincide with the change of seasons, as the final snow melts in our backyards and bulbs planted last fall peak through the ground with the promise of rich colors and textures to come.

For the New Hampshire Association for Justice is itself in the midst of its own internal changes, as new leadership prepares to take the gavel in June, new staff learns how to work as an integrated team, and together we all learn how best to embrace and move forward with our renewed organizational name and identity.

For our name change is more than just words, and in the true New Hampshire tradition, more than a mere nod to a national trend. Over the course of the past year, under the leadership of Board President Christopher Seufert, the NHAJ Board of Governors embraced the change in name as an opportunity to step back and take a strategic look at our mission, goals and objectives. For many years, the Association for Justice (under its prior name) fought hard to ensure equal justice for everyone in New Hampshire. Through a combination of professional development, networking and legislative advocacy, the Association provided a critical voice on matter of public access to justice. How could this work be improved? The answer lies embedded in our new name: association and justice. As an association, we need to expand our reach and our contacts. As a voice for justice, we need to be more proactive in matters of public policy and advocacy.

Just what does this mean on a practical level?

First and foremost it means not messing with a good thing. The New Hampshire Association for Justice has long provided professional education and networking of the highest standards. Over the coming months and years, we will work to meet and even exceed those standards. Members should expect to receive an extensive survey this summer seeking your input on matters of professional support and education. What do you need to support you in your daily practice as together we fight for justice in the courtroom? Members will be able to rely on continued value through membership as they benefit from programs such as our NHAJ List Serve, our CLE Seminars, timely legal updates, discounted operational services (on items such as conference calling and insurance), e-clips, and a committed Concord based staff.

Second it means a critical look at our public policy priorities, strategies and partnerships. Our goal is to become a trusted voice in the legislature, providing reliable data and assessments at the same time as we move forward on a proactive legislative agenda. Over the summer, the Board will work with staff and interested members to set strategic priorities necessary to achieve our goal. Possible work includes a legislative agenda, policy white papers, tighter legislative tracking and reporting. Our work will most certainly embrace and depend on increased member engagement- as we support your ability to speak powerfully on behalf of your too often powerless clients.

Third it means a long term commitment to public outreach and education. For too long trial work has been devalued through a relentless and effective public relations campaign. It is time we work together to tell our story, or more appropriately the stories of our clients. It is time we turn the spotlight on efforts to undermine the civil justice system and explain the importance of preserving access to justice in the courtroom. We know that a healthy third branch of government is necessary to protect individual rights, to promote opportunity, and to support long term civic health. It is time we speak more effectively about these social, economic and civic issues.

Not all of this will happen overnight. With a small staff and limited budget, we will need to set realistic goals and timelines. In so doing, we will be reaching out to you, seeking your input and your involvement. We hope you will feel comfortable calling on us. Remember that Allyson Ryder, our Program Manager, Karen Mullaney, our Office and Finance Manager, and I are here to support your work and our collective success. Together we will be able to keep the scales of justice in balance. Together we will be able to ensure *Justice for All!*