

Building on What Works: Remarks from Utah State Bar President-Elect Tom Bayles

Good morning, and welcome to Southern Utah.

It is a pleasure to welcome the Utah State Bar to St. George. This community is home for me. It is where I live, where I practice, and where I've spent much of my career. Having all of you here means a great deal to me, both personally and professionally.

For those who may not know me, I'm Tom Bayles. I currently serve as the Bar Commissioner for the Fifth District and am the candidate for President-Elect of the Utah State Bar. I'm also the managing attorney at ProvenLaw, a boutique estate planning firm. I'm a second-generation Utah lawyer, and one of the real joys of my career has been the chance to practice law alongside my daughter, Lindsay.

Before looking ahead, I want to begin with gratitude.

First, thank you to Kim Cordova for her leadership as Bar President this year. Kim has led with steadiness, thoughtfulness, and genuine care for the profession, and we are all better for the time and energy she has devoted to the role.

I also want to thank the Bar's executive team and staff. Much of what you do happens behind the scenes, and most of it never receives applause. But it matters. This organization works because of your preparation, your consistency, and the care you bring to the work every day.

As I think about what comes next, I do not think our job is to reinvent the Bar. Instead, our responsibility is to keep building on what works, and to stay grounded in what matters. That is one reason this year's focus on relationships and skills feels exactly right.

For all the ways the profession changes, the fundamentals remain the same. Lawyers need strong professional relationships. They need practical, relevant skills. And they need a Bar that helps them do their work, and not one that makes an already demanding profession harder than it needs to be.

One priority that matters to me is straightforward: we should continue looking for ways to make the day-to-day practice of law easier to navigate. That means practical resources, clear communication, and useful programming. It also means a Bar that feels accessible, responsive, and genuinely helpful to the lawyers it serves.

Part of that work is continuing to improve access to high-quality CLE and skills training across the state. A lawyer's ability to stay current and connected should not depend on geography. We now have the tools to reach attorneys across Utah through Zoom access, strong section programming, and more opportunities for lawyers to learn from one another

wherever they practice. That matters especially for lawyers practicing outside the Wasatch Front.

In many of those communities, lawyers carry a wide range of responsibilities. They often work with fewer nearby resources and less margin for inefficiency. They are not on the sidelines of this Bar. They are central to its mission. And they deserve to feel that.

Another important part of our work is maintaining strong and credible communication with the Legislature. When laws are being considered that affect the courts, the justice system, or the practice of law, the Bar should continue to serve as a thoughtful and trusted voice. Public policy is stronger when it is informed by people who understand how those decisions play out in real life.

I am not here to promise dramatic change.

Most worthwhile work in an organization like this is steady work. It is incremental. It is collaborative. And it depends on lawyers across the state being willing to stay involved, speak up, and contribute their experience.

So, I hope you will stay engaged.

- Join a section.
- Serve where you can.
- Volunteer.
- Share your perspective.

The strength of the Utah State Bar has never come from any one office or any one board. It comes from the people in it, from lawyers who care about the profession and are willing to help move it forward.

Our profession continues to evolve. But it is still built on the same core principles it always has been: judgment, skill, service, and trust.

If we keep investing in relationships, practical training, and real support for lawyers across this state, the Bar will continue moving in the right direction — steadily, thoughtfully, and in a way that serves both the profession and the public.

Thank you for being here, and welcome to Spring Convention.