

Final -- 12/10/18

NYCLA Annual Dinner Speech
December 10, 2018

Good evening everyone

Let me begin tonight by expressing my gratitude to our Host, Bob Haig

Bob has chaired our Annual Dinner for a number of years and though he makes it look easy, it's an enormous amount of work and he does a fantastic job year in and year out

Bob also devotes a tremendous amount of time to the outstanding treatise "Commercial Litigation in New York State Courts" which provides substantial royalties to NYCLA

Please join me in thanking Bob for all of his contributions to NYCLA

And please also join me in thanking our outstanding Executive Director, Sophia Gianacoplos and the wonderful NYCLA staff for their hard work in organizing this Dinner

Now, a few words about NYCLA, today and tomorrow

NYCLA celebrated a milestone in 2018 -- its 110th birthday -- and I am happy to report that our Association is very busy, productive and looking toward the future

Some of the highlights of this year are set out in the President's message in the Dinner Journal which you all have so I will not repeat them

Suffice to say that thanks to our dedicated members and staff, NYCLA continued its mission to educate lawyers and the public, to help less fortunate New Yorkers obtain legal assistance, to act as a thought leader on important issues and to celebrate the accomplishments of Judges and members of the bar

Through the years, NYCLA has worked closely with the Courts on a number of important initiatives and we are very proud to be honoring the state and federal Courts tonight

We understand the vital role a strong and independent judiciary serves in our society and we take seriously our obligation to come to the defense of Judges and Courts when they are unfairly attacked and will continue to do so both on our own and with our sister bar associations

We have also been thinking about the future at NYCLA

In 1908 when it was founded NYCLA was the first major bar association in New York and one of the first in the country to welcome all lawyers, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or religion

Consistent with that birthright NYCLA has always strived to be inclusive and forward-thinking

The world has changed quite a bit in the 88 years since our landmark building, affectionately called the Home of Law first opened its doors and we recognize that NYCLA needs to move forward as well

Toward that end, we have been devoting substantial time and attention to envisioning a new NYCLA, a place where we can better serve the interests and needs of our members and provide the technology, space and services today's lawyers require

This has been a very important undertaking for our Association and we hope to have more to say about our plans in the coming months

Our goal, admittedly ambitious, is to build on the proud history of NYCLA and be a model for bar associations going forward

We hope you will all join with us and support us as we move into the future

Let me turn now to the presentation of the President's medal

The Medal is named in honor of our 33rd President, Boris Kostelanetz, and is conferred upon a member whose record of dedication and service to the Association and the legal profession comport with the high standards he established

I can't think of anyone more deserving of this Award than tonight's honoree, Michael Miller, for his enormous contributions to NYCLA, the legal profession and the community

Michael is a truly gifted and charismatic bar leader, tirelessly pursuing an ambitious agenda with enthusiasm and determination, effectively motivating others to work with him to get things done

One of the reasons for his great success as a bar leader is that he understands the value of relationships and I know he has many, many friends in this room tonight

Relationships matter to Michael, he invests time in them and the many friends he has made in the legal community have not only helped him accomplish a

great deal but have enriched his personal and professional life as well

As an aside, there is a powerful message in that for those who wonder about the continuing relevancy of bar associations.

Here are just a few of the highlights of what Michael has accomplished:

He was NYCLA's 52nd President, taking the reins of leadership at a very difficult time, mere months after the collapse of the Twin Towers down the street from our building, but successfully propelling the Association forward

And Michael continued to take on important leadership roles at NYCLA long after his Presidency such as Co-chairing our influential Task Force on Judicial Budget Cuts

In addition to bar work, Michael has generously devoted substantial time to serving the community, spending countless hours helping families of the victims of 9/11, work which earned him the ABA's Pro Bono Award in 2002 and serving as an election supervisor in war-torn Bosnia

In June of this year he was inducted as the 121st President of the New York State Bar Association -- in a

ceremony we were honored to host at NYCLA -- becoming the first person to serve as both President of NYCLA and State Bar since United States Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes nearly 100 years ago

As President of State Bar, Michael has been a whirlwind of activity, crisscrossing the State and beyond to attend meetings and events, appointing Task Forces to study important issues such as the disturbing problem of mass shootings in the United States and speaking out forcefully as the voice of the legal profession in New York State

Ladies and Gentlemen – Please join me in congratulating the 2018 Boris Kostelanetz President’s Medal winner, Michael Miller