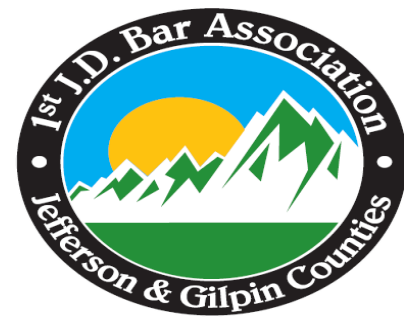


# PROCLAMATION

## First Judicial District Bar Association



### MISSION STATEMENT

The purposes of the Association shall be to enhance the practice of law within Gilpin and Jefferson County, to promote professionalism and the administration of justice, to encourage legal education, to uphold the honor and dignity of the bar, to cultivate cordial relations among the legal communities of the 1st Judicial District, to perpetuate the history of the profession and the memory of its members, to facilitate and improve the provision of legal services to the community, and to administer the budget for professional, social and community-oriented purposes.



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### OCTOBER 2024

Presidents Column

Unravel the Gavel –  
A virtual CLE chat

Member Profile Veronica Gonzales

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**ALAN HENDRIX**

## PRESIDENTS COLUMN

"Membership, well we are only three columns in and already your President has gotten lazy and is now doing what lawyers do best; plagiarize. Right? Citing quotes from precedent, court orders and persuasive briefs.

Just a little foreword here, with the remainder from an excellent article, in the June 2024, *Colorado Serenity, Colorado Premier Lifestyles Magazine*, distributed in Jefferson County with pick up sites in Conifer, El Rancho, Genesee, Evergreen, Kittridge, and mailed delivery to home addresses in those vicinities. This article by Stephen Knapp titled "Don't Go There" is being reprinted in its entirety with permission and is, given the political season, extremely timely. Without further ado. ***Please see the article on page 3.***





# Don't Go There

## By Stephen Knapp

Excellent article in the June 2024, *Colorado Serenity, Colorado Premier Lifestyles Magazine*, reprinted in its entirety with permission

*You can't reason someone out of something that they weren't reasoned into in the first place.*

Mark Twain

**Smart people say** that smart people don't argue politics with friends, but that's not entirely true. Smart people don't argue politics with anybody.

In theory, argument presupposes that both sides are receptive. In reality, nobody ever changed their political stripes on the strength of conversation, and anybody who thinks they can beat that fact is not smart. Even so, with another election cycle hard upon us, we're all doomed to ride a strident cyclone of squabbling scolds spouting gouts of sound and fury signifying only that smug preconceptions are impervious to debate.

It's not that people can't change their minds. Lee or Levis. Coke or Pepsi. "60 Minutes" or "Father Brown." We're a fickle crew by nature. And yet when talk turns to topics like politics and religion, to include related doctrines like environmentalism, humanism and social equity, we quite ferociously don't want to know any more than we already know.

**"We don't want to believe it, so we don't. The brain is great like that."**

If that's shallow, it's also an impulse deeply rooted in our individual and collective psyches. It's the opinion of psychology that our world-views begin emerging shortly after we do, and they're continuously molded and reinforced by our particular social environments. By adulthood, our opinions on just about every big-ticket topic have hardened into personal identity. What we think about immigration and gun control aren't merely viewpoints, they're cornerstones of our good character, proof of our moral rectitude, solid anchors in a turbulent world.

More than that, our beliefs define our group identity. We're social creatures, after all, instinctively looking to the tribe for protection, and shared values provide a sense of safety and belonging. "We Believe" signs and "MAGA" hats aren't campaign gear, they're clan totems, badges of membership. Disloyalty feels dangerous, defection unthinkable.

That's why, in the opinion of neuroscience, facts are pretty much useless in political debate. When someone questions our judgment on a controversial subject, even nicely, maybe even inadvertently, it feels like a personal attack, an insult to our virtue, a threat to our sense of security, of affinity, of self. We respond defensively, digging in deeper, which is why political argument so often ends in raised voices and broken boards.

**"...in the opinion of neuroscience, facts are pretty much useless in political debate."**

Presented with facts inconsistent with our beliefs, we experience the uncomfortable phenomenon of cognitive dissonance. To restore psychological symmetry, we employ cognitive bias, quickly, easily, almost subconsciously disregarding or discrediting inharmonious information. It's a self-protective mechanism stamped into our DNA, and it's how we can get excited about candidates we know to be skunks. We don't want to believe it, so we don't. The brain is great like that.

Words may be helpless before preconceptions, but some people can't help themselves. Arguing is in their blood. For what it's worth, there's a tactic or three that might hold out a fighting chance to change an intractable mind.

Give them an out. The only thing the argumentative hate worse than being contradicted is losing, and they'll collapse into nervous catalepsy before they'll admit they're wrong. Rather than ridiculing their position, acknowledge it as reasonable under different circumstances. Their belief is perfectly valid, see, just impractical under prevailing conditions through no fault of their own. This may or may not resolve their cognitive dissonance on the front end, opening a channel for real communication.

Don't make it personal. A sharp advocate doesn't frame the debate in terms of what "I think" or "I know" or "I saw on a cable news channel." As much as possible, make it about what somebody else, anybody else, thinks, knows, or saw on TV. If that will do little to improve credibility, it might do a lot to head off a nasty grudge match.

Feel their pain. When someone becomes emotionally invested in their opinion on, say, the future of the penny, it can feel to them like the future of the penny is critical to their own health and happiness. Commiserate. Admire their passion. Share their angst. When the "but" comes they may take it better coming from someone they consider sympathetic.

Study up. True, facts won't win the day, but they may shake an opponent's resolve. Psychologists have identified a curious condition they call, deep breath, the "illusion of explanatory depth." Most people think they know a lot more about most topics than they really do. Half a magazine article in the dentist's office or half an hour chatting over appetizers with the crowd from the office, and they're experts on fracking, pharmacology and the First Amendment. The trick here is not to ask why one thinks what he does, but how what he thinks would work in practice. Make him explain his reasoning, support the thin veneer of his opinion. Odds are the emperor will quickly discover himself starkers, which is when a few deftly inserted facts may induce him to question his stance. Not checkmate, but he'll have lost his queen.

People almost never change their minds on controversial issues, but when they do, it's usually for one of two reasons: The first is fear. Selling ideas on fear is cynical, destructive and really effective. If Gen Z is hummed out all the time, it's because both sides of virtually every controversy promise certain doom if they don't get their way.

The second, sigh, is resignation. We may hate an idea, but when that idea becomes law and there's no longer a single thing we can do about it, many people will simply decide to stop hating it and look for reasons to like it. It's another of Nature's home remedies for cognitive dissonance.

Smart people avoid political argument assiduously, but they also know that there are plenty of, er, other people who won't make it easy. Facing yet another interminable, insufferable and unwinnable dispute, smart people steer into safer waters. Creamy smooth? Or crunchy?

*I am quite sure now that often, very often, in matters concerning religion and politics, a man's reasoning powers are not above the monkey's.*

—Samuel Clemens



**FIRST JD BAR ASSOCIATION  
Virtual CLE  
Thursday, November 21, 2024  
12:00 pm—1:00pm**

***UNRAVEL THE GAVEL:*  
1ST JD CHAT SERIES WITH  
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**Featuring District Court Judges**

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<https://1stjd.org/events/#!event/2024/11/21/unravel-the-gavel-1st-jd-chat-series-with-members-of-the-1st-jd-bench-virtual-event>

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT VERONICA GONZALES

Veronica Gonzales is one of the first Licensed Legal Paraprofessionals (LLP) licensed to practice Family Law on a limited basis in Colorado. She is with Juniper Family Law working with attorney Louisa Schlieben in Old Town Arvada. Veronica earned an Associate's degree of General Studies and a Paralegal certificate from the Community College of Denver in 2002, she then went on to graduate from the University of Colorado at Denver with a bachelor's degree in Sociology with a Law Studies minor in 2007.

Veronica started her career right out of high school as a legal assistant/paralegal for a court appointed attorney practicing Juvenile law including Dependency and Neglect, Delinquency, Truancy and some domestic relations private cases. She worked in that field for four years. For the following 16 years of her career, Veronica worked for an attorney practicing Workers' Compensation defense. When the Workers' Compensation attorney she worked for retired in 2018, Veronica decided to make her way back to Family Law. Veronica took the LLP exam, April 30, 2024, passed and was sworn in by the Supreme Court of Colorado on June 20, 2024. She became one of the first Licensed Legal Paraprofessionals in Colorado. Veronica currently practices as an LLP and is working to build her practice. Louisa continues to be very supportive of Veronica and the LLP profession. Louisa has been a mentor and offers her knowledge and expertise to teach Veronica everything she needs to know to be successful as a LLP.

Veronica is working to make sure the LLP Profession grows and flourishes by joining bar associations, networking, getting involved in the Family Law community, volunteering with Metro Volunteer Lawyers and doing all she can to help promote the LLP profession. Veronica will continue to practice law as an LLP for many years to come. Veronica endeavors to provide the utmost professional representation to all clients.

She has a 20-year-old daughter who she raised on her own, so she has personal experience with the trials and tribulations of a single parent. She can fully empathize with her clients who are transitioning to single parenthood. In addition to her career, Veronica has a very full personal life and enjoys being active and socializing with family and friends.



Veronica Gonzales (she/her)  
Licensed Legal Paraprofessional  
(LLP)  
Juniper Family Law, LLC  
7718 Grandview Avenue  
Arvada, CO 80002  
p: 720.800.9991  
e: [Veronica@JuniperFamilyLaw.com](mailto:Veronica@JuniperFamilyLaw.com)

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## 2024 1st JD Bar Association Golf Event for the benefit of CASA



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A special thank you to Dennis Polk of Holley Albertson Polk, P.C. for his individual contribution.



**TOP MVL VOLUNTEER FROM  
THE 1ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
Alan Hendrix**

This year, Metro Volunteer Lawyers is recognizing volunteers whose time and effort make our goal of increasing access to justice possible!

We are excited to announce that ALAN HENDRIX has been selected as our top MVL volunteer for the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District.

Congratulations and thank you so much for all your continued volunteer work with MVL. We would not be able to increase access to justice in our community without your help.

MVL is hosting an event to recognize and celebrate the amazing work of our volunteer attorneys through MVL's various volunteer opportunities. The event details are below.

**MVL Volunteer Appreciation Event**

October 24, 2024,  
4:30pm-6:30pm  
Colorado Bar Association  
1290 Broadway, Suite 1700  
Denver, CO 80203

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You are invited to the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**Joy of Giving**  
Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 pm



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Register here

[https://events.handbid.com/auctions/2024-joy-of-giving?blm\\_aid=25482](https://events.handbid.com/auctions/2024-joy-of-giving?blm_aid=25482)