

BY BRIAN L. DAVIDOFF

What's Happening at the American Board of Certification

I was installed for a one-year term as president of the American Board of Certification (ABC) in December 2024 at ABI's Winter Leadership Conference in Scottsdale, Ariz. It was a busy year and one that I believe has yielded positive forward movement for the organization. My year as president reaffirmed my belief that the ABC is an excellent organization to affiliate with, and one that you should consider joining.

Who and what is the ABC? Known initially as the American Board of Bankruptcy Certification, ABI sponsored the ABC in 1992 as a nonprofit organization "dedicated to improving the quality of the bankruptcy bar." The ABI Annual Report in 1991-92 stated that ABC's "rigorous ... certification standards are designed to encourage bankruptcy practitioners to strive toward excellence and to recognize those attorneys who are especially knowledgeable in the bankruptcy field."

The ABC, which has certified more than 1,000 professionals, is the sole national organization providing board certification for insolvency lawyers. Its certification provides an objective standard that assists the public in making informed decisions about choosing counsel while encouraging attorneys to strive toward excellence and recognizing those who have met the ABC's rigorous standards.

For many years, the ABC focused exclusively on its foundational role: certifying attorneys as bankruptcy specialists in business, consumer and creditors' rights law. Throughout 2025, while not losing focus on this central feature, we have made efforts to expand both the visibility of the ABC and deliver greater value to its members.

We are in the process of expanding the ABC's recognition in a number of ways. Of course, our most obvious audience is ABI members, so making the ABC more visible to ABI members is a natural path to follow. This and prior articles in the *ABI Journal* are a good start. **Jonathan C. Bolton** of Goodsill Anderson Quinn & Stifel (Honolulu) has come on board as the ABC Update's first-ever coordinating editor, to establish a continuing flow of information about the ABC and its members in the *ABI Journal*.

The ABC typically hosts an event each year during ABI's Annual Spring Meeting and Winter Leadership Conference. Come visit us at those conferences and learn more about the organization and the certification process.

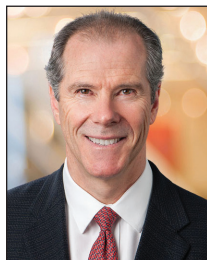
ABC's Marketing Committee, ably headed by **Salene R. Mazur Kraemer** of MazurKraemer Business Law (Pittsburgh), has had a productive year with regular publications to ABC members and arranging meetups at various insolvency-related events throughout the country, including regional ABI events and National Association of Bankruptcy Trustees events, and at the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges.

ABC is focusing on expanding its membership. Annually, we reach out to the ABI "40 Under 40" honorees to invite them to become certified attorneys. For them, we waive the initial certification fee. Several of them have taken us up on this offering and have become certified attorneys. ABC is in the process of amending its bylaws to enable those members whose affiliation has lapsed (for permissible reasons) to re-establish their relationship with ABC. Finally, in this vein, ABC is also amending its rules to permit members who no longer actively practice law to remain affiliated with ABC to enjoy the camaraderie and community that the organization provides to certified attorneys.

David Prelle Eron of Prelle Eron & Bailey, PA (Wichita, Kan.), chair of ABC's Membership Committee, launched the "ABC Certified Attorney of the Year" program. For the first time at the ABI's Annual Spring Meeting in 2025 in Washington D.C., ABC presented the ABC Certified Attorney of the Year Award to **Joseph A. Peiffer** of Ag & Business Legal Strategies (Cedar Rapids, Iowa). The award is for those who best exemplify ABC's goals: demonstrating professional achievement, outstanding reputation, community service and professional contributions.

The Membership Committee is laying the groundwork for an annual cost-free Zoom CLE program for ABC attorneys. We also host quarterly meet-and-greets among ABC members. The goal of these meet-and-greets is to not just encourage exchanges among ABC members on different pressing issues, but also to generate interaction among the members throughout the country.

Central to the ABC's existence is the certification of attorneys. The initial certification process includes an examination. ABC's Faculty Committee is responsible for maintaining and updating the exams as needed. This year, Prof. **Daniel Tavera**



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of Mississippi College School of Law (Jackson, Miss.) filled the vacancy as dean of the faculty.

Aside from all the camaraderie, community and networking opportunities available in the ABC, why become a certified attorney? Board certification assists the public in identifying those attorneys who have the skills and have taken the extra time and effort to meet the ABC's rigorous standards. Board certification is the mark of a dedicated legal professional and encourages attorneys to strive toward excellence, and it recognizes those attorneys who have met those standards. Advantages of board certification include:

- *Greater Opportunities for Marketing and Referrals:* ABC certification is a mark of a dedicated professional. A regularly published national directory of ABC-certified attorneys, as well as media releases and professional presentations, all provide greater visibility and marketing opportunities.
- *Improved Standing and Prestige Among Peers:* ABC certification reflects a significant degree of training and experience in the specialty field of law.
- *More Effective Advertising:* Any attorney who advertises ABC certification is able to provide to the public an objective criterion of expertise. ABC-certified attorneys can use the ABC logo on business cards, letterhead and other communications.
- *Improved Credentials:* When serving as an expert witness, an ABC-certified attorney enjoys additional credentials of professional competency. Hourly rates awarded by bankruptcy courts in professional fee applications have been increased as a result of board certification. Some insurance carriers also provide discounts on professional liability insurance for certified attorneys.

By the time you read this, my term as ABC President will have come and gone, the baton having been passed to **Justin M. Luna** of Latham, Luna, Eden & Beaudine, LLP (Orlando, Fla.) as the incoming president. My thanks go to the other hard-working Executive Committee members:

- **Amy Quackenboss**, who not only serves as ABI's executive director but also as the executive director of the ABC, as well as her team dedicated to ABC matters, **Iris Williams** and **Colleen Watson**;
- Treasurer **Jimmy D. Parrish** of BakerHostetler (Orlando, Fla.);
- Standards Committee Member **Erika R. Barnes** of Stites & Harbison PLLC (Nashville, Tenn.);
- State Bar Liaison Committee Member **Wesley H. Avery** of the Law Offices of Wesley H. Avery, APC (Pasadena, Calif.), who served as a board member and chair of this committee for many years, but passed the baton to **Randy Nussbaum** of The Cavanagh Law Firm (Phoenix), who willingly stepped up even after being a prior president of the ABC;
- Secretary **Luis E. Rivera II**, previously of GrayRobinson, PA (Fort Myers, Fla.), who served as a board member for many years and as secretary during 2025, but resigned his role upon being appointed as a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division; and
- Long-Range Planning Coordinator **Robert C. Furr** of Furr Cohen, PA (Boca Raton, Fla.).

Last but by no means least, thanks also go to **Patricia B. Fugée** of FisherBroyles, LLP (Perrysburg, Ohio), also a past ABC president, who has continued to provide ongoing guidance and support for the organization.

To learn more about the ABC, please visit abcworld.org. **abi**

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