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Laura Farber will be the ABA's first Latina president. For now, she's listening.

The Pasadena employment lawyer declined to talk about criticisms of the ABA but said she hoped to spend time listening to the needs of America's lawyers

By David Houston

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Laura Farber will inherit leadership of the American Bar Association at a pivotal moment.

The Pasadena employment lawyer was sworn in Tuesday as president-elect of the nation's largest voluntary bar organization just as it finds itself embroiled in fights over law school accreditation, diversity initiatives, judicial independence and the legal profession's response to President Donald Trump's executive orders targeting major law firms.

Farber, however, said she intends to spend the next year listening rather than speaking for the organization.

"One person represents the ABA and that's our president," Farber said in an interview with the Daily Journal. "After our annual conference next year ... I'll answer questions."

That restraint comes as Congressional Republicans have questioned the organization's accreditation standards for law schools and its diversity initiatives, and while several states have explored alternatives to relying exclusively on ABA accreditation. At the same time, the ABA has continued to be a leading voice on rule-of-law issues, suing the Trump administration over executive orders targeting several prominent law firms.

Farber, a partner at Hahn & Hahn LLP in Pasadena, was elected Tuesday by the ABA's 535-member House of Delegates during the organization's annual meeting in Chicago. She will serve for one year alongside ABA President Barbara J. Howard, a family law practitioner in Cincinnati, before becoming the ABA's 151st president in August 2027 — and the first Latina to lead the organization.

Farber will also be the first California lawyer to lead the organization since San Francisco



Laura Farber of Hahn & Hahn LLP in Pasadena
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attorney Robert D. Raven served as ABA president in 1988-89.

In an interview Thursday, Farber declined to discuss ABA policy but did talk about the leadership style she hopes to bring to the role.

"I'll be talking, but mostly listening," she said. "So that I can hear from lawyers all over the country what matters, what they need and what we need to be doing to support that. That is our number one goal in the ABA — to serve our members."

In her acceptance speech before the House of Delegates, Farber outlined four priorities for the coming year: serving members, strengthening the legal profession, eliminating bias while advancing diversity, and defending the rule of law.

"Our work ahead is grounded in four goals," she said. "These are not separate lanes. They are one promise: to build a strong, broad and united profession to defend our Constitution, increase access to justice, and fight for our democracy and the rule of law."

Farber's own path to the presidency began long before she entered the legal profession.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, she immigrated to the United States as a child after her scientist parents came to California for postdoctoral research. Growing up in Monterey Park, she said her family's experience shaped both her understanding of democracy and her decision to become a lawyer.

"I wanted to be a lawyer because I wanted to focus on things that were important based on what my parents had shared about what we came to this country for," she said. "A lot of it had to do with the freedoms and the Bill of Rights and what this country represents."

Farber graduated from UCLA before earning her law degree at Georgetown University and has spent her career at Hahn & Hahn, where she practices employment and commercial litigation. Unlike many employment lawyers, she represents both employers and employees, saying she enjoys helping clients avoid litigation as much as trying cases.

She traces her involvement with the ABA to the organization's Young Lawyers Division after first becoming active with the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Barristers section.

"I realized, wow, I could actually meet people from all over the country and start thinking about ways to advocate and support the profession," she said. "I do believe that having a national voice can be impactful, and I wanted to be part of that effort."

Farber said one of the profession's greatest responsibilities is developing its next generation of lawyers.

"I think the biggest challenge for young lawyers is figuring out how to stay engaged in the profession," she said. "Finding mentors is hugely, hugely important."

She said law firms and bar organizations alike should create opportunities for younger attorneys to gain practical experience and build professional relationships, something she said she believes has become more important as fewer cases proceed to trial.

Farber also said she sees artificial intelligence as a tool rather than a threat.

"I don't see it replacing lawyers," she said. "I think it's only going to enhance the practice."

Although she acknowledged that the cost of legal education remains a challenge for many aspiring attorneys, she said students should focus on finding the law school that best fits their goals and take advantage of available financial assistance whenever possible.

Outside the legal profession, Farber is perhaps best known in Southern California for serving as president of the Tournament of Roses Association for the 2020 Rose Parade and Rose Bowl Game before chairing the Rose Bowl Management Committee.



Courtesy photo

She also emphasized the symbolic significance of becoming the ABA's first Latina president.

"I'll be the first Latina president," she said. "I'm thrilled that this profession ... reflects our beautiful community."

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