



Update from CAOC Deborah Chang

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Rising above it all

NO MATTER HOW BAD THINGS GOT, THERE WAS ALWAYS A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS
MAKING SURE JUSTICE PREVAILED

*“Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success
if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do.”*

Nelson Mandela

SACRAMENTO UPDATE

As we bid adieu to 2020, I cannot help but look back at where we were this time last year: Totally oblivious to the unbelievable events that would soon change not only our law practices, but the world around us.

Who could have guessed that a global pandemic would cause extended statewide shutdowns and threaten the fifth largest economy in the world? For better or worse, COVID-19 forever changed us last year: The way we worked and played, the way we raised and taught our children, the way we shopped, the way we traveled, and the way we celebrated our holidays. Throughout the year, it seemed as if we were waiting for the bad dream to be over and for us to wake up to our normal world.

But things were far from normal. We saw record-breaking wildfires. Signs and acts of political divisiveness and social unrest were everywhere. Hospitals in Southern California ran out of ICU beds and even body bags. We lost a beloved Supreme Court Justice who taught and showed us what a brilliant strong woman could do. And then we voted in an unprecedented presidential election in which the outgoing president refused to accept the results.

But even though we are exhausted from the events of this last year, we should also take heart in what the judicial system managed to do together to rise above it all. No matter how bad things got, there was always a voice in the wilderness making sure justice prevailed.

State officials who never craved the limelight stood up to a bully with a

powerful presidential pulpit and millions of social media followers, holding firm to basic principles of democracy – even when more powerful enablers and followers refused to do so. The Trump-nominated federal judiciary refused to yield to his relentless lawsuits and unambiguous threats. Judges in local, state, and federal courthouses have steadfastly issued rulings based on the facts and the law. Even the shocking tapes of President Trump threatening the Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, bullying him to “find” enough votes to reverse the president’s loss to Joe Biden in the Peach State, demonstrated a steadfast refusal by a fellow Republican to do the right thing and not cave to such tactics.

In a year of uncertainties, one thing was certain: Our system of justice is still here, working to hold the powerful to account.

And so are all of us who make up the greatest judicial system in the world. When the recent COVID-19 relief bill went through, it did so without legal immunities for businesses because lawyers and legislators, along with our friends at the AAJ, fought to maintain the legal rights of all. And since the pandemic came to California, CAOC has been here every day working night and day for all of us. We made sure emergency judicial and other rules were put in place and worked tirelessly with the legislature to make sure bad bills and immunities were not put into law.

We are so much wiser and better prepared for this coming year than we were last year. We now know how to rise above it all, and we are smart enough and

motivated to find alternatives in our cases that work for our clients, each other, and the court system. Instead of waiting for everything to get back to normal, let’s roll our sleeves up and find solutions for ourselves. At CAOC, we will work with our local trial associations to identify problem areas and solutions, and we will work with defense counsel, along with the Judicial Council and our legislature to find creative ways to ensure that cases keep moving toward resolution, jury trials are being held, and our system of justice will keep going – whether courthouses are open or closed to the public.

And what a great time to get involved with the CAOC and CAALA. We now have the luxury of attending meetings through remote virtual technology, which means no traveling in our cars or on planes to see each other. As we strive to find novel solutions for unprecedented times, we would appreciate your input and involvement.

So, let’s commit to 2021 being the year we rise above it all and succeed. We have survived 2020 and we can handle anything. Here’s wishing you a very successful and fulfilling year ahead.

