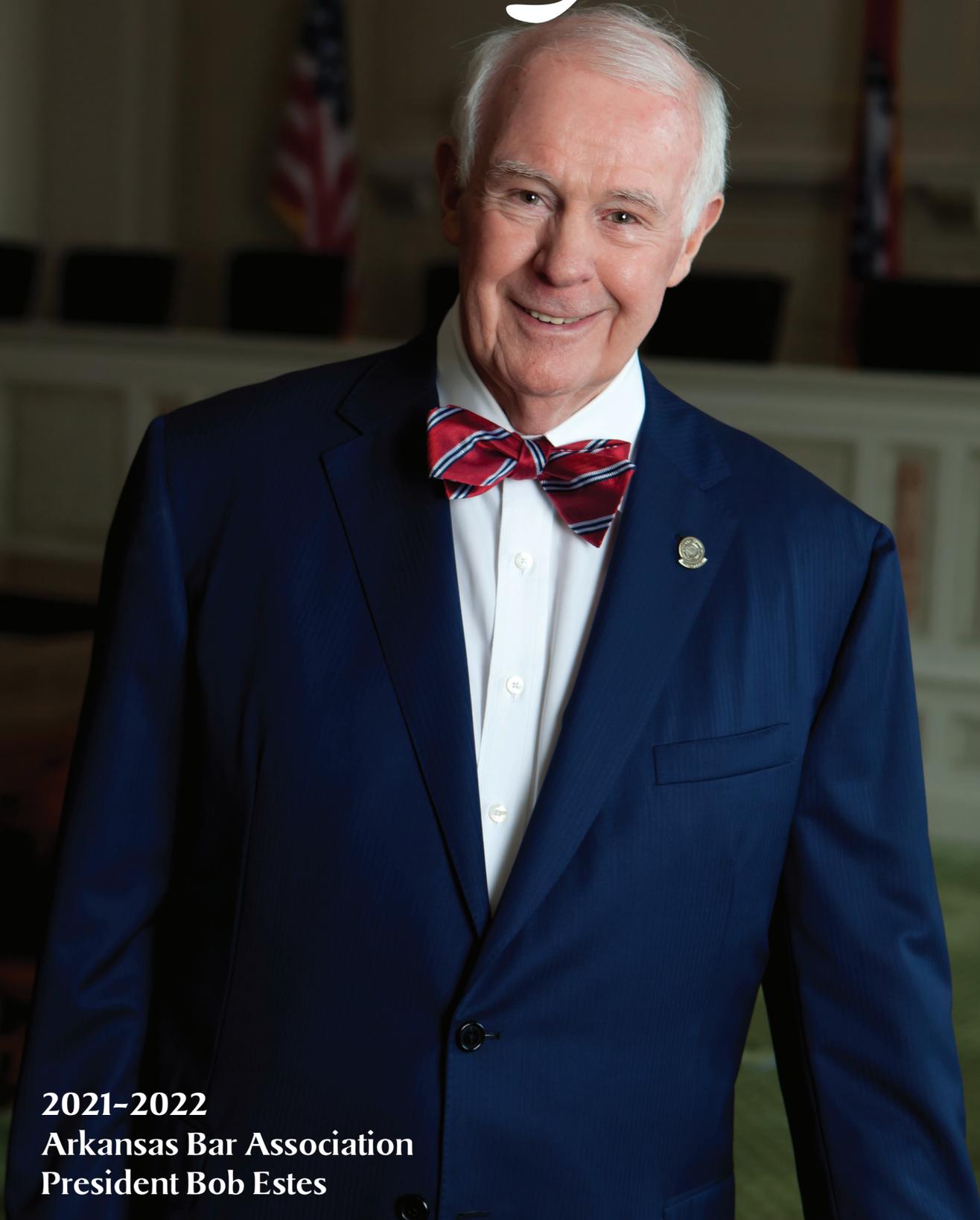


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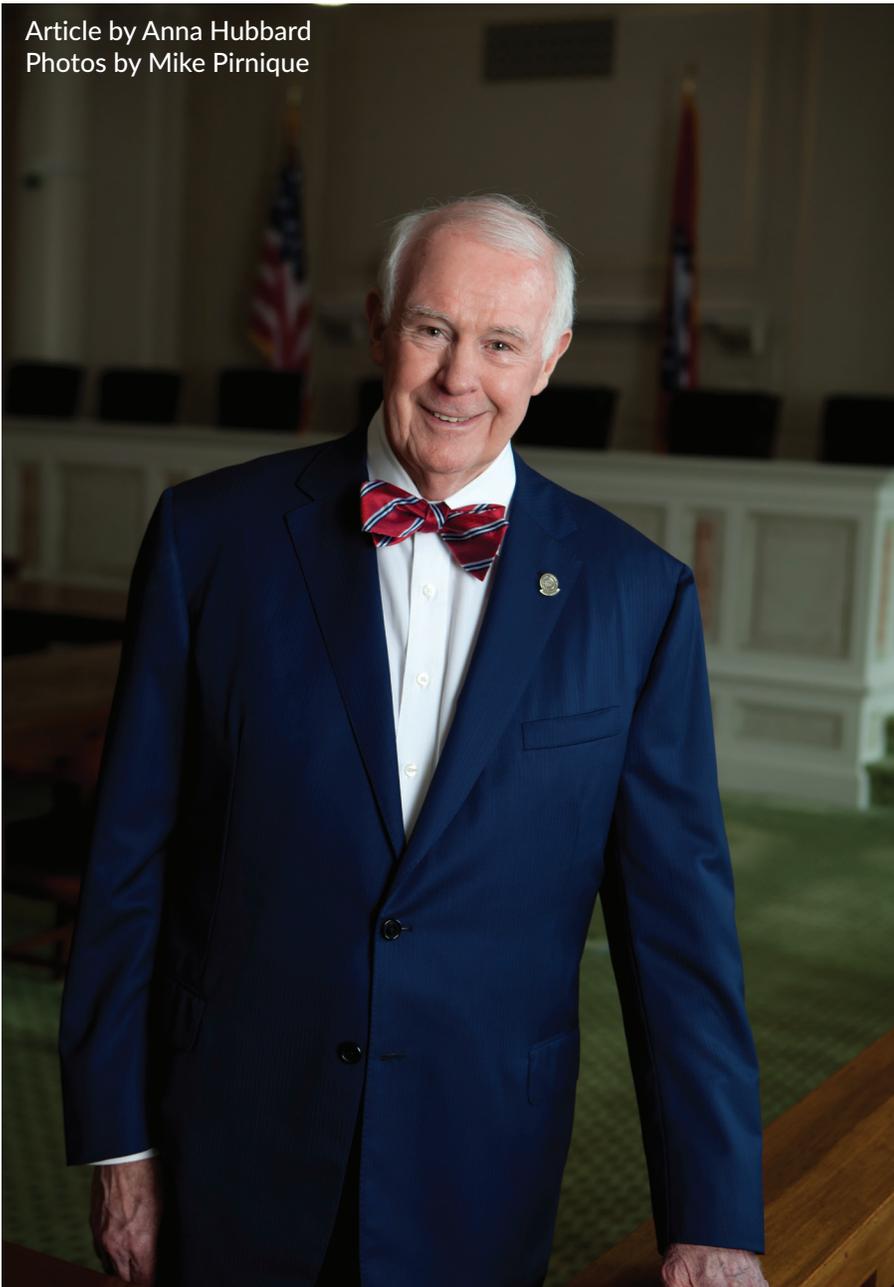
2021-2022
Arkansas Bar Association
President Bob Estes

Bob Estes was sworn in as the 124th President
of the Arkansas Bar Association on June 18, 2021.

President

Bob Estes

Article by Anna Hubbard
Photos by Mike Pirnique



Working Together

“Is your Arkansas Bar Association important? Is it essential? Absolutely yes!” Bob said after being sworn in as the 124th President of the Arkansas Bar Association. “It is the lawyers and judges, members of this Association who advance the administration of justice and foster and maintain these high ideals.

“We do more than write contracts and try cases. Lawyers give a voice. This is true when we advocate. We speak for plaintiffs and we speak for defendants. We help people. Lawyers change lives. Lawyers bring justice. Lawyers restore hope. Lawyers improve our communities. Lawyers matter.

“It is us together and not alone – our Arkansas Bar Association offers the experience to advance the administration of justice and to foster and maintain high ideals of integrity, learning, competence and public service so essential to our purpose as lawyers and judges.”

As a young boy growing up across the street from a prominent lawyer in North Little Rock, Bob began to have thoughts of one day being a lawyer. In addition to playing with his brothers at the home of Terrell Marshall, who was president of the association in 1951-1952, Bob regularly read the U.S. Supreme Court opinions that his father, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, ordered from the U.S. Government Printing Office.

“In the 5th grade I told my mom I wanted to be a lawyer. I began to get the idea that lawyers were special. Not that they were important, but that lawyers were special. Lawyers could make things happen. Lawyers could make a difference.

“I had no idea what lawyers did, I had no idea how you even became a lawyer, but I got



"Without integrity you are nothing. Your word is your bond."

Bob and his daughter Sarah Estes and Chief Justice Kemp

the notion and idea that maybe I could be a lawyer and maybe I can make a difference."

Over his 46-year career fighting for his clients, Bob has made a difference. He has been involved in major verdicts that resulted in unsafe consumer products being removed from the market. He has been in solo practice for the past 30 years focusing his practice on litigation. "Anything that happens in the courtroom," he said.

Starting out as a deputy public defender for the fourth judicial district, Bob was almost immediately assigned to a case on appeal to the Arkansas Supreme Court. Thus, he began his courtroom career arguing a capital felony murder case in the same courtroom at the Arkansas State Capitol where he was sworn in as president of the association this year.

Bob's good friend, John Barry Baker of Fayetteville, was the public defender who hired Bob as deputy public defender. "One of the good things about being a public defender, you get thrown in the fire right away," John said. "Bob was up to the task."

John and Bob, who are the same age, have been friends ever since those early days. John said he had been out of law school for a few years before Bob because of Bob's military service after college. "He served in Vietnam, and he was in the thick of it, in actual combat."

John carries in his wallet a copy of a saying that was handed down from Bob's grandfather to his father and then to Bob. "We are here to produce, provide and protect," John said. "That is what Bob has focused his life on—producing, providing and protecting. He is a Christian. He has

never been extremely involved in church work, but his law practice is his church work; it is his ministry."

Seasoned litigators can relate to how Bob recalls every detail of his first big case along with the hundreds of other cases he has tried. When asked what advice he would give to new attorneys starting out, Bob said, "Stay away from what is harmful and seek out what is good and just and profitable. Without integrity you are nothing. Your word is your bond. That person who is your adversary today may be the very person who you depend upon for counsel, advice, friendship and fellowship tomorrow. Be respectful. Be kind.

"Your time and advice are all you have to sell. You will be known by the people you represent in your community more than by your accomplishments. Choose your clients carefully and choose your cases carefully."

Josh McFadden of Fayetteville tried one of his first cases against Bob. "As in many legal cases, the clients on both sides were quite upset by the circumstances in which they found themselves and the legal issues were complicated," Josh said. "However, Bob and I were able to advocate for our clients, while negotiating a unique resolution that satisfied the interests of both sets of clients.

"The best way to describe Bob in that case, and generally, is calm and dignified. No matter how contentious an issue may be, Bob approaches opposing counsel with dignity and respect. His approach is a testament to his respect for the practice of law."

Another one of Bob's longtime friends, retired Judge Kim Smith of Fayetteville,

recalls his days in the courtroom with Bob. "Bob was a fierce adversary in many trials we had when we were both just out of law school," Kim said. "I was a deputy prosecutor and Bob was a deputy public defender; later, Bob was in private practice when I was the elected prosecutor. Bob was an excellent trial attorney and one of the most ethical attorneys I have ever dealt with. His word was his bond. He is a man of great integrity."

Advancing the Administration of Justice

Bob has been a member of the association since he was in law school. Upon his graduation, he was approached by Fayetteville attorney Walter Niblock, past president of the association in 1977-1978, who encouraged Bob to join.

"He came to see me and told me I needed to join the Arkansas Bar Association and that I needed to participate," Bob said. "He appointed me to two committees. From that day forward I have been involved in the association in one capacity or another."

Bob's long service to the association has included roles on all governing bodies including the YLS Executive Council, House of Delegates (Tenure), Executive Council and Board of Governors. His leadership roles include chairing the Re-Districting Task Force, the Practice Closure Task Force, the PAC Executive Committee, and the Legislation Committee, for which he was awarded a Golden Gavel. He is a Fellow of the Arkansas Bar Foundation which has honored him with the Arkansas Bar Foundation writing award. He has served in three cases as a Special Associate



Photo from the Swearing-In Ceremony at the Old Arkansas Supreme Courtroom

Front row from left: Margaret Elizabeth "Meghan" Estes, Elaina Henley, Bob Estes, Abbott Alexander Estes, Hannah Louise Estes, Eve Caroline Estes, Abram Charles Estes; Back row from left: Robert R. "Robbie" Estes III, Margaret Elizabeth "Peggy" Estes, Robert R. "Jake" Estes IV, Sarah Elizabeth Estes, Fernando Lopez and Matthew Price Estes
Not pictured: John Michael Estes

Justice on the Supreme Court of Arkansas. He currently serves on the Arkansas Supreme Court Committee on Civil Practice and is a past president of the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association. He has been a member of several Fayetteville city and community boards and commissions.

Past President Brian Rosenthal of Little Rock was one of the lawyers who encouraged Bob to run for President. "Bob Estes brings a level of professionalism and gratitude to all he touches," Brian said. "He has led important statewide bar initiatives such as redistricting by being fair and inclusive. Our profession and bar will greatly benefit with Bob as our 124th President."

Immediate Past President Paul W. Keith of Hamburg is proud to pass the gavel to Bob. "Bob and I share the belief that lawyers are uniquely qualified to be the guardians of the rule of law and that the rule of law is all that stands between us and anarchy," Paul said. "He will be remembered as a great President of our Association."

A Son of the Greatest Generation

Bob was the first person in four generations of his family not to work for the Kansas City Southern Railroad, and he was the first person in his family to graduate college. His father and mother were of the "greatest generation" and met at the railroad when his father returned home on military leave to find "a cute brunette" doing his job for him.

"Women filled in and kept this country going during World War II," Bob said. "My parents met in the fall of 1943, married in the spring of 1944, and dad left the next morning for Europe."

Born in Baton Rouge, Bob moved to North Little Rock in the third grade when his father was transferred to Little Rock. Bob's dream to become a lawyer followed him through junior high and high school, but not so much during college where he earned a Bachelor of Science in business administration in 1969 from the University of Arkansas. It wasn't until he came back from active duty in Vietnam that he felt the law calling again.

"When I was in Vietnam, that was a seminal experience; I began to see that without a rule of law there is chaos. Where there is chaos there is destruction. Where there is chaos and destruction people can't grow. People can't flourish. People can't reach their full potential. So, perhaps being a lawyer is something I should think about."

Bob enlisted in the United States Army in the fall of 1968 as a Private E1. His father had enlisted as a private, so that is what Bob did. He went on active duty after college graduation, served over a year in Vietnam, and was discharged as an E5 in 1972. He went to law school after returning home and graduated from the University of Arkansas School of Law in 1974. He also earned an MBA from the University of Arkansas in 1983.

In addition to writing poetry, Bob enjoys hiking the Arkansas Ozarks and fly fishing

in the rivers, creeks and streams of northern Arkansas and southern Missouri with his family. He is also an avid gardener. Bob has four children and eight grandchildren.

Legacies

His youngest child, daughter Sarah, said she grew up gardening with her father and now has her own garden. "I was able to preserve a little bit of my dad's legacy," she said. "His parents had a garden. I remember as a kid picking blueberries from his parents' garden. Gardening always reminds me of him and of his mom and dad."

Bob instilled his love of reading and poetry in Sarah as well. She said he read to her every night before bed. "He would read me a book of my choice, a book of the Bible, or some good portion of the Bible and then a couple of poems," she said. "At five years old I was able to recite some poems because he read them to me all the time."

Bob's dedication to his family even while maintaining a demanding career has made a big impact on her life. "I've learned a lot from him," she said. "The hard work and dedication to everything. His diligence and hard work is shown in work and in family and gardening—in everything."

Bob's son Matthew said the same thing about his dad's devotion to his family. "He taught by example how important it is to have a high level of integrity in your professional life, how important it is to work hard and never let your family life suffer because of that. He taught me that family always comes first."

In addition to teaching Matthew to fly fish, Bob taught him the importance of taking care of yourself. “Some of my earliest and best memories are going to the gym with him,” Matthew said. “He would pick me up after a long day at the office and we would go to the gym for an hour or so. He taught that if you don’t take care of your body then your mind is going to go, too. And you won’t be able to do the things that you love to do.”

Guardians of the Rule of Law

One of Bob’s goals as president of the Arkansas Bar Association is to lead the association in its efforts to support the rule of law, which was the theme of his inaugural address (printed on this page). Another one of his goals is to promote collegiality among lawyers and civility in the practice of law.

ArkBar’s Executive Director Karen K. Hutchins has seen how Bob can bring people together. “Bob is so well known in the legal community that he can simply pick up the phone or walk down the street to start conversations about developing an idea or resolving an issue,” Karen said. “He understands the value of getting to know someone new, and he listens to their concerns and point of view. He values others and uses that sense of respect to create community and civility that brings us together.”

As President, Bob wants to ensure that lawyers find value in supporting their association and that their membership provides opportunities for experiences that they will enjoy. “Bob is well aware that a lawyer’s time is valuable, so it is important to him that our members’ time spent supporting the Association creates a value for their practice or the profession,” Karen said. “This includes time working together to create a civil working environment, or to provide services that improve the administration of justice and support the rule of law. He has often stated ‘This is not time for a tea party but time to work toward a resolution.’”

Bob concluded his inaugural address with, “As I begin to serve each of you as President of your Arkansas Bar Association, I strive to serve you well, advancing and accomplishing the purposes of our Association.” ■



From Bob’s Inaugural Address:

The rule of law is that set of principles insuring an orderly and just society. It is our social contract, based on the idea that each and every one of us are accountable to the law. Expression, freedom and liberty are all dependent on the rule of law. It is the glue that binds us.

It is the principle under which all persons, institutions and entities are accountable to laws publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated by an independent bar and an independent judiciary. The rule of law only has meaning when there is an independent judiciary and an independent bar free from undue influences and reprisals.

It is the foundation for our basic and fundamental rights. It demands equal justice. It exists when the laws are equally and impartially enforced. No one is above the law and everyone is obligated equally to obey the law. Key to the rule of law is our commitment to apply the law to everyone—to government, to individuals and to entities. Everyone is treated equally under the law. It requires everyone be held accountable to the same law. It is the foundation for our basic and fundamental rights. We cannot have commerce, peaceful discourse and interactions with one another without the rule of law.

Lawyers play an integral part in maintaining the rule of law. This is true when they advocate on behalf of the state, the accused, the injured, those who are in disputes and conflicts and those who hold minority opinions. The rule of law is to be applied in a fair and equal manner to everyone no matter where they come from, no matter what their background and no matter what they look like. It is to be applied equally and fairly to everyone. The public nature of the rule of law and the public nature of the judicial process implemented by an independent bar and an independent judiciary is critical. The rule of law protects from the reign of tyrants and the vice of republics. The only civilizations that have prospered and thrived over time have been those civilizations that have emphasized the rule of law.

When the rule of law prevails, there is equal justice and ordered liberty. When it does not prevail there is chaos, confusion, despotism and lawlessness.