



Executive Director
Stuart Zanville

CONSUMER ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES

Like the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, CAALA's elections will go from in-person to online

THE MEMBER ELECTED AS SECRETARY BEGINS A SIX-YEAR JOURNEY TO ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

As I write this column, the Democratic and Republican national conventions are a few days away and already they are the most unconventional conventions in history. While the first nominating conventions of the 1800s were simple meetings with a single purpose, recent conventions morphed into over-the-top extravaganzas of political hype and propaganda.

Previous conventions shared one thing with recent conventions though; they were in-person events. Thanks to COVID-19, the 2020 conventions will be just the opposite. Nobody will attend in person, not delegates, not spectators, not news reporters, not even candidates. Everyone will attend remotely.

While button and balloon vendors and party planners, hotels and restaurants will suffer greatly, for the rest of us the conventions will be pretty much the same as usual; without, of course, the histrionics and spectacle.

Don't worry, you will still be able to watch slickly produced campaign videos and heart-wrenching stories of healthcare heroes and you will still see long speeches from the candidates and party leaders. But, if you have ever attended a political convention, you will immediately realize that the conventions don't *feel* the same. And that's a shame.

Attending a convention in person is a visceral, physical experience. It is three days of intense interaction, both inside the Convention Hall and outside. Inside, the energy level is high and there is a constant buzz of noise and excitement. Outside, both protesters and supporters take part in tumultuous rallies. You will not get those feelings at a remote convention.

I have only attended one political convention in person, but it was a doozy. I graduated from college in June of 1968 and one month later I began a broadcast internship with an all-news radio station in Chicago. One month later the Democratic

National Convention of 1968 began, and I had the great privilege of attending as a credentialed news reporter.

The physical experience of being there in person began days and miles from the old International Amphitheater where the Convention was held. You have all seen the dramatic images of young protesters clashing with Chicago police officers and national guard troops. Inside the Amphitheater it was a chaotic and raucous scene. Being there in person was an experience that I will never forget.

Although a remote event is different than an in-person event, in this period of a COVID-19-induced "new normal," we have learned that there are some real advantages to taking part in events via videoconference. OK, I may be reaching a little here, but an example is the monthly meeting of the CAALA Board of Governors, specifically, a meeting when an election takes place. Two of those meetings are the elections for CAALA's Secretary and the meeting to select CAALA's Annual Award winners. Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting that CAALA Board elections are as historic or tumultuous as political conventions; but they are fun and also important to CAALA's leaders and members. Since March, CAALA's BOG meetings have gone from in-person to remote.

CAALA was created in 1949 and Edward Feldman was elected as the Association's first President. Every year since, CAALA's Board of Governors has elected the Association's new Secretary. The Secretary takes office on January 1 of the following year and is one of six elected officers of CAALA. They progress through the CAALA leadership ladder until becoming President six years after their election as Secretary.

The Secretary-election meeting is a terrific event that, like the political conventions, used to be held in person. It was one of the most popular Board meetings of the year as the candidates for

Secretary each spoke about why they were uniquely qualified to serve as CAALA's Secretary and eventually as CAALA's President.

While it was a popular meeting, one thing was missing; it was only experienced by Board members and other CAALA members who came to the CAALA Conference Center in person. CAALA did not have the technology to stream the meeting to members. Now, thanks to Zoom, that is no longer the case.

On September 24, CAALA's Board of Governors will elect its 2021 Secretary. Any CAALA member who is interested is encouraged to register and attend via Zoom. Sign up to attend on the registration portal of the CAALA web site at www.caala.org. To date, there are three candidates for the 2021 Secretary position: Danny Abir, Elizabeth Hernandez and Taylor Rayfield.

On October 15, a second election meeting will be held to select the winners of CAALA's 2020 Annual Awards, including Trial Lawyer of the Year and Rising Star. That is another meeting that is a highlight of the year but has not been made available to members other than those who attended in person. It is inspiring to hear the finalists for the Awards tell their stories.

The year 2020 and COVID-19 will result in many changes for trial attorneys and CAALA members. Some of those changes have caused challenges for your family and practice, but some will be positive. Introducing more members to the CAALA election process is one of them. The election procedures should be transparent to all CAALA members and meetings by videoconference will accomplish that. I hope you register and join in on September 24 and October 15. The meetings may not be the same as the political conventions, but they might be more interesting; and the speeches will definitely be shorter.