



Civility in the Legal Profession — Our Common Goal

By Justice Donald W. Lemons

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First, as president of the American Inns of Court Foundation, I want to tell you what an honor it is for the American Inns of Court (AIC) to work closely with ABOTA and JAMS to bring to the legal profession the Civility Matters program. We truly believe the program will make a significant positive difference in the integrity and civility of members of our profession.

Second, I want you to know about the AIC movement. We are devoted to promoting professionalism, civility, ethics and excellent legal skills at the American bench and bar. From the founding of the first American Inn of Court in 1980, lawyers, judges, academics and students throughout the nation have been meeting on a monthly basis in a collegial setting in their local American Inn of Court for continuing education and mentoring. Today, more than 27,000 members participate on a regular basis in more than 350 chartered American Inns of Court. Since the founding, more than 100,000 members have contributed to, and benefited from, their involvement in this national movement.

Looking for a new way to help

lawyers and judges rise to higher levels of excellence, professionalism, and ethical awareness, the American Inns of Court adopted the traditional English model of legal apprenticeship and modified it to fit the particular needs of the American legal system. American Inns of Court help lawyers become more effective advocates and counselors with a keener ethical awareness. Members learn side-by-side with the most experienced judges and attorneys in their community.

An American Inn of Court is not a fraternal order, a social club, a course in continuing legal education, a lecture series, an apprenticeship system or an adjunct of a law school's program. While an Inn has some of each of these features, it is quite different in aim, scope and effect.

Membership is composed of the following categories: **Masters of the Bench**—judges, experienced lawyers and law professors; **Barristers**—lawyers with some experience who do not meet the minimum requirements for Masters; **Associates**—lawyers who do not meet the minimum requirement for Barristers; and **Pupils**—law students. The suggested number of

active members in an Inn is around 80.

Most Inns concentrate on issues surrounding civil and criminal litigation practice, and include attorneys from a number of specialties. However, there are several Inns that specialize in criminal practice, federal litigation, tax law, administrative law, white-collar crime, bankruptcy, intellectual property, family law, or employment and labor law.

I encourage you to explore our website. (www.innsofcourt.org). Read about the history of the American Inns of Court and its mission and goals. Examine the Professional Creed that articulates aspirational conduct for lawyers. Review our diversity policy.

If you are a member of an American Inn of Court, I thank you for your participation, and I invite you to let us know how we can continue to serve and support you. If you are not a member of an American Inn of Court, consider joining thousands of others who share a commitment to improving the legal profession and maintaining the values essential to the success of a noble profession.