

RES GESTAE

A man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a dark pinstripe suit, a white shirt, and a red and white patterned tie. He is standing in front of a body of water. In the background, there is a long bridge with multiple pillars, a white boat on the water, and a blue sign that says "FORT MYERS YACHT BASIN". The sky is blue with some light clouds.

2020 VISION

Matt Roepstorff's
presidential
agenda

Caffé Toscano dishes
out unforgettable meals



Happy New Year and welcome back! It's my extreme honor and privilege to serve as president for the Lee County Bar Association for 2020. To represent and lead this group of highly acclaimed and nationally-recognized judges, attorneys, advocates and support staff is a professional honor and a

responsibility that I humbly and gratefully accept.

While we advise our clients that we can never guarantee outcomes, you're going to like what the bar has to offer this year – guaranteed.

Attorneys play an integral role in drafting, shaping and implementing the laws and regulations under which we all live. We use our skill sets and training to advocate for those laws, regulations and policies that we believe are in the best interest of society. It is incumbent upon us to examine and openly discuss those policies which will greatly impact not only our clients, but our families, friends and neighbors.

I am excited to announce a full slate of upcoming and highly impactful presentations, panels and luncheons focused on topics which will be central to our profession and our daily lives. Beginning in February 2020, we will provide a forum for open and thorough discussion and education on topics including the new hemp industry in Florida, gun control legislation and its 2nd Amendment implications, Florida's constitutional amendment process and the legal challenge to voting rights restoration for felons, as well as the potential impacts of recreational marijuana.

The LCBA is no place for advancing political agendas, but to ignore these impactful issues and to retreat from potentially controversial discussions would be a missed opportunity. It is my hope all interested parties can join us for these events. I want to highlight and emphasize opening our informational and educational presentations to not only LCBA members, but other community leaders, guests, professionals, students and members of the public.

I truly look forward to what promises to be an exceptional year for the LCBA.

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Roepstorff Packs 2020 Agenda With Significant Issues

BY TOM HAYDEN

Major topics of conversation and concern that will shape 2020 and beyond are at the top of Matt Roepstorff's agenda and vision as he takes the reins as the new president of the Lee County Bar Association.

The hemp industry, felon voting rights, gun control, immigration and laws that govern lobbying efforts are among the topics Roepstorff will target during monthly LCBA luncheons, open to those in the legal professional and community stakeholders.

What drives his agenda is a desire to better communicate key issues that impact Bar members daily.

"The impetus for me, when I think of the Bar association is, No. 1, facilitate the advancement of the profession," said Roepstorff, who will be sworn in as the LCBA's 70th president on Jan. 24. "We advocate for our members for best policies and best practices.

"When you look at doing that, you look at policies that we deal with every day as attorneys and the questions we get from clients and potential clients. Any attorney will tell you they get questions like, 'hey, what is going on with this (issue)?' We need to be providing a forum to talk about those issues."

And he wants these issues to be discussed and debated, not just among those inside the legal profession but also those outside the law offices and

court rooms. That's why he wants to open the monthly luncheons to the public, so they can hear important information from industry experts.

"Because we are coming up on an election year with so many hot button issues, we would be remiss not to discuss these," said Roepstorff, of counsel with GrayRobinson, P.A. "I am certainly not trying to push an agenda, but there are a lot of issues that will significantly affect community. How can we not talk about it?"

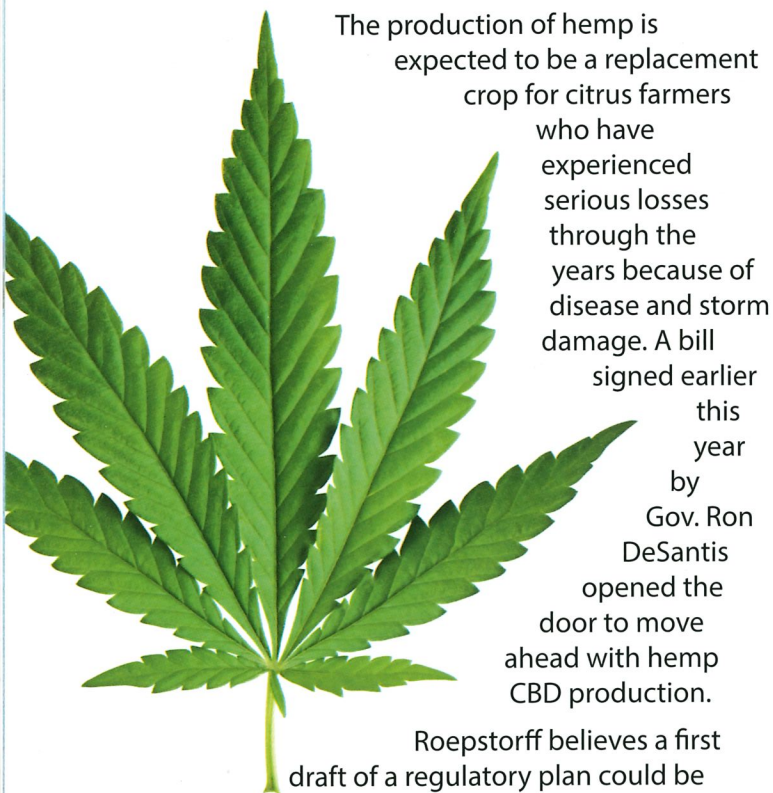
Added LCBA executive director Lauren Baugh: "I am excited about Matt's vision to focus on issues impacting the legal profession. I like the fact that it is something that promotes conversation among bar members on what we do."

Some of the key issues for Roepstorff and topics of the 2020 LCBA luncheons:

Hemp and its impact

"Hemp: The legal and economic ramifications" will be the topic of a panel discussion during the Feb. 21 LCBA luncheon. "It's going to be a topic which will affect many facets of our profession," Roepstorff said. "There is not only the economic impact, but the impact of the agricultural economy, and agriculture is huge for the Florida economy. The regulatory framing is unknown at this point."





The production of hemp is expected to be a replacement crop for citrus farmers who have experienced serious losses through the years because of disease and storm damage. A bill signed earlier this year by Gov. Ron DeSantis opened the door to move ahead with hemp CBD production.

Roepstorff believes a first draft of a regulatory plan could be before a Florida legislative committee in February. "That will give us a look at the possible framework for licensing, manufacturing and cultivating," he said. "And how we are going to implement this in the legal framework."

Compared with the passage of what he considers restrictive medical marijuana legislation, Roepstorff hopes hemp regulations will not be as confining. "I think this [CR1] administration will have the hemp business become available to all sizes of business ... and be much more widely available," he said.

Significant for the legal community will be enforcement of hemp use versus marijuana. "It will be the most prevalent issue to date on the criminal side for law enforcement in how to distinguish between hemp and marijuana," Roepstorff said. "They have a similar look in smell and appearance. It has caused a lot of frustration for law enforcement and the state attorney's office."

Adding to the legal dilemma will be the possibility recreational marijuana could become legal in Florida. An amendment, driven by a citizen's petition, could appear on the November ballot.

"A lot of larger firms dedicate entire practice areas to alcohol and beverage regulation to the point that alcohol and beverage sales are more heavily regulated than hemp at this point," Roepstorff said. "Certainly,

once hemp comes along, there will be a whole new set of regulations and you could see boutique firms and practice sections dedicated to hemp and marijuana."

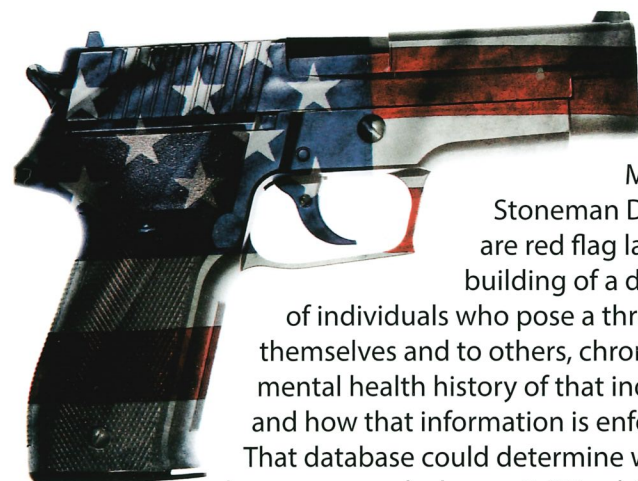
Anti-lobbying efforts

In 2018, Florida voters approved Amendment 12, which prohibits public officials from lobbying for compensation during that person's term in office and for six years after. Prior to Amendment 12 passing, the prohibition was two years.

A new bill could expand limitations and cripple workforce opportunities for ex-public officials. Roepstorff says new limitations could prohibit former elected officials for working for law firms who lobby for legislation or for public institutions, like universities or colleges that receive state funds.

"They are basically handcuffing their employment in the private sector," Roepstorff said. "I understand the nature of the bill, but it has gone too far at this point. I am in full agreement with the time buffer after they leave the legislature, but I don't like to see what amounts to a restriction of employment because a lot of the legislature is made up of attorneys."

Gun control



The growing issues post-

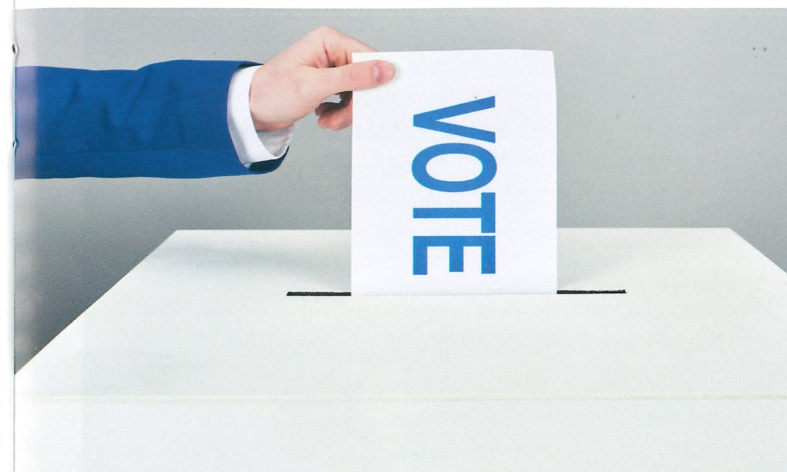
Marjory Stoneman Douglas are red flag laws, the building of a data base

of individuals who pose a threat to themselves and to others, chronicling a mental health history of that individual and how that information is enforced. That database could determine who can have a gun and who can't. "It's a big issue of due process, who decides the legal framework and who decides a gun should be taken from you or have your Second Amendment rights taken from you," Roepstorff said. "It's a very delicate balancing act."

"The main thing we want to push is not necessarily having an outcome on the deciding issue but keeping track of how the debate is progressing and how cases can be decided legally. The bar does not have a dog in

this fight, but we obviously have clients and we need to stay especially vigilant every step of the way."

Felon voting rights legislation



In 2018, Florida voters approved an amendment allowing the restoration of voting rights for felons who have served the full term of their sentence. An estimated 1.4 million people with felony convictions became eligible to vote. Legal battles have erupted over what is considered the full term of a sentence, many believing restitution is not a part of it.

"It's always so funny to me how an attorney can take the simplest of words and question the meaning," Roepstorff said. "In this case, what is the full term of a sentence before the restoration of rights?"

Roepstorff knows the debate about completion of terms will continue for some time, while ex-felons wait for the right to vote. "What's most important for the Bar is how fast we can get this resolved," he said. "And what the Supervisor of Elections does in the meantime."

Honoring the Bar

Roepstorff's aggressive and informational approach to issues impacting the Bar is drawn as much from his passion for the law but also his respect for colleagues.

"Protecting the reputation of the Bar. This is huge for me," Roepstorff said. "There are so many judges and members of the association I have the highest level of respect for. There is a lot of responsibility to do the best you can for the people who put their trust in you. I never want to do anything to hurt the reputation of the Bar."

Roepstorff also wants to look at ways to create associate LCBA members, so that people who are not necessarily involved in the legal profession, can join and participate in issues that impact communities. This would require a change in the bylaws by vote of the membership.

"I am hoping we can get this done this year," he said. "I want to start attracting those groups for our panels and lunches."

His overall mission is simple: "I want our membership to feel like they are getting good value for their dues, the best value for their membership." RG

Roepstorff's 2020 Agenda



(Issues tentatively set to be discussed during monthly luncheons)

February: Hemp

March: Anti-lobbying laws

April: Gun control

May: Immigration and sanctuary cities

June: Healthcare funding and drug imports

July: Certificate of need repeal for hospitals

August: Amendment 4 - Restoration of felon voting rights

September: Cancellation of student loan debt

October: Smoking and vaping