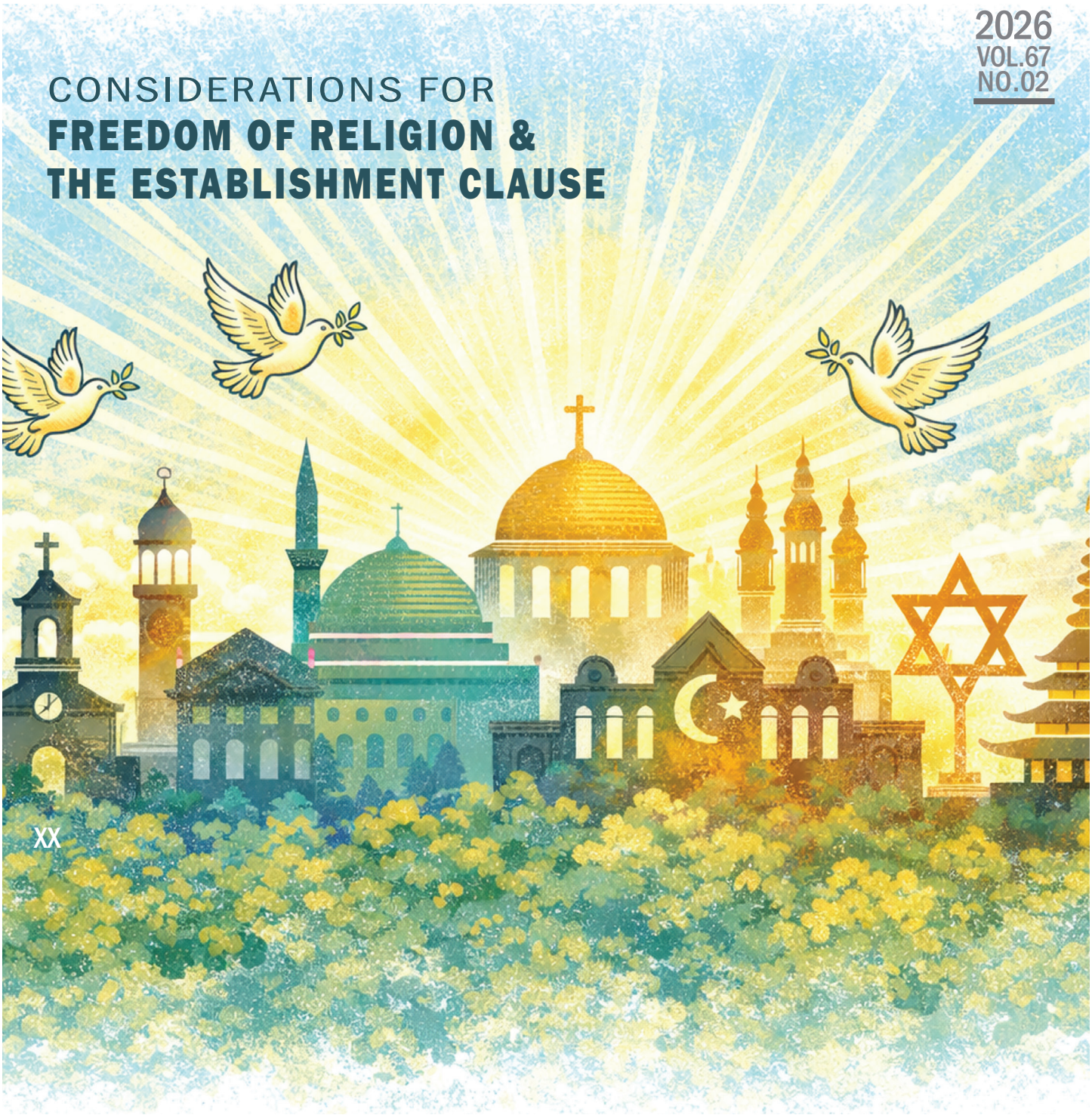
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CONSIDERATIONS FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION & THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE



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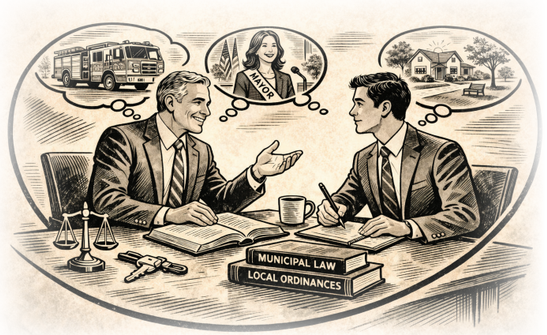
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MENTOR'S CORNER

Advice I Would Give My Younger Self

This Mentor's Corner is provided to you by the mentors from the following cities: Nathan M. Nickolaus, Of Counsel, Lauber Municipal Law; Chris Balch, Balch Law Group; Mandana D. Vidwan, Senior Assistant City Attorney, City of Charlotte, North Carolina; Marion C. Moore, Chief Assistant Corporation Counsel, Special Federal Litigation, City of Chicago Department of Law; Jeannine Williams, Chief Assistant City Attorney, City of St. Petersburg, Florida; Shaun Jacobs, Supervising Assistant City Attorney, Los Angeles, California; and Leann Guzman, Fort Worth, Texas.



They say the best experience to learn from is someone else's experience. To help newer practitioners of municipal law do just that, we share below some advice from our IMLA Mentor Team. They were asked, "If you could go back to when you were newly practicing as a municipal attorney and give yourself some advice, what would it be?"

Nathan M. Nickolaus, Of Counsel, Lauber Municipal Law: "My biggest regret is not joining my state association and IMLA earlier. I really did not realize how unique municipal law is, and as a result, I assumed a lot of things that turned out not to be correct. I also missed out on the opportunity to get help and guidance from my fellow municipal attorneys."

Chris Balch, Balch Law Group: "If I had advice for that young lawyer from 30+ years ago, now it would be find someone in the practice area that you respect and don't be afraid to ask them questions, to use them as a sounding board, and to learn all you can from them. Those I met in litigation over the years taught me all I know, but nowhere near all that they know. Be a sponge. Learn from others. You'll never know it all, and that's okay."

Mandana D. Vidwan, Senior Assistant City Attorney, City of Charlotte, North Carolina: "I would try harder to network with attorneys around the state and country. I've recently become better at networking and have found so much value in meeting new people and picking their brains."

"Don't be afraid to spend time researching and learning what you need to know to become an effective municipal lawyer"

Marion C. Moore, Chief Assistant Corporation Counsel, Special Federal Litigation, City of Chicago Department of Law: "My advice would be to take advantage of the very cool experiences you get to have as a municipal attorney: attending a police training course, touring a water plant or firehouse, getting an inside look at the airport, seeing what the 911 call center looks like - and really talking with the people who work there. Hands-on learning about all of the things a municipality does makes you not only a better attorney and better equipped to represent the municipality in court, but a better citizen. This also counts for going to observe your colleagues in court. You have at your fingertips the ability to observe incredibly experienced attorneys arguing all sorts of cases in all sorts of venues - do it! Opportunities like this are unique to working for a municipality. It is worth the time to do this, even if it means you end up having to stay late to finish up discovery responses, briefing, etc."

Jeannine Williams, Chief Assistant City Attorney, City of St. Petersburg, Florida: "I would advise myself to prioritize self-care. As young lawyers, we tend to focus heavily on our work and less on our own physical, mental, and spiritual health. It is imperative to prioritize spending time with family and friends, nutrition, exercise, mental health, and spiritual grounding. Our ability to serve our clients effectively depends on it."

Shaun Jacobs, Supervising Assistant City Attorney, Los Angeles, California: "Don't be afraid to spend time researching and learning what you need to know to become an effective municipal lawyer, and focus on what you need to do to move your case closer to trial, MSJ, or settlement. Especially for the attorneys directly employed by their municipality (as opposed to a firm). This advice is two-fold. In private practice, especially as a young attorney, I was always worried if I was taking too much time on a task, researching, writing a brief, etc. In government, you just put how much time it takes and don't cut your time. You have time to learn, research, etc., what you need to be effective.

"Secondly, the corollary to this is that since you work for the government and don't have to meet a billable hour requirement, focus on the work that will get you closer to your goal of getting a case dismissed (on the civil side) or to trial. So, for example, don't file a motion to dismiss or summary judgment for the sake of filing a motion to dismiss or motion for summary judgment. If you can get rid of a cause of action (or ideally the whole case), it will be worth it. If it just educates the plaintiff on what is wrong with the case, and they will amend anyway and fix the problem, it might not be worth the time. Be efficient and targeted with your work." ML

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