

Inside the Big Tent

I will endeavor to use my abilities and experience to help move the organization forward, facilitate collaboration, and encourage civil debate among us all on the issues before us. Our collective engagement and action will make us stronger and more prepared for the future of our profession.

BY JILL ROTHSTEIN

Since I accepted the opportunity to be your Executive Director, I have been warmly welcomed by everyone with whom I have come in contact. I've heard many versions of, "how can I help you get settled?" and "please come join us at our brat cookout/nature hike/biking trip." What's been noticeable to me is that every time someone says something like the above, it is with complete sincerity. "Wisconsin Nice" is a real thing. I have been genuinely and generously welcomed into the big tent that is Wisconsin.

The State Bar of Wisconsin, like other mandatory bar associations, is also a big tent, and I believe that our mandatory status is a privilege. We get to welcome all comers, and we work collectively toward a common mission. My primary goal as the State Bar's newest executive director is to continue to invite all lawyers inside our tent.

I had the pleasure of shadowing former executive director Larry Martin for a couple of weeks before my official start date on Sept. 1, 2025. As he introduced me to members, I heard a familiar refrain, "You have big shoes to fill." Larry's consistent response, "Jill is bringing her own shoes." There's a strong history in our bar, and I am prepared to build on that history with a new perspective and new ideas. I am, however, mindful that the best way to build something strong is to study the foundation. I understand that I have a lot to learn, and I hope to approach this first year with curiosity, open-mindedness, and an appreciation for the work of the members and leadership, both past and present.

My 16-plus years of experience at the South Carolina Bar, most recently as general counsel, have prepared me for what's next. The South Carolina Bar is also a mandatory organization

with a similar membership size. I am committed, also, to taking time to understand the nuances of the State Bar of Wisconsin and the needs of our very diverse membership in a very diverse legal and geographic landscape.

During this first year of my tenure, I hope to venture out and meet with members of the Board of Governors, the judiciary, local bars, and other specialty groups. Recently, I attended the Dodge County Bar Association's Annual Schuetzenfest, where I had the pleasure of meeting several State Bar members from the area. To hear about the challenges and pleasures of their practices was a wonderful learning opportunity. I intend to do more outreach: to listen to and learn from our leaders, to develop an understanding of member challenges and opportunities, and to use what I learn to work with State Bar leadership in pursuit of our strategic goals and initiatives.

The State Bar of Wisconsin is an exemplar among bar organizations. Other bar staffs and leaders look to us for ideas and strategies. It's a privilege to be here, and I am grateful for the opportunity to direct an organization with highly qualified and dedicated staff and leaders. I will endeavor to use my abilities and experience to move the organization forward, facilitate collaboration, and encourage civil debate on the issues before us. Our collective engagement and action in this big tent will make us stronger and more prepared for the future of the legal profession. Let's get to work!

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