



CAALA President

Mike Arias

ARIAS SANGUINETTI WANG & TORRIJOS, LLP

Take full advantage of the CAALA convention – and connect

AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO NETWORK AND CONNECT

I have been attending the annual CAALA Vegas Convention for 20+ years and I can honestly tell you that I am more excited about this year's convention than any others that I have attended. One reason is that this year I have the honor and pleasure of being CAALA's president. After talking to some of my predecessors, I know that attending the convention as the president is a completely different experience. Many of the 3,000 attendees know your name and many want to talk to you about various aspects of CAALA and their CAALA experiences – and I'm looking forward to that.

Another reason I am looking forward to the convention is the opportunity to see so many of the 170+ CAALA Plaintiff Trial Academy (PTA) graduates that will attend. Since 2014 we have recognized the PTA grads during the Annual Member Meeting. Seeing the participation of so many PTA alumni at the convention is motivating.

I have also seen the convention from a different perspective over the last several years as part of the Executive Committee and now as CAALA president. I have had the pleasure this year of working closely with Cindy Cantu and CAALA's Education Chair Liz Hernandez and Vice Chairs Martin Aarons and Taylor Rayfield, seeing firsthand how dedicated they are to making the convention a success. Their work began right after last year's convention and they have spent hundreds of hours determining topics and speakers, making sure the topics are fresh and the speakers are the best.

As always, the topics of the convention reflect the interests and

desires of our members. All of the topics chosen are vitally important to CAALA members and each of the speakers chosen has special expertise in the subject area that we want to share with all attendees.

There are many things about the CAALA Convention that are different from other conventions – and I speak from experience, having attended dozens of other similar conventions. What many people don't appreciate about our convention is the importance of its physical configuration. The four session rooms all open into the exhibit hall, and unlike other conventions, it's easy to go from one to another. This is very user friendly – especially if there are speakers on different panels that you want to see or you can't decide which speakers you want to hear. At CAALA Vegas you can see as many as you can get to.

Networking

But as great as the speakers and topics are, the CAALA Convention is special for another reason, the ability to connect with as many people as you have the time for and desire to meet. Providing networking, connections and mentorship opportunities is an important part of CAALA. In my opinion, it's one of the reasons why CAALA Vegas is seen as the nation's premier trial lawyer conference.

Every minute of the CAALA convention is an opportunity to connect and network. Not only do you have the chance to spend time with your peers and old friends, you also have the opportunity to connect with judges, defense attorneys, legal staff and vendors. I cannot emphasize

enough how important the connecting and networking opportunities are, whether you are a young attorney or have been one for a long time. One of the most important aspects of any successful legal career is making connections and networking.

The CAALA Convention includes two formal networking receptions, but really, the entire convention is an opportunity to connect. I strongly urge each of you to walk the exhibit hall, spend time in the session rooms and in the lobby and talk to the other attendees. Even when you are sitting by the pool, it's a chance to connect. Don't be shy; it's not that difficult to spot someone's name badge and say hi.

You have the opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones – many that will be with you for years. In the 20+ years that I have been attending the convention, I have made friends that I have stayed in contact with for a long time. I have also learned over the years that what makes CAALA different is our sense of community and that sense of community is only enhanced by the face-to-face contact we have with each other at CAALA Vegas.

I hope you connect with as many CAALA Vegas attendees as you can, but I also want to give you a personal invitation to start – by connecting with me. My year as CAALA President has been filled with a lot of highlights, but none is more gratifying to me than the hundreds of conversations I have had with CAALA members. CAALA Vegas is the perfect time for you to have those same type of conversations. ☑