

# Interview with Federal Bar Association President John Parker

BY JONATHAN BLAKE

**TBRL:** What is the mission or purpose of the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Federal Bar Association?

**JP:** Our main objective is to encourage, facilitate and improve the federal practice before the Middle District of Louisiana, for both the judges and local practitioners. Generally speaking, this involves exposing our members to the court, the judges and their staff through CLE opportunities hosted at the court house and/or by the judges themselves, through social functions, and through civic engagement opportunities. Baton Rouge has a beautiful federal courthouse and exceptional judges of whom our community can be proud. We seek to support the court's operational needs to the extent that we can and promote its more frequent, effective use by practitioners.

**TBRL:** How many members does the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Federal Bar Association have?

**JP:** Our membership has consistently increased over the past few years; we currently have 184 members.

**TBRL:** What are the requirements for membership in the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Federal Bar Association?

**JP:** All one need do is sign up for membership at <http://www.fedbar.org> and stay current with your annual dues. Our annual dues range from \$85-215 per year, depending on years of practice and whether you are in the public or private sector. We offer significant discounts to public sector attorneys. Law students can also become members for a one-time fee of \$20-50, depending on year, which includes the first year after graduation.

**TBRL:** How long have you been a member of the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Federal Bar Association?

**JP:** I joined shortly after starting practice and became part of the board as membership/recruiting chair in 2013.

**TBRL:** What are some of the benefits of membership in the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Federal Bar Association?

**JP:** Our biggest new benefit is that we will now be hosting at least 3-4 CLE credit hours every year, free of charge to members, but they'll also be open to non-members at very reasonable rates.

We really aim to cater to and improve our local federal practice, so every CLE will be geared toward issues or problems related to jurisdiction/procedure issues or specific practice areas that frequently arise in the Middle District. One or more of the CLEs will be given by the Middle District judges themselves, which is a huge perk, but we also intend to bring in outside "ringers" for certain practice areas such as labor and employment.

Otherwise, I think we've always been known for our networking events, namely happy hours at local watering holes that give our members the chance to meet other federal practitioners, summer associates and also the judges and law clerks of the Middle District. The judges and their staff regularly attend social events and go above



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and beyond to assist with our chapter functions and solving common issues or concerns that pop up in the Middle District. Having spoken with members of other chapters across the country, we are really fortunate to have such good participation from our judges.

**TBRL:** What motivated you to run for President of the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Federal Bar Association?

**JP:** Hands down my late grandfather, John V. Parker, who served as a judge in the Middle District. He loved his grandchildren and would often bring us to the courthouse on Saturdays when we were kids. He would do some work and then we'd all grab lunch at his favorite spot, Jay's Barbeque. We'd sometimes go into the courtroom, and he'd let us "try" a case (one of my sisters was always the judge, so I always lost). Through these experiences I developed a strong sense that there was something special about federal court. There is a great reverence held for the courthouse and the function it performs by the people who work there, from the federal marshals who guard the building even on weekends to the attorneys who practice before it and up to the judges themselves. You feel like you are a living part of American history when you walk into a federal court, and I wanted to be a part of it.

No one held a larger sense of respect and admiration for the Constitution and the rule of law, than my grandfather. He had great faith in the American legal system. My grandfather sincerely believed that being a federal judge meant being a public servant whose sole duty was to apply the law no matter how difficult carrying out that duty might be. That was a principle he never wavered from, even when doing the right thing may not have been popular. For that I have profound respect for my grandfather as well as all other judges who sacrifice a large part of their pre-judge selves when they take the bench.

**TBRL:** Does the Baton Rouge Federal Bar Association ever file or intervene in any lawsuits or file amicus briefs?

**JP:** Because the FBA is a non-partisan organization, we do not file or intervene in lawsuits or file amicus briefs. Our advocacy efforts, as it were, are strictly limited to promoting the use and efficient operation of the federal court system with our main focus of course being the Middle District of Louisiana. One of the great benefits of becoming a board member of our chapter is that you have at least one opportunity to attend what is known as FBA's Capitol Hill day in Washington, D.C., where you get to relate the operational needs of Louisiana's federal district and appellate courts to our members of Congress. We have an excellent federal court system, but for it to remain so Congress must continue its commitment to confirm a sufficient number of judges and provide adequate funding to address the increasing number of filings and provide


essential updates to facilities, software and other security measures.

**TBRL:** During your tenure as President, do you have any projects or initiatives you would like to see get started?

**JP:** Our chapter has a lot to offer, but it's time to do a better job of articulating what our chapter does and what it offers to both current and prospective members. To this end we have already updated our by-laws to clarify our chapter's mission, the duties of each officer, and the concrete benefits that we offer members. We also intend to update our chapter website more regularly and get more participation from our membership through forming committees. As mentioned, beginning this year we also now annually offer 3-4 CLE credit opportunities catered to the federal practice.

We have more work to do, but I am truly excited about the steps our board is taking to better communicate what we do and improve upon the benefits of joining our chapter.

**TBRL:** What do you love most about the Federal Bar Association?

**JP:** Besides the points already mentioned, during last year's trip to Washington for Capitol Hill Day I got to witness our chapter's President-Elect Catherine Maraist order our table's dinner in excited, fluent Italian to a befuddled American waiter. At least it was an Italian restaurant! 



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