

President's Message

Q&A with 2021-22 LBF President Christopher K. Ralston

Interviewed by 2021-22 Secretary Hon. John C. Davidson

Davidson: Tell us a little bit about your practice.

Ralston: I've been very fortunate to practice at Phelps Dunbar my entire career. I practice in the area of commercial litigation, so I see a great variety of intellectual property and trade secret disputes, cases involving antitrust and unfair competition claims, licensing and breach of contract disputes and even large real estate litigation. The firm's regional footprint and resources give me the added benefit of being able to work with clients and colleagues not just in New Orleans, but throughout the South and the Gulf Coast region. I really enjoy what I do and working with the clients and my colleagues here at the firm.

Davidson: How did you get involved with the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF)?

Ralston: I first learned about the Louisiana Bar Foundation from Judge Eldon Fallon when I served as a law clerk for him after law school. As a past president of the LBF, he told me about the mission, the history and the great work of the Foundation. It wasn't until years later that I was invited to become a Fellow. I've loved the work and the fellowship ever since.

Davidson: Why did you become a Fellow of the LBF?

Ralston: Honestly, I learned from Judge Fallon early on that work outside the office could be just as rewarding as success in the courtroom. His example inspired me to get involved in causes in the community. I also knew and respected many of the Fellows, leaders and past presidents of the LBF who continue to stay involved simply because they enjoy the work. So, when I got the invitation to

join the LBF, it was a very easy thing for me to do.

Davidson: Why do you think the LBF is important to the legal profession?

Ralston: Equal access to justice and to the courts is a cornerstone of our legal system. By helping to ensure that all of our citizens have access to counsel and to the courts, including representation in civil matters, the LBF is helping to ensure that fundamental principle is realized. Through its educational efforts, such as the Oral Histories projects and Scholar In Residence programs, the LBF fosters a better understanding of our state's legal system and the law. Finally, by honoring our most distinguished jurists, professors and lawyers, the LBF celebrates the best in the legal profession and the individuals and organizations that work for the betterment of our legal system, our communities and our state.

Davidson: Why do you think the LBF is important to Louisiana?

Ralston: With a poverty population as high as Louisiana's, the LBF's funding of the nonprofits and civil legal aid providers is really valuable. Last year, the LBF distributed more than \$8.7 million for social justice initiatives in Louisiana. We know that for every dollar invested in civil legal aid in Louisiana, the state realizes an economic benefit of \$9.18 in return on that investment. Simply stated, when we help our citizens better their situations and their futures that also benefits our economy, our communities and our state.



Christopher K.
Ralston

Davidson: What role does the LBF play in the Louisiana civil legal aid network?

Ralston: The LBF plays a central and a critical role in the provision of civil legal aid in Louisiana. For one, the LBF is the largest funder of civil legal aid in Louisiana. The LBF also promotes the provision of civil legal aid as well as education about its importance, its value and its positive impacts on Louisiana, our economy, our communities and our citizens. Among other things, the LBF also provides training, new and collaborative grant opportunities, and other resources for the nonprofits actually providing civil legal aid to our most disadvantaged and marginalized citizens.

Davidson: What do you hope to see the LBF accomplish during your year as LBF President?

Ralston: I am already very proud of the LBF, its Fellows and its mission. I hope to continue that work and to build on existing successes. We're working to increase the funding distributed to our grantees. I'd also like to see us promote stability in funding so that we are minimizing volatility and the stress that puts on the programs and the stakeholders. In addition, I hope to continue the push to expand our membership and to enhance the visibility of the good work done by the LBF and its Fellows and grantees. If we continue to do those things, we will continue the LBF's reputation as the preferred administrator of funding and other resources so that the stakeholders succeed in protecting and increasing equal access to justice in our state. Doing these things will ensure we continue to contribute to the betterment of Louisiana.