

# The Legal Intelligencer

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## At PBA's Helm, Creme to Focus on Process, Forging Consensus

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When Matthew Creme first got involved with the Pennsylvania Bar Association, it was more out of a sense of duty than desire.

He had been asked to be the organization's Zone 3 governor in 2000 and, prior to that, had not been significantly involved. He didn't join the House of Delegates until 1999 — a move that was "sort of in anticipation of taking" the Zone 3 leadership position.

As a "short-timer," then, Creme, 55, seems to draw more so on his experiences outside the organization. He said that means the PBA is getting a "process person."

As a municipal law attorney at Nikolaus & Hohenadel in Lancaster, Creme is well-versed in the "first you do this, then you do that; you can't do that until you're finished with this" mentality.

Suffice it to say, that's not always the way the bar association runs.

"In organizations like the PBA, we're busy people," he said. "Sometimes, we neglect process."

And that is where Creme hopes to leave an impact.

### 'A Time for Recharge'

Creme said he didn't know whether he would enjoy being involved with the PBA when he began working with the organization in 1999.

When he met others in the organization's governance, however, he "really did."

"I find it enjoyable," Creme said. "I find my organized bar activity, generally, to be a time for recharge. I'm with lawyers who like being lawyers."

After his time as Zone 3 governor, Creme served three years as the organization's treasurer and received encouragement to run for vice president.

Though he enjoyed the service, the invitation gave him pause.

"I felt a little uncertain about that," he said. "I wasn't sure it was something available to me. I'm a short-timer in PBA governance."

But there was an honor associated with the invitation, as well, Creme said. No PBA president had called Lancaster County home since Paul A. Mueller in 1956.

Creme was scheduled to officially end that drought last week at the conclusion of the PBA's annual meeting.

At the top of his list of priorities is the development and implementation of a planning committee.

Though Creme's proposal is only now in the discussion phase, he hopes to introduce a version to the organization's bylaw committee for implementation.

The plan, he said, is to allow for a more "bottom up" decision making process.

Creme said he's made visits to several counties for bench bar meetings, pro bono award dinners and other events as president-elect and that he's "invariably" approached by a member with questions.

"They're asking, 'What about this? What about that? How are we doing this?'" Creme said.

"I think a process can connect again these various parts of the organized bar," he added. "It will allow people who are deeply involved or only marginally involved to have some knowledge on how the process is being pursued."

The effect, however, is that the PBA's bigger programs — such as its civics education initiative, mentoring efforts and constitutional review commission — will be managed by a better mechanism, Creme said.

"I think that it certainly would affect how the major programs come into being and are pursued," Creme said. "There's a reality involved with those that a one-year term is a short period of time. Much of the major programming arcs across the surface of several presidents. I think we need to acknowledge that and be sure we've planned for that."

The plan, Creme said, is to have a group of officers, board of governors members and house of delegates members make up the planning committee. It is modeled after the Philadelphia Bar Association's recently developed committee and municipal planning commissions.

"We know what we know," Creme said, referencing his background as a municipal law attorney. "I put together an outline I think suits our purpose. At least, at this point, there are a few blanks in it. I'm hoping to discuss it with the board of governors when we have our board retreat in June."

## Consensus Building

A native of Berwick, Pa., Creme attended Dickinson College and the Georgetown University Law School. He moved to Lancaster County after graduation and clerked for Lancaster County Common Pleas Court Judge Paul A. Mueller Jr., the son of the former PBA president.

From there, he joined Nikolaus & Hohenadel. This year is his 30th year with the firm.

Lancaster, he said, has shaped his professional life, showing him that people are "active in a lot of different things and not everybody is the same."

The city is "bigger than you think, but smaller than a lot of people might imagine," Creme said. He, therefore, sees the same people professionally as he does while working with nonprofits, attending church and grocery shopping.

"I think that's informed my style in leading governance and running campaigns and relationships with people," Creme said. "How we communicate with each other is very important. Nobody knows better than lawyers that words fail us."

Pair that with Creme's work in municipal law — a "scary place for a lot of people" — and he's learned the value of compromise.

In his representation of clients, he said, give and take is the way to accomplish goals. It's also the way his law firm runs, he said. And all of that experience will help guide his presidency, he said.

"Consensus is a superior form," Creme said. "I flatter myself by thinking I've come to be somebody who can make that happen." •