

NEWS



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**MBA ANNUAL CONFERENCE FEATURES BENCH-BAR FORUM
ADDRESSING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

BOSTON— Always a popular component of the Massachusetts Bar Association’s Annual Conference, this year’s Bench-Bar Forum will examine the public perception of the legal system and the media’s effect on it. The forum will be offered on the last of the conference’s three days of professional programming, on Saturday, March 25. Respected parties from the bench and the press leading thought-provoking discussions on the timely topic, “Covering Justice: The Media and the Public Perception.”

Bill Kovach, chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, Washington, D.C., will present the keynote address to the three-hour forum. He will provide a comprehensive look at American journalism by presenting the latest findings of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, including research, cross-media trends and the direction of the future.

Kovach’s remarks will provide context for the panel discussions that will follow. The panels will be moderated by Judge Gordon L. Doerfer of the Massachusetts Appeals Court, Judge John M. Greaney of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court and ABA President Michael S. Greco of Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham LLP.

The first panel will explore the public’s understanding of the role of judges and judicial independence, and examine how media treatment of issues commonly raised in court can influence the public’s understanding of some of the fundamentals of the law and the functioning of the courts.

The second panel will expand on this topic by examining the public’s perception of lawyers and their role in the legal system, the origins and effects of negative stereotypes

of attorneys, and whether lawyers and reporters reinforce such stereotypes and how they interact with each other.

Saturday's professional programming will conclude with a consideration of how lawyers, judges and the media can work together to improve the public's understanding of the legal system. The panel will focus on ways to improve communication with each other, foster a climate of greater transparency and afford robust media access to the workings of the courts, within the constraints of ethical and privacy concerns.

Also on Saturday, March 25, the conference's closing lunch will feature remarks from Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall. For more detailed information on the MBA's AC06 full program, visit www.MassBar.org or call 617-338-0530.

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.

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