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Celebrating its 30th Anniversary Year, the Association of Business Trial Lawyers – Los Angeles Chapter Announces New Small Business Dispute Resolution Initiative and Law School Scholarship Program

On Tuesday, February 10, 2004, before a room of 630 lawyers and judges at the best-attended ABTL-Los Angeles dinner program in history, ABTL President Alan Friedman of Jones Day announced the launch of the association's Small Business Dispute Resolution Initiative. Under the Initiative, ABTL lawyers will in coming weeks be volunteering their services as settlement officers for small business cases to help reduce the case load of the Los Angeles Superior Court.

In addition, the ABTL announced it had established a scholarship program at the five accredited Los Angeles-area law schools. Beginning this fall, five students each year selected by the deans of Loyola, Pepperdine, UCLA, USC, and Southwestern on the basis of academic performance, financial need, and commitment to public service will each receive a \$1000 ABTL scholarship. Scholarship recipients will be invited to attend an awards ceremony at the ABTL's September dinner program each year.

Under Friedman's leadership, the ABTL's Board of Governors last summer formed a Public Service Committee chaired by Travers Wood of White & Case. Committee member Wayne Flick of Latham & Watkins will be coordinating the Dispute Resolution Initiative. Once the judicial settlement officer program is underway, the ABTL intends to pursue the broader goal of serving the community by providing a small business dispute mediation service at nominal cost to parties, staffed by ABTL volunteers. In announcing the program, Friedman said, "Most business in Los Angeles County is small business. Many small businesses disputes can't bear the costs and delays of the judicial system. Our longer-term goal is to become the Small Business Mediation Court of first resort in Los Angeles County. Not only will this serve the business community, it will provide valuable mediation training and experience to the next generation of lawyers coming up the ranks."

Founded in Los Angeles in 1973, the ABTL has grown to five chapters statewide. In November 2003, the ABTL celebrated its 30th Anniversary Gala at a dinner program featuring United States Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia as the keynote speaker. The ABTL consistently provides the best in continuing legal education programs for business trial lawyers. Through its programs and activities, the ABTL provides a unique forum for dialogue between bench and bar to improve the administration of justice in business cases. The recent February 10, 2004 dinner program, for example, presented a panel discussion by all six Complex Litigation court judges in Los Angeles County, followed by a question-and-answer session. For future program dates and topics and membership information, visit the ABTL's website at www.abtl.org or call 323.939.1999.