



CAALA President

Douglas Silverstein

KESLUK, SILVERSTEIN, JACOB & MORRISON, P.C.

What a difference a month makes

JURY TRIALS ARE BACK IN LOS ANGELES

In mid-January, as I was writing my February President's column, Omicron was surging, hospitalizations were up, and the Los Angeles Superior Court had paused almost all trials and (smartly) repurposed trial judges as MSC judges. As I write this March column, new Covid cases and hospitalizations are down, mask requirements are on the verge of being reconsidered and, importantly for our practices, the Los Angeles Superior Court gave us a Valentine's Day present – the full resumption of civil jury trials beginning February 14. What a difference a month makes.

Barring any further Covid curve balls (something we have unfortunately become accustomed to dealing with), the full resumption of jury trials is the single most significant thing that can be done to address the pandemic backlog of cases and allow us to achieve long overdue justice on behalf of our clients. That's because nothing brings a case to conclusion – whether through settlement or a trial – faster than a firm, predictable trial date.

The effect of trial cannot be understated. It forces all parties, counsel and insurers to critically evaluate the case for settlement purposes, complete fact discovery, retain experts, and prepare for trial. That process results in one of two outcomes – settlement or trial. The resulting benefit of consistently predictable and firm trial dates is what we have been missing for the past two years, and why there is such a backlog of cases. The dam has been opened and trials are now rolling, although realistically we should expect preference and the oldest cases to go to trial first. Finally, some welcome news as we learn to live with Covid and hopefully move from pandemic to some manageable form of endemic.

Throughout it all, CAALA has been working closer than we ever have with the Los Angeles Superior Court as its top justice partner to assist in helping the court manage the backlog and clear the way to the full resumption of jury trials. CAALA has partnered with the Court in a variety of ways to assist all CAALA members by participating in the development of virtual trial protocols, sponsoring programs on conducting remote trials and expedited bench trials, developing as a founding justice partner the highly successful Resolve Law Los

Angeles virtual MSC program (<https://resolvelawla.com/>) for PI cases that, as I write this, with CAALA's leadership is being expanded to include employment cases, participating in the development of a new West District virtual MSC program, and consistently keeping all CAALA members advised of up-to-the-minute developments with the Court.

Not content to rest with the resumption of trials, CAALA continues to be hard at work on your behalf. In addition to carrying through with these many ongoing Court initiatives, we partner with the Court on a weekly basis to assist in any way we can to help the Court, our clients and our attorney members in the efficient administration of justice. Given our direct line of communication, we have raised with the Court and received timely and important feedback on trial continuances, untimely IDCs, and a host of other issues of interest for CAALA members that we all face in our daily practice.

A seismic shift in the practice of law

But CAALA is not just looking outward to the Court to address the seismic shift that has taken place in the practice of law. We have started the long, challenging process to take our already great, largest local trial bar in the country and make it even better. We are driven by a singular focus – to be the essential resource and partner in your plaintiff's practice. During the weekend of February 4-6, 2022, CAALA's Executive Committee, Past Presidents, Board of Governors, and Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs met to begin the process of formalizing CAALA's strategic plan to better serve you. Whatever expectations I had for this meeting were far exceeded. The collaborative discussion was at times intimate, honest and inspiring. So many people care so much about this association and are unified in their goal to make it the best it can be.

As just a sampling, the discussion included fresh, new educational ideas (both in person and virtual), podcasts, ASAP presentations on trial victories, advanced trial academy programming, a cadaver anatomy program, small group focus discussions, increased networking opportunities, more programming geared to solo and small firm practitioners (who

make up the majority of CAALA members), greater inclusivity through enhanced diversity, equity and inclusion, programming specifically for women lawyers, law school and community outreach, establishing a CAALA YouTube channel, better public messaging about the great work plaintiff's attorneys do, and membership surveys to ensure we are meeting the needs of the CAALA community.

This discussion is just the start. By the time you read this, I will have formed a Strategic Plan Task Force to take all these great ideas and more and turn them into a short, mid- and long-range CAALA strategic plan. We will be asking critical questions like: What do our members need now that they didn't before? How can we help our members work less stressfully, more profitably and more productively? What is CAALA uniquely positioned to do for its members? CAALA – like the workforce – has five generations in it: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and now Generation Z. How can CAALA meet the differing needs of all of its members?

From these questions and the many great ideas generated, specific programming action items will be formulated from the strategic plan, and CAALA's various committees with the able help of CAALA staff will be tasked with implementing and executing those action items. The strategic plan will continue to develop throughout the year and, at another working meeting in November 2022, we will take stock of what we accomplished, what is left to be done, and how we must adapt to how the world looks then, which is likely to be markedly different than it looks today. CAALA must and will continue to evolve to meet its member needs.

CAALA – like any organization – is challenged by limitations in time, finances, and human resources. Strategy is how we skillfully and purposely deploy them. That is exactly what we intend to do.

As always, I invite you to contact me at any time (dsilverstein@californialaborlawattorney.com) with questions or ideas on how CAALA can better serve you. I look forward to being of service as your 2022 President.