



Address of New President – Elizabeth Watters

Good afternoon. Thank you all for being here. I am honored to stand before you today as your new President of the Columbus Bar Association.

It means a lot to me that my family, friends and colleagues are here to share this day, and as I would like to acknowledge a few of them.

First, **my firm**, Chester, Willcox & Saxbe, and the wonderful attorneys with whom I work with every day. Jack Chester has established a legacy within the bar that everyone at the firm strives to live up, and Rocky Saxbe and Rod Willcox have been the heart and the soul of the firm. So, I can't tell you how much it means to me to have all of the named partners of my firm – my mentors – here. I am deeply grateful for your support.

Seated with my family are **two past Columbus Bar presidents** who helped launch my journey to today, my partners Frank Ray and Steve Fitch. Thank you both for your encouragement to do this, and thank you to Frank for giving me the opportunity to chair a CBA committee and for asking me to run for the Board. Frank – I am so pleased that you will be the Columbus Bar Foundation President this year, and that we will get the opportunity to work together outside of the office. Your unwavering support and friendship over the years has meant a great deal to me.

I am also pleased that **my assistant**, Rosemary Cullison, is here today. Rosemary and I have worked together on and off for more than 10 years, and if she could handle everything that came with the tobacco case, I know she is up to the challenge of making sure that I am able to keep all of the balls in the air this year while I juggle career, association work and single motherhood.

I also want to thank the **Honorable Richard Frye**, my former partner and good friend, for agreeing to swear me in, and the Honorable Timothy Horton, my former colleague, friend and confidant, for doing the invocation and benediction. It means a great deal to me to have both of you be a part of this special day.

Second, I want to thank **Kathleen** for her leadership this year as well as her friendship and support. As most of you know, Kathleen is an eternal optimist who accomplishes the most difficult of tasks with a smile and positive attitude. I have never seen her get frustrated or heard her raise her voice, and I am not even sure that she sleeps. But what I do know is that she is loved and respected by every member of the CBA staff, her officers and the Board, and she has been very gracious to me – including me in decisions and encouraging me, very subtly, to chart my own path of leadership. She is thoughtful, kind, persuasive and very practical in her decision-making. And while I

will never have her grace or her charm, I hope that I can fill the very big shoes (and by big I mean well manicured, beautiful and stylish shoes) that she leaves behind.

Next, I want to thank **Judge Graham** for being here and his support of the CBA. I so enjoyed our four years together on the Board, and miss your wit, humor and sage wisdom at our Board meetings. You are welcome to come back any time.

I would also like to acknowledge **Dean Alan Michaels** from the Moritz College of Law at The Ohio State University and thank him for being here today. As some of you know, I am quite fond of my alma mater and think it is the greatest public law school in the county – Justice Scalia’s recent comments notwithstanding. I look forward to renewing and strengthening the ties between the bar association and Central Ohio’s law schools this year. And with new Board members Dean Guttenberg’s and Greg Travaglio’s guidance and assistance, I am sure we will accomplish a great deal together.

It goes without saying that I am deeply indebted to **my family**. My parents, Richard and Jeanine Watters, have been there for me at every turn, with encouragement and support. They have taken care of Meghan during CBA Board retreats, ABA annual meetings and any other last minute work or association event – and I am sure that I will impose on their generosity and love for their granddaughter even more this year. As they get ready to celebrate their golden, 50th wedding anniversary in August, I just want them to know how much they mean to me. Thank you for everything.

I am also pleased that my daughter, Meghan, is here today and has sat patiently through what is probably a very boring meeting for her. She is my great joy and makes everything I do worthwhile. Meghan – maybe Steve Fitch can amuse you with some pictures of his granddaughter, Cora, while I finish my speech? I am sure that he has some with him.

My special sunshine – I know that I promised you early on that you would not have a babysitter more than twice in one week. And I have not always been able to keep that promise. But, my hope is that by doing something that is so personally and professionally rewarding this year, I will become a better parent and teacher for you in the long-run. Thank you for your understanding and love – even when I have a work meeting. The good news: The ABA mid-year meeting is in Orlando this year, so we will be going to DisneyWorld.

II. Theme

I would like to conclude by taking just a few minutes to talk about two of the issues that we will be emphasizing in the coming year.

A. It’s the Economy Stupid

It is no secret the economy is having a big affect on the legal profession in central Ohio, and that many of our members have had to make tough financial decisions in the last six months. This is a reality whether you are a solo practitioner or practice in a small, medium or large firm.

The economy will continue to be an important CBA focus this year as the association focuses like a laser-beam and rises to the challenge of ensuring that it has the benefits, programs and services that members need, when members need them the most.

You have heard Kathleen talk about our new CLE Easy Pass. Every attorney in my firm will be getting their CLE through the CBA's Easy Pass this year. As Rocky says: it's a non-brainer. Hopefully, you agree.

This week we launched our new website, with its great Directory, economic toolkit and Columbus Lawyer Finder marketing service. Let us know what you think.

The Board and I will also be listening to your ideas and concerns throughout the year, and will try to respond to them quickly and in a meaningful way. We will continue to bring to you a host of tools and services to support your practice, while at the same time addressing the changing needs of our members – young and old and of all backgrounds – by doing more with less and improving the value of your membership. In short, the association's goal for the year is to make your working lives better in these tough economic times.

B. Making Working Lives Better

The second is an issue that – let's be honest – falls on the deaf ears of many in the profession: the work/life balance. Maybe some of you have heard about the term "wocation" – the mix of work with your family vacation. Constant e-mail checks and cell phone calls, while you try to enjoy the beach with your family? I had one of those last week.

It is impossible for me, as a single parent of a first grader, to ignore this issue. We have made many strides in this area – the six incredible women that have come before me are a testament to our profession's progress – but the truth of the matter is that in central Ohio the number of women practicing law is shrinking at the same time that the number of women graduating from law school is increasing. That is not acceptable.

And it is not just women that want a better work/life balance. Young lawyers – men and women – our future members and leaders – are leaving the law because of this issue.

Now some of you may say this doesn't affect me. But the truth of the matter is it does. As I look out at all of you, I see hard working men and women with tough jobs and demanding lives. We all have many responsibilities: to our clients, our families, our colleagues and ourselves. The demands and pressures of being a lawyer – much of it from technology and instant communications – are increasing for all of us and they are taking a toll. So, we need to a new dialogue about wellness within the profession, and I plan to bring this issue to the table while I have the ability to do so. I hope some of you will listen and help me to address this issue.

III. Conclusion

The great Lebanese-American writer, Kahlil Gibran once wrote:

"Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need."

I hope that you will join me in making the most of this year by giving more than you think you can to our association through your time, talents and ideas. I also hope that you will not let your pride stand in the way of taking what you need from the association to ensure your professional success – including demanding that the CBA continue to be a national leader in providing attorneys what they need, when they need it most.

Thank you!