

## The Bar Around The Corner: Women's Bar Association of the State of New York (WBASNY)



**Association Address / Phone:** P.O. Box 936, New York, NY 10024; 212-362-4445

**Web site:** [www.wbasny.org](http://www.wbasny.org)

**Founded:** 1980

**Number of Members:** 4,072

**Brief Association:** Vision: Promote the advancement of the status of women in society and of women in the legal profession; to promote the fair and equal administration of justice; and to act as a unified voice for its members with respect to issues of statewide, national and international significance to women generally and to women attorneys in particular.



**President Irene B. Villacci**

**Brief History:** WBASNY was founded in 1980, when five existing women's bar associations joined as chapters: New York, Westchester, Capital District, Staten Island and Nassau. Today, there are 18 chapters statewide, with 4,072 members who are private practitioners, public interest attorneys, federal and state judges, court and government attorneys.

**What is your association's favorite meeting location?** Each WBASNY chapter has its own board of officers and directors, and state delegates to

the WBASNY Board. The chapters are extremely active, running meetings and events within their own regions. Many chapters network and have joint functions with neighboring chapters. The WBASNY Board meets three times each year outside of the annual Convention. Board meetings have been held in New York City and the Albany area to accommodate our members upstate and downstate, but also to give them the opportunity to network with each other.

**What is your association's most popular outing/social event?** Its annual convention, which commemorates our first convention in 1980, when the founding chapters formed the statewide organization. The convention is usually two to three days, and approximately 150 members and their families attend. There is an awards reception where we bestow WBASNY's highest awards to selected members, and the outgoing president is honored. The new officers and president are installed on the final evening of the convention. The daytime calendar is packed with outstanding CLE programs, as well as a golf outing and local excursions.

**What is your association's most pressing concern regarding the legal profession?** There are many, as life for the communities we serve becomes more complicated. Access to justice for criminal and civil issues is a constant pressing concern. The advancement of women lawyers to the bench is a concern innate to our mission purpose.

But of late, a new, pressing concern is the training and advancement of new lawyers in the profession so that they become strong advocates and future leaders in WBASNY and our legal profession. Obviously, we will watch closely as changes in legal education continue, and will offer our membership's voices of experience.

**What is your association's goal for next month? Next year?** Our theme for this year is "WBASNY: Stepping Up, Moving Forward Together." WBASNY is celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2015. As we near this landmark anniversary, we are reflecting on our accomplishments, and also looking forward with a vision for further achieving our mission purpose.

Our goals for this year are to develop a mentoring plan for our newly admitted attorneys to help them transition into the field; to implement programs to train women to be successful candidates for judicial office; to continue to support access to justice for all; and to increase public awareness against human trafficking.

**How has your membership over the years helped to improve your association?** Following my term as president of the Nassau Women's Bar Association chapter in 2003-2004, I was appointed as a co-chair for several years to the Chapters' Membership and Development Committee and the Permanent Conventions Committee. As Membership chair, I assisted in the founding of the Mid-York (2005) and Finger Lakes (2006) chapters. I also assisted chapters in developing membership campaign plans and programs that benefitted members. While Permanent Conventions co-

chair, I assisted in selecting appropriate sites for our conventions, but also developing a good program to attract members to the convention. Through my experiences on these committees, I learned much about the work of my colleagues and how it differed from mine on Long Island.

Because of these opportunities, I bring to my term a full-range view of WBASNY members statewide, and a long-range vision to steer the organization forward successfully.

*The Bar Around The Corner is a project of the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders, [www.nyscbl.org](http://www.nyscbl.org).* ♦