

# A Closer Look

## ALAN OLSON

- **About:** Olson will be the 38th president of Iowa Association for Justice (IAJ) in 2011. Olson founded Olson Law Firm in Des Moines in 1998, which specializes in representing plaintiffs in injury cases. He has been a part of IAJ since 1993. IAJ is a group of approximately 800 trial lawyers statewide.
- **Education:** Juris Doctorate, Drake Law School, 1992. Bachelor of Arts in sociology at Drake University, 1989.
- **Age:** 44
- **Family:** Wife, Carla, and sons Derek, 11, and Logan, 9.

### What does the IAJ do?

What we do is we protect our civil justice system; we seek justice; we seek to ensure that laws exist so that when people and entities make mistakes that result in somebody being permanently injured or even killed, that there's a system in place to hold the person who made the mistake responsible for the fallout.

### Why did you seek the presidency?

I was very appreciative of the opportunity to work with very intelligent and capable leaders who were as interested in serving the public and serving our society as the members who are attracted to and active in our association. In addition to our efforts of protecting the civil justice system in a formal sense, of what you might see in a legislature or a courtroom, one of the very rich traditions of our organization is public service. ... That's what attracted me to it, and it kept me wanting to continue to find new ways to work with these leaders, who in turn partner with other people and organizations to make a lasting difference in the lives of real people, and to leave things better than when we came.

### What does the position entail?

Essentially in the IAJ president position, you're really sort of the chief spokesperson for the organization. You put a face on the organization, which represents the efforts of so many. It's to work very closely with our expert staff to carry out the actual rubber-meets-the-road business of the things we've been dis-



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cussing, and to prioritize and create plans of action and to strategize for how we can help level the playing field for people who otherwise might not have the means or the opportunity to do that, both on an individual basis and a community basis.

### How have your prior experiences shaped you?

The plaintiffs' bar appealed to me at a very young age, because of the fact that it is really more than anything the group of dedicated and thoughtful and caring people who stand up for the rights of others. That has been a big motivator for me my whole life – whatever I've been given, whatever abilities I've been given, whatever motivation I've had to try to do something with them. I really feel like my role was to give a voice to others who would otherwise probably not be heard from, and so I always knew that I wanted to practice law in a way that I could help people have an opportunity to be heard.

### Make your campaign pitch to me.

I'm a good listener. I am very interested in making a priority out of best deciding how to utilize our organization's and our society's resources in a way that does the most good for the most people. I am very team-oriented. I am a person who welcomes the opportunity to learn from others, and by seeing others in action, be reminded that it is important for all of us on occasion to

get outside of our comfort zones, to take on new causes, to consider new viewpoints, to consider new people and to walk a mile in their shoes to better understand and empathize what their situations are really like beyond the stereotypes.

### What are your goals for the year?

As an organization, we want to make sure to protect individual rights and to protect people's and companies' and corporations' rights to have a jury of our peers decide whether someone made a mistake, and if so to preserve the opportunity in our civil justice system to afford members of our society to keep being the best group suited to resolve disputes that arise in their communities, and involve their fellow mankind and the corporations that are so important to a successful community. The most important thing is we keep the decision of what an appropriate solution is in the hands of the people, and the government is run by the people, mindful of individual rights not being swallowed up by the government.

### What do you do for fun?

My passion, above all, is coaching youth baseball. I think it's important for adults to look for opportunities to stay in touch with their youthful, energetic viewpoints, and to stay in touch with the children of our country.

– Kyle Oppenhuizen