

MESSAGE

from the President

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Goals of NDAA's New President

I THINK there are basically two reasons why people join prosecutors' offices

- to gain trial experience for a few years and then move on to make the big money; or
- because they have the passion to be a prosecutor.

Both of these are valid reasons. I hope that if you had the passion, you still have it; and that if you started just to get the trial experience, you have developed the passion and decide to stay in prosecution.

After almost 30 years as a prosecutor, I still love my job 95 percent of the time and still look forward to going to work every day. I still have that passion, and I consider myself very blessed because of that.

I want to take a minute to tell you about my family because they are the most important people in my life. My oldest son, Christopher, is 26. At the end of the next school year he will have master's degrees in both biology and political science from Marshall University. My second son, Drew, is 24. He graduated from Marshall with a B.A. in both history and religious studies and will begin a master's degree program in history at Ole Miss this fall. My youngest son, Ben, is 19. Ben will be a sophomore at Wheeling Jesuit University this fall, majoring in business.

My wife is called Mike, short for Michaela. She is the glue that holds us together. She often refers to herself as a single married person and that is often all too true with the number of hours I work. But that is true for many of us. All of us who have the passion to be a prosecutor need that glue at home because of what the job requires to do it right—because we are the real public defenders, and doing that job right is hard work.

I am from Huntington, West Virginia, the home of Marshall University. You may have seen the movie *We Are Marshall*. The movie only hints at the effect the plane crash had on the town of Huntington. You see, back then, town's people were allowed to fly on the plane with the team. It was not just the team that was killed that night. It was also many prominent members of the community: doctors, lawyers, businessmen and their spouses.

There were over 50 children who had one or both parents killed. You can imagine how the city was devastated when so many of its leaders were killed that night.

Before the *We Are Marshall* movie, there was an award winning PBS documentary made about the crash, titled *From Ashes to Glory*. It chronicled the history of Marshall and Huntington after the crash, and it was indeed a rise from ashes to glory. After the crash, Marshall went through the longest losing streak in NCAA history to go on to become the winner of numerous Southern Conference and MAC Championships, two NCAA Division II-A titles, an undefeated season, Number 10 national ranking and five consecutive bowl victories. Marshall, with the support of the citizens of Huntington, truly rose from the ashes of that plane crash to the glory of the championship teams it produced.

As you may know, NDAA has also gone through some troubling times. We too have had our struggles, such as the resignation of our former executive director and a reduction in federal funding for our National Advocacy Center that provides state of the art training and education for all state and local prosecutors. We were by no means in "ashes," but we have been down. However, I can proudly state unequivocally that we have turned the corner and we are rising back to our former "glory." This is due in large part to the tireless work of many people, like former president Jim Fox, Dean Mary Galvin, former Interim Executive Director Tom Sneddon, Chairman of the Board Joe Cassilly, former treasurer and now President-elect Jim Reams, and the truly remarkable and hard-working staff we have both at NDAA Headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, and at both offices in Columbia, South Carolina.

We have a new executive director in Scott Burns. I cannot begin to tell you what a great job Scott is doing and how hard he is working on behalf of America's prosecutors. From his years as deputy drug czar, Scott knows many influential people on the Hill, at Justice, the White House and elsewhere and he is using all those contacts to benefit NDAA. Thanks, Scott,

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and keep up the good work.

Thanks to the hard work of many people, NDAA recently received an award of 1.6 million dollars from the Department of Justice for the NAC. While that is by no means the level of annual funding we need, it will enable us to again begin paying the expenses of those attending courses at the NAC at least through July of next year. By the time you read this, we should again be able to bring our nation's prosecutors to the NAC at no expense to them. Everyone already knows that the NAC offers the best training for prosecutors in this country, and we should all be proud that we can again offer that training at no cost to the student or their office, especially in these tough economic times.

Make no mistake—the fight to secure permanent funding for the NAC is by no means over. We will continue our efforts to secure that needed permanent funding, but this award gives us much needed additional time to succeed in our efforts. We still need your help. Letters to your senators and congressman and meetings with them or staff at home telling them your personal experiences of how important the NAC has been to you and your office is critical. There is no limit to our persuasive abilities if we all speak loudly and with one voice. We must get this done—and we will.

NDAA has so much to offer to our members and America's prosecutors. We offer programs related to gun violence prosecution, violence against women, gangs, child abuse, community prosecution, and driving under the influence. At the NAC, we offer training courses such as Bootcamp for New Prosecutors, Trial Advocacy, Cross-examination, Jury Selection, Courtroom Technology, DNA, Elder Abuse, and Arson, to name just a few. Additionally, our South Carolina office offers cutting edge courses around the country, such as the Career Prosecutor's Course, Evidence for Prosecutors, Prosecuting Homicide Cases, Forensic Evidence, Prosecution and Victim Advocacy, Prosecuting Drug Cases, and Domestic Violence Prosecutions.

We are also working on updating our Web site. It will soon be state-of-the-art and will include access to briefs, pod casts, and many more options for our members.

As your president, I have what I believe to be important goals for NDAA in the coming year. The two most important items without question are securing necessary permanent funding for the NAC, as discussed above, and funding for the John R. Justice Act (JRJ Act). When properly funded, the JRJ Act will provide student loan forgiveness for our state and local prosecutors (and public defenders) who have substantial student loans coming out of law school. Such loan forgiveness would be a huge recruiting and retention tool for prosecutors'

offices around the country. If we can keep our assistant prosecutors for four to six years while they reduce or pay off their student loans, many will develop the passion I spoke of earlier and stay in prosecution.

Additionally, I believe NDAA must be more responsive and quicker to respond to issues of national importance. These include, for instance, the NAS study, which we actually did a pretty good job of responding to; the financial problems many of our offices are facing while many public defenders budgets are increasing; and efforts to arbitrarily reduce prison sentences across the board without consideration of certain factors we as prosecutors know are important.

I also want to see NDAA work more closely with our respective state prosecutor coordinators. The National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators (NAPC) is a natural partner we have simply not utilized enough in the past. There is, or at least should be, an almost symbiotic relationship between NDAA and NAPC. Our work should compliment each other. It can only be mutually beneficial and make both organizations stronger if we work more closely together. That has begun to happen, and I look forward to this cooperation improving.

Similarly, I believe NDAA needs to reach out to and work more closely with other groups, such as the International Chiefs of Police (IACP), the FOP, National Sheriffs' Association, National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), and victims' rights groups, etc. These are also natural partners of NDAA, and we need to make more of an effort to reach out to and partner with such organizations.

It should be apparent that I am proud to be the president of NDAA, proud of what NDAA has to offer, proud of what we do, and excited about our future. I am happy to travel to any state and tell all its prosecutors about NDAA and what we have to offer. NDAA is "the voice of America's prosecutors" and we are going to be that voice—in Washington, D.C., on Capitol Hill, at the Department of Justice, at the White House, with the ABA, with other groups in D.C. and elsewhere—anywhere we need to demonstrate that we are out there, working for America's prosecutors every day.

But one person, or a few people, cannot effectively be this voice. It takes all of us. If I may borrow from Marshall University again: "We are the *real* public defender." We should be proud of that. We should have the passion to speak out loudly and firmly. The past is behind us at NDAA. Our best days are ahead. Together, we should all be working, all the time, to make it clear that we are "the Voice of America's Prosecutors" and darn proud of what we do.

It is an honor to serve as the president of NDAA. I am looking forward to this coming year and what we will accomplish together.