

Meet the New Members of the CBA Executive Council

Please allow us to introduce the newest members of the CBA's Executive Council: Jessica Brown, Ryann Peyton, Keith Vance, Leslee Balten, Judge Amanda Hopkins, Ian McCargar, Kevin McReynolds, and Danaé Woody. As they embark upon their first term, we've asked these new governing members to share a little about their personal and professional backgrounds, their involvement with the CBA, and their reasons for participating on the Executive Council.



Jessica Brown
President-Elect

Please tell us a little about yourself, personally and professionally.

Personally, I'm all about family, but I'm not at all domestic. I don't cook, clean, garden, or do much else around the house. Luckily, my husband Chris does! Chris is an amazing support to me; I couldn't do what I do without him. We have two daughters. Hadley attends Denver School of the Arts for Musical Theatre and is entering eighth grade. Tatum is going into third grade at Stanley British Primary School and loves synchronized swimming, gymnastics, and visual arts. Our family tries to prioritize having fun. We especially enjoy vacationing and game nights with friends.

Professionally, I am a partner in Gibson Dunn's Denver office. I have been at Gibson Dunn my entire career, following a federal judicial clerkship with the late, great Judge Jim R. Carrigan. My practice is focused in the areas of labor and employment, including workplace investigations, and white collar government investigations.

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I joined the Colorado and Denver Bar Associations when I became a lawyer 24 years ago

and got involved right away. I gave courthouse tours to students at the City and County Building. I volunteered for LawLine 9 when the topic was employment law. I co-chaired the DBA's Barristers Ball twice. I presented to the Labor and Employment Section on summary judgment motions and whistleblowers with members of the plaintiff's bar. I served on the CBA Committee for Balanced Legal Careers, presenting programs relating to flexible work arrangements, generational differences, and wellness. I joined the Legal Aid Foundation Board and the Colorado Women's Bar Association (CWBA), and eventually served as CWBA chair and president, respectively. More recently, I chaired the CBA/DBA Joint Management Committee. I have always viewed bar activities like extracurricular activities in high school—they enhance my professional experience, and I am a happier, more connected, and fulfilled lawyer because of them.

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

I love almost everything about being a lawyer—from analyzing novel legal issues to constructing creative arguments, interviewing witnesses, assessing credibility, writing reports, editing motions and briefs, advising clients, mentoring associates, and managing teams. I don't even mind timesheets! I would never discourage anyone who wants to be a lawyer

from entering the legal profession. Neither of my daughters seems to have any interest in law (yet?), but it's a great opportunity to develop leadership skills, keep your mind active, build relationships with interesting people, and make a difference. If I had to pick one favorite thing about my job, it's the opportunity to collaborate with really smart and engaged clients, colleagues, experts, and vendors—all working together toward a common goal. That is also why I like bar association work: I enjoy collaborating on projects and programs with smart and engaged lawyers and non-lawyers in our community.

Why did you say "yes" to serving as president-elect and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the bar?

One reason I said "yes" to serving as CBA president-elect is that my "leadership mentor," Patricia Jarzobski, was only the fifth woman to serve as CBA president in more than 120 years—just a few years ago! It is important for women to see other women in leadership roles. But the main reason I said "yes" was for the opportunity to give back to a profession that has given me so much. My experience aligns with the CBA's strategic plan: I have developed programming to help lawyers advance and that promote diversity and inclusion; I have been passionate about mentorship and promoting young lawyers into leadership; I have focused on access to justice; and, during a period of declining membership in voluntary bars, we broke membership and revenue records in another statewide bar, the CWBA. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to continue the CBA's positive momentum to achieve similar outcomes.



Ryann Peyton
Vice President,
Region One

Please tell us a little about yourself, personally and professionally.

I am an accidental lawyer. I went to law school to become an FBI agent.

When that didn't pan out, I moved to Denver and struggled to find my place as an out-of-state grad from an unknown law school with no local community. I ultimately landed in private practice focusing on family law and civil litigation.

In 2015, I took a hiatus from practice to co-found RANGE Consulting, a social enterprise that trains employers on strategies for LGBTQ workplace inclusivity. Social responsibility became a calling, and I sought to bring that model to the legal profession—specifically in helping lawyers successfully transition into and within the practice of law.

I currently serve as executive director of the Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program (CAMP), where I get to help lawyers find their people, place, and purpose in Colorado's legal profession.

I am a wife, a mom, and a pretty decent skier.

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I became actively involved in the CBA after graduating from the CBA's leadership training program (COBALT) in 2014. COBALT was a turning point in my career. I came to recognize that my perception of professional identity and professional success was based on what everyone was telling me it *should* be and not what I really wanted for myself. COBALT helped me identify my personal strengths, gave me the

courage to take professional risks, and taught me the qualities of a great leader.

I had "grown up" in the diversity bars, serving as president of the Colorado LGBT Bar Association and president of the Colorado LGBT Bar Foundation, but until COBALT, I never recognized my own value and potential in the larger bar. Since then, I have served on the CBA Board of Governors, the CBA Young Lawyers Division Executive Council, and the CBA/DBA Joint Diversity and Inclusivity Steering Committee.

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

When I was in practice, I saw people on their absolute worst days. Their marriages were ending, their children were being taken away, and their businesses and financial aspirations were crumbling. It is an immense privilege and responsibility to take care of people when their lives are falling apart. I took that responsibility seriously and enjoyed navigating my clients through the arc of litigation. As lawyers, the public looks to us to be the experts, the helpers, and the leaders. Our profession may have its problems, but at the end of the day, we are the lodestars for resolving our society's conflicts and elevating the virtue of justice for all. What greater occupation could one seek to do such important work for our communities?

Why did you say "yes" to serving on the CBA Executive Council and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the bar?

I believe that lawyers serve two roles. Of course, they serve their clients as competent practitioners and counselors. But lawyers must also serve as caretakers of the legal profession. Each of us has an obligation to leave this profession better than we found it, and engagement with and service to the bar association is an effective means to improving the profession.

I look forward to engaging new CBA members through improved outreach models that cultivate collaboration with the CBA as a means to supporting new lawyers in the transition to practice. All CBA leaders should actively participate in the bar's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within the organization. In addition to continuing to serve on the CBA/DBA Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee, I intend to generate meaningful activities and conversations to promote diversity and equity in the CBA.



Keith Vance
Vice President,
Region Five

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I am a Southern Colorado guy. I was raised on a cattle ranch near Manassa, Colorado and that was my life until I went to college and law school. In my early legal career, I was an insurance defense attorney and city prosecutor. Since 2002, I have strived to be a different kind of trial lawyer, handling mostly plaintiff civil injury work and criminal defense. In 2005, I attended Gerry Spence's Trial Lawyers College in Dubois, Wyoming. There, I not only learned a lot about myself, but rekindled my love for my clients and the law in general. I truly enjoy practicing law and helping the injured, downtrodden, and accused. I cannot imagine doing anything else.

Outside the law, I am still a Southern Colorado guy. My wife and I have raised four kids (not that the job is over) and we have one granddaughter. For fun, I like to fish, camp, ride motorcycles, read a good book, and socialize with like-minded people. I try to give back to my community and served two terms on our local school board, and ran a Boy Scout troop as a scoutmaster. I guest lecture at local high schools and Adams State University, and do as much pro bono work as I can afford.

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I have been a CBA member for over 20 years. Historically, I have used the CBA for guidance on ethical and professionalism issues, CLE opportunities, and networking. More recently, I have enjoyed the advancements of Casemaker and how Licensed Lawyer can assist with referrals. As the owner of a small firm, I appreciate how the CBA strives to save members on costly overhead.

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

Being able to help people get through difficult times is quite rewarding. It brings me great joy to see a new client come into my office—many times overwhelmed, depressed, and discouraged—only to have a new lease on life once we work through the problem and find a solution. Fighting the good fight for a deserving client (and winning) is one of the most satisfying feelings I have found.

Why did you say “yes” to serving on the CBA Executive Council and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the bar?

I am always looking for meaningful ways to give back. I said “yes” because I think serving on the Executive Council will allow me to work with other CBA leaders to find solutions to problems facing our profession.



Leslie Balten
Vice President,
Region 7

Please tell us a little about yourself, personally and professionally.

As John Muir penned, “the mountains are calling and I must go,” and I listened to that calling. If I’m not in my office or in the courtroom, you will most likely find me on the ski slopes, mountain biking, or manning the oars of a whitewater raft. After practicing in Denver for nine years, I returned to Breckenridge, where I first began my Colorado journey in 2001. I am of counsel for the law firm Ciancio Ciancio Brown, P.C., where I practice primarily civil litigation and family law. I manage our firm’s Breckenridge office, co-manage our civil litigation department, and act as our firm’s internal event planner. I also have the pleasure of serving on the Executive Council for the Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center, which is an extraordinary organization expanding the potential of people of all of abilities through inspiring outdoor experiences.

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I first became involved with the CBA as a member of the 2015 COBALT class. COBALT was such an incredibly transformative program for me, and I desired to stay involved and ensure future classes had the same amazing opportunity. As a member of the class selection committee and sessions committee in 2016 and 2018 and a member of the 2019 executive committee, I have met amazing friends, mentors, and colleagues. COBALT has been an incredible

part of my leadership journey and completely changed the trajectory of my life and practice.

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

My practice focuses primarily on litigation, and very few people come to see me when their lives are wonderful, safe, or secure. The ability to take the burden off a client’s shoulders, navigate them through what is often one of the most difficult times in their life, and leave them in a better place than when we first met is what I find most rewarding about being a lawyer.

Why did you say “yes” to serving on the CBA Executive Council and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the bar?

As my time with COBALT is coming to a close, I was looking for a way to serve the CBA in a broader capacity and also become more involved in my geographic region. As a member of the Executive Council, I intend to be an active liaison between the two and of service to both. Having lived and practiced in both mountain communities and the Front Range, I understand the importance of having the support of strong, local bar chapters, as well as the greater Colorado Bar Association. Those outside of metropolitan areas may sometimes feel disconnected from the CBA and the meaningful services and resources it provides. I look forward to helping bridge those gaps and to supporting our 7th Region’s communities.



Judge Amanda Hopkins
Council Member,
At Large Member

Please tell us a little about yourself, personally and professionally.

I grew up in Colorado Springs, where I was an avid soccer player and champion synchronized swimmer. I left Colorado Springs to attend college at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, graduating in 2001 with a BA in international political economy and a minor in Latin American studies. I received my

JD in 2006 from Seattle University. I moved to the San Luis Valley on Halloween 2007 to work for the Office of the State Public Defender and was the managing deputy public defender from December 2011 until the summer of 2018. I was appointed to the District Court Bench in the Twelfth Judicial District on July 10, 2018, and sit in Rio Grande, Saguache, and Mineral counties. In my free time I like to garden, hike, and kayak, and I am planning to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro with my sister next winter.

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I was a very casual member of the CBA since 2007 and had never really involved myself with any of its programs. In 2014, I was honored to have been selected to that year’s COBALT class, and that changed the trajectory of my career. Among the other amazing advantages of that program, I learned the value of comradery and community. Because of COBALT, I am able to see how an organization like the CBA can be a vital and useful tool—even for those of us in the hinterlands.

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

When I was a senior in high school, I had to give a speech to the Colorado Springs Rotary Club as part of a scholarship application. I told the

members that my goal was to become Wonder Woman. Being a lawyer, and even more so in my short time as a judge, the reasons I said that have come to fruition. This job has a way of redefining victories for you, but when they do come they are that much sweeter. I love that I have the ability to actually do something positive for the members of this community that has given so much to me. Progress is coming slowly, but it’s happening, and I am so grateful to be able to play even a small part in that. P.S.—I got the scholarship.

Why did you say “yes” to serving on the CBA Executive Council and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the bar?

My favorite part of being the managing deputy for the public defender’s office in Alamosa was watching that evolution of young attorneys into seasoned veterans; but at the same time, I am deeply concerned about the number of attorneys who will be retiring soon and the decaying sense of civility that I am seeing in the profession. This seemed to be a good way to be able to impact those issues on a broader scale. I also feel frustrated that truly quality programming and professional development has, at least in the past, been focused on those in the metro areas along the Front Range, because people in small places like Alamosa deserve amazing attorneys too. The CBA has taken great strides

to bring more and more content to lawyers in rural areas, and I am an example of how your career can benefit when you take advantage of those opportunities. So I also said “yes” to help spread the word.



Ian D. McCargar
Council Member,
At Large Member

Please tell us a little about yourself, personally and professionally.

I was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. My father was a lawyer, and my mom was a nurse. I graduated from Michigan State University in 1979, and three years later I received my JD from Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Vicki and I escaped to Colorado within days of my law school graduation. I spent my first seven years practicing in Steamboat Springs, relocating to Fort Collins in 1989. Born into a musical family, I have a melody in my head virtually every waking hour (and sometimes while sleeping).

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I’m a law geek. I have always been active in local bar affairs, but there came a point in my career

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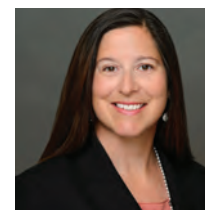
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when I felt I needed a greater connection with lawyers on a more statewide basis. I accepted an appointment to the Executive Council in the late-2000s, helped with the early stages of the CAMP program, and was a member of the 2011 COBALT class. I have volunteered with the high school mock trial program since 2002. I currently serve as Board of Governors representative on the Government Counsel Section Board. These connections to the CBA reinforce my real enthusiasm for lawyers and the work we do at so many levels of our culture. That enthusiasm pulls me into the office every day. I love what I do, and I want to surround myself with those who feel the same.

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

Creative problem-solving through a time-honored analytical method. The players change, the game changes, but the method for legal problem-solving remains at its core a creative exercise. This stuff just never gets old for me.

Why did you say “yes” to serving on the CBA Executive Council and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the bar?

Despite having been at this awhile, I still feel a need to connect statewide with other lawyers. I look forward to working with CBA staff and President Kathleen Hearn Croshal on her initiatives for the coming year.



Kevin McReynolds
Council Member,
DBA President

Please tell us a little about yourself, personally and professionally.

Growing up in Arizona, I spent a lot of family vacations skiing and camping in Colorado. After detours to Texas for college (where I met my wife) and California for law school and a clerkship, I finally got the chance to move here in 2008.

I'm an appellate attorney with the Colorado Attorney General's Office, where I've spent almost half of my career. I left private practice

after discovering my love of appellate work through a pro bono immigration case. After arguing (and winning) that first appeal, I was hooked and left civil litigation for criminal law so that I could do appellate work full-time.

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I was the only associate at a six-lawyer firm when I moved to Colorado, and I initially got involved in the CBA to meet other young lawyers. After showing up when the YLD put together a kickball team, I kept coming back. I've gotten to know a lot of great people, found mentors, and made friends through the bar. And spending time with so many community-minded young attorneys led me to take on the pro bono work that ultimately led me into government service.

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

Solving new problems. I have an inherent need to fix things and make them better, and I love the law because we get to work on “people problems” that have a real impact. I'm lucky that my current work gives me a lot of opportunities to think through new issues and help the courts move the law forward.

Why did you say “yes” to serving as DBA president and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the CBA?

I never saw myself as someone who would become president and was honored when other leaders in our community asked me to take on this role. I know firsthand the amazing work the DBA and CBA do, and I'm excited to help engage new and young lawyers to show them all the CBA can do to help them with their careers and include them in our community. I'm particularly looking forward to continuing to work with the joint CBA/DBA committee on diversity and inclusiveness that has already begun to develop a broader pipeline of leaders from across the legal community and an ambitious plan for making the bar a place where everyone feels empowered and that they belong.



Danaé Woody
Council Member,
CBA Young Lawyers
Division Chair

Please tell us a little about yourself, personally and professionally.

I was born in Pensacola, Florida, and grew up in the Twin Cities, in Minnesota. I've been licensed to practice law in Colorado since 2012 and started the Woody Law Firm, LLC in 2014. The best parts of my job are working with people—training, volunteering, and helping real people through real life. When I have free time, I enjoy spending it with my family and friends, usually on a coastline.

How did you first get involved with the CBA and how has it enriched your career?

I joined the CBA as a student member, but first became meaningfully involved in 2012 with the


Modern Law Practice Initiative, f/k/a Modest Means Task Force. My early involvement with the CBA kicked off a cascade of speaking and writing opportunities, as well as opportunities for leadership, mentoring, and relationship building with other lawyers I may never have otherwise come across. Practicing law can be a lonely endeavor, but it doesn't have to be!

What is your favorite thing about being a lawyer?

My favorite part of practicing law is the contact I have with individuals from all walks of life, and the stories of people's lives and fresh starts I get to be a small part of.

Why did you say "yes" to serving as the YLD chair and what are you looking forward to this year as you help lead the bar?

I've served on the CBA YLD Executive Council since 2015, and during that time I've been

honored to serve young lawyers around Colorado by helping to facilitate pathways to leadership and opportunities to be seen around the bar (e.g., as faculty, authors, volunteers, peer mentors, etc.). As I look toward the upcoming year, I hope to encourage law firms and organizations to actively support the professional development of their young lawyers in and around the legal community by acknowledging outstanding work and courtroom experience, and promoting pro bono service and other community involvement from the early days of joining this profession. I'm also looking forward to working with the bar to bring greater numbers of young lawyers "into the fold" of bar involvement and leadership, and create more spaces for young lawyers to contribute to the organization as representatives of one of the largest demographics of our membership. 



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