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CONSUMER ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES

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Looking to 2021

POSITIVE CHANGES TO CAALA ARE OVERDUE AND NECESSARY

CAALA changed a lot in 2020, but its membership didn't. That is good news for us as we move past the year like no other.

There is no doubt that CAALA is different today than it was when the pandemic hit. Overnight, we went from an association driven by in-person events to a community separated but connected. And now that we have had time to take a closer look, that's a good thing for CAALA and a good thing for CAALA's members.

Last March, we had no idea that COVID-19 would ravage the country and cripple the economy. No one could predict that those events would also paralyze the courts and the legal community. We did not know what those events would mean for CAALA's membership, the lifeblood of our Association.

Membership holds steady, more young attorneys

By the end of the year, Liz Hagan, CAALA's Director of Membership and Programs, was pleased to announce that our membership numbers are about the same as before the pandemic hit. Even more exciting is that by the end of the year we had a significant increase in new members and 60 percent of those are attorneys in their first five years of practice. The past year has reinforced many things we believe regarding membership.

Sarah Sladek is a respected marketing and media professional who has researched and written extensively about associations and non-profit organizations. In September she wrote something that could have been about CAALA:

"When the pandemic hit, associations did everything they could to serve members and help the communities, businesses and industries in crisis. Associations had to react quickly to shift events, communities, offices, and operations online. The pandemic was a shock, but in certain aspects change was long overdue and necessary. Associations had become dependent on live events as a major source of revenue. For many, the

pendulum had shifted away from member-centric missions to focus on event-based revenues."

She went on to say something that CAALA subscribes to now more than ever: "What really matters, what influences an association's bottom line more than anything, is membership. An investment into member benefits, community-building, and service is, and will always be, the best investment your association can make."

This is not a new approach for CAALA, but in 2020 we expanded our membership programs and adapted to the pandemic quickly with positive changes.

Moving from a passive resource to an active one

The week that the pandemic hit, we moved from in-person education events to online and remote learning. The participation was outstanding, averaging more than 200 attendees for each program. By the end of the year, we had presented 75 online education programs compared to two dozen education programs the year before. We pivoted from in-person meetings to online ones and saw attendance go up dramatically. We went from being a passive resource to a very active one, sending regular member emails with important news and updates about the courts and the pandemic. We provided business partner resources to help members deal with the challenges of working remotely.

CAALA has long offered powerful list serves that are available to all members. They are our most important benefit of membership. During the pandemic, list serve volume skyrocketed, making them the largest of any trial lawyer association in the nation. More than 40 million list serve messages were sent and received by CAALA members in 2020.

For CAALA to succeed, we must build on the things we did to help our association and our members survive 2020. That starts with listening to members.

Sladek says the successful association is "member-centric, responsive to the

needs of the members, always prioritizing access to exceptional member benefits and experiences. She adds that the "association has systems in place to actively engage the participation of new people and cultivate new ideas."

As we move into a new year, CAALA promises to listen to you and to understand what you want from us.

Research firm to conduct member survey

We will begin the year by conducting a comprehensive member-needs survey conducted by Loyalty Research Center, one of the nation's leading research companies specializing in associations and non-profit organizations. The company will be reaching out to members this month and we strongly urge you to respond to the emails and participate in the survey so your voice can be heard.

CAALA has also updated the look and feel of our website to make it easier to navigate. The website has many resources available 24/7. A new resource is the CAALA Video Library that features short presentations by CAALA members about issues relevant to members and their practices.

There are other ways that we will be listening to members this year. We have created portals on the CAALA website for members to tell us they want to be a speaker or moderator at a CAALA event. There is also a portal so we can learn who wants to volunteer to be a part of one of CAALA's major committees: Education, Membership, New Lawyers, Diversity and Inclusion, Political Affairs or Wellness.

We will continue to invite any CAALA member to attend meetings of the Board of Governors by Zoom video conference. We want all members to participate if they choose. Committee meetings such as Education are also Zoom video conferences.

Listening to our members, better communication, and more remote resources: three things that came out of 2020 that will benefit CAALA and its members. 📧