

Speaking Out: Making an Impact vs. Just Making Noise

After finding their product strewn about the Capitol Building on January 6th, Axe Body spray issued a statement boldly condemning the acts of violence on January 6th and strongly supporting the democratic process and peaceful transition of power. Gushers, the kids' snack company, issued a statement in favor of Black Lives Matter. Fruit by the Foot too stood proudly with Black Lives Matter. Kid Rock famously gunned down Bud Light bottles with an automatic rifle after the company's partnership with transgender rights activist Dylan Mulvaney. Finally, my old condo association with six units in it issued a statement condemning Putin's invasion of Ukraine. As proud as these male grooming products, children's snack companies, musician/rapper and condo associations are of their strong stances, who is listening to them and why?

We live in a divided society. Recently, I was in Greenwich, Connecticut at the Round Hill Club. Being a guest, I met several new folks. Each tried to feel me out within 30 seconds of meeting me: am I liberal or conservative; a Trumper or Biden fan. That night, I just wanted oysters on the half shell and clam pasta. We see this everywhere. My clients do the same when initially meeting me. I see this within the bar and throughout our community. Once elected President, members have come to me and complained they or their firm left because the bar is pushing a woke liberal agenda.

Let me be very clear here: The Louisville Bar Association is not a political organization. While we elect our leaders, we are a 501(c)6: a professional organization. We exist to serve our members. We are not in the business of supporting politicians or individual judges. Of course, we as individual members have our own personal leanings, but we are not an organization of democrats or republicans. I refuse to allow our bar to fall into political camps.

We follow our mission, to:

- Promote justice, professional excellence and respect for the law
- Improve public access to the judicial system
- Provide law-related services to the community, and
- Serve our members.

We are a professional organization designed to help the community and the law. The bar has recently been asked to consider commenting on the LMPD consent decree, the omnibus criminal reform House Bill 2, and issues surrounding JCPS bussing. There is no doubt that these are important and pressing issues that have serious consequences for our community. I have my own strong opinions on these matters, but they have nothing to do with our mission as a professional organization. Therefore, it is improper for the LBA to comment on them.

Consequently, the Louisville Bar Association's Board put in place a new Public Position Policy based on a similar policy from the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association. Essentially, our bar will take public positions and make statements if and only if:

- 1) The position would further the interests of the LBA, its members and the community at large; *and*
- 2) The vast majority of its members would agree with the position.

Finally, the LBA shall not endorse candidates for public office or judicial appointments.

Briefly, the requests for statements are sent to the President and the Executive Director. They will collectively determine whether a 48-hour response is required. If so, they and the Executive Committee will take a unanimous public position if 1) an accurate public position can be formulated and issued with enough speed so as to be relevant to the public discussion and 2) the issue is of such significance to warrant a rapid response. If a rapid response is not required, the matter will go to the full Board for investigation and evaluation and put to a vote. Any public position by the LBA will be in service to and limited to our mission.

Put differently, the LBA will stay in its lane. We are not burying our heads in the sand. We are sticking to our purpose, our mission and what we are best at. We will continue to do what we were designed to do.

At the end of the day, Gushers should make their packages easier to open without using our teeth, the condo association should fix the back stairs, Kid Rock should quit wasting beer, and Axe Body Spray should just stop.



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Bryan R. Armstrong
LBA President