

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 163, No. 118

Serving Chicago's legal community for 162 years



Illinois Supreme Court Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier delivers the oath to former Cook County circuit judge Russell W. Hartigan to become president of the Illinois State Bar Association Friday at The Abbey Resort in Wisconsin. Hartigan, a mediator with Resolute Systems, outlined his goals for the year ahead at the bar group's annual meeting. *Photo provided by the Illinois State Bar Association*

Hartigan takes the helm

BY LAUREN P. DUNCAN

Law Bulletin staff writer

The new Illinois State Bar Association president has always had an affinity for the statewide bar group, according to a source close to him.

"If there was a condition such as ISBA-itis, he would have it," said Michael R. Hartigan, son of the ISBA's new president, former Cook County circuit judge Russell W. Hartigan, at a ceremony Friday. "He has ISBA FOMO for all of you who know that," referring to the shorthand term for fear of missing out.

At Wisconsin resort, ex-judge begins term as head of Illinois State Bar Association

Russell W. Hartigan, of Western Springs, was sworn in as the new president at a dinner held at The Abbey Resort in Fontana, Wis., Friday night, where he detailed his agenda for the next year. It includes creating a number of new initiatives and continuing others created by former ISBA presidents.

The dinner was a part of the ISBA's three-day annual meeting

held Thursday through Saturday at the resort along Lake Geneva.

Hartigan succeeds outgoing president Vincent F. Cornelius.

And he plans to be focused on the job ahead: Hartigan retired from his seat on the Cook County Circuit Court on Jan. 17.

He said he did so "begrudgingly," but arrived at the decision after deciding it would be difficult to handle a full load of Law

Division cases at the Daley Center while traveling around the state.

"I couldn't quite figure how I could do both, as much as I struggled with it," he said.

Hartigan was a founding partner of Hartigan & O'Connor P.C. before his appointment as a circuit judge in October 2010. He won a full term for his seat in 2012, running unopposed in both the Democratic primary and general election. After retiring in January, he joined Resolute Systems LLC as a mediator and arbitrator.

Hartigan's plans for the coming year include forming a succession and transition committee to help

both young lawyers come into the profession and senior lawyers plan the transition out of their practices.

The initiative comes after Hartigan had two lawyer friends who were sole practitioners that suffered strokes, leaving their spouses in need of assistance handling the cases and financial matters of the law practice. He said his committee is going to look into what other states require for succession planning to promote planning ahead.

Another goal of Hartigan's is to boost ISBA membership, which he said has dipped in recent years.

"The bottom line is giving value to our members," he said. "I think what we've determined is that a membership, to everything we give them, is a couple thousand dollars worth of services," he said. "That's what we have to show and demonstrate to the members, that they're getting good value for their membership."

He's forming another committee that's going to meet with firm leaders in trying to "spread the gospel" of the ISBA.

Meanwhile, Hartigan has plans to travel around the state, including visits to Alton, Quincy, Carbondale, Decatur, Centralia, Danville, Effingham and Galesburg.

He's also planning a young lawyers committee that will help prepare new attorneys for managing their own practices.

Hartigan wants to continue to focus on other existing ISBA initiatives, which include a legal futures committee that looks at changes in the market related to technology, a proposal to amend Illinois Supreme Court Rule 711 to allow law school students to practice in the private sector and a law school deans committee.

And Hartigan also mentioned gun violence as a top priority to address.

Hartigan acknowledged the work being done by other bar groups like The Chicago Bar Association on the issue of violence, but said it was time for the ISBA

Russell W. Hartigan

President, Illinois State Bar Association

- **Work:** Mediator and arbitrator at Resolute Systems; retired Cook County circuit judge, founding partner of Hartigan & O'Connor P.C.
- **Law school:** The John Marshall Law School, 1975
- **Interests:** Golf, handball, football referee, spending time with grandchildren
- **Term:** 2017-18
- **Group founded in:** 1877
- **Group size:** More than 30,000
- **Group website:** isba.org



to take its own look at it with a "multidisciplinary approach."

He said the issue holds personal significance to him, as the West Side native was born in the Austin neighborhood and his father worked in North Lawndale, both communities now struggling with poverty and violence.

The committee will be chaired by former ISBA president Cheryl I. Niro and will also include 5th Ward Ald. Leslie A. Hairston, former lawmaker Ellis B. Levin and potentially Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart, among others.

One year from now, Hartigan said he hopes he'll be able to look back and see that some of his goals completed or at least moved closer to the finish line.

"Hopefully I accomplish these goals, and if I don't, at least I've put the seed down for the future presidents to maybe carry on," he said.

Prior to being selected as the ISBA's third vice president in 2014, Hartigan served in a number of leadership roles within the group including two six-year terms on the board of governors and service as a board liaison to the insurance law, workers' compensation law, civil practice and procedure and local government law section councils.

He was a director for the Illinois

Bar Foundation for nine years and previously chaired the foundation's grants committee and the Lawyers Care Fund.

In 2014, he was the president of the West Suburban Bar Association. Hartigan has served in several other civic positions, including service on the Pillars Community Services and the Des Plaines Valley Boy Scouts boards, the Lyons Township supervisor and as a village of Western Springs and Lyons Township trustee.

A few colleagues who have known Hartigan for years spoke in support of him at his installation dinner, including his second cousin, former Illinois attorney general and 1st District appellate justice Neil F. Hartigan. Neil, who had an unsuccessful bid for governor in 1990, opened with a joke: "I can't tell you how delighted I am to come to something where somebody named Hartigan could actually get elected."

On a serious note, he praised the ISBA's selection of his cousin as its new leader, emphasizing his passion for the law and the ISBA, adding he "can't think of anybody that I trust more, think more of."

"Russ Hartigan loves the law, absolutely loves the law. As long as I've known him, you start talking about something else ... and invariably he'll come back to his

favorite subject, the Illinois State Bar Association," he said.

Fourteenth Ward Ald. Edward M. Burke, who oversees the Chicago City Council's Finance Committee, also addressed the dinner attendees.

"He's a man of passion, great character and deeply held conviction," Burke said. "In fact, he was once quoted as saying that his passion has always been the ISBA."

Also in attendance was former circuit judge William J. Haddad who has known Hartigan since kindergarten, attending St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy School in Oak Park and later St. Ignatius College Prep together.

Haddad praised Hartigan for his work ethic, which he said he saw dating back to the high school gridiron and studying at The John Marshall Law School as well as more than 33 years of practicing law and serving as judge.

"He's not afraid to share the credit. You'll never see Russ condescend anybody. He humors people, brings them along as friends. He believes in relationships and bringing people along," Haddad said.

Hartigan's son Michael, the managing partner at Hartigan & O'Connor, cited his father's decision to step down from his judicial role as a sign of his dedication to the ISBA.

"A lot of people scratched their heads, but it's something that he struggled with," he said. "He's always referenced the fact that 'I don't have to do this, but I can't devote myself fully to this position while I'm maintaining a position to the people of Cook County,' so he elected to step down. If that's not evidence of his commitment to this organization, or evidence that he should be committed, I don't know what is," he said.

Hartigan and his wife Susan have two other children, Brian and Kelly, who both attended Friday's dinner.

He was sworn in by Illinois Chief Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier.