



CAALA President

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Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth

COVID MOVES THE GALA TO MARCH, AND A CALL FOR CIVILITY IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES

I have set forth a bold agenda to guide us for the next year and beyond in all aspects of our association – Education, CAALA Vegas, Document Bank and Video Library, List Serves, Political Action, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Civility, Adequate Court Funding, and Independence of the Judiciary. That agenda was shaped in large part by the opportunity occasioned by the pause of the global pandemic and how we could use it to reimagine CAALA while staying true to our core values. Baked into that agenda was the glimmer of hope as the world started to open up following higher vaccination rates and lower COVID rates. But the Omicron variant had other plans.

Mike Tyson famously said, “Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.” That quote is a reminder that it’s not about your plans as much as what you do *after* you get punched in the mouth. Well, that is exactly what has happened with the Omicron variant.

Now more than ever, CAALA has to show resiliency and flexibility in how we continue to be the indispensable resource to your plaintiff’s practice. While we understand the importance of in-person events – and the community that results from those interactions – that needs to be balanced with safely running our association. With that in mind, CAALA’s Executive Committee, comprised of its Officers and three most recent Past Presidents, along with CAALA’s staff, met virtually on an emergency basis on January 4. As a result of that meeting, we rescheduled the CAALA Gala from January 15 to March 19. We also moved all January in-person programming to virtual, or rescheduled January events to later in the year. As I said to the Executive Committee, flexibility will be our mantra.

And that resiliency and flexibility is exactly what we need to successfully navigate these trying times on behalf of our clients. We have been working closely

with the Los Angeles Superior Court leadership as they do their best to keep the courthouse doors open. CAALA’s relationship with the court is stronger than it has ever been as we strive to be the court’s number one justice partner. As an association, we are doing all we can to support the court.

Civility in the time of COVID-19

Given this reality, it bears repeating what I said in my last column about the importance of one of CAALA’s core values, “Civility has always been important to our profession. It is now essential with COVID backlogs in court and the reduced ability to move matters to trial. Courts simply aren’t available to resolve disputes that counsel are fully capable of resolving themselves. Practicing civility is perhaps the single most important thing we can do to assist the courts right now. As leaders of the plaintiffs’ bar, civility should be our calling card.”

Executive Committee

Undeterred, CAALA’s Executive Committee and staff met virtually again the entire afternoon (and then some) of January 11; not just to go about the business of CAALA, but to take a deep dive into how we can take an association that is already great and make it even better. As just a sampling, we are installing more robust governance, including creating a CAALA General Counsel position, formalizing Executive Committee Members as liaisons to each of CAALA’s outstanding committees, updating or creating policies for greater clarity, and building out an entirely new website and mobile website to allow for great content and more robust searching capabilities. We are increasing diversity, equity and inclusion in all we do, creating new educational programming, revamping Plaintiffs Trial Academy (PTA), expanding revenue generation from

vendors and sponsors, expanding the Resolve Law Los Angeles Virtual MSC Program for personal-injury cases to include employment cases, enhancing efforts to oppose the State Bar paraprofessional program and to defeat contingency-fee caps, and exploring ways to have greater engagement of both new and long-time members.

The content derived from this meeting was outstanding, but perhaps what was most notable was the incredible energy that each of the Executive Committee members have for this undertaking – so much so that by the time you read this column, the Executive Committee will have met again for an entire afternoon to continue this endeavor, and the full Board of Governors will have had a full-day working meeting to begin the process of formalizing CAALA’s short-, mid- and long-range strategic plan. That strategic plan will not be static; it will be developed throughout the year and refined even further at another full-day Board of Governors working meeting in November. By then, the world could look very different than it does today. Regardless, CAALA is not content to have a business-as-usual approach now or moving forward.

As with how we are forced to represent our clients in these challenging times, CAALA has the grit to persevere on behalf of its members. With the input of many hard-working leaders, we’ve got a well-thought-out plan that will continue to evolve – whether we get punched in the mouth or not.

As always, I invite you to contact me at any time (dsilverstein@californialaborlawattorney.com) with questions or ideas on how CAALA can better serve you. I look forward to being of service as your 2022 President.

