

Engagement. And we are off! Well, it is almost the new year—2025—and for me, it feels already like the new year as we continue to plan and implement the plan for OACTA 2025. In some ways I feel as if I am stealing an idea being tossed around quite liberally these days, that is, the concept of “engagement.” But I also feel as if engagement weren’t noticeably missing from many of our lives, it wouldn’t be necessary to continue to champion the idea. Add to it that I feel as if I am “preaching to the choir” (to use another overused expression) because most of you reading this Update are the ones who are engaged. So the challenge for us is how to engage others. I challenge each of the committee chairs and co-chairs to reach out to their members and ask them what they want from OACTA and what would get them engaged? Is it casual get-togethers at a local pub? Is it more coffee chats? I also suggest that each committee member think about inviting someone in his/her firm or another firm to join. Reach out to lawyers that you meet in other cases and get to know them.

Engagement. What does the next generation of lawyers want from OACTA? Now is the opportunity for all of you 40 and younger to tell us what do you want from OACTA? What can we do better. Stay tuned to join a Coffee Chat on January 10 at 8:30am to tell me your ideas. I really don’t want to start talking to myself! People “will” talk about me!

Engagement. This includes simply getting to know other lawyers. What do they like to do when they are not lawyering? Do they have family? Do they have pets? We spend a lot of time in the courtroom humanizing our corporate clients and we sometimes forget our co-counsel or opposing counsel are humans as well. As someone recently pointed out to me, in the “old days” when lawyers would traverse the state for pre-trials in out of the way counties, and in the big cities, lawyers would find themselves waiting for the judge to finish up other pretrials and we were forced to sit in waiting areas and talk to the other lawyers. We were able to get to know them on a human level. While it didn’t change our advocacy, it did lead, in most cases, to more civility. And perhaps to insight as to the other side’s case, leading perhaps to a resolution. At the least, it led to lawyers thinking first about what they said.

Engagement. Many thanks to Paul for setting up the connection with OAJ. It is so important that we become acquainted with the lawyers representing our client’s opponents. Again, let’s add humanity to the equation. I have some ideas about engagement with OAJ that will allow us to get to know them as people, so more to come after we flush out some ideas.

Engagement. Another cliché: “Think globally; act locally.” This is apropos when we think about the opportunities that DRI has to offer. Not only are their leadership opportunities at the national level, opportunities to learn from other talented lawyers, opportunities to gain substantive knowledge, but there is also the opportunity to be involved with policy and legal issues that truly do make a difference. I continue to be intrigued by the work of the Center for Law and Public Policy. I want to continue to learn about what it does and I invite you to do the same. DRI’s Website states “About the Center” as follows:

Founded in 2012, the Center for Law and Public Policy (The Center)—through scholarship, legal expertise, and advocacy—provides the most effective voice for the defense bar in the discussion of substantive law, judicial process, constitutional issues, and the integrity of the civil justice system at both the national and state levels. Two of the Center’s three primary committees—Legislation and Rules and Public Policy—are comprised of numerous task forces and working groups that undertake in-depth studies of a range of topics and publish comments, articles, and white papers on a variety of issues. These resources serve not only as practical tools for DRI members, but also as objective counsel to policymakers and effective public education assets. The Amicus Committee files amicus curiae briefs in carefully selected cases that present issues of importance to civil litigation defense lawyers and their clients.

And while the dailiness of our practice often doesn’t leave us time to think about these lofty ideas, it’s always good to keep in mind that there is work to be done. Often one can find this work to refresh one’s view of the legal practice.

So enough about engagement for this moment, as I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday and no judges have scheduled for you “Merry Gifting” jury trials! I leave you with a picture of three of your leaders enjoying camaraderie at the recent DRI Annual Meeting in Seattle.

