Robert A. Clifford
2011-12 CBA President
I Am Listening

In my 30-plus years as a practicing attorney in Chicago, if there is one thing I have learned it is the value of membership in bar associations. I joined the CBA as soon as I passed the bar—today I would encourage law students to join. Membership in bar associations are valuable for so many reasons. In my years of serving on several committees and as a member of the Board of Managers in the early 1990’s, I found that the more you give the more your grow. I also am very involved in the work of the American Bar Association and currently have the privilege of serving as Chair of the ABA Illinois Delegation. Chicago is my home town; it’s where I practice and The Chicago Bar Association is my hometown bar association. My ABA work has exposed me to many different bar associations and, proudly, the CBA is second to none in providing outstanding services to our members, to the courts and to the public.

Today, perhaps more so than ever, the legal profession and the justice system are facing considerable challenges, some of which are reshaping the traditional practice of law and the operation of our courts. Change is being driven by a wide array of societal forces, including the economy, the poor job market, higher than usual unemployment rate for new lawyers, technology, new and proposed government regulatory initiatives, and social media. Each bar president serves in a stewardship capacity and does his/her best to develop new programs (for the members and the public) and to improve/strengthen existing membership services.

This year, I will focus on increasing and expanding the scope of our educational programming for members, new lawyers and for the public. Our programming will cover some of the following:

- **Public Education** about the law and our justice system is a priority as civics education is almost totally absent from school curriculum. In his remarks to the ABA several years ago, retired Supreme Court of the United States Justice David Souter noted the results of a national survey indicating that two-thirds of Americans surveyed could not name the third branch of government.

- **Conference on the Future of the Circuit Court of Cook County.** With the help of our dear friend, Chief Circuit Court Judge Timothy C. Evans, we will sponsor a conference to examine the future needs and operation of our Court.

- **Practice/Management Programming.** We will also expand our Law Practice Management Programming, provide a series of free monthly webinars and will increase online committee programming that qualifies for MCLE credit.

- **Supreme Court Rule 711.** We’ll also propose an expansion of Supreme Court Rule 711 to permit third-year law students to provide civil legal information and, in some cases, limited legal services to the growing number of poor who appear in court without counsel.

- **Law School Forum.** We’ll conduct a law school forum to explore how our area law schools are managing student expectations, addressing increasing law school costs, job expectations, etc. In a very real sense, I am getting back to basics and will use the collective wisdom, good will and considerable talent of our members to address the key issues facing the profession and our courts.

For me, this year is all about how the Association can better serve you. A great coach once said, “Leadership is all about getting people involved and getting them to care.” He went on to say that if we get enough people to care, we can solve almost any problem. I subscribe to that approach and also believe that we should “listen and learn before we speak.” This year I promise to listen to your ideas about how we can better serve your needs. My goal is to ensure that we strengthen our fundamentals, improve our technology and programming in greater service to our members, the courts and our community. I welcome your comments, suggestions and encourage your participation in the important work of our Association.

YLS INTERNATIONAL & FOREIGN LAW COMMITTEE

The Young Lawyers Section is pleased to announce the creation of a new committee, International & Foreign Law. The Committee will examine both private and public international law, including U.S. and foreign legal aspects of international business transactions, litigation and arbitration, taxation of foreign income, foreign investment laws, treaties, the United Nations and other international organizations. The group also will explore the nuances and importance of international criminal law. The inaugural year will be chaired by Kyle Olson, Baker & McKenzie; John Tufano Jr., attorney at law; and Maya Ganguly, attorney at law. The committee will meet regularly on the third Monday of the month. To join, visit www.chicagobar.org (under Committees) or call 312/554-2134.