



The Atlanta Bar Association's 125th Year: Time to Celebrate

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The 125th year of the Atlanta Bar Association began on April 28, 2013, marking the anniversary of the founding of our organization in 1888. We are celebrating this year in fine fashion with a luncheon on February 25, 2014 at the Piedmont Driving Club. The guest speaker will be William Hubbard, the President-Elect of the American Bar Association. He will be introduced by former ABA President, William "Bill" Ide, who was recognized with the Rule of Law Champion Award by the ABA last year for his work in promoting the rule of law throughout the world.

One of the features of our association is that it is a democratic institution. It is democratic in the sense that our members select our leadership through election of those willing to serve. It is also democratic in the sense that it is made up of officers of the Court who have as one of their objectives the preservation of an independent judiciary, an essential branch of government. Thus, while we are not part of the government, we are a democratic institution that supports the rule of law that is essential to governing a free people.

There are now approximately 195 countries recognized in the world. Some of them, of course, are quite old, dating back thousands of years. Most of them, however, are much younger. By my count approximately 107 of the countries presently in the world were formed after 1888. This means that the Atlanta Bar Association is older than approximately 55 percent of the countries in the world—well over half.

Atlanta is a relatively young city (incorporated 1847), but you may be surprised to learn that our bar association is among the oldest in the United States. The American Bar Association was not founded until 1878, pre-dating our formation by only ten years. Boston's bar association incorporated in 1861, New York City's association formed in 1870, Washington D.C.'s started in 1871, and Chicago's began in 1874. Philadelphia, which claims to have the country's oldest bar association,

started in 1802. Savannah, which is the oldest city in our state (1733), did not form its bar association until 1917. Augusta dates its bar association to 1895.

Thus, we can take pride in the fact that our bar association is a democratic institution of long standing. This is an achievement that we should not take for granted. We share a long legacy of devotion to the public good, promotion of the growth and

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development of our city, and continued commitment to the rule of law. It is good and right that we should pause in the midst of our very busy and seemingly important endeavors to celebrate our beginnings, to remember from whence we came, and to marvel that our enterprise has so long endured. It is in this way that we can hope to continue the best that is within us. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "Continuity with the past is a necessity, not a duty." We celebrate because we need to do it, to remember who we are, and to prepare for that which we may yet become.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Wade", written in a cursive style.