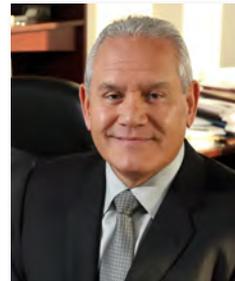


Getting all on board

Many California trial lawyers who benefit from our work at CAOC are not members. You can help change that.

By Mike Arias



Over the last decade, CAOC and its many volunteer trial lawyer leaders and members have spent thousands of dollars and thousands of hours of their time developing and promoting legislation and rules to help your practice and to secure the rights of your clients.

Some recent examples: CAOC-backed legislation extended the statute of limitations in personal injury cases, put a time limit on depositions and halted the xenophobic defense practice of referencing a plaintiff's immigration status. In years past, CAOC defeated efforts to establish no-fault insurance, cap damages in personal injury cases and limit attorney fees. Again and again, CAOC's legislative triumphs have directly benefited every plaintiff trial lawyer in California and their clients.

How did we do it? With the resources provided by our dues-paying members, resources that benefit every trial lawyer in the state, even non-members. Operating the largest state plaintiff trial lawyers association in the country is an expensive proposition.

CAOC's legislative department is staffed with some of the best lobbyists and strategists in the country. Their passion for fairness and their ability to navigate the political landscape are, in my view, underappreciated. Every year they work closely with your CAOC leadership to develop legislation designed to help you as a trial lawyer. And every year they exceed reasonable expectations and successfully put many of our bills on the governor's desk.

On the flip side, the number of bills brought each year by the California Chamber of Commerce and others to limit our clients' rights is staggering. Yet each year most of these anti-consumer bills never even make it out of committee.

CAOC's political department staff works tirelessly to ensure we help elect state lawmakers who are friendly to consumers and civil justice. Thanks to these extremely experienced and focused staffers, Sacramento's statehouse is rife with legislators who understand the value of the civil justice system and our clients' need for justice.

CAOC's education department is staffed with amazingly creative and dedicated professionals who want nothing more than to help you become a better trial lawyer. They work tirelessly to develop educational seminars that directly affect your practice. The Annual Convention, the regional seminars, the countless webinars and all the other educational opportunities are all designed to help you be the best trial lawyer you can be.

I know you know all this because you are already a dues-paying member and appreciate what CAOC does for you. As of this writing, CAOC has more than 3,600 dues-paying members. But it's estimated that there are at least 7,000 full-time consumer attorneys in California, and a far larger number who do at least some plaintiff personal injury work. The upshot is there are far too many of our fellow plaintiff trial lawyers benefiting from CAOC's efforts without helping the cause.

We try our best to let these non-members know what we are doing and what we have accomplished for them. Unfortunately, many of them have either missed our message or have decided to ignore it.

This is where we need your help as a member. If you know a plaintiff trial lawyer who is not a CAOC member, please let us know. Simply email Liz Teves at liz@caoc.org and we will reach out directly to that lawyer, find out why they are not a member and attempt to show them why

they should be. And if you don't mind, we'll use you as a referral source.

In addition, if any of the lawyers in your firm are not members, I would ask that you get them to join CAOC. Just because you are a member does not mean your firm is a member, so we may not be receiving all of the support we need from your firm.

Membership dues are a key funding source of this organization and account for more than a quarter of CAOC's operating budget. The rest of our budget is dependent on revenues from educational programs and contributions from hundreds of faithful supporters. Unfortunately, those sources and contributions can vary from year to year. We need to increase our membership so that reliance on these other sources is not necessary. WE NEED EVERY TRIAL LAWYER in California to step up and pay their fair share – or at least acknowledge what CAOC does for them – by becoming a dues-paying member.

So please take a few minutes out of your day and make a few calls, send a few emails or contact Liz with any prospects you may have. While I truly appreciate the fact that you are already a member, we need your help in getting those who are not members "TO SEE THE LIGHT"!

If you have any ideas on how we can increase membership, or have any other thoughts you would like to share with me, please email me at mike@aswtlawyers.com. ■

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