

# New NJSBF president shares vision for the future in the organization's 65th year

Charlie Stoia knows the influence of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation through his 25 years of service to the organization.

As the newly sworn-in president of the Foundation, Stoia is honored to take the reins in the organization's 65th year of serving as the educational and philanthropic arm of the New Jersey State Bar Association. Ready to embark on a two-year term, he plans to further the Foundation's mission of providing educational resources, civics training and scholarship funding to thousands of school children, educators and law students across the state.

Stoia, a principal at Porzio, Bromberg & Newman in Morristown—recently shared his history with NJSBF, his proudest achievements as a volunteer and vision for the future.



Charlie Stoia, NJSBF President

## What inspired you to join the NJSBF and how long have you been involved?

My history with the Foundation started about 25 years ago when I joined the law school scholarship committee. The great thing about the Foundation is the multifaceted programs and benefits they provide. Our mission is to inform citizens of New Jersey about the law and to also provide services to those in need. Not specifically legal services, but educational services to the community that are consistent with our mission of increasing awareness and knowledge of the law and legal system. Whether it's programs for schools, educators, the public or through the law-related educational initiatives we co-sponsor with other nonprofits, everything is for the benefit of people. We don't deal with political issues. All we do is good. I find it to be a very positive, fulfilling experience.

## What is your proudest accomplishment or most rewarding project as a volunteer for the Foundation?

I take particular pride in the law school scholarship program. I've been involved in it for so long because I believe we truly help deserving people who have already accomplished incredible things in their lives. The

scholarship program benefits law students from all walks of life—people who have been unhoused, in domestic violence situations, first-generation Americans and college graduates, women and those in the LGBTQ+ community. They have literally fought through whatever life has thrown at them and gotten to the point where they are now in law school. One of the components that we consider in awarding scholarships is the applicant's service to the community. We take great pleasure in being able to support and assist these folks who have already made community service a priority in their lives. The scholarships we give are appreciated and help set the recipients on the right path.

## Discuss your vision as president and what you would like to accomplish.

For many years we have offered incredible programs that, in all honesty, will be difficult to improve upon. What the board, our staff and I aim to do is develop additional programs that address new and current issues that come up in our lives and in society. For example, we rolled out a great new training program for educators last year on restorative justice.

This training complements the

Foundation's other training courses and helps students and teachers address conflict in schools, which helps prevent bias, bullying and violence. To date we have trained hundreds of teachers from across New Jersey in this method which helps build more inclusive and happier school environments. And the positive response from teachers has been tremendous. This is one example of the type of things we want to keep doing—initiatives that are new, innovative and help the community.

## There are many aspects of the Foundation—the mock trial program, grants and scholarships, the publications that expand the public's knowledge of the legal system and foster pride in the practice of law. How do you think the Foundation makes a difference not just for attorneys but the residents of New Jersey?

Many of our programs do foster pride in the practice of law. We have hundreds of attorneys who volunteer their time and expertise in our mock trial programs, our speakers bureau and on many different committees. They have shared how rewarding and inspirational it is to be a part of the Foundation's programs.

To help with expanding knowledge of the legal system, we reach thousands of teachers every year through our trainings and publications like *The Legal Eagle*, which is a newspaper for kids, and *Respect*, a newsletter about diversity and inclusion. The ripple effect is such that we are impacting thousands and thousands of students through their teachers. It goes to show that the Foundation has a great influence on the lives of non-lawyers.

## One of the Foundation's slogans is that "informed citizens are better citizens." What does that statement mean to you?

Society works best when all citizens are good citizens. Part of being a good citizen is being informed of your rights and the rights of others. Our entire society works better when all citizens are informed. The law is complicated.

I believe the idea that "informed citizens are better citizens" is reflected in everything the Foundation offers. Our school and public programs, and conferences, are designed to increase awareness, appreciation and knowledge of the law to ensure everyone is aware of their rights.

## This year the Foundation is celebrating 65 years. What do you think has contributed to the Foundation's longevity? And how do you think the Foundation can maintain its relevance and effectiveness, or even improve it?

Our world is changing all around us. Regardless of what anyone thinks of the current state of affairs, it's clear that society is far different than it was even five years ago. The Foundation has been so successful for the last 65 years because it has adapted with the times and conformed with how the world changes. It's incumbent on us as leaders of the Foundation to observe and recognize those changes and continue to develop new programs, or tweak our current programs accordingly to complete our mission, which is to ensure that citizens are informed of the law and their rights.

As far as the Foundation's longevity is concerned, I can't say enough about our great staff. They are the ones who prepare and put on the incredible programs we offer working with our board, trustees and committees. We all share a common vision, which is a testament to why we've been so successful. The willingness of lawyers to volunteer their time to assist in all of our programs, and the support of the New Jersey State Bar Association and its members in all of our activities, has been crucial. ■

Visit our website  
[njsbf.org](http://njsbf.org)  
 for more information  
 about the Foundation



# Mental health diversion program closer to reality

The New Jersey Senate and Assembly Judiciary committees gave the nod to a plan to create a Mental Health Diversion Program, which would redirect eligible persons away from the criminal justice system and into appropriate case management and mental health services. The New Jersey State Bar Association supports S524 (Ruiz)/A1700 (Quijano) and encourages further review, having convened its own Mental Health Committee to look at the issue of court-involved individuals who have a mental health diagnosis.

“This bill is a positive step toward changing the views on the intersection of individuals with mental health issues and the court system,” said NJSBA President Timothy F. McGoughran, who testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee last week. “There remain some concerns with the process, but the Association recognizes that we cannot make the perfect the enemy of the good. And this is a good bill. We stand ready to be a resource to all involved in this process to share the insights and expertise of our research and the real-world experience of our members.”

If signed into law, the bill would create three regions in the state and assign one vicinage per region to begin the implementation of a Mental Health Diversion Program. Eligible persons are defined as having committed non-violent crimes in the third and fourth degree, with prosecutorial discretion to admit others in the program on a case-by-case basis. Mental health professionals will evaluate and create treatment plans and the cases will be overseen by judges throughout the process through regularly scheduled meetings with a team to oversee the

person’s progress. The state Attorney General’s office would be responsible for establishing the services and treatment professionals.

The NJSBA convened a Mental Health Committee to review this effort and issues related to law enforcement-involved and court-involved individuals with a mental health diagnosis.



## CAPITOL REPORT

### NJSBA-drafted elective spousal share bill clears Senate Judiciary Committee

A bill that permits courts to address equitable distribution when a complaint for divorce or dissolution of a civil union has been filed and either party has died prior to final judgment. S2991 (Singleton)/A2351 (Mukherji) awaits a full vote in the Legislature after passing through the Senate Judiciary Committee last week. The NJSBA drafted the measure to codify existing case law regarding elective spousal share distribution.

“The NJSBA worked collaboratively with stakeholders including elder law attorneys, trusts and estate attorneys, and the New Jersey Law Revision Commission to address this issue,” said Sheryl J. Seiden, a NJSBA Trustee and former chair of its Family Law Section. She testified on behalf of the Association in support of the bill and helped draft the legislation.

The bill codifies the holding in *In the Matter of the Estate of Arthur Brown, Deceased*, 448 N.J. Super. 252 (App. Div. 2017), in which the Court held that despite the presence of a

cause of action of divorce, the surviving spouse was not allowed to disclaim an elective share.

“This holding resolves an important issue regarding these matters where a spouse dies prior to a final judgment of a divorce and the surviving spouse is left without any entitlement to the deceased spouse’s estate. This legisla-

tion will simply provide a remedy for the division of the deceased spouse’s property,” said Seiden.

The Association is monitoring the bill’s movement in the Legislature.

### Domestic violence bills clear Senate Judiciary Committee

Several bills addressing domestic violence were voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee and now await a full vote of the Legislature. The NJSBA generally supported the bills, with recommendations to amend A1475 (Lopez)/S1809 (Ruiz) regarding coercive control.

### A1475 (Lopez)/S1809 (Ruiz)

This bill requires the court to consider information concerning coercive control in domestic violence proceedings. The bill offers a definition of coercive control, to be considered following the entry of a temporary restraining order. The NJSBA urged amendments to exclude a disjunctive list of examples of coercive control over concerns it would both limit the definition of coercive control and expand its appli-

cation to acts that would not fall under the umbrella of domestic violence.

“While the Association understands the import of including reference to coercive control, it recommends amendments that would reflect a definition of coercive control that does not limit, rather creates a flexible description of behaviors that would fall into the definition of coercive control while at the same time narrow its applications to exclude domestic contemps,” said the NJSBA in its statement. NJSBA Family Law Section Executive Committee Secretary Robert A. Epstein testified on behalf of the NJSBA and was involved in discussions among the stakeholders in support of its amendments.

### A1704 (Speight)/S1000 (Ruiz)

This bill requires domestic violence orders to be issued in other languages in addition to English under certain circumstances. The NJSBA supports this bill.

### A3093 (Stanley)/S1516 (Greenstein)

This bill authorizes the court to include in domestic violence retraining orders a provision making the order applicable to a pregnant victim’s child upon the birth of the child. The addition would be available to a plaintiff who requests it. The Association supports this bill.

*This is a status report provided by the New Jersey State Bar Association on recently passed and pending legislation, regulations, gubernatorial nominations and/or appointments of interest to lawyers, as well as the involvement of the NJSBA as amicus in appellate court matters. To learn more, visit [njsba.com](http://njsba.com).*

NJSBA



WEDNESDAY, JULY 26 | 6:30 P.M.  
TD BANK BALLPARK, BRIDGEWATER

Join the New Jersey State Bar Association to watch the **SOMERSET PATRIOTS**, a New York Yankees Double-A Affiliate, take on the **BOWIE BAYSOX**, a Baltimore Orioles Double-A Affiliate, at the TD Bank Ballpark.

**This event is open to NJSBA members and their guests.**  
Space is limited to the first 45 registrants.

**Register NOW—\$25/person**  
**Limited to 45 registrants**

**Attendees will receive a bobblehead doll of Yankees top prospect, Anthony Volpe.**