



## **CAL-ABOTA**

California Chapters of the  
American Board of Trial Advocates

*www.cal-abota.org*

### **CAL-ABOTA PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**by Dennis LaRochelle**

**September, 2015**

Your CAL-ABOTA Board of Directors recently met in Santa Barbara. The meeting was well attended with 24 of 33 board members present. It was our honor to have Foundation President Cynthia McGuinn join us and deliver a report on the Foundation. Highlights of the meeting follow:

#### **Election of Treasurer and Members-At-Large**

The Board enthusiastically and unanimously elected Education Committee Chair Bryan Reid of the San Bernardino/Riverside Chapter as next year's Treasurer. Chris Wesierski, Immediate Past President of the Orange County Chapter, and Wally Yoka, Immediate Past President of the Los Angeles Chapter, were elected to Member-At-Large positions. Chris will fill the two-year term and Wally will fill the three-year term with Dominique Pollara of the Sacramento Chapter moving up to the one-year Member-At-Large position.

#### **Expedited Jury Trials**

Wally Yoka reported the status of a bill that will make Expedited Jury Trials mandatory in limited civil cases. The bill contains several opt out provisions. If interested, here is a link to the current version of AB 555. [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160AB555](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB555). Your Board voted unanimously to support AB 555. I followed by sending a letter to Governor Brown urging him to sign AB 555 into law.

Along with making smaller cases less time consuming and expensive, we expect the new measures will give younger lawyers more of an opportunity to gain valuable jury trial experience.

### **Foundation Fellowship**

Under the leadership of San Bernardino/Riverside Immediate Past President Richard Scott, CAL-ABOTA's Foundation Committee worked hard at increasing the number of Foundation Life Fellows. This year 45 new Life Fellows were added to the Foundation rolls. Cynthia McGuinn reported that of 1,788 active CAL-ABOTA members over 720 are now [Fellows of the Foundation](#).

### **Education Committee**

The Board had a general discussion about the direction of ABOTA's Youth Education efforts. There was some dialogue on whether the current model of James Otis Lectures and Teacher's Law School programs can withstand a cost/benefit analysis. Considerable time, effort and funds have been expended on those programs but attendance has been limited. Perhaps shorter programs at smaller venues would be more effective.

Moreover, given the Chief Justice's effort to bring civics back to the classroom, there may be more opportunities for ABOTA to support civil justice education in the schools. Education materials that the Foundation already has might be used by the schools as new curriculum is developed for teaching civics.

It would seem that the future of the youth education effort lies in being flexible and open to assisting educators in different ways. We will continue to look toward the Foundation and the Chief Justice's office for guidance.

### **Civility Award Recognition**

Our Long-Range Planning Committee, led by Chair Chris Wesierski, proposed that CAL-ABOTA publically recognize all Chapter members receiving Civility Awards. The Board agreed that beginning in 2016, CAL-ABOTA will post on its website a list of all chapter members who receive Civility Awards. In addition, we will display a congratulatory poster and verbally acknowledge the recipients at each year's Hawaii conference.

### **Jury Service Video**

[CAL-ABOTA's Jury Service video](#) is now posted on the websites of the Judicial Branch of California and the Los Angeles Superior Court. Both the Riverside Superior Court and the San Francisco Superior Court will post the video on their websites in the near future.

All CAL-ABOTA Chapter Presidents have been asked to contact their local Superior Courts to determine whether more counties are interested in having the CAL-ABOTA Jury Service video posted on their websites and/or shown during jury orientation. Our thanks again go to Immediate CAL-ABOTA Past President Steve Glickman for all his work on this important project.

## **CAL-ABOTA Website**

Speaking of websites, the [CAL-ABOTA website](#) is being completely rebuilt. We will send an announcement as soon as the site is ready to be used, which may be any day now. Unlike the old site, our new website can be accessed with smartphones and tablets. Many new features have been added and it looks great!

## **Chapter Reports**

Representatives from all eight chapters attended our meeting and reported on the activities of their respective chapters. The meetings, programs and events that have taken place thus far and that are calendared to be completed by year's end are too numerous to list here. It seems that every year each chapter has become more and more involved in ABOTA's mission of preserving our jury system, elevating the standards of integrity, honor and courtesy in our profession and educating and training trial lawyers. See for yourself by going to: <http://cal-abota.org/our-chapters/chapter-activities/>.

## **Hawaii**

It is not too late to sign up for this year's conference at the Mauna Kea. The conference will run from November 2 – 7, 2015. Join CAL-ABOTA Trial Lawyer of the Year Bill Shapiro for a fun-filled week that will include outstanding CLE programs, gala dinners, cocktails parties, golf tournament and fabulous entertainment. Register at <http://cal-abota.org/Hawaii/conference/>.

See you in Hawaii!

Dennis LaRochelle  
President