

Bar chief says it's time to end the paper chase

Campaign's on to make law firms eco-friendly

By **Sacha Pfeiffer**

GLOBE STAFF

Lawyers are hardly poster children for the environmental movement.

They are notorious for printing reams of paper, burning tons of fossil fuels as they travel to courthouses and client meetings, and leaving lights blazing and photocopiers humming while they work nearly round-the-clock.

The new president of the Massachusetts Bar Association wants to change that.

As one of the initiatives of his yearlong presidency, which began in September, David W. White Jr. is aiming to "make the practice of law the most environmentally friendly business in Massachusetts."

To achieve that ambitious goal, he is pushing law firms statewide to minimize their energy use with a variety of earth-friendly measures: using fluorescent light bulbs, turning lights off when they leave a room, installing sensors that automatically

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darken a room when it goes empty, powering down office equipment at the end of the day, buying energy-efficient equipment, and recycling diligently.

By taking such steps, White said, he has already cut energy use at his own law office by 10 percent. At the Mass. Bar Association, the staff is becoming more conscientious about turning off unnecessary lighting, he said, and plans to install some motion-detecting lights.

"Clients will be looking to law firms to demonstrate leadership

in energy conservation, and we hope to show them the way," said White, who is a partner at the law firm Breakstone, White & Gluck in Boston.

"We need to do everything we can to fight global warming and develop a more energy-independent country."

White has established a task force of 12 attorneys that is drafting "green guidelines" for the legal industry, such as renting hybrid vehicles when traveling, using recycled paper, and minimizing printing by relying on e-mail rather than paper faxes or mail.

He is also suggesting to some judges that routine meetings take place by teleconference, rather than in person, to cut down on travel.

How realistic is his effort?

"We can make a very good start," White said, "and once people realize the bottom-line benefit for their firm and the image benefit for their firm — and for the practice of law as a whole — I think it's going to catch on very quickly."

Attention to the bottom line played a role in Nixon Peabody's recent decision to name a "chief sustainability officer," a position now held by Carolyn S. Kaplan, who has been an attorney with the Boston law firm's energy and environmental practice group since 1997.

In her new role, Kaplan will help the firm develop green initiatives that can be adopted at its 17 offices nationwide, such as making sure each location has printers capable of making two-sided copies, and some that can print four pages per sheet.

She is also soliciting suggestions from the staff, who have recommended that the firm reduce its employee air travel and offer discounts toward purchasing hybrid vehicles.

Kaplan will also help identify ways the firm can boost its profitability by increasing the work it does for clients whose needs in-

volve issues such as renewable energy, clean technology, green buildings, tax credits, climate change, or investing in green funds.

"There are so many different ways we can expand how we advise clients and assist them in grappling with this new business climate," Kaplan said.

Nixon Peabody's green initiative, she acknowledged, is designed to be beneficial for the firm as well as for its clients.

"Absolutely," she said. "It's doing well by doing right."

"As a large nationwide law firm, we have an obligation to our employees and our clients to act responsibly and to take a leadership role in addressing climate change and skyrocketing energy costs," Kaplan added.

"Taking this type of position perhaps is unusual now, but at some point soon this is going to be business as usual."

Sacha Pfeiffer can be reached at pfeiffer@globe.com.

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DAVID W. WHITE JR.,
*the new president of the
Massachusetts Bar
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