



From the President
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Independence and the pursuit of justice

DEFENDING A SYSTEM IN WHICH THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARE PROTECTED AGAINST THE POWERFUL

We are now in the midst of summer – the season of fireworks lighting up the sky, berry cobbler and watermelon on the counter, bags of chips, and backyard barbecues. It is a time to slow down and spend time with friends and family.

For me, the Fourth of July also makes me reflect on our justice system. At the heart of that system is access to justice. It is the idea that every person, no matter how powerful or how powerless, can stand before an impartial group of 12 peers and be heard. Access to justice is something that must be defended, as we have seen in the many attacks on it this year.

This year, defending it has meant standing by our judges when they are unfairly subjected to recall efforts, as we have seen in Orange County. An independent judiciary is the foundational pillar of our system. When judges are threatened for making lawful, principled decisions, the threat is not to them alone, but to everyone who relies on our system.

It has also meant fighting against multi-million-dollar companies that seek to rewrite the Constitution to suit their interests, increase their profits, mislead the public, and make it harder than ever for ordinary people to be made whole. Their goal is to make it impossible for the most injured among us to hire a lawyer to help them.

Consider the everyday person harmed in a car crash through no fault of their own. They are not asking for a windfall. They are asking for what our system was built to provide: fair compensation for their injuries and access to the medical care they need to heal, to recover, and to return to work and to their families. When powerful

interests tilt the field against them, the cost is borne by the most vulnerable among us.

Watching our community of trial lawyers come together to fight these injustices makes me proud to do this work. It is something I remind myself of on the hard days – the days when a case feels impossible, when the other side has limitless resources, when the path forward is anything but clear. On those days, I think about the simple truth at the center of everything we do: They need us.

Motivated by those we represent

I am motivated by many things. By doing what is right. By helping those in need. By being part of a justice system that, at its best, refuses to look away from suffering. But most of all, I am motivated by the people we are privileged to represent; good people who were harmed, who had nowhere else to turn, and who often had nothing.

Without sharing their personal details, I think of them often. A 20-year-old left paralyzed after falling through a skylight that lacked the most basic safety protections. A young child with burns covering half of her body. A newlywed who lost his wife on their honeymoon. A mother who lost her father, and then watched as her husband was left paralyzed.

These are people whose lives were changed in an instant, through no fault of their own. What they needed, in the aftermath, was accountability. They needed a justice system that worked – impartial judges who would hear them fairly, and advocates who would stand beside them and refuse to give up. They needed organizations

like OCTLA, CAALA, and the lawyers who make them what they are. And they needed the chance for a jury of 12 peers to hear their case, to deliver justice, and to let them feel heard.

I also remind myself of the greater good our cases do. The roads made safer because we held the government responsible for an intersection it knew was dangerous for years; the added safety features residents had begged for over two decades – none of those things would have happened without our system, without fighting, and without access to the courts, our judges, and the civil justice system. That is the quiet, lasting work that rarely makes the news but protects people long after a case is closed – drivers who will never know how close they came, families who will never have to grieve because juries finally held the public entity or large corporation accountable for the dangers they caused.

That, to me, is what the Fourth of July is really about. We celebrate independence – but independence has never meant standing alone. It has meant building a system in which the rights of the individual are protected against the powerful, in which no one is too small to be heard and no entity is too large to be held accountable.

So, this Independence Day, between the fireworks and the berry pie, and if I'm being honest, lots of chips and dip, I will be thinking of the clients who reminded me why this work matters, the colleagues who fight alongside me, and the system worth defending. The freedoms we celebrate this month were never guaranteed, and they never defend themselves.

Happy July! 