



From the President

**Aaron Hicks**

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## Perspective from the OC

### A SUMMER SURGE OF GREAT EVENTS TO PUSH US FORWARD, TOGETHER

As we hit the midpoint of 2025, I've been reflecting on how energizing this year has been for OCTLA – and how that momentum reflects something even greater: the collective strength of California's trial lawyer community.

Our theme this year is *Stronger Together*, and it's not just a slogan – it's a mindset. Whether we're co-hosting educational programs, advocating for justice in Sacramento, or mentoring the next generation, collaboration is what fuels our progress. I'm proud to share a glimpse of what we've been up to in Orange County and how it's part of a larger, unified movement we all share.

#### Building the foundation

We kicked off the year in Coronado with our strategic planning retreat, reaffirming OCTLA's commitment to intentional growth, diversity, and mentorship. These principles shaped everything that followed.

In April, we joined advocates from across the state – including many CAALA members – for Justice Day in Sacramento. OCTLA hosted our *Night at the Capitol* mixer that evening, giving lawyers and lawmakers the chance to connect over shared priorities and policy goals. It was a powerful reminder of how aligned we are in our fight to preserve access to justice.

In May, OCTLA once again partnered with CAOC and CAOIE for our annual *Palm Springs Seminar*. The programming was outstanding, the desert setting unbeatable, and the casual networking – poolside, at CLEs, and in the lazy river – left attendees refreshed and reenergized. Events like these prove that high-level education and community go hand in hand.

On June 6th, we hosted our *Annual Golf Tournament* at Oak Creek Golf Club in Irvine. Thanks to incredible sponsor support and a sold-out field of players, it was a fundraising success and a whole lot of fun. These kinds of events help fuel not just our programs, but our sense of connection.

#### Investing in future leaders

This summer, OCTLA launched its annual *Summer Internship Program*,

offering law students hands-on experience in the world of plaintiff litigation. We welcomed five standout interns – Josh Rezvani, Alina Gonzalez, Robert Kitapszian, Sofia Kabir, and Madeleine Gam – who were placed with OCTLA member firms handling personal injury and medical malpractice cases.

More than a résumé line, these internships put students in depositions, hearings, and case strategy sessions. We're grateful to the generous firms that hosted them: the Law Offices of Jennifer R. Johnson, Callahan & Blaine, Hodes Milman LLP, Ikuta Hemesath, and MLG Attorneys at Law. Watching these students grow has been a highlight of the summer – and a hopeful look at the next generation of trial lawyers.

#### Honoring our past, creating new traditions

In July, OCTLA will host our annual *Past Presidents' Dinner* – a tradition rooted in gratitude. This year, we honor the memory of two past presidents, John Burns and Ronald Schwartz, who recently passed. Their leadership helped shape OCTLA's legacy, and their influence endures in the work we continue to do.

We're also excited to introduce new opportunities for connection and mentorship. On July 24th, we'll host *Trivia Night* at Hangar 24 in Irvine – a relaxed evening of fun, friendly competition, and community-building.

Then, on August 14th, we'll launch our first *Bridge the Gap* event, bringing together newer and seasoned attorneys to share insights and build relationships. This initiative reflects a shared belief I know many in CAALA hold: We're all stronger when we learn from each other.

#### Looking ahead: NEGU and TOP GUN

As the year builds toward our *TOP GUN Trial Lawyer of the Year Awards Gala & Silent Auction* on November 22nd, we're focused on making it meaningful. This year, all proceeds benefit the Jesse Rees Foundation (NEGU), whose mission is to bring encouragement and joy to children fighting cancer.

NEGU's impact – through JoyJars, hospital outreach, and family support – is

deeply moving. I invite CAALA members to attend or support this effort. It's one more way our community can come together and do something powerful, both inside and outside the courtroom.

#### Continuing the surge

While summer often signals a slowdown, OCTLA is picking up speed. Our MCLE dinners continue monthly, our events are thriving, and our members are more engaged than ever. But we know we're part of something bigger than just our county.

We're proud to walk alongside CAALA, CAOC, and other local TLAs as we collectively push for fairness, education, and justice. As we head into fall, I hope we keep leaning on each other, learning from each other, and lifting each other up – because truly, we are *Stronger Together*.

#### Standing firm in our values and supporting the judiciary

At OCTLA, we hold firm to our core values – justice, fairness, service, community, innovation, diversity, equity, inclusion, excellence, advocacy, integrity, civility, and courage. These are not just words; they are commitments that define how we litigate, lead, and live.

Now more than ever, our mission and these values are being tested. Courts, clients, and communities face pressures that challenge the strength of our legal system and the resolve of those who protect it. In response, we affirm our unwavering commitment to the rule of law. We support an independent judiciary and reject any attempt – overt or subtle – to weaken the courts or the legal profession. We reaffirm every individual's Constitutional right to due process and to seek redress through the courts when wronged. And we remain dedicated to building a legal community that reflects the diversity of our broader society, believing that equity and inclusion are essential to strengthening both our profession and the public we serve.

Let this be our collective pledge: *Take No Challenge Alone*. Within OCTLA, we believe in the power of community, and we are STRONGER TOGETHER.