



From the President

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HICKS LAW FIRM



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Bridging the gap

THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP AND THE STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY

As we pass the midpoint of 2025, I continue to be inspired by the strength, generosity, and grit of our plaintiff's bar. This year, our theme at OCTLA – Stronger Together – has taken on new meaning as we've leaned into the relationships that elevate us not just professionally, but personally.

One of the most powerful ways we strengthen those bonds is through mentorship. The importance of mentorship in the legal profession cannot be overstated. For newer attorneys, guidance from seasoned trial lawyers can be the difference between doubt and confidence, hesitation and courage. And for experienced advocates, mentorship offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect, give back, and leave a legacy that stretches beyond any verdict or settlement. At its core, mentorship is about connection – and that's exactly what OCTLA is working hard to cultivate.

On August 14th in Newport Beach, we're excited to host our inaugural Bridge the Gap event – an evening dedicated to fostering mentorship between experienced attorneys and the next generation of trial lawyers. The event will feature a fireside chat with some of the most respected names in our legal community, who will share war stories, lessons learned, and tips for navigating today's trial landscape. Following the panel, attendees will have the chance to mix and mingle in a relaxed, social setting. It's an opportunity to ask questions, share stories, and spark relationships that we hope will continue well beyond the event. If you're a newer attorney looking for guidance, or a veteran litigator ready to give back, we hope you'll join us. These moments of connection are what keep our profession grounded and growing.

Remembering John Burns and Ronald Schwartz

This spirit of community and camaraderie was on full display at several

recent OCTLA events. In July, we held our annual OCTLA Past Presidents' Dinner at Muldoon's in Newport Beach, honoring the leaders who helped build this organization into what it is today. It was a night filled with stories, laughter, and deep gratitude. We also took time to reflect on the legacies of two remarkable OCTLA past presidents we recently lost – John Burns and Ronald Schwartz. Their contributions to our profession, our organization, and our broader legal community will never be forgotten. We are forever grateful for their leadership and friendship, and their impact will be felt for generations to come.

And speaking of strength through connection – what a great time we had on July 24th at our Trivia Night social event at Hangar 24 in Irvine! Teams of attorneys teamed up for a lively evening of competition, laughs, and casual networking. Events like these reinforce the idea that community-building doesn't always have to happen in a CLE setting. Sometimes, grabbing a drink, sharing a laugh, and competing over obscure trivia questions is exactly what we need to recharge and reconnect.

Looking ahead, we're excited to continue this momentum into fall. On September 25th, we're hosting our next Plaintiff Attorneys Only MCLE program, Listserve Live, at The Park Club in Costa Mesa. This innovative event brings the energy and practicality of our daily Listserve into a live, interactive format. Attorneys Keith Bruno, Chelsea Sachs, and Ali Razavi will serve as panelists, fielding real-time questions from attendees about their actual cases. Whether you're facing a tricky procedural issue, preparing for trial, or just looking for new strategies, this is a rare opportunity to receive candid advice from some of the best in the business. It's education, mentorship, and collaboration – all in one room.

As we round the corner into the final stretch of the year, we're already preparing

for our biggest night of the year: the Top Gun Trial Awards Gala and Charity Silent Auction, taking place on November 22nd at the Hyatt Regency in Irvine. This event is more than just celebrating courtroom excellence – it's also about honoring our collective commitment to service. Once again, we'll be raising funds for the Jessie Rees Foundation (NEGU – Never Ever Give Up), an incredible organization that brings joy and encouragement to children fighting cancer. Supporting NEGU reminds us that our impact as trial lawyers reaches far beyond the courthouse. Through this partnership, we carry our values into the community and show that advocacy doesn't end when the case does.

Throughout this year, I've seen firsthand the power of mentorship, the value of community, and the importance of showing up – not just for our clients, but for each other. Whether it's passing on a trial tip, answering a young lawyer's call, or simply showing up at an event, these small moments create ripples that shape the culture of our profession.

So, as we continue through 2025, I encourage each of you to be a mentor, seek a mentor, or thank a mentor. If you've been practicing for years, there's someone out there who could benefit from your experience. And if you're still new to this work, don't be afraid to reach out and ask questions – this community is full of people who want to help you succeed.

Mentorship makes us better lawyers. But more importantly, it makes us better colleagues, leaders, and human beings. At OCTLA, we believe that when we share what we've learned, we all grow stronger. And as always, we believe that we are Stronger Together.

