



CAALA President

**Jeffrey Rudman**

THE RUDMAN LAW FIRM

 **Consumer Attorneys**  
ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES

Journal of Consumer Attorneys Associations for Southern California  
**ADVOCATE**  
May 2020

## Finding the silver lining

WE SEE SOME SILVER LININGS IN THE EXAMPLES OF TRUE HUMAN SPIRIT DURING THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

In what seemed like a relative blink of an eye, the novel coronavirus radically changed the world as we knew it. There is no way to adequately summarize the impact that the virus, and the way in which the world has responded to it, has made on every aspect of our lives.

We saw it escalate from news stories about China and Italy, to restrictions on travel, to the cancellation of festivals, concerts and sports seasons. Next was the closure of restaurants and bars and ultimately orders to shelter in place. It has affected the health of so many that it's exhausted health care systems and caused death tolls to rise. We have seen our schools and courts close. We have seen the markets spiral downward, small businesses go under, and millions of people lose their jobs. We have been isolated in our homes and forced to work remotely, while our children are also home, learning. We have forgone visiting in person with family and friends. We have felt the anxiety of risking exposure when engaging in simple, yet still allowable, tasks such as going grocery shopping or picking up a prescription from a pharmacy; and we have been asked to wear homemade facemasks when we do leave our homes. The breadth of the impact of this virus on our everyday lives has been nothing short of staggering.

However, in the midst of the storm, we see some silver linings in the examples of true human spirit in the face of adversity, such as that of our medical professionals, putting their lives at risk on the front line, treating those who have fallen ill to COVID-19. We see our communities by and large respect the stay-at-home orders in their personal efforts to "flatten the curve" and curtail the spread of the virus for the benefit of all. We see supermarkets catering to senior citizens by opening early exclusively for them. We see factories normally used to make clothing now manufacturing face masks, and car manufacturers now producing ventilators to help with the critical shortages that our hospitals are facing. There are so many heart-warming examples of people banding together to help their fellow human beings.

### Our legal community

Our legal community, in addition to facing many of the challenges described above, has also been greatly impacted by the closure of our courts. As I write this, and most probably at the time it is published, our civil courts in Southern California are all but closed. Jury trials that were proceeding at the time of the closure were declared mistrials. All jury trials have been suspended for at least several months.

The Civil Division of the Los Angeles Superior Court (LASC), as with many other courts, remains available only for ex parte proceedings. Law and motion hearings have been continued and in LASC new reservations are not being accepted. As such, disputes remain unresolved indefinitely and litigants have no recourse. As many have said, "Justice Delayed is Justice Denied." Our clients are suffering. Whether it be a catastrophically injured person awaiting trial in hopes of recovering compensation to pay for future medical treatment, or a person who has suffered a less severe injury but is relying on our civil justice system to reimburse lost income suffered in the months of recovery now needed to pay the bills, the wheels of civil justice are not turning, and our clients are languishing.

Our legal community also suffers. Many of our friends, whether plaintiff or defense attorneys, or legal support staff, have been laid off. Contingency lawyers, who already struggled with a lack of cash flow, now see delays in the resolution of their cases and therefore the fees they rely on to keep their practices open and provide for their families.

Yet, I have seen silver linings in our legal community as well. I have seen CAALA transition to remote operations and redirect its focus to providing biweekly webinars to help CAALA members navigate the issues attorneys face in the wake of coronavirus. Then there are the amazing volunteers that, on short notice, put together presentations for their fellow CAALA members in this time of need. I have seen law firms continue to pay their staff full wages despite their not being able to fully perform their duties remotely, so as to support them financially during these desperate times. A colleague of ours recently reported to me that he had

secured 10,000 face masks from an offshore distributor, which he was donating to local courts to help protect our judicial officers and court staff still coming to work.

What has been especially at the forefront of my mind, having the privilege (or some, not I, might say curse) of serving as CAALA President during this pandemic, is how bar associations and court leadership have banded together to address the challenges of these times.

Through our close contact with Consumer Attorneys of California (CAOC), we have been able to communicate the concerns of our members so that they may be included in CAOC's efforts to bring about statewide changes, whether it be by order of the Governor or the Chief Justice and Judicial Council. Through those efforts we've seen the rights of our clients be protected with extensions of the statute of limitations and the five-year deadline to bring a case to trial, not to mention rule changes with regard to remote depositions and electronic service so that we may proceed with our cases during the time of the court closures.

Locally, I have had the pleasure of serving on the Los Angeles Superior Court Working Group where I work closely with other leaders of both the plaintiff and defense bar and liaise with LASC Presiding Judge Hon. Kevin Brazile to ensure that we get the most current information regarding his orders to our members, seek clarification of those orders when needed, and advocate for methods that will keep our civil cases moving during these difficult times.

I am honored to work with Lawrence Ramsey, president of the Association of Southern California Defense Counsel, to jointly message our respective members about the importance of civility, compassion and understanding towards opposing counsel during these difficult times; we are all truly in this together as members of the civil bar.

I take comfort in these positive developments arising out of the impact of the coronavirus on our community. I urge you to find positivity where you can, practice with civility, and be kind to those with whom you interact, whether it be personally or professionally. We are in fact all in this together, and CAALA has your back!