

## Q&A FROM HBA-NJ PRESIDENT-ELECT – HECTOR D. RUIZ, ESQ.

### Q. How and when did you initially become involved with the HBA-NJ and what inspired your involvement?

A. I was initially inspired to become involved with the HBA-NJ for two main reasons. First, I clerked for former HBA-NJ President and current United States District Court Judge, the Honorable Jose L. Linares, who often spoke fondly about his experiences with the HBA-NJ. His high regard for the organization drew my interest in learning more about the HBA-NJ. Second, I was drawn to the HBA-NJ because of the people and the amazing events. When I attended HBA-NJ events, I was immediately struck by the quality of the events; at the same time, I was also thoroughly impressed and inspired by the genuine and palpable sense of family, community and congeniality among the Board members and membership. I quickly developed a great admiration for the HBA-NJ, and I knew that I did not simply want to be a member; I wanted to be directly involved in this organization. Eventually, I spoke to Incoming-President at the time, Dan Mateo, about serving in the role of Press Secretary during his term. After being grilled by Dan, he offered me the position. I half-joke about being grilled, but our conversation further reinforced my interest and desire in being part of the HBA-NJ as I saw how seriously the incoming HBA-NJ President treated his role and the role of other Board members.

### Q. How will your background and experience inspire your leadership as President of the HBA-NJ?

A. Working at one of the larger law firms in the state for several years, I was attracted to the support the HBA-NJ could provide me both professionally and socially, and this informed my decision to join the Board and ultimately serve as HBA-NJ President. As I started to become more involved, I quickly realized the importance of this organization in providing information and support to its members as well as to the Latino community at large. I was equally impressed by the sense of comradery and community, as well as the dedication to the HBA-NJ and its mission. Accordingly, I will view my Presidency through this lens; that is, being the organization of first resort for our members and the community.

### Q. What are some of the major initiatives and goals that you have planned for the HBA-NJ this upcoming year?

A. The initiatives I envision for next year generally fall into two categories: membership and community. With respect to membership, while I think our members already receive great benefits as part of the HBA-NJ, I want to focus on providing even more value to our members. This includes offering regular networking events and

increasing programming, including CLEs and other presentations, and perhaps engaging in strategic partnerships. I also want to continue and build on our highly successful and popular programs like the Corporate Counsel Conference and the W.E.L.L. Conference. Secondly, my focus will be on expanding and adding community initiatives (discussed more below).

### Q. The mission of the HBA-NJ, includes, among other things, serving the public interest by advancing, developing and promoting the Hispanic community in the State of New Jersey. What programs, community initiatives, and/or committees, if any, do you have planned for next year that will support this mission?

A. First, I think the HBA-NJ can play a stronger role in providing basic legal information to our members and the broader Latino community.

We can accomplish this by offering regular Community Education Initiatives and Know Your Rights programs throughout the state. In addition, I think that now, probably more than ever before, the HBA-NJ needs to be at the forefront of the immigration debate in this state. The HBA-NJ can achieve this in several ways. First, by assembling a dedicated Immigration Committee made up of leaders in the field from throughout the state that are intimately familiar with issues facing the different parts of New Jersey. I

also hope to call on the Immigration Committee to formulate a roster of immigration attorneys throughout the state that our Board, members and community can turn to for guidance. Finally, we can publicize and promote our efforts through press releases and joint endeavors with other affinity bars in the state.

### Q. When you end your term as President of the HBA-NJ, how do you want your legacy to be remembered and what changes do you hope to have implemented?

A. First, we all know that this is an incredible organization, with a vibrant, smart and dedicated Board and amazing members. Therefore, I am hopeful that the HBA-NJ becomes the go-to organization and a resource for our members in all corners of the state. I think I can accomplish this by increasing the ranks of our memberships through additional offerings and innovative programming. Further, I hope that the HBA-NJ continues to advocate for judicial diversity, and I want the HBA-NJ to be on the top of our members' minds when they are contemplating pursuing a judgeship. Finally, I am optimistic that our Public Policy and Immigration Committees will be what the community and other organizations alike turn to for guidance in the first instance. ☺

