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**Report of President Domenick Napoletano
to the House of Delegates of the New York State Bar Association
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Dear Colleagues:

It is a pleasure to be standing before you today. As some of you may know, I come from a modest background, my parents immigrated to this country from Italy and worked tirelessly to provide me with opportunities they could never have dreamed about - such as leading our association. Their lessons have resonated with me throughout my life, and those will be the values that will guide me throughout my presidency.

My involvement with the New York State Bar Association has been a rewarding journey, and I can't wait for this next year to unfold.

It was a distinct honor to have my lifelong friend and mentor - Retired Presiding Justice Michael Pesce swear me in as the 127th President earlier this week.

I ask all of you to take a moment to acknowledge my predecessor Richard Lewis for his outstanding leadership, guidance and numerous accomplishments throughout the past 12 months. I also want to acknowledge all the past presidents who have inspired and guided me.

Looking ahead - I want to acknowledge the association's incoming leadership team. President-Elect Kathleen Sweet, Secretary Taa Grays, Treasurer Susan Harper, and Richard Lewis, who has now become the Immediate Past President.

And of course - I would like to thank my wife Fran - and my children - Alexis and Nicholas and my grandchildren Sofia and Everret (aka) Gogi. I wouldn't be here without their support.

I view the next 12 months as an opportunity to serve our members with one goal in mind -- making the practice law more efficient for them. I understand that's an ambitious goal and that some of my goals will require more time than my one year in office, but addressing our members' needs will be at the forefront of any initiatives that we tackle.

Let me start off by stating that I have the upmost respect for the New York State Bar Association along with other professional organizations I have been a part of. Our sections and committees are comprised of extraordinarily talented individuals who intuitively understand what issues need

to be addressed in their areas of expertise. I will be asking them during my presidency to develop and put forth legislative proposals for our Executive Committee to vote and pass upon in order to present those same proposals to our State Legislature so that together we can make new law and thereby improve our profession.

But - to go forward - we first must remove the hurdles that impair our ability to perform our jobs efficiently.

One focus of my presidency will be to take a long-overdue look at the Civil Practice Law and Rules and the Criminal Procedure Law to weed out no longer relevant provisions that have been rendered obsolete. Likewise, our jobs as lawyers would be much easier if our judges would all utilize the same Court part rules. I plan to have discussions on this with our Judicial Section Chair - Justice Tanya Kennedy. I will continue this discussion, as well as others, so we may further lay out a blueprint for a resolution.

We as an organization have also developed a good working relationship with Chief Judge Rowan Wilson and am looking forward to bolstering our partnership with him and our State Administrative Judges throughout the next year.

Likewise, it is my goal that we also direct our attention to discrimination that is frequently faced by our member lawyers and for that matter lawyers in general over 50-years-old. I have heard from some members that job prospects for older and experienced lawyers are limited compared to their younger colleagues. Prejudicial language that is written or at least implied in job descriptions and application forms often makes this blatantly evident.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we need to ensure that our young members have the tools to propel us forward. They define the future of our association. They are the most diverse, tech-savvy, and socially aware generation to ever enter the legal profession. At the same time, they are the most anxious and worried generation to ever pass the bar exam.

Their well-being is a priority for us. The aftereffects of the isolation they endured throughout the pandemic have made them susceptible to higher rates of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. It is imperative that we help them understand how to effectively engage in personal interaction and camaraderie outside of their comfort zones so their critical thinking and advocacy skills may be maximized.

Therefore, it is urgent that the appropriate resources be put in place to prepare newer attorneys to effectively practice in New York State. As you may know, Our Task Force on the New York Bar Examination has recommended restoring a New York practice course that law schools in some cases have either stopped offering altogether or offer it as an elective rather than a required course of study. A mandatory course in New York practice would help ensure that new attorneys are well-versed in our state's laws.

I - along with our leadership team - will continue to advance our ideas to law schools and the Unified Court System on these and other topics - including - how artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies should be taught and implemented in the legal profession.

There is a litany of other matters we need to devote our attention to as well.

Nobody will be surprised to hear that there is a shortage of attorneys throughout New York's rural communities. These communities - which comprise 44 of the state's 62 counties (NYSBA Report and Recommendations of the Task Force for Rural Justice) are further hindered by a lack of broadband access and the greater digital divide.

I commend Gov. Kathy Hochul for establishing the One Billion Dollar Connect ALL initiative. We will continue to monitor its implementation and effectiveness.

On a similar note, it is difficult to comprehend that in an age of self-driving cars and privatized space travel, attorneys in some counties lack the means to file their documents electronically. Every county should allow e-filing and any other smart technology that can increase the courts' efficiency. We have endorsed a bill now pending in the state Legislature that will hopefully make e-filing more readily available statewide.

As for me personally, I have been a member of our association for over 40 years, and I've served on various committees and in many leadership roles - including as some of you know as treasurer. I am forever grateful for the friendships I have formed and the collaborative spirit that has allowed us to accomplish so much. I'm excited that we have new members joining our committees because their diverse backgrounds and insights will help produce fresh ideas that will ultimately strengthen all of us.

Implementing these ideas and addressing the practical issues of our association requires a reimagining of the way we conduct our affairs. To that end, we have implemented a new membership model that will take effect at the beginning of the 2025 membership year. We will eliminate our "a la carte" pricing structure and create more efficient online transactions while expanding our offerings under a single, affordable fee.

Our CLE department's programs and published materials are expertly designed and implemented to uniquely advance practical knowledge and skills in a variety of practice areas. I implore everyone to take advantage of this indispensable programming that is available at your fingertips.

Undoubtedly all this is a tall order. However, I guarantee you I have never shied away from driving success. The value of hard work was instilled in me by my humble parents, who urged me to become the first person in my family to graduate grammar school, never mind law school.

Now - after 43 years as a sole practitioner - I annually juggle hundreds of cases throughout numerous counties, while being asked to appear on complex cases by larger firms, as well. So, I can truly sympathize with the constraints and challenges faced by both the two-thirds of our members who are also single practitioners, and those of large firms. We all share the ever elusive need to reduce the drain on our time so we may be more effective public servants.

I would like to close with these thoughts.

I am thankful for the trust you have placed in me to serve as our association's President. The 126 esteemed individuals who have preceded me in this position have set a very high bar. I undoubtedly will face my share of roadblocks. However, my greatest asset is the collective talent that encompasses our association through the members who I am privileged to call friends. You

have generously lent your support and know-how so that our association can profoundly impact the legal profession for the betterment of our citizens.

For that - I thank you. Please know my door is always open and I look forward to hearing from you.