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Bloomington, Lafayette attorneys honored by ISBA

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Attorneys from opposite ends of the state were honored for their contributions to the legal profession Friday during the Indiana State Bar Association Solo/Small Firm Conference.

Joseph D. O'Connor, an attorney with Bunger & Robertson in Bloomington, and Jack L. Walkey of Ball Eggleston P.C. in Lafayette each received the GP Hall of Fame Award from the ISBA's General Practice, Solo & Small Firm Section. The award "honors outstanding contributions to clients, the legal profession and the community."

O'Connor is a mediator who works in family law and civil litigation. Walkey concentrates his practice on family estate and tax planning issues. Both men are members of state, local and national bar associations, including the American Bar Association, and serve on the boards of multiple organizations in their local communities.

Additionally, both O'Connor and Walkey have worked at their firms throughout their careers, both starting as clerks during law school.

Neither O'Connor nor Walkey were able to attend the Friday night awards ceremony in their honor, but both submitted videos thanking the bar for recognizing their work.

Also on Friday, current ISBA President Todd Spurgeon praised the Solo/Small Firm Conference for promoting collegiality, networking and CLE opportunities. As a practitioner at the mid-sized firm of Kightlinger & Gray, Spurgeon said he had never attended the conference before, but is now a "convert" who plans to come back frequently.

Spurgeon offered specific praise for the conference committee planners and the ISBA staff, joking that they are going to take "a whole week off" before starting to plan the 2020 conference later this month. Their work, he said, creates an atmosphere that feels more like a family reunion than a gathering of lawyers.

But the conference also included time for business. The Board of Governors met for a budget meeting on Friday and came out with what Spurgeon described as the closest version to a balanced budget the bar has created in about five years.

"I think it's the best one we've put forward in quite a while," Spurgeon said of the budget.

The Solo/Small Firm Conference was attended by lawyers from all parts of the state and all practice areas. Attendees ranged from law students to all five justices of the Indiana Supreme Court. That, according to Spurgeon, is what gives the conference its strength.

“I think it’s a really good example of how bar associations and committees and sections of the bar association can show how we advocate for our profession, how we make each other better lawyers, how we can make each other better people through the programs we put on and through the networking we do,” he said. “And this is from the law students to the senior lawyers to judges to solo practitioners, and even some medium-sized firms, folks like me.”