

**THE**  
**HISTORY**  
**OF THE**  
**PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF BAR EXECUTIVES**

Researched and Authored by

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*The history of our association is dedicated to those that made it possible.*

An organization of bar executives within Pennsylvania was formed in 1979. This group, the Pennsylvania Bar Executives or the PBE, struggled to become recognized as professional and to deem this position as a profession. There was little respect given to bar execs from some members of the organized bar and even less from a few of their spouses during those early years.

This was not an unknown profession. Throughout the Nation, there were bar execs employed by state and local bars. However, during the mid to late seventies, in Pennsylvania there were only a few. They were: Frederick H. Bolton, Esquire, Executive Secretary of the Pennsylvania Bar Association; James I. Smith, III, Executive Director of the Allegheny County Bar Association; Kenneth Shear, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Bar Association; Elizabeth Lawfer, Executive Director of the Bucks County Bar Association; and Elizabeth C. Price, Executive Director of the Delaware County Bar Association. There were a few administrators in the smaller counties that combined their duties with that of the local law library.

2.

The years from 1979 to 1986 to this year, 2007, the task of becoming recognized and respected has not been an easy one. Eventually, many associations recognized the need to have a “central storage” of information, a constant factor, someone to “over see” programs, an administrator...an executive director.

A small group of bar execs met in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Bar Association Meetings. They met in a restaurant convenient to the location of the state bar’s meetings. We sat, I might add, at a very small corner table. In addition to the Officers of the Pennsylvania Bar Executives ( Elizabeth Price of Delaware, Linda Rauenzahn of Berks, and Elizabeth Lawfer of Bucks) during the early years from 1978 to 1986, the following persons were listed as county bar association executive directors or secretaries: Kenneth Shear of Philadelphia, James I. Smith, III of Allegheny, Mary Ellen Rebman and Maureen Cullen of Lancaster, Barbara I. Kittrell of Berks, June Vail, Irene De Raymond and Kathryn Schott of Northampton, Diane Kearney of York, Larry Sindaco of Luzerne, Donna Crockett of York, Mary Csapo of Lehigh, Debbie Eyler of Chester, Delores Alex of Erie, Eugene Lederer of Centre, Allen Levinthal, Esquire of Dauphin, Pat Kellet of Schuylkill, Michael Keegan of Lackawanna, and Joseph Gallo of Montgomery. Not all those listed were members of PBE. Bar executive involvement within the state association ranged from active to inactive and unseen. Involvement with the PBE and the PBA was not encouraged by most local bar associations. Two friends from the Pennsylvania Bar Association staff that helped “our cause”, in every possible way, were Arthur J. Birdsall and Theodore W. Stellwag.

The Officers of the Pennsylvania Bar Executives added the word association to the organizational name, thus it became the Pennsylvania Association of Bar Executives. The association bylaws were drafted in October of 1985 and were later adopted in October of 1986 by the membership.

3.

We continued to grow in number and in stature.

In July of 1986, a letter was written to Ira B. Coldren, Esquire, President of the Pennsylvania Bar Association by the first President of the PABE, Elizabeth C. Price requesting:

“that all executive directors or executive secretaries of local bar associations be included on all state bar mailing lists; be included as courtesy members of state bar committees; be on the mailing list for the VIP publication; have a designated section for seating at the PBA House of Delegates Meeting as well as being provided the necessary and informational materials of the meeting; have the registration fee and cost of the meals waived for all state bar meetings; have cooperation in reserving meeting rooms for the Pennsylvania Association of Bar Executives and the Conference of County Legal Journals; have the PABE Meetings placed on the printed PBA brochures; and be recognized by the volunteer members of the Pennsylvania Bar Association as a professional organization of the State of Pennsylvania.”

The letter, further stated that the requests being considered were all mechanics that enabled each bar executive to better serve members of the bar. One of the purposes stated in Article II of the Bylaws of the Pennsylvania Association of Bar Executives was also conveyed in the correspondence. It stated the dedication of bar executives to the organized bar by promising:

“ to provide a forum for the mutual interchange of ideas which will facilitate the administration of organized bar activities; to provide information which will assist in the introduction of modern methods of office management and business administration in the operation of bar association offices; to secure a closer coordination of activities of bar associations; to conduct surveys among members of the association on various aspects of bar association operations and activities; to stimulate the work and activities of bar associations in general; and to develop a cordial relationship, spirit of unity and common understanding among bar executives.” The letter, also expressed “appreciation of the state bar’s past generosity” and hoped for “future cooperation in the unified efforts to achieve excellence for the organized bar and its concept.”

3.

Copies of PABE President Price's letter were sent to the following: Maureen E. Cullen, PABE President Elect; Barbara I. Kittrell, PABE Secretary; Margaret R. Halfpenny, PABE Treasurer; James I. Smith, III, PABE Delegate; Theodore W. Stellwag, PBA Executive Director; and Arthur J. Birdsall, PBA Director of Membership and County Bar Services.

Mr. Coldren's response was friendly and very positive to each request. He, also, graciously added the following:

"On another matter, not raised in your letter, it is my pleasure to invite you or a representative of the PABE to attend the meeting of the Board of Governors to be convened on Thursday, August 21, 1986 at the Harrisburg Marriott. We will send more specific information about the meeting in the very near future. Please know that we are anxious to have the participation of PABE and look forward to welcoming you to the Board meeting."

"As you know, Ted Stellwag and Art Birdsall are visiting all 22 county bar Executives around the State. They are doing so because they recognize, as I do, the importance of having the candid opinions and good counsel of staff of professionals."

"I believe that the Pennsylvania Bar Association has done a good job over the years of providing the important services to county bar associations. Certainly the CCBL Annual Seminar is indicative of that fact. We recognize, also, that this is an area in which there must be continued growth. Art Birdsall is now Director of Membership and County Bar Services. It is a new job title and underscores our commitment in this area. I think that you and all of the members of PABE will be pleased with the continuing cooperation and partnership."

Ira B. Coldren, Esquire and Joseph H. Jones, Esquire were among the few members of the Pennsylvania Bar Association that were gracious and cooperative. This was, again, exhibited during the August, 1986 Meeting of the PBA Board of Governors. The President of the PABE, Mrs. Price, was welcomed by President Coldren. However, the welcome was not unanimous. One of the Governors, which will remain nameless, suggested to President Coldren and to Vice President Jones that the representative from the PBA Young Lawyers' Section and the President of the PABE be asked to leave the meeting. President Coldren inquired as to whether or not we wanted to remain in attendance. Louis N. Teti, Esquire and I chose to remain. Without leaders such as those gentlemen, we may still be striving for the recognition that we deserve. We owe Mr. Coldren and Mr. Jones a debt of gratitude.

5.

The Bottom Line ; At Last.....we had made it or had almost made it.

In 1983, the Conference of County Bar Leaders created county bar recognition awards to highlight programs of local bar associations that promoted the improvement of the legal profession, the justice system, and the community. Members of the Pennsylvania Association of Bar Executives were to be judges of this competition. It became evident to the bar executives that competition should be eliminated and restored with recognition of valued projects of the local bar associations. With the recommendation of the PABE, the award criteria was changed so that any bar association would receive a recognition award for up to three projects meeting the standards of the award. Every year a minimum of twenty five county bar associations receive an award for worthy projects.

The Conference of County Bar Leaders was about nineteen years into its successful journey prior to the formation of the PABE. A representative from our association was not invited as a courtesy member until 1993 and 1994 when Presidents James I. Smith, III and Patricia M. Martin contributed to the planning of the conference. Thereafter, each PABE President has contributed to the success of CCBL. Pennsylvania bar executives have had many friends from the leadership of the PBA. One, in particular, demonstrated his friendship, his trust, and his confidence in us, namely C. Dale McClain, Esquire. This was demonstrated when he, as President of the Conference of County Bar Leaders (1998), presented, for the first time, the Arthur J. Birdsall Award to its namesake. Mr. McClain's presentation included the following criteria; "to recognize a bar executive who has been a faithful steward of traditions, who is committed to the success of his or her bar association, who enhanced significantly the stature of his or her bar association, who cooperates with other bar executives and bar leaders to make CCBL the best it can be and who puts him or her self second to the needs of the bar association whenever and whatever they may be." The recipients thereafter were Elizabeth C. Price (1999), James I. Smith, III (2000), Margaret R. Halfpenny (2001), Barbara I. Kittrell (2002), Patricia M. Martin (2003), Sandra Brydon Smith (2004), Marianne S. Canning (2005). and Nancy R. Paul (2006). Thank you, Mr. McClain, for the recognition.

6.

The Boards of the Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) and Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA) were unwilling to invite a representative from our ranks. However, James I. Smith, III and Kenneth Shear were invited as courtesy members because of their positions with the two largest counties in Pennsylvania, Allegheny and Philadelphia. Then in 2003, the President of the PABE, Arthur J. Birdsall, and PBI President, Chester C. Corso, Esq. “made it happen”. President Birdsall appointed Elizabeth C. Price to attend the meetings of the PBI as a representative of our association. With regard to IOLTA, a PABE representative has not been appointed nor invited to attend the IOLTA Board Meetings. However, the Executive Director of IOLTA, Alfred J. Azen, is a member of the PABE and submits reports periodically to our Association.

Our professionalism has long been respected and recognized by the members of the Pennsylvania Bar Association. We now have representatives serving on PBA state wide committees and task forces. Our publications such as, “Survival Guide for Bar Leaders” and the “PABE Reference Guide” is available on the PABE Web Site and made available to all county bar leaders in Pennsylvania. We have representatives who serve as courtesy members on the Pennsylvania Bar Association Board of Governors and the Pennsylvania Bar Institute Board of Directors. The PBA’s Conference of County Bar Leaders has recognized our representative as a voting member of the planning committee. Seating is reserved for PABE Members at all PBA House of Delegates’ Meetings; we receive free copies of all PBA publications; and we have free access to the “Members Only” section of the PBA Web Site.

Members of the association convene yearly at their retreat located within the State of Pennsylvania. The agenda offers seminars that are personally and professionally stimulating. The speakers are impressive motivational speakers, financial experts, well known authors, the leadership of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, and members of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania. This year, 2006, we will be graced with the presence of The Honorable Stephen J. McEwen, Jr. and The Honorable Maureen E. Lally-Green.

Throughout the years the dedication of our past leaders, our present leaders, and our members has made our association one that is recognized and most importantly, respected.

**We’ve come a long way. Haven’t we?**

**7.**

**The Past Presidents of the Pennsylvania Association of Bar Executives,**

- Elizabeth C. Price .....(1986 – 1987)
- Margaret R. Halfpenny....(1988 – 1989)
- Barbara I. Kittrell.....(1990 – 1991)
- James I. Smith, III.....(1992 – 1993)
- Patricia M. Martin.....(1994 – 1995)
- Evelyn E. Sullivan.....(1996 – 1997)
- Sandra Brydon Smith.....(1998 – 1999)
- Marianne S. Canning.....(2000 – 2001)
- Arthur J. Birdsall.....(2002 – 2003)
- Nancy R. Paul..... (2004 – 2005)
- Becky H. Morgenthal.....(2006 – 2007),

**and the members have made History.**

**The challenges, the success, and the continuation of our history  
are yours.....**

Debra A. Arner, Alfred J. Azen, Deborah H. Baslyga, David A. Blaner,  
Katey A. Buggy, Joseph P. Burke, III, Arthur J. Birdsall, Marianne S. Canning,  
Jessica Engel, Bruce D. Fleisher, Wendy C. Hoffman, Susan L. Kenny, Lucy M. Kitner,  
Barbara I. Kittrell, Diane Krivoniak, D. Susan Kost, Elizabeth A. Kramer,  
Mary Beth Leeson, C. Daniel Levering, Heather Martin, Richard L. McCoy,  
Roger B. Meilton, Donald Morgan, Becky H. Morgenthal, Francis J. O'Rourke,  
JoEllen Pastore, Nancy R. Paul, Elizabeth C. Price, E. Marie Queen, Suzanne Robinson,  
Kathleen Sabol, Carolyn Seibert-Drager, Kenneth Shear, Barry M. Simpson, Julie Sipe,  
Sandra Brydon Smith, Evelyn E. Sullivan, Stacey A. Thomas, Suellen Verlihay,  
Lucy Wolf.

Honorary Members: Margaret R. Halfpenny, Katherine H. Humm, Patricia M. Martin,  
Ann S. Perchinsky, Kathryn V. Schott, Theodore W. Stellwag

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