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ATTORNEY GROUP SEEKS TO BECOME LEANER, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN POST PANDEMIC.

New Bar President Talks Future of Association

By [Amy Stulick](#)

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The San Fernando Valley Bar Association on Oct. 1 celebrated the installation of its officers and new president David Jones at a virtual event.

Jones, an employment law litigator with Lewitt Hackman in Encino, will serve a one-year term at the 94-year-old association, which currently has 2,000-plus members.

Prior to the event, Jones spoke with the Business Journal about his new role at the association, and how that changes during a pandemic — one of his initial challenges was retaining members during a time when the membership drive is usually booming, Jones said.

“We generate a lot of our revenue through membership,” added Jones. “We expect there will be a slight drop off, given the difficult times. Not so much the people’s dedication to the organization, but just tough times.”

Jones knows that traditionally, the association’s members attend events not only to stay informed, but to stay connected. With the pandemic, it has become easier than ever to drift away from one’s professional network while working from home.

“Staying connected not just with your network, but with your friends who are attorneys and the broader Valley community is really important, so we’re just making a big push on membership to do that,” explained Jones.

Online, mostly COVID-related events will be free for members, the association president said.

Valley sponsorship remains strong, Jones added, with firms including Encino’s Greenberg & Bass Law; Alpert Barr & Grant; Lewitt Hackman; Reape Rickett in Santa Clarita; and Kraft Miles & Miller in Woodland Hills coming through to support the online installation ceremony.

“We’re going to accept sponsorship money, promoting online, and at some point next

year before the end of my term we'll have some version, whether it's outdoors or socially distant, some version of a Judges' Night and some version of an Installation; I just don't know when," explained Jones.

In addition to retaining membership levels, Jones told the Business Journal his role as president is different during "lean times," with immediate goals focused on stabilizing and maintaining operations when it comes to revenue and cost.

"For last term and this term, the president has had to have one foot in the operations side of the bar, the revenue side, balance sheets and all the rest, whereas before, at some level with a lot of hard work from bar staff we have a system and it can run itself at some level, freeing the president to do work on their agenda and on their projects, aspirations to make the bar shine," continued Jones.

"During this term, I'm going to have to be more hyper-focused on being the finances of the bar, making sure we're absolutely lean and mean and we don't have too much of a downturn," he added.

But Jones does have one pet project related to the pandemic that he hopes takes root during his term — molding the group to be more of a community service organization, to support people struggling to resolve legal issues during the pandemic.

"Despite the fact that we haven't traditionally been a community service organization, we've got the (Valley Community Legal Foundation) that does that, I'm definitely working on adapting the organization to work with the community during this stretch to support people," said Jones. "I'm looking, as one of my aspirational goals, to extend the bar into some of these activities both in support of lawyers but also as part of the Valley community."

Jones is a graduate of Loyola Marymount University and Whittier Law School; he is admitted to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, as well as the Central, Eastern and Southern District Courts of California.

At the time Jones assumed the presidency, the following attorneys were elected to the executive committee: Christopher Warne (president-elect); Matthew Breddan (secretary); Heather Glick-Atalla (treasurer); and Barry Goldberg, who will serve as immediate past president.

Jones will appoint up to three additional trustees, two from the association's active membership and one from the associate membership, the association said in a statement.

Appointees will join Alan Eisner, Gary Goodstein, Alexander Kasendorf, Minyong Lee, Joy Kraft Miles, George Seide, and Santa Clarita Valley Bar Association representative Taylor Williams, all of whom are serving as trustees through 2021.