



CAALA President
Genie Harrison
GENIE HARRISON LAW FIRM

Now for some good news

CAALA VEGAS IS A GO FOR SEPTEMBER, WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO BE VACCINATED CAN DO SO BEFORE LABOR DAY

In the legal business, we often must be worst-case scenario planners. To that end, by habit, I read multiple, varied news sources every day. In early January 2020, I became transfixed by news of a deadly virus that seemed to be spreading uncontrollably in Wuhan, China. It was clear to me that COVID-19 would soon plague the United States.

By the end of January last year, I placed two orders for 400 surgical masks and bought hand sanitizer. I started educating my firm about coronavirus, ensuring that we all took precautions based on information known at the time. I readied us for fully remote work and provided my firm's employees time during the workday to stock up on supplies that would soon become scarce. My firm's last day in the office would be Friday, March 13th.

In a CAALA Executive Committee meeting on March 11th, we voted to cancel CAALA's Spring Mixer scheduled for the next day, March 12th, which would have seen 500+ people in close indoor contact. Hindsight is 20/20, and, happily, the Executive Committee, the CAALA Staff, and the CAALA Board have all made excellent decisions to carry out CAALA's first, most important, goal, which is to protect our members.

Now for the good news. As confident as I was about the need to cancel CAALA's Spring Mixer and the inability to proceed with the Vegas Convention in 2020, I am equally sure that CAALA's Vegas Convention *will occur* this year. Indeed, based on all available information, it seems clear that those who want to be vaccinated will have been well in advance of Labor Day.

Bellagio Resort and the new Allegiant Stadium

This year our Convention moves to the fabulous Bellagio resort, where our experience will be different and better than ever. And here's a teaser – we will have a spectacular party at the Las Vegas Raiders' brand-new Allegiant Stadium. Mark your calendars because that will be an event you don't want to miss. The Bellagio itself is an incredible location, offering terrific entertainment spaces, high-end restaurants, shopping, and a beautiful pool area, all of which we plan to enjoy thoroughly. CAALA's Education Committee is hard at work planning the broad array of topics and seminars to be offered at this year's

Convention, which will again include outstanding lectures, a staff track, and some new unique offerings. Along with the Bellagio management, CAALA staff are planning every detail for a safe, enjoyable convention.

As CAALA's President, I'm delighted that our Vegas Convention is occurring this year. I cannot wait to see all of you and celebrate our togetherness over Labor Day weekend. There is nothing more exciting than a new adventure, and now, combined with seeing each other again after such a long break, CAALA Vegas will, indeed, be "back better than ever."

The Vegas Convention is not the only event resuming this year. CAALA will also offer its popular Trial Skills for the New Lawyer Seminar on May 15th, and our Women Trial Skills Conference October 15-16. The Plaintiffs' Trial Academy is back this year as well.

Our Legal Support Staff Group (LSSG) will also offer a brand-new program, a Staff Academy. The Staff Academy will be an in-depth program for newer support staff. We will teach everything the support staff needs to know to help lawyers successfully represent consumers. As part of my commitment to embrace the technological advances presented during the COVID-19 break, the Staff Academy will be remote, so this fundamental skills training will not require commuting to the CAALA office. My hat's off to the LSSG leaders, Lupe Flores and Rose Gutierrez, for developing the fantastic new CAALA Staff Academy.

The new CAALA Video Library

March 2021 also marks the rollout of CAALA's new Video Library, which is like a cross between YouTube for plaintiffs' lawyers and Master Class training videos. These videos are quick tutorials on everything you need to know to be a plaintiff's lawyer. CAALA's Video Library has a wide range of topics, from beginning lawyer skills to advanced trial skills, and is searchable by topic and speaker.

The Video Library features speakers and topics including Bob Simon and Taylor Rayfield on having a paperless/cloud-based practice; Christa Ramey on minor's compromises; Denisse Gastelum on government tort claims; Derek Tran on DFEH complaints; Eric Kingsley on PAGA

notices; Alyssa Schabloski on drafting effective complaints and avoiding demurrers; Michael Cohen, Holy Boyer, and Jeff Ehrlich on persuasive legal writing; Martin Aarons on trial technology; Olivier Taillieu, David deRubertis, and Claire Plotkin on voir dire; Bruce Broillet, Chris Dolan, and Jeff Rudman on Opening Statements; and Steve Vartazarian, Gary Dordick, Rahul Ravipudi, and Ricardo Echeverria on persuasive closing arguments.

The Video Library is a one-of-a-kind resource that will help all lawyers, from new to expert level. Established lawyers can watch trial masters as part of their preparation process or send less-experienced associates to the library to get topical training on everything from demurrers to ex parte applications, saving precious mentoring time for more advanced topics. Newer lawyers will have video tutorials to help with everything from opening their own law office up through trial skills. The Video Library will continue to grow and will eventually include longer, more in-depth presentations, with CAALA's goal being to have a complete library of short videos that help plaintiffs' lawyers do their best in the business and practice of law.

As devastating to our lives and businesses as the pandemic has been, it has also forced us to adapt fully to practicing law remotely. Before the pandemic, this transformation was in process for many but inevitable for all. In the sprawling, densely populated Los Angeles region, it is a welcome change that we can now appear remotely for a Status Conference instead of driving for hours to and from a 15-minute event. Remote appearance options should remain, with improvement to the courts' technology options. Likewise, CAALA members now and forever will have the option of participating remotely in seminars, Board, and Committee meetings.

I am, by nature, more optimistic than pessimistic. Even when things seem bleak, I usually choose to reframe and find the positive. CAALA, the courts, and the law practice have adapted and changed for the better in many respects. On the other hand, many challenges still face us, from getting vaccinated to addressing the courts' backlog. But at least I am confident that we will soon be together again. Look for me in Vegas – I'll be the one in black sequin pants. 🍷