



# NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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## COMMITTEE ON ATTORNEY PROFESSIONALISM

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## SUBCOMMITTEE ON ATTORNEY PROFESSIONALISM AWARD & SELECTION

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### **Subject: New York State Bar Attorney Professionalism Award**

The Committee on Attorney Professionalism administers the annual New York State Bar Association Attorney Professionalism Award. We are now seeking nominations for the Award. Nominations must be submitted and postmarked **no later than October 30, 2020** on the Nomination Form (copy enclosed, may be reproduced as needed).

The Committee's working definition of attorney professionalism is as follows:

Attorney professionalism refers to those qualities and attributes of a lawyer reflecting honor, integrity, civility, and commitment in the practice of law. These qualities notably elevate the profession above and beyond a means to earn a living. An attorney demonstrates professionalism by striving above career success, in pursuit of goals that meaningfully enhance the pursuit of justice and the rule of law for the betterment of our society. Those goals include increasing the representation of the unrepresented and endeavoring to strengthen the public perception that our legal system functions effectively, impartially, and fairly. Professionalism naturally carries with it the awareness that the law, and thus the manner in which lawyers conduct their practices, has a broad impact on people's lives and on society itself.

Beyond thorough compliance with the Rules of Professional Conduct and the skillful application of knowledge, resourcefulness, and perseverance in the performance of service, attorney professionalism involves a dignified pursuit of a higher calling that can enrich our society. Professionalism requires poise, honesty, maturity, and reasoned judgment and embodies a heightened sense of responsibility and fair play, as well as a respect for others — even when zealously advocating on behalf of the client. As attorneys pursue excellence, they should also look to apply their hard-earned skills and experience to serve, assist, and mentor within the profession.

The New York State Bar Association's Committee on Attorney Professionalism confers the "Professionalism Award" on those attorneys who most markedly demonstrate these values and wholeheartedly embody these ideals.

The Award honors attorneys who evidence the highest attributes of professionalism in the practice of law: attorneys who have labored in "the vineyard" and are especially valued by their clients and their colleagues. Therefore, rather than being strictly a lifetime achievement award, this particular honor relates to overall professionalism in the actual practice of law. A nomination should be supported by letters from others, such as attorneys, judges or the nominee's clients or clients' families, particularly letters that are contemporaneous with the services rendered. These testimonials are important in the selection process. Your nomination should, as inclusively as possible, specify how the nominee has demonstrated the following attributes:

An attorney reflects the values and ideals of professionalism by:

- Engaging in exemplary ethical conduct while fulfilling the spirit, as well as the requirements, of the Rules of Professional Conduct;
- Attaining the highest skills level in a specific field, as demonstrated by pursuing efforts to improve skills above the required continuing legal education and by keeping abreast of the latest developments in the attorney's areas of expertise;
- Paving the way for the enhanced future of the profession, especially by mentoring younger attorneys;
- Exercising distinguished judgment while providing client service at the highest levels, and formulating and implementing views and advice based on knowledge and experience;
- Acting with dignity and integrity as exhibited by soundness of character, honesty in practice, undivided loyalty, confidentiality, and agreeing to disagree without being disagreeable; and
- Demonstrating civility and always endeavoring to behave responsibly and to exhibit appropriate courtesy and respect of others, in the highest aspirational spirit of the profession.

**Are you aware of an attorney who distinctively embodies these qualities? We welcome and encourage an application describing your nominee's professionalism, so that we may consider the nominee for our annual Professionalism Award.**

Please keep in mind, in considering your nomination, that there are other awards honoring service to bar associations and pro bono activities. In this Attorney Professionalism Award, the New York State Bar Association seeks to honor a person who exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism in the actual practice of law.

Prior award recipients include Barry Kamins, Brooklyn (2000); Lucille Fontana, White Plains (2001); Carlton Thompson, Binghamton (2002); Anne Reynolds Copps, Albany (2003); James M. Conboy, Albany (2004); George J. Nashak, Jr., Glendale (2005); Terrence M. Connors, Buffalo (2006); Frank E. Yannelli, Garden City (2007); Peter V. Coffey, Schenectady (2008); Jill M. Cicero, Rochester (2009); Mark A. Longo (2010); Brooklyn; James P. Bessette, Malone (2011); Christopher T. McGrath, Garden City (2012); John Ferrara, Monticello (2013); John S. Marwell, Mount Kisco (2014); Michelle L. Haskin, Albany (2015); Norman J. Resnicow, New York City (2016); E. Stewart Jones, Jr., Troy (2017); Maryann Saccomando Freedman, Buffalo (2017); William J. Dreyer, Albany (2018); Peter J. Strauss, New York City (2019); and Angela Morcone Giannini, White Plains (2020).

Sincerely yours,

*Vivian D. Wesson*

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Enclosure