

BY MARGARET WRENN HICKEY

Your \$287 in dues delivers more than \$2,780 in value.



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The State Bar Makes Practicing Law Easier

Learn about the many ways the State Bar assists attorneys to improve law practice and the justice system.

Members sometimes complain that the State Bar of Wisconsin does not do enough for attorneys for the dues charged. For 2023-24, the annual State Bar dues are \$287. Other assessments the State Bar collects for the Wisconsin Supreme Court (\$236) also appear on the annual dues statement that active members receive.

Your \$287 in dues delivers more than \$2,780 in value. Learn more at www.wisbar.org/memben. Here are a few ways the State Bar assists attorneys that improve not only your practice but also the justice system.

Throughout the year, the State Bar provides timely continuing legal education on relevant topics to attorneys at a reasonable price. In addition to stand-alone seminars, attorneys can obtain up to 16.5 CLE credits by attending the multiday annual Solo & Small Firm conference and up to 10.5 CLE credits by attending the Annual Meeting & Conference (AMC). This year's AMC will be held in Milwaukee, but the event moves around the state to make it easier for members to attend. These events include networking opportunities for and with attorneys and judges.

The State Bar advocates regarding amendment of some laws and of the rules that govern attorneys. Recently, the State Bar advocated for changes to the lawyer trust account rule (SCR 20.1.15). The amended rule becomes effective July 1, 2023. Among other things, the new rule removes prohibitions on electronic transactions and provides lawyers greater flexibility in handling client funds. Attorneys will no longer need to have a separate trust account for credit card payments for advance fees. This will greatly simplify the rules and administration for attorneys. (See "2023 Amendments to the Trust Account Rule: Electronic Transactions Permitted" elsewhere in this issue.)

During many state and legislative budget cycles, the State Bar has advocated for higher compensation for district attorneys and public defenders and for other court-appointed attorneys. This advocacy has helped increase pay rates. Currently, the State Bar is advocating for full funding of the needed district attorney and public defender positions so that the court system can work more effectively. Without full funding for criminal courts, all justice, including in civil matters, is delayed. Learn about the State Bar's advocacy and government relations program at www.wisbar.org/govrelations.

The State Bar also produces multiple means of keeping attorneys informed about legal developments, including State Bar books, the *Wisconsin Lawyer*, *InsideTrack*, blogs, section newsletters, and when needed, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, email messages to all members on changes to the justice system.

The State Bar does all of this with hard-working and dedicated staff members who are always willing to answer questions and help whenever asked. The State Bar does this with the help of thousands of lawyers in sections, divisions, and committees who volunteer countless hours to serve their fellow attorneys.

It has been my great pleasure to serve each of you in the past year as President, to work with our incomparable staff, and to advance our mission. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. **WL**

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