



CAALA President

Mike Arias

ARIAS SANGUINETTI WANG & TORRIJOS, LLP

The importance of politics to CAALA and the importance of CAALA to politicians

THIS ELECTION IS ABOUT YOUR PRACTICE

In a few short weeks, the mid-term elections will take place, and I hope I don't have to tell you how important this election is for consumer attorneys and the people we represent. Like so many CAALA members, politics means a lot to me; not just because I'm CAALA's President and I'm about to be installed as President of our state trial lawyer association, CAOC. And not because I'm a political junkie who would follow politics 24 hours a day if I could. No, it's because this election will seriously impact our livelihood and the work we do. I know that sounds dramatic, and it's not my style to overstate or sensationalize things, but this election is really that important.

I spend a lot of time talking to CAALA members, from young attorneys to veteran trial lawyers, and from solo practitioners to members of big firms. I must admit I'm a little surprised sometimes when members tell me they don't have much interest in politics. I patiently explain why having an interest in politics is so important for trial attorneys and I usually get a very shocked look when I tell them exactly what CAOC and our national association, AAJ, do every day to protect their clients and their practices. When I finish, they almost always say, "Wow, I had no idea."

I also like to remind members that CAALA is a large and very important plaintiff trial lawyer association, probably the most important local trial lawyer association in the country, and that our association and our members are very important to elected officials, both in Sacramento and in Washington D.C. It really does surprise me that most members don't realize they are part of a very powerful organization.

Candidates came to CAALA Vegas

A few weeks ago, at the CAALA convention, we all had first-hand proof of just how important this election is to consumer attorneys and how important consumer attorneys are to elected officials and the right candidates.

Even if you don't follow politics closely, you know that on November 6, Democrats have a very good chance of taking back the U.S. House of Representatives. On election day, all 435 seats in the House of Representatives will be contested. I can't think of anything more important than Democrats winning back the House, which is currently controlled by Republicans, many of whom are pro-Business, anti-Consumer and anti-Civil Justice. If Democrats win only 23 key Congressional seats now held by

Republicans, we will take back the House. What does this mean to you as a Trial Lawyer? It means that the wrath of legislation that has emanated out of the Republican-controlled House – that is designed to limit consumer rights, deny trial by jury and eliminate our practices – will stop.

As is usually the case, California is at the center of the national political landscape, and five Congressional races are being held in Southern California Districts where Democrats have a very good chance of defeating incumbent Republicans or taking over open seats previously held by Republicans. All five of these Districts are within driving distance of most of CAALA's 3,200 attorney members; they are literally in our own backyard. Along with the help of our partners at AAJ, I invited all five of the key California Democratic candidates plus prominent Northern California Congressman Eric Swalwell to attend the CAALA Convention. People told me the candidates would never do that since Labor Day is the start of their campaign season. I found out that those people were wrong when I heard from every one of the five candidates and Eric Swalwell that they were eager to attend the Convention and meet our members. I was extremely proud to have played a part in bringing them to the convention but also proud that being at the convention meant so much to the candidates and to a prominent Congressman.

On Saturday afternoon, the five candidates and Swalwell met and spoke to our members. The room was full, and I must tell you it was one of the most motivating and inspiring political events I've experienced in my 35-year career.

The five candidates are Gil Cisneros (CA-39), Katie Hill (CA-25), Mike Levin (CA-49), Katie Porter (CA-45) and Harley Rouda (CA-48). Their districts are in L.A. County, Orange County, San Diego and San Bernardino.

I want to share with you a few words from these candidates to give you some idea why it is so important that these five remarkable people be part of a Democratic-controlled House of Representatives in November. Each of them comes from a different background but all five are strongly in favor of consumers and the attorneys who represent them.

Introducing the candidates

Eric Swalwell began by introducing the five candidates. He said they all "Take on causes greater than themselves and will fight

efforts to pare down, strip down and take away access to justice." Swalwell added that "23 seats are between where we are and cutting in half our time in hell. We can prove that we are better than that in America."

Katie Hill and Gil Cisneros both said they have lived a life of service. Katie as a nurse and Cisneros in the Navy. They say they are both fighting to keep President Trump from taking away what trial lawyers work to do.

Katie Porter is a tenured professor of law at U.C. Irvine and she said that she has spent her whole career fighting for families ripped off by banks and businesses. She says that like trial lawyers she is fighting so families get a fair shake in our economy.

Mike Levin is running for the seat vacated by Darrell Issa. Levin told the CAALA members he has taught his two young children they aren't to lie or bully and to treat people with respect. Levin asked, "Why don't those same rules apply to the President?"

Harley Rouda is in a fierce fight to defeat long-time Conservative Congressman Dana Rohrabacher. Harley is an attorney and successful businessman who reminded us that, "You took an oath to support and defend the Constitution, so why shouldn't Rohrabacher honor the same oath?"

We all know how important it is to win back the House. Here's how we can do it.

At the end of his comments, Levin turned to the attorneys in the room and said: "We need you to show up, we all need your help. Can you all commit to do something for us? You don't have to go out of state to make a difference, come to Carlsbad or Palmdale or Irvine and help us take back the House."

Eric Swalwell told a story about Katie Hill recruiting trial lawyers to volunteer to help her campaign and that they went door to door in her district asking, "Can Katie Count on You?" Swalwell turned to the attorneys in the room and said, "I am asking you the same question for Katie, Katie, Harley, Mike and Gil: Can They Count on You?"

I am asking every reader of this column the same question. Whether it is giving financial support, helping with a phone bank, or walking precincts in Orange County, San Bernardino or San Diego, I hope these candidates can count on CAALA members. I don't have to tell you how important it is to put them in Congress in November.

