



From the President
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THE BERTCH FIRM



A BIG Night

THE OCTLA INSTALLATION AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Last month, I boldly declared that OCTLA's theme for 2024 is "Go Big!" I outlined what it meant to go big, provided practical steps for going big, and challenged each member of OCTLA to try a case to jury verdict. One month into this year, I can proudly report that we are off to a BIG start.

We kicked off the year with our first marquee event, our annual Installation of Officers and Directors and Awards Ceremony on January 13, 2024, held at the Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach. Over 300 attorneys, judges, mediators and affiliate members attended in support of our officers, directors and award winners. The audience was further decorated by more than two dozen elected public officials, political candidates, sitting and retired judges, OCTLA past presidents and OCTLA past Top Gun winners. Friends, families and long-time supporters of OCTLA alike were also in attendance.

During the event, Immediate Past President Lindsey Aitken provided a year-in-review for 2023 and received an official Certificate of Recognition from Senator Tom Umberg for her outstanding leadership in 2023. Wylie Aitken then introduced (roasted) Judge of the Year honoree, Honorable Lon F. Hurwitz. The room was filled with laughter as Judge Hurwitz took the stage to deliver an invigorating and inspired acceptance speech, challenging us all to remain steadfast in the fight for justice for our clients.

OCTLA President-Elect Aaron Hicks then introduced (roasted) me before I took the stage to be sworn in and deliver my Incoming President's speech. Past OC-ABOTA President, the Honorable Robert Moss, (Ret.) swore me in followed by swearing in the Officers and Directors.

In my speech, I outlined more concretely my vision for "Going Big" in 2024. First, I proudly announced that OCTLA was making a greater commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by establishing a standing DEI committee, who will create a DEI Commitment to Diversity Statement for OCTLA and will ensure that each committee promotes DEI in furtherance of OCTLA's mission.

Second, I reiterated that OCTLA will place an emphasis on increasing the number of jury trials tried by our members. I encouraged experienced and new attorneys to connect with each other and collaborate on cases. I encouraged the more experienced attorneys to invite younger attorneys to second-chair a trial with them. I encouraged the younger attorneys to seek out a more experienced attorney to learn from.

Third, I emphasized that 2024 is a big year politically because it is a presidential election year. Now, more than ever, we need people in office who understand the challenges facing consumers and consumer attorneys. If we can do these three things, improve our commitment to DEI, try more cases to verdict, and get consumer

advocates into public office, 2024 will be a big success.

The night drew to a close with the after party. A hot coffee, espresso and churro bar, live music from blues musician Brother Yusef, photo booth (and more open bar) awaited our attendees as they mingled and enjoyed a night cap. By all measures, the event was a resounding success. Significantly, the success of this event would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors, who contributed an *all-time high* in sponsorships for Installation!

Finally, I want to recognize and congratulate OCTLA member James Perry on receiving the Member of the Year award for his dedication to our organization last year. I also want to congratulate past OCTLA Young Gun award winner Geoff Rill on receiving Board Member of the Year award for his outstanding commitment and leadership last year, where he served as chair of the mentoring committee and vice-chair of the membership committee. He just keeps collecting hardware.

And finally, I want to congratulate the aforementioned Honorable Lon F. Hurwitz on receiving Judge of the Year for his many years of exemplary service and judicial excellence from the bench.

Next month, I will provide a report from our Annual Strategic Planning Meeting in...Big Bear.

