



CAALA President

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Farewell, but not goodbye

AS A PAST PRESIDENT, I LOOK FORWARD TO BEING THE MOST RELAXED PERSON IN THE ROOM

It's hard to imagine that after six years serving as a CAALA officer, this December Advocate column marks the end of my year as CAALA's 2022 President. This year has been unlike any other in the history of CAALA; we emerged from a global pandemic and reshaped CAALA into a stronger association than it has ever been in its 73-year history. I am so incredibly proud to have played some small part in helping CAALA reach its many goals.

I am incredibly grateful to CAALA's Executive Committee and Board who supported me so much this year, particularly CAALA President Elect Minh Nguyen. Minh has been a true brother and CAALA is in such excellent hands at it moves forward under his leadership. While I had the privilege to lead CAALA during this time, this success is the result of a true team effort by so many hard-working CAALA members and staff.

Mission and vision statements – Without a target, there's no chance of hitting it. For that reason, we formed a Strategic Plan Task Force to help chart CAALA's short, mid- and long-range plans. We viewed this endeavor as a critical foundation to our future success so CAALA could take the necessary steps to innovate and. With significant input from all of CAALA's constituents, CAALA's mission statement is *Empowering Attorneys Advocating for the People* and its vision statement is *Educate, Advocate, Collaborate*. This is what we do. All the programing (tactics) implemented by CAALA's many committees will flow from this high-level strategic mission and vision. Many thanks to the Strategic Plan Task Force members, especially Co-chairs Ibiere Seck and Martin Aarons.

New website – To assist in communicating this strategic vision, we pushed for CAALA to build out a completely new website and mobile website with a backend association management system that will run all of CAALA's online presence, including Listservs. The website debuting soon focuses on a clean, user-friendly, content-rich environment that also heightens member awareness of CAALA's connection to other organizations and brings news and updates to the forefront.

Member and staff growth – CAALA is the largest regional trial lawyer association

in the country and this year grew to 4,100 members. The day I took office as president was also the first day for CAALA's new Executive Director, Kwedi Moore, the first and only black woman to hold the top position in a major trial lawyer association. CAALA has always been an association of firsts, and I am so incredibly proud to have had a hand in this first. One of Kwedi's initial tasks was to level up by hiring four key staff positions. CAALA now has a full complement with eight incredibly dedicated staff who will facilitate best-in-class delivery of more than 50 programs and meetings annually.

Commitment to DEI – CAALA has a flourishing DEI Committee and has integrated diversity initiatives into our new strategic plan, including partnering with other bar associations. We are not just using DEI as a talking point, we are making it an intentional part of our culture moving forward. We started a diversity-based Student Outreach Project: When You Can See It, You Can Be It, and provided Implicit Bias Training for CAALA's board and committee chairs. I am especially proud that we had 66 female speakers at CAALA Vegas—the most ever and just about half of all speakers.

Committees – In addition to our many education events, CAALA committees have focused on finding ways to keep the community connected. Women in Law found success with monthly Chat & Chew meetings. The Membership Committee continues quarterly zoom orientations to welcome new members and the highly successful case collaboration series. The Legal Skills Support Group solidified their social media presence, and their mentor program has seen great success. The Finance Committee is developing planned giving so members may include a legacy gift to CAALA in wills and trusts as part of their estate.

New programs – We continue to develop new programs to enrich our member benefits, including a Jury Selection Workshop, Cadaver Anatomy Demonstration, and Quarterly Wellness Webinars.

CAALA Vegas – Our 40th anniversary in Vegas was record setting. We had a record 3,764 total attendees. Beyond the numbers, the connection and community are unrivaled.

We will have one more CAALA Vegas at the Bellagio, and then return to the Wynn.

State Bar initiatives – So many from CAALA and CAOC joined together to do what was once unthinkable – prevent our own State Bar from implementing disastrous programs that would have allowed non-lawyers to practice law and corporations to own law firms. The Bar was stopped in its tracks when we successfully partnered with the Legislature to include provisions in the Bar funding bill putting a halt to the Bar's plans.

MICRA deal – Through the incredible teamwork of CAOC, Fairness for Injured Patients (FIPA) Initiative Proponents and CAALA members Nick and Courtney Rowley and many other members, Governor Newsom signed AB 35 into law, significantly increasing MICRA damage caps and providing much greater access to justice for Californians injured by medical negligence.

Phased elimination of PI hub – CAALA's relationship with the Court has never been stronger, from joint programing to real-time feedback on court issues confronting our members, to expanding the Resolve Law Virtual MSC Program to include employment cases. It was truly my privilege to partner with the Court's leadership, past Presiding Judge Eric Taylor, new Presiding Judge Sam Jessner, and past Supervising Judge of Civil David Cowan to provide CAALA's input on the phased elimination of the PI Hub. The PI Hub was the biggest issue we faced litigating personal injury cases. Attorneys who have practiced a decade or less have only known this system. With the return to IC courts in the districts, PI cases will be better managed, there will be greater certainty when and where cases will be tried, and insurance carriers will now be incentivized to offer fair value.

Although my year as President comes to a close, I'm not going anywhere. I'm a CAALA lifer. I will continue to serve on CAALA's Executive Committee for the next three years. I look forward to being the most relaxed person in the room with the sweet sound of my new role – as a CAALA Past President. I have been honored (and grateful) to advance our causes on your behalf and to be your 2022 President. As always, I invite you to contact me at any time (dsilverstein@californialaborlawattorney.com).