Some major changes are coming to State Bar governance in 2019. Four years ago the Supreme Court appointed the Task Force on the Review of the Rule and Governance Structure of the State Bar of Arizona. It was chaired by former Chief Justice Rebecca Berch and, two years later, issued a report leading to a rule petition adopting its recommendations. Two prominent areas of change were in defining the Bar’s Mission and restructuring our Board of Governors. This led to a significantly amended Supreme Court Rule 32.

The bottom line is that the 25 members of the board (out of 26) will be either elected or appointed in 2019. If you are interested in Bar governance, I urge all of you in good standing and admitted to practice for at least five years to consider standing for election in your district or seeking an appointment to the board by the Supreme Court. This is an opportunity to make a positive difference for the public and the profession.

The highlights of the board restructure (see sidebar for more details) are:

- Fewer elected members
- More Court-appointed members
- Staggered terms
- Term limits
- Earlier statewide elections (March, not May)

For those of you considering running, the expectations for board members are that they:

- Be prepared and participate in the nine board meetings, the majority of which are in Phoenix;
- Understand they are assuming a duty of care, loyalty and obedience;
- Will be required to comply with the Bar’s conflict of interest policy (which is not onerous);
- Will be expected to respect the validity of the board’s decisions (even if not in the voting majority);
- Will be expected as a member of the board to “speak with one voice” regardless of whether a particular decision was favored by them or not; and
- Will be expected to uphold and enhance the reputation and the public image of the Bar.

As mentioned above, the seminal change recommended by the Task Force and adopted in new Rule 32 was the restatement of the State Bar Mission. This Mission now states simply, “The State Bar of Arizona exists to serve and protect the public with respect to the provision of legal services and access to justice.” Rule 32(a)(2). While there is more text in Rule 32 on the Mission, the essence is captured in the first sentence. When considering whether to seek election or appointment to the Board of Governors, please keep our obligation to serve and protect the public in the forefront. The Bar does serve and protect the public, and has done so for decades. We need a few good men and women to continue the Mission.