

Introducing CBA President John Vaught

BY BRENDAN BAKER



John Vaught is more than prepared to be the next president of the Colorado Bar Association. Early in his career, he served as chair of the Denver Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, and oversaw the first-ever DBA YLD meeting in Denver. He previously served as president of the Denver Bar Association from 2014 to 2015. In that time, Vaught oversaw several initiatives, including a campaign to increase membership in the DBA by 15%, and the 2014–15 Bar Ambassador program. Now he is eager to apply this experience to CBA governance, with an ambitious platform covering several statewide initiatives.

Vaught has had a long and distinguished

career in Colorado, but his path to leadership began in Texas. He graduated from Stephen F. Austin University in Texas, with a degree in business and economics, before joining the U.S. Navy and serving as an officer in the Vietnam conflict. After a year in Vietnam, Vaught was stationed in Naples, Italy. He remained there for several years before leaving active duty to return to Texas, where he enrolled at St. Mary's University School of Law. Vaught graduated summa cum laude and then moved to Colorado to clerk for the late Robert H. McWilliams, Jr., a Tenth Circuit judge and former justice of the Colorado Supreme Court.

Following his clerkship, Vaught became an associate at Holland & Hart in Denver. He made partner in six years and stayed there for nearly two decades. He then joined Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, and eventually became a partner at Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell, a position he stepped down from on January 1 to take on CBA leadership. Vaught's areas of practice include antitrust law, securities fraud, class action law suits, and insurance.

In addition to his successful practice, Vaught has been very involved in work to support veterans, including helping to found Colorado Lawyers for Colorado Veterans, an organization currently under the aegis of the CBA Military and Veterans Affairs Section that matches CBA volunteer attorneys with veterans who cannot afford legal assistance. In 2016, Vaught was awarded the Governor's Award for Outstanding Veteran Volunteer. In recognition of his service to the profession, St. Mary's recently named Vaught as a Distinguished Graduate for 2018.

During his time as DBA president, Vaught focused on the bar's role as a facilitator of

personal relationships and networking opportunities, emphasizing personal interaction over technological communication. While these values will still be reflected in Vaught's administration of the CBA, he also intends to highlight the very significant technological issues facing attorneys in the current practice environment. The first of Vaught's presidential initiatives is to lobby for increased broadband infrastructure and coverage in Colorado. The modern practice of law is virtually impossible without speedy, reliable broadband Internet access, yet Colorado has very poor broadband coverage, particularly outside of the major urban centers. This has an immediate impact on attorney representation and access to justice throughout the state, because there are areas where lack of technological infrastructure makes it prohibitively difficult for attorneys to run successful practices. To support the practice of law in Colorado, Vaught intends to use the CBA's lobbying power to seek solutions for the current lack of broadband coverage. This includes working with the Colorado legislature as well as partnering with the American Bar Association to lobby Congress where appropriate.

The second of Vaught's presidential initiatives is to provide more guidance and assistance for attorneys, particularly out-state attorneys, toward making their practices more profitable. As Vaught sees it, the profitability of individual practices has an impact on access to justice. Attorneys whose practices are not profitable are unlikely to have the time or resources to provide consistent pro bono representation, among other issues. Vaught envisions the bar facilitating training for attorneys on how to run their practices as effectively and profitably



Vaught's son Brian, a Naval Aviator, in his F18 off the coast of Korea.



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1 Vaught with son Brian.

2 Youngest granddaughter Evelyn.

3 Grandson Harrison.

as possible, for example by unbundling the delivery of legal services and working with innovative business models. This training could be accomplished through intensive clinics, networking and brainstorming events, mentorship programs, and other means. Helping attorneys run profitable practices is both a primary goal of the CBA and supportive of other primary and secondary goals of the association.

Vaught's third presidential initiative is to reorganize elements of bar governance. In particular, Vaught wants to fully harness the potential of the CBA's seven regional vice presidents. Vaught sees these positions as being the voice of CBA within their respective regions and intends to give them a more active role in regularly connecting members with bar leadership. This should increase the value of bar membership, especially for those attorneys in less populous areas of the state who might have unique needs and challenges compared to their urban counterparts.

Vaught also hopes to increase the funds available to the Colorado Bar Foundation, a charitable entity that raises money to provide grants for legal education programs and other community service initiatives. Vaught would

like the Foundation to provide even more direct support for such programs and help create more new and ambitious programs.

Apart from these initiatives, Vaught and the entire staff will oversee the transfer of the bar offices to a new building early next year. Between providing even more value to members and transferring to a new space, it is certain that Vaught will have no shortage of work to do in his time as CBA president.

When he isn't serving his clients or the bar, Vaught enjoys travel, reading, photography, fishing, hunting, golfing, and sailing. His years of living in Italy left him with skills in the kitchen and an appreciation for the culinary arts. He earned his private pilot's license a few years ago and flies when time permits. He also often spends time with his three children, Mark, Brian, and Brooke, and their families.

John Vaught is eminently well-prepared to execute an ambitious platform as the 2018-19 CBA president. He has already made a substantial impact on the Colorado legal community as a practitioner and a leader. This new role will allow him to apply his professionalism, experience, and vision on a level that will surely benefit Coloradans for years to come. 