

We, The People: Principles of Purpose From President W. West Allen



by **W. West Allen**

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As a country, we're in a watershed moment of recalibration, awareness, and appreciation. The Federal Bar Association is committed to meeting this historic moment with enhanced and expanded networking, programming, technology tools, and leadership opportunities. To that end, the FBA is excited to welcome W. West Allen as the 93rd National President. His Presidential Installation will be broadcast on October 1, 2020, at noon ET. Please join us to see Chief Judge Miranda M. Du of the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada administer the oath of office, followed by remarks on the U.S. Constitution by President Allen.

We are in a new century for the FBA. This is an ideal opportunity to launch important new initiatives and rededicate ourselves to the highest principles and purposes associated with being part of our exceptional FBA community of lawyers and judges.

Mr. Allen has developed vital Principles of Purpose to foster an even deeper sense of success for the FBA and respect for the U.S. Constitution. We know you will find these Principles of Purpose to be future-focused and mission-driven.

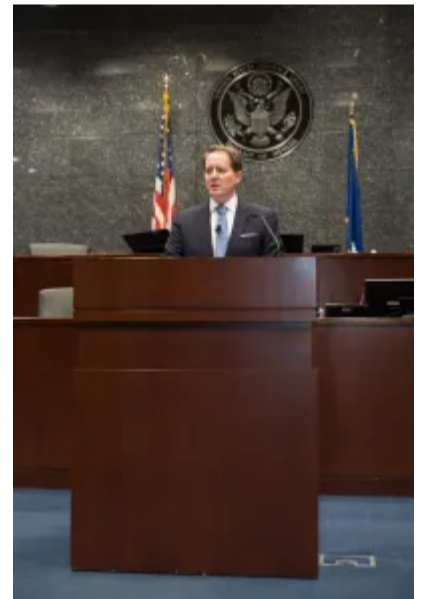
Now and throughout the year, let us make our top priority be to remind potential members about the benefits of joining the FBA and how essential our community is in promoting the sound administration of justice. The FBA, founded in 1920, is dedicated to the advancement of the science of jurisprudence and to promoting the welfare, interests, education, and professional development of all attorneys involved in federal law.

Each month, our National President will explore a Principle of Purpose as taught by the Constitution, extracting fundamental ideas and precepts from its creation and expounding upon them. W. West Allen's presidential priorities are summarized below. Now is the time to double down on our commitment to the FBA and successfully serve this 100-year-old association into its next century.

Our North Star: The Constitution of the United States

Lawyers and judges are the guardians of the U.S. Constitution. We must understand, explain, and defend it. We must make it accessible and tangible for others. All citizens have taken upon themselves a Covenant of Citizenship to advance and defend the cause of freedom through the principles of the Constitution. For the pursuit of perfection for our federal legal system, of which we are an integral part, we need to help convey the message of our Constitution to everyone. My presidency will emphasize the importance of teaching, learning, and knowing the Constitution.

The Constitution is the quintessential accomplishment of humankind on earth for the cause of freedom. It is the standard, as George Washington described, raised up to the world for the wise and honest to repair. It safeguards the rights and protection of all and defines the proper limitations of government and, in particular, those inclined to abuse the power entrusted to it.



Civics—understanding how the Constitution works and what it says, are the essential components to these Principles of Purpose. The FBA may lead by example and help others understand the Constitution on a deeper level and in a more profound way.

We should all understand better the founding principles of the Constitution. My presidency will focus on these. Not just the basic principles of popular sovereignty, federalism, separation of powers, the Bill of Rights, and the rule of law, which are the essence of the Constitution; but also the unspoken constitutional principles, such as unity, hope, knowledge, virtue, kindness, patience, diligence, and gratitude. As FBA members, we can find a way to make the Constitution be more meaningful, more purposeful, and more understandable. We will create something that endures and make it more perfect than before.

Collaboration

The FBA is the bond that unites a special group of lawyers and judges committed to the advancement of our federal legal system of justice; to advocacy, leadership, education, networking, and much more. We fight against apathy and ignorance, against oppression and abuses of power. Together, we must take up our shields and our swords and fight for these causes; we must fight for a true understanding of the Constitution.

The FBA is an inclusive, extended family of committed citizens who want to serve, strengthen the federal legal system, and support the administration of justice. We will continue to collaborate with different groups, including the National Constitution Center, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and the Federal Judges Association. By engaging with others who have similar goals, we can reinforce constitutional civics and strengthen the independence of federal courts. We also will do all we can to ensure the personal security and safety of our federal judiciary and their families.

Respect

Treating others with respect and dignity is of optimal importance. The Constitution itself, including its First Amendment, teaches us that we must give space to the enlightening ideas and discovered truths of others; we must respectfully listen and treat others with kindness and dignity. Mark Twain wisely said: “Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.” We need more of that today, both in government and among our citizens. If we don’t learn this important lesson of the Constitution, our society will continue to grow cold. It will suffer and, ultimately, it will fail.

The FBA is a family of lawyers and judges that bears responsibility to convey the messages in the Constitution to everyone because if we don’t, no one learns them. We need to be mindful and respectful of what this document is telling us. If all citizens knew what a gold standard we have and how our system of justice is always improving thanks to the diligent efforts by our best legal professionals, they may not feel that they have to tear it down. No legal system is perfect, but we have one in the United States that works well and is calibrated to continually be improved upon, to the relentless pursuit of justice and equality for all. Let’s roll up our sleeves as legal professionals, as an association, to make our legal system work the way it its destined to be.

It is important for lawyers and judges to educate and inform, and to remove any misinformation about our Constitution from the public discourse as much as possible. It is our responsibility to respect the Constitution and reduce the cacophony. Too many politicians and some citizens use the Constitution as a bumper sticker or a means to bludgeon an opponent by declaring this or that as “unconstitutional” without understanding what they are talking about. The FBA can help get us focused on the things that do matter, what the Constitution actually says, and its deeper, unspoken principles, such as listening, unity, compromise, and mutual respect.

We are living in unique times, to say the least. We have a deeper set of responsibilities now. We are the guardians of the Constitution. We must respect each other as citizens and the individual rights and freedoms the Constitution exists to protect. No greater immediate responsibility rests upon us than to protect the freedom vouchsafed by the Constitution of the United States.

Altruism

flower would grow.” I try to live that way. I hope to bring what I’ve learned as a husband, father, and son to my leadership role in the FBA. I will listen and be mindful of what others need, and what our nation needs.

We have a responsibility to educate future generations of citizens and lawyers. We must give of our time freely to meet this responsibility. We must offer to this world the best version of ourselves as citizens. The ability to improve who we are on a daily basis is not just a gift but a requirement in a republic. It’s what makes a republic work. The more we treat each other poorly and unfairly, the more laws are required, and the less freedom there is.

Gratitude

*Active participation in the FBA has been an indispensable part of my career. I have always viewed the FBA as an organization that is continuously engaged in good cause—people who do extraordinary things. Abiding by and building upon these enduring founding principles that I’ve mentioned make our society free and work best. We must understand the miracle that is America, the miracle that its Declaration of Independence became a reality; and the miracle of the successful implementation of this new, written form of government of the People, by the People, for the People—the Constitution. And within the four corners of the pages of the Constitution, we must understand its principles of government—popular sovereignty, federalism, the Bill of Rights, and the rule of law—as well as its unspoken principles that enable us together as an American family to live in harmony united. This is what makes our nation’s motto a reality: *E pluribus unum*, “out of many, one.”*

I grew up next to two different Civil War battlefields in Virginia and Georgia. That created within me a deep appreciation for freedom and just how delicate, like life itself, freedom really is. It is important to remember the lessons of history gained on and off America’s battlefields. Our founders were profoundly grateful for the miracle that they had just witnessed when they fought for and secured freedom from the most powerful empire the world had ever known. That hope, humility, and gratitude prepared them to do astonishing things. The FBA should be an organization that everyone within the legal community wants to be part of because they are doing good work for good causes, improving our nation’s system of justice, and thereby, raising America’s Standard even higher to the world.

I believe passionately in the cost of freedom and its delicate nature. We are always just one generation away from losing that freedom. The Constitution sustains and protects that freedom. It doesn’t restrict or bind us in a way that can’t change; it liberates and anticipates that future generations will improve upon it, guaranteeing even more freedom for more souls throughout the world.

We must never lose nor forget the principle of gratitude.

Empowerment

If you want to promote the welfare, interests, education, and professional development of all attorneys involved in federal law and improve America’s legal system and the administration of justice, the FBA is your professional home. We strive to improve our federal legal system of justice through grassroots work with local federal judges and lawyers, and we then connect our members with judges and lawyers from around the country.

With nearly 20,000 members—including 1,500 federal judges—our members run the gamut of federal practice, from small to large firms, corporations to federal agencies.

During my presidency, we will focus on the profound and significant nature of our U.S. Constitution and our duty and promise as judges, lawyers, and citizens to understand it, know it, and teach it. Lawyers and judges are in the best position to expound upon the ideas set forth in the Constitution.

On this much depends, for our Constitution hangs tenuously in the balance today. It is our call to sustain and preserve it.

The FBA is the gold standard of legal organizations. Having a legal organization that binds together a family of bright men and women seeking to improve the administration of justice in America is something every lawyer and judge should want to be a part of. I want the FBA to be as meaningful an association as possible for its members today, tomorrow, and in the future.

I look forward to hearing from you, and I welcome your feedback and guidance as we plan our strategy for the year ahead.

W. West Allen



About the Author

Stacy Slotnick, Esq. holds a J.D., cum laude, from Touro Law Center and a B.A., summa cum laude, from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She performs a broad range of duties as an entertainment lawyer, including drafting and negotiating contracts; addressing and litigating trademark, copyright, patent, and other IP issues; and directing the strategy and implementation of public relations, blogging, and social media campaigns.

About the FBA

Founded in 1920, the Federal Bar Association is dedicated to the advancement of the science of jurisprudence and to promoting the welfare, interests, education, and professional development of all attorneys involved in federal law. Our more than 16,000 members run the gamut of federal practice: attorneys practicing in small to large legal firms, attorneys in corporations and federal agencies, and members of the judiciary. The FBA is the catalyst for communication between the bar and the bench, as well as the private and public sectors. Visit us at fedbar.org to learn more.
