



## Update from Washington

**Linda A. Lipsen**

CEO, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE

# The public today has a more favorable view of trial lawyers than it did seven years ago

ALSO: FIGHTING TO HOLD AUTONOMOUS-VEHICLE MAKERS ACCOUNTABLE

On the anniversary of 9/11, I always proudly remember how our trial lawyer community stepped up to provide free legal services for victims and their families in a time of great national crisis. The collective action was the largest, most successful pro bono project in the history of U.S. jurisprudence. It truly was a testament to what trial lawyers stand for and the lengths they will take in service of others.

### Legal resources for devastation in Maui

That selfless spirit continues today. In response to the devastation of Maui, trial lawyers in Hawaii and on the mainland have collaborated so that lawyers anywhere can help those who have been left homeless, injured, and traumatized by this tragic event.

The Hawaii State Bar Foundation has set up a special fund for Maui, which is helping establish legal resource centers at several Kaanapali hotels with Wi-Fi, portable printers, and scanners. Contributions are also supporting the development of a website for people to submit questions to volunteer lawyers. Another goal is to fund a Legal Aid disaster relief unit on Maui with a staff attorney and paralegals. I strongly encourage you to donate today. Trial lawyers really do care, and the public realizes that.

On that note, I think you'll find our civil justice poll results below very promising.

### Positive news: Civil justice polling results

I am excited to share positive news with you from a survey of over 1,000 people on civil justice and the work you do every day as a trial lawyer. Our polling partner, Hart Research, has been working with us for over 18 years and helped us put together a comprehensive poll.



*The big takeaway here is that the public has a more favorable view of what trial lawyers do than the previous public survey seven years ago. Opposition to lawsuits in general has declined, trust in juries is very high, and there is an increasing sense overall that civil justice improves lives and plays an important role in society. In general, there is also a growing sense that litigation helps hold corporations accountable.*

We're very pleased to see such improvement in so many categories since we last did this type of polling. If you would like more information on the poll results, please contact AAJ Communications at [media.replies@justice.org](mailto:media.replies@justice.org).

This data will give you a fresh look at how the public views your work and offer some tips about how we talk about our issues. It will help you sharpen your communication with everyone you talk to, whether it's juries, the media, or the public. I hope our poll findings provide encouragement for the fights ahead.

### AAJ fights to hold AV makers accountable

In late July, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce held a hearing on autonomous vehicle (AV) legislation. The two main bills discussed were the AV

industry-backed Self-Drive Act and a bill from Representative Dingell updating and adding new motor vehicle safety standards for AVs. Prior to the hearing, AAJ reached out to members of the House Energy and Commerce committee. During these meetings, we explained our concerns and strong opposition to the Self-Drive Act. We also discussed why Rep. Dingell's proposal addressed some of our key concerns such as forced arbitration, transparency, and protecting state tort laws.

While AV manufacturers aggressively lobby for new and relaxed regulations, AAJ's Public Affairs team continues to educate members of Congress that consumers and the public must continue to be able to hold AV manufacturers accountable for harms resulting from new technology. We must also ensure that the high cost of AV development does not lead to monopolistic dominance by manufacturers, and that consumer privacy is protected from invasive data collection.

Furthermore, forced arbitration should not be allowed to take root in the AV industry, and Congress must make sure that consumers of these technologies can seek justice when they are hurt, which will also deter reckless AV development. True accountability will mean not only justice for victims today but protection for people tomorrow.

### Fighting for all trial lawyers

Thank you for your ongoing support. Our goal is to provide you with tools to enhance your practice and succeed for your clients. AAJ will continue to fight for access to justice for your clients and will keep you informed about important developments. I welcome your input at [advocacy@justice.org](mailto:advocacy@justice.org).