

Leading Latino Lawyers Across the State: A Q&A with Carlos Bollar '97, Incoming President of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey

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As president of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey, what issues will you be addressing and why?

I intend to work with our dynamic Board and membership to expand various programs of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey (HBA-NJ). First, we must provide additional resources and growth opportunities for Latino lawyers across the state, regardless of practice area. We have exciting continuing legal education and networking events planned throughout the year, including our Annual Corporate Counsel Conference, Sun Surf & Seminars Conference, Trial Skills Seminar, Small Law Firm Seminars and Nuts and Bolts Seminar series.

The HBA-NJ will also continue to advocate for diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, particularly in the judiciary and other leadership positions statewide. Our Judicial and Prosecutorial Action and Executive Appointment Committees are very proactive and work with elected officials to advocate on behalf of qualified diverse attorneys. This year, we will be instituting our Champions of Diversity award to recognize those law firms and corporate departments who go above and beyond in advancing diversity and inclusion in the legal industry.

I will further expand the HBA-NJ's philanthropic initiatives by increasing the HBA-NJ's visibility and advocacy across the State. Last year, we worked with our amazing sponsors to award over \$39,000 in scholarships to Latino law students, and we are well on our way to exceed that number this year. Our high school mentoring

program is also growing to include both Passaic and Union City high schools. The HBA-NJ will also continue to increase our community education initiatives, bringing these legal education programs to Latino communities in need throughout the State of New Jersey.

Why should Hispanic attorneys practicing in the Garden State get involved in your organization?

The HBA-NJ is a vibrant organization with hundreds of members that provides a built-in network of attorneys from a variety of fields: private practice, in-house counsel, government, public interest, the judiciary and the legislature. Our membership does a great job of mentoring and educating each other in our profession. The HBA-NJ provides a variety of additional resources to further the professional advancement of our members. We provide many opportunities for affordable continuing legal education throughout the year, including education in emerging legal topics and courtroom skills training. The HBA-NJ is also very involved in philanthropic issues and provides attorneys with many opportunities to give back to the Latino community.

What made you decide to become an attorney? How did you know the path you choose for yourself made sense for you?

I was drawn to the legal profession at a young age. I have always been very interested in history, government, politics and social issues. My parents were both immigrants to this country: my father from Cuba and mother from the Dominican Republic. My parents were both grateful for the sanctuary and opportunities provided by the United States and loved this country. I have always felt a sense of obligation and civic duty to our government and our community. I would feel that way even if I was not an attorney.

What advice might you offer to current law students preparing to enter the field?

Law students are often hyper-focused on their grades and the interviewing process for their first job. But law students who get involved early in professional organizations have a distinct advantage when it comes to getting their initial job and later in their career when they realize the importance of networking and rainmaking. I recommend that law students get invested in one great legal organization; good examples include the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey, the New Jersey State Bar Association and their County Bar Associations.

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