

DAY IN THE LIFE

CURATED BY PATRICIA D. CAFFERATA, ESQ.

Balance Key to Managing Duties as Lawyer, City Council Member

By Devon T. Reese, Esq.

I've been a lawyer now for 20 years; I guess time flies when you are having fun! I've been helping people and advocating on behalf of those in need for as long as I can remember. In 2019, I was appointed to a new "helper" role and now have the privilege of serving as the city of Reno's at-large representative on the city council. I am also the vice mayor.

Some people think serving on the city council is a part-time job. No way! In addition to my role on the council, I also serve on more than 10 other boards and commissions. Thankfully, my colleagues on the council and the mayor share the same work ethic and commitment to the city that I do. My workweek is typically packed full of meetings and voluminous readings, which law school prepared me well to handle. I couldn't be busier, but my life couldn't be more fulfilled.

My transition to being a lawyer and councilmember involved an inevitable learning curve. Thankfully, I have lots of support in my life. I couldn't succeed in serving my clients without the support of one of the largest and most successful law firms in Nevada. The team at Hutchison & Steffen allows me to best represent Reno citizens while



also serving the needs of my clients and friends. Without other trusted lawyers at my firm, I couldn't provide the level of service to my clients that they deserve. It would be hard to be a solo practitioner and an elected member of city council, although my mentor and friend, Pierre Hascheff, was one of the finest at both.

The key is balance. All lawyers need to stay highly organized and understand how to manage their time. Clients suffer when we are in disarray. Now that I have multiple calendars—and often overlapping obligations—I make certain to ensure that my priorities are clear and that my calendar is set every day. That said, we don't always have the ability to control our own time because things change moment to moment. I try to maintain an element of flexibility so that I can adjust my schedule when needed and make sure I have time to give my family the love and support they deserve.

One surprise for me as I made the transition to being an attorney and a councilmember is the

number of conflicts that could arise. As lawyers, we naturally have a keen sense of conflicts, having studied them extensively in law school. We are trained to prepare and think constantly about conflicts in our professional life. For me, this means I now must be more selective about the clients and matters I work on to avoid an overlap at odds with my duties to my constituents and my clients.

I'm often asked if I miss being "just a lawyer." Not really. I sometimes miss being in the trenches everyday with the great litigators at my firm. Thankfully, I still have the opportunity to do both. I get to be deeply involved with the direction Reno is going when I'm wearing my city council hat. And I get to jump back in the trenches when my clients need it when I'm wearing my lawyer hat. It's the best of both worlds, and I count my blessings every day.

I highly encourage members of the State Bar of Nevada to become active in public service in whatever manner you can. If life takes you into politics, being a lawyer gives you an awesome set of tools that can be used to help folks navigate sometimes difficult waters. Above all else, remember "service above self."

DEVON T. REESE is the at-large Reno City Councilmember. He currently serves as vice mayor. He is also a local attorney and primarily practices civil litigation with the statewide law firm of Hutchison & Steffen. He represents labor unions, small government entities, businesses and families. He graduated in 1996 from the University of Missouri, Kansas City. He received his law degree in 2000 from the University of Kansas.

