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ATLA sees leadership change after 26 years

Carol Utley to retire; Matthew Hass named executive director

Little Rock, Ark. – After 26 years of leading Arkansas’ professional organization for trial attorneys, Carol Utley has retired as executive director for the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association (ATLA). The association has selected Matthew Hass, ATLA’s Government Relations Director, as her successor. He will be in charge of directing the organization’s professional and political activities.

“Working for ATLA has been a worthwhile experience,” said Utley. “Though I’m proud of several accomplishments throughout the years, it’s especially rewarding to see the growth we’ve had in our membership offerings such as continuing legal education (CLE) training. The contributions we make to our members help them provide a higher quality of service to their clients and therefore better outcomes for those individuals.”

Utley’s tenure also saw the organization grow in both staff size and membership. What began as a one-person staff servicing a membership of 200 grew into today’s team of staffers who assist nearly 1,000 ATLA members from across the state.

“Having a board and staff as supportive as ATLA’s has played a major part in our successful growth,” said Utley. “This is why I’m confident that ATLA will continue to grow and offer its members both rewarding benefits and a capable voice. Matthew Hass has worked tirelessly as government relations director, and I have no doubt he will bring the same intensity to his new position.”

A graduate of Henderson State University, Hass has a long history of working in the political arena beginning with local campaigns in 1990 and later serving as the Saline County Democratic Party Chairman in 2000. He has worked with a variety of groups advocating for education, healthcare and consumer issues during his career. As Government Relations Director for the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association he administered one of the largest political action committees in the state and represented the organization's interests at the State Capitol.

"It is an honor to follow in Carol's footsteps as the executive director of ATLA," said Hass. "She has devoted her career to standing up for those that need it the most, and I intend to promote and defend those same ideals during my tenure."

"As government relations director, I have seen firsthand how Arkansas' legislature can directly impact an individual's ability to receive justice," Hass continued. "That's why as executive director, I intend to place an even greater emphasis on our involvement in the political process to ensure that our voices are heard and that every Arkansans' right to a trial by jury is protected."

The Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association (ATLA), was founded in 1963, and is an affiliate of the American Association for Justice in Washington, D.C. The organization was established to advance the administration of justice while upholding and improving the adversary system and preserving every citizen's access to trial by jury. Through continuing legal education programs and publication, ATLA serves its membership by providing training in all fields and phases of advocacy. The association is a volunteer organization with statewide membership of approximately 1,000 lawyers from all 75 counties and several states.

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