

Nancy Conrad, higher education chair and managing partner at White and Williams LLP, Lehigh Valley office, embraces leadership role as Pennsylvania Bar Association president

■ MELINDA RIZZO

Nancy Conrad is a partner at White and Williams LLP, and the higher education chair and managing partner of the firm's Lehigh Valley office in Center Valley. She's currently serving as the second president and seventh woman from the Lehigh Valley to the Pennsylvania Bar Association. Conrad is serving a one year term, and she's excited about the opportunities for herself – and others – to grow.

Q. As the second president from the Lehigh Valley, how's it going so far?

A. It has been going very well. I value the opportunity to join together, gather input from all voices and work as a team. Based on these interactions we are in a better position to develop programs and events on a collective

and inclusive viewpoint that serves...our members and attorneys state-wide.

Q. How has your previous experience prepared you for this role?

A. I have been a Pennsylvania Bar Association member for about 30 years. When I first joined the PBA, I found value in participating in committees and sections. That is where I forged many of the long-term relationships I have today. I recall my first meeting, which was the commission on women in the profession or "WIP" fall retreat. The warm welcome I received encouraged me to become engaged in programs and activities. I eventually became a co-chair. My positive experience with WIP led me to other committees including, labor &



employment section, the federal practice committee and to assume leadership roles. Ultimately, I pursued the role of woman governor on the PBA Board of Governors.

Q. What is your biggest challenge as president of the bar association?

A. One of the biggest challenges is membership. We finished 2023 stronger than ever. It was the first year in the past 10 years with member growth well over 22,000 members.

I attribute this growth to engaging programs, strong continuing legal education offerings through the Pennsylvania Bar Institute (the PBA's learning institute,) great member benefits and an ongoing member commitment.

Q. What is your biggest challenge as an attorney in your practice?

A. Attorney wellness. Work policies need to address employees' "new normal" lifestyles. Productivity is essential. Firms walk a fine line to remain profitable and retain talented employees. Many new lawyers value work-life balance and remote work options – in addition to a competitive salary. These are essential factors when deciding which firm to join and stay.

Q. What do you see as the top challenges as PBA president moving forward?

A. Supporting Pennsylvania communities. The number of Pennsylvanians in need has increased significantly in the past several years. The PBA is stepping up to help provide legal services to members

across our communities. We have increased spending and doubled our pro bono department. Now with three full-time employees dedicated to expanding our reach, PBA is better able to deliver results for Pennsylvanians in need.

Q. What specific goals do you have for the group – or yourself?

A. I strive to be an inclusive thought leader in my practice, and I apply the same principles with the PBA. My vision for the year is built on "four cornerstones."

- Promoting integrity and excellence in the practice of law.
- Encouraging wellness and professionalism among PBA members.
- Ensuring inclusion and belonging in the PBA.
- Extending PBA's outreach and connection to PBA communities.

Q. What are the most pressing issues facing the bar association – and attorneys in general right now?

A. We are monitoring the use of artificial intelligence

[AI] capabilities within the legal profession. Along with beneficial efficiencies created by AI are concerns about protecting client data privacy and confidentiality. ChatGPT and similar products can be helpful tools; however, they can negatively impact legal work when they produce information that is inaccurate. E-scams create risk for lawyers and law firms, and we need to be vigilant in training and monitoring programs. The PBA is well positioned to address technology strengths and threats through its technology committee. Statewide electronic filing is an issue for lawyers in Pennsylvania, too. Some systems are in place, and the PBA taskforce on electronic filing and retrieval has been working toward a statewide electronic filing system. A uniform system in Pennsylvania would allow a lawyer in Centre County, for example, to file documents in Dauphin County, which would be a time-saver for lawyers – and a cost-saver for clients.

Conrad's responses have been edited for length.