

Rhode Island Bar Association Leadership Q&A

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Dana Horton is an insurance litigation partner with over 20 years of experience representing and advising insurance companies in large loss property subrogation matters, complex property and liability insurance coverage disputes, and bad faith claims. Dana's experience includes handling proceedings from inception through resolution in state, federal, and appellate courts. She is a member of Robinson+Cole's Insurance + Reinsurance Group. Throughout the duration of her practice, Dana has served as a leader in the courtroom and in her community. She is an active member of the Rhode Island Women's Bar Association and has served as a mentor to law students at Roger Williams University. Through her bar involvement, she has promoted and advocated for rule changes where appropriate and has worked with the bar and the Court to improve the practice of law in the State of Rhode Island. She has served on a number of court-appointed committees in this regard. She currently serves as the RI Bar Association's Annual Meeting Planning Committee Chair and as a member of the Bar's Executive Committee and House of Delegates. Dana served for many years as a co-chair of the Robinson+Cole Women's Committee and is an active member of the firm's Diversity, Equity + Inclusion and Wellness Committees. She continues to be a strong mentor for lawyers within Robinson+Cole and new lawyers within the State.



What do diversity and inclusion mean to you, both personally and professionally?

There is an old expression: "If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always got." This, in a nutshell is what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to me. Diversity, equity and inclusion spawn creativity and growth – we need alternative perspectives, varying ideas and cross-sectional experiences for completeness. Otherwise, change cannot occur.

What does it mean to you to have a commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace?

Having a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, to me, is a two-part analysis. First, it is recognizing and acknowledging that there may be underrepresented people "at the table," or individuals and/or groups of people who have not been given an opportunity to sit "at the table." Second, it is taking affirmative steps and actions to make sure they have the opportunity to do so, and not being afraid to speak out and advocate when they don't....

Did the Annual Meeting Planning Committee considered DEI issues when planning programming for the 2022 Annual Meeting?

As long as I can recall, the RIBA and Annual Meeting Committee have considered diversity, equity, and inclusion issues when planning programming and seeking presenters for workshops. We have some extremely talented attorneys within our borders, and we need to encourage those who have not presented a workshop or participated on a panel discussion to become involved and volunteer.

From a programming perspective, the RIBA always tries to present a balanced program at the Annual Meeting, that is, one that appeals to the most attorneys and practice areas. Every program submission is given great consideration and if a particular subject matter lacks submissions, we work hard to find panelists and programming to complete the offerings. Further, if something is felt to be too narrow a scope for the Annual Meeting, we will typically work with the submitting attorney to find an appropriate venue for the program (whether a lunchtime CLE, full/half day program or otherwise). With regard to specific programming, both plenary sessions will encompass DEI issues and initiatives, and several of the workshops contain components of DEI in their program.

What do you think the Bar can do to raise awareness regarding Diversity & Inclusion?

Certainly, the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion is a step in the right direction. I am a big proponent of mentoring and that is something not only the Bar, but any organization (legal or otherwise), should consider in one form or another going forward. Sometimes, in order to effectively advocate for yourself, you need to have someone first advocate for you (or at least make you aware that you should be advocating for yourself). I also think the Bar can be a leader with regard to setting the pace with which other organizations address DEI issues. While it is important for individuals to recognize there is a need and talk about how to address that need, action is the key – nothing is going to change until we change it, and this means that organizations need to rise along with their employees and implement the change they want to see.

At a recent DEI event I attended in Connecticut, I heard the following quote, which made an immense impact upon me: “We need to embrace our differences and simultaneously find our common ground.”