



Moving Forward with DRI's Center for Law and Public Policy

Larry Ebner is both founder of Capital Appellate Advocacy PLLC in Washington, D.C. and Executive Vice President & General Counsel of the Atlantic Legal Foundation. Now in his 51st year of legal practice, he is a Fellow of the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers and graduate of Harvard Law School and Dartmouth College.

The best part of chairing The Center for Law and Public Policy is teaming with a fantastic group of dedicated DRI members who have deep knowledge of so many important judicial and legislative issues currently confronting civil litigation defense attorneys and their clients.

For me, serving as The Center's chair is the culmination of my active involvement with DRI. It began in 2009, when former DRI President Mike Weston invited me to speak at that year's National Foundation for Judicial Excellence symposium to more than 125 state supreme court justices and state appellate judges. After that heady experience, I could not wait to devote more time to DRI. Like so many other pro-business, defense-side, civil litigators, I felt right at home. As an appellate specialist, I relished the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Appellate Advocacy Committee, organizing and participating in many appellate-practice seminar panels, serving for seven years as that committee's publications chair, and authoring numerous articles for publication in DRI's *For The Defense* and *In-House Defense Quarterly*. And of course, I was thrilled to be appointed to DRI's prestigious Amicus Committee, and eventually serve as its chair. That led to my becoming vice chair, and now chair, of The Center.

Along the way, I have interacted with hundreds of DRI members from around the United States, many of whom I consider to be friends as well as professional colleagues. They include current and former DRI executives such as Dean Martinez, Sean Dolan, Jay Ludlam (now The Center's Director), and John Kouris, as well as DRI's truly impressive, elected leaders, and dozens of highly experienced and skilled attorneys who participate in The Center's multifarious activities.

I am particularly honored and privileged to chair The Center during this critical, post-pandemic period. The Center, which is DRI's think tank and advocacy arm, is back in full gear. With the foresight of Sean, Jay, and others, we have reorganized The Center's structure to create additional opportunities for participation by DRI members ranging from junior attorneys to the most senior among us. We also are making The Center more proactive than ever before, as well as increasingly responsive to DRI members' needs, including when urgent legislation or judicial situations arise in a state. And we are working hard and innovatively to raise The Center's profile both within DRI and externally.

The newly reorganized Center is now composed of the Legislation & Rules Committee, the Public Policy Committee, the Amicus Committee, and a new Advisory Council. The Legislation & Rules and Public Policy Committees encompass numerous issue-specific task forces and working groups. These include, for example, the State Legislation & Rules Task Force, the Third-Party Litigation Funding Task Force, and the Artificial Intelligence Working Group. The Amicus Committee, in addition to filing amicus briefs in carefully selected Supreme Court and other appeals, now has a Litigation Issues and Trends Subcommittee, and a soon-to-be launched Appellate Skills Development Subcommittee. The latter will provide pro bono drafting assistance to SLDOs on state court-specific amicus briefs. The Center's new Advisory Council will benefit The Center by providing insights on emerging issues and trends that The Center will want to explore and address.

In the following pages, the chairs of three of The Center's principal components—Jim McCrystal (Legislation & Rules), John Pierce (Public Policy), and Matt Nelson (Amicus)—provide further details about their recent and ongoing activities. Last but not least, a special shout-out to John Guttman, The Center's vice chair, who brings decades of litigation knowledge and experience to many of The Center's activities.

On behalf of The Center's leadership, we hope that you not only will read the following pages but also contact any one of us with your ideas for new and ongoing Center projects, and also to express your interest in becoming involved.

Lawrence S. Ebner