

Reaffirming the Importance of Collegiality, Civility, and Professionalism in Times of Adversity



Jill Robb Ackerman

We as legal professionals are in a unique position to be an integral part of solutions that refuse to let 2020 define “normal” for our future.

2020 is conditioning us to accept death, civil unrest, devastating hurricanes, floods, and wildfires as our new “normal.” My heart goes out to all those who have suffered and are suffering now from these events.

We together, will heal. We *will* become “our best self.”

Almost seven months ago, I abandoned my office at Baird Holm LLP on the vernal equinox, March 19, 2020, and retreated to my son’s old room only to turn it into my home office. Then, on the autumnal equinox, September 22, 2020, I began this very article that you read now for the Nebraska Lawyer. In all the chaos of 2020, those two dates were the only two moments seemingly balanced.

As for my background, I grew up in Doniphan, Nebraska. My mom and dad were born in 1907 and 1908. My mom survived smallpox. Both parents survived the Spanish Flu. My mom pointed out to me, more than once, the line of petite weathered gravestones in the town’s cemetery of six children who died of influenza in 1918. Mom always added that the young town doctor died helping people during that epidemic. I always thought mom was being macabre. Wrong. She was preparing me for this.

My first thought about the pandemic was how long would it last? How could I armor myself about what was coming?

I checked how long the Spanish Flu Pandemic lasted—two years.

How long did World War I last? Four years, three months, and one week.

How long was my father-in-law a prisoner of war in Germany after being shot down over Cologne? Eighteen months.

And with knowledge, I steeled myself for the rest of 2020. But I still was not prepared.

I am not even going to pretend 2020 is normal. It is not. We lost two exemplary jurists, Judge Smith Camp and Justice Ginsberg, less than a week apart. Both iconic models of grace, grit, and brains.

If you are alone, reach out. If you know someone that is alone, reach out. Take care of each other during this pandemic and afterward. I would hazard a guess that you have felt anger, anxiety, depression, and hopelessness at some time in the last ten months. I have. I miss family and friends. Remember that NLAP is there to help if you need it.

One step to becoming “our best self” is to stop, take a breath, and express our gratitude for what we can be thankful for. Luckily, we live in Nebraska where our medical professionals did not hesitate to become trusted leaders in the fight against COVID, sharing best practices with leaders to minimize the devastating medical impact of COVID.

Thank you to our medical professionals, first responders, teachers, and all other essential workers that continue to man the front lines.

Thank you to the NSBA members who immediately answered the call to action providing free best practice guidance to our members suddenly forced to serve their clients remotely.



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Thank you to our judges, prosecutors, and defenders who keep our courts open to serve the essential needs of Nebraskans.

Thank you to our lawyers who keep serving their clients in this time of uncertainty, fear, and volatility.

Thank you to the lawyers who provide flexibility to the staff members of our legal community who are faced with being integral parts of our offices while teaching or caring for their young family members.

Thank you to our volunteer lawyers for providing access to justice for the most unfortunate.

Thank you to the law schools and Bar Commission that guided our newest members of the profession through the rigors of the bar exam (in order) to become the newest members of our profession.

Thank you to Steve Mattoon for your steadfast NSBA leadership during this past year.

Thank you to Liz Neeley, Sam Clinch, and the rest of the NSBA staff for ensuring the NSBA continues to meet the varied needs of our membership.

Thank you to the members of the Executive Council, the House of Delegates, and the leaders of all of our committees and sections for creatively producing our 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting – “Helping Lawyers Help People.”

Each took the time to be his or her “best self.” Each took risks using their talent not just for themselves, but for the greater good.

When we entered the era of the pandemic, we had a fantasy that we would have more “me time.” So wrong. More “me time” did not materialize. We suddenly learned about PPE, Zoom, and essential workers. Toilet paper disappeared and reappeared. Parents became full-time teachers, caregivers,

technology specialists, and lawyers. Clients desperately needed help understanding new government programs and how to manage remote workforces and financial uncertainty. It was chaotic.

Being trained to deal with adversity, we faced each adversity by throwing ourselves into work to care for our clients. However, I caution each of you to take that “me time” now before the winter sets in. While some may be fortunate enough to be able to safely travel, others will have to do with staycations, and others just alone time. Savor that time with your family and pets.

At this point, while this pandemic is not over, hope is now bolstered by scientific breakthroughs to manage the virus. We are resilient. We will heal.

In the coming months, let's be our best selves. Let's reaffirm the importance of collegiality, civility, and professionalism in our own daily life to manage the humanitarian crisis.

In closing, we welcome and urge your participation in the NSBA. You will connect with new friends throughout Nebraska. If you do not know how to become involved, call me.

We have some exciting experiences planned for the coming months, including many fun CLE opportunities and the chance to play some virtual trivia. We look forward to seeing you there, even if it is on Zoom. So until next time, stay well, stay strong. 



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Reopening Your Practice: Considerations from the Nebraska State Bar Association

We recognize that law firms across the state are beginning to reopen. As part of our commitment to supporting law firms during the pandemic, the NSBA (in partnership with several other state bar associations) has prepared some considerations for your planning purposes. We hope this document, “Reopening Your Practice: Considerations from the Nebraska State Bar Association” is helpful for your planning purposes.

Find it FREE in the NSBA Store: <https://www.nebar.com/store/viewproduct.aspx?ID=17028762>

