



CAALA President

**Mike Arias**

ARIAS SANGUINETTI WANG & TORRIJOS, LLP

Journal of Consumer Attorneys Associations for Southern California  
**ADVOCATE**  
January 2018 Issue

**Consumer Attorneys**  
ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES

## Become more engaged!

TOGETHER WE ARE A STRONGER ORGANIZATION AS WE LOOK TO THE NEW YEAR

Thank you for the opportunity to lead this remarkable organization.

Some 35 years ago, I was considering Officer Candidate School and following in my father's footsteps in the military (even though I never knew him). Becoming a lawyer wasn't even a thought in my mind. But, thanks to a very considerate and helpful lawyer-turned-economics professor and academic advisor – here I am.

When I decided to give law school a shot, I had no idea what I was doing. I had never met a lawyer and I wasn't sure what I would or could do with a law degree. My academic advisor had observed me while I was Class President and watched me lead some political protests against drastically cutting education budgets in the state. All I was told by him was that I should consider law school.

Even more unexpected is that I am now about to lead the nation's largest local plaintiff's trial lawyer organization. What an honor! I am not sure I deserve the honor – but I promise to do my very best.

Over the last 33 years I have learned that CAALA – through its members and staff – does more to help, protect and improve the lives of people than I ever envisioned when I became a plaintiff's lawyer. This is possible because CAALA spends its resources – both economic and human – to educate and prepare our members to best serve our clients and each other.

What makes all of this even more special is that CAALA is comprised of a broad and diverse membership in terms of demographics, economics and experience. This wide spectrum of members, each with their own special contribution to the representation of our clients and to the organization, provides for an energy that is therapeutic and contagious. And if accepted and appreciated, it can change lives – both ours and our clients.

It is the ultimate goal of every plaintiff trial lawyer to fight the good fight, to prevail over sometimes insurmountable odds and to win for our clients. It is with that goal in mind, that we all join forces, both figurative-

ly and literally, in our efforts to help each other succeed. Maybe not every time, but surely most of the time. Even when we don't win a particular battle, we don't give up – as the fight to protect our clients is never-ending.

Thankfully, many of our CAALA brothers and sisters appreciate and live the mantra that together we are a stronger organization; that by helping the less experienced become more experienced, and by continuing to improve the skill sets of our members, we help each other and our clients. That is my belief and I hope it is yours.

We have come a long way since the inception of the Los Angeles Trial Lawyers Association back in 1949. The forward-thinking founders had a vision of what a consortium of trial lawyers could do for society and ourselves. Over the last seven decades, many of us have contributed our time and treasure to continue to improve on the vision of our founders.

Nearly 70 years later, we are a force of trial lawyers intent on ensuring that the future of the civil justice system survives. We work hard to safeguard the right to trial by jury; to argue vigorously and intelligently before the courts in hopes that the rulings and the law they pronounce are just and fair; to ensure that access to a courtroom is provided; and by participating in the legislative and political process – in hopes that our elected leaders enact laws and regulations that are responsive to the needs of the people.

It is this final, important point that I ask each of you to become more engaged.

A year ago we all woke up to an unexpected political environment. There are many opinions of what the future holds for us as a nation. But the one thing that we can all do is become engaged in the process. I don't mean by simply giving money to a civil justice candidate. To become truly engaged will require you to become more familiar with proposed legislation – both state and national – be it for or against the needs and interests of our clients and our practices – and participate in the debate of such legislation.

Get to know your elected officials. Use the resources provided by CAALA and our sister state organization Consumer Attorneys of California (CAOC) and our sister national organization American Association for Justice (AAJ). Get involved in local meetings and provide economic support when asked by your trial lawyer leaders.

I can tell you this – based on my personal experiences in the leadership of CAOC and my involvement in AAJ, trial lawyers carry significant weight and can influence the results in much of the legislative process.

We have had a direct and distinct effect on not only the election of many of our legislators, but on the political process thereafter. Do not underestimate the strength and influence of trial lawyers in Sacramento and Washington.

It is my hope and belief that 2018 will be a good year for our country and I will work hard to make it a banner year for CAALA. I have instituted several new committees and working groups to concentrate on the issues that I believe are crucial to the long-term success of CAALA and to address issues raised by our membership.

We will be moving into our new office space – on our own floor – in January. This new space will allow us to continue to provide and expand access to our “one of a kind” comprehensive educational and membership programs and events.

We will continue to grow our membership, which should soon exceed 3,000 plaintiff trial lawyer members. The adage “strength in numbers” rings true when it comes to trial lawyers and CAALA.

Improving the trial skills of our members – young as well as more seasoned – will continue to be my true north. We will begin our 4th Annual Plaintiffs Trial Academy this spring and hope to add another 36 students to the 136 graduates of the CAALA PTA family. Combine this with our skills-based programs for our other members and we are all contributing to the collective success of all CAALA trial lawyers.

I am looking forward to serving you – thank you for the honor.