

THE DAILY RECORD

Moretti lays out plan for year as MCBA president

By: Bennett Loudon © May 26, 2016

Mark Moretti is cautious about setting overly ambitious goals for the coming year as president of the Monroe County Bar Association. But that doesn't mean he won't take on some important issues.

"When every Bar leader comes in they want to put their own big-screen TV up on the wall. Meantime, littered around the floor are all these past presidents' old big-screen TVs that have fallen into disuse," Moretti said during an interview Tuesday.

"I decided that what I'm going to do is put a couple smaller-screen TVs on the wall and I'll fix up, and maybe fine tune, a couple of the larger ones sitting on the floor and not working at all, or as they should be," said Moretti, a partner at Phillips Lytle LLP.

Moretti's installation is set for 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., June 23, at the Bar Association's annual dinner at the Hyatt Regency Rochester. Moretti will be sworn in by state Supreme Court Justice Craig J. Doran.

Moretti, who wanted to be a lawyer ever since he played one in a seventh-grade mock trial, is from Little Falls, Herkimer County. He earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Rochester in 1975 and his law degree from SUNY Buffalo Law School in 1978.

One of the most significant items on Moretti's to-do list is a review of the judicial candidate evaluation process, and a suspension of ratings judicial candidate ratings in the 2017 election season while that review is being done.

"We've had some people who have urged us to do away with the process. We've had other people who have urged us to keep the process as is. We've had other people who would like to tweak the process in some fashion," Moretti said.

Moretti said a task force with balanced representation, politically, will study the process and make recommendations. In lieu of the ratings in 2017, the Bar Association is planning to host a public forum for judicial candidates "to come in and talk about their qualifications and talk about their backgrounds."

Moretti also wants to resurrect a program to survey lawyers on the styles of sitting judges and provide the results of those anonymous surveys to the judges confidentially.

Jim Grossman, a past president of the Bar Association, has agreed to chair a committee to reinstate that program that was done several years ago to evaluate mostly state judges who have been on the bench at least a few years.

"The survey is done anonymously. It's packaged up highly confidentially and it's presented to the judge. It never sees the public light of day," Moretti said.

"It's really meant to be something which helps the judge — maybe seeing the things that people really appreciate and the things that maybe I'm going to tinker with to make my style easier on the lawyers who are practicing in front of me," Moretti said.

Moretti also said the Bar Association will sponsor an anti-drinking- and driving program to present at area high schools, led by Edward Fiandach, who specializes in DWI defense.

"If we can affect some kids positively in that regard then that would be a tremendous contribution to the community," Moretti said.

Moretti also plans to organize a panel of lawyers to participate in the University of Rochester's annual law school evening in September, which is open to pre-law students from area colleges.

Moretti said the panel will include lawyers from various sectors of the legal profession, including large and small firms, corporate layers, municipal lawyers, public defenders, and criminal prosecutors.

"Unfortunately, a lot of pre-law students have this fuzzy image of the law that's colored by TV programs, but they really don't have any connection with what it really is like to practice in a real world," Moretti said.

Moretti will take over as president of the Bar just as Kevin Ryan takes over as executive director. Moretti said he plans to help Ryan get acquainted with the community.

"Kevin comes to the table with a great background. He comes with 14 years as really the No. 2 guy in the Vermont State Bar, and for roughly half of the year he was basically leading the Vermont State Bar because of the way they're set up, their executive director lobbies for six months of the year approximately," Moretti said.

The Bar Association has already started to lay out a game plan for Ryan's introductions to lawyers, judges, community leaders, and the media.

Moretti, Ryan and the board will also be focused on developing a new three-year strategic plan starting in late 2016 and early 2017.