

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Michael Mallow*

After a decade of serving on the Los Angeles ABTL Board of Governors, I'm beyond thrilled to deliver the President's Message in this first ABTL Report of 2024. During my decade with ABTL, I have watched this organization grow and thrive from 1,500 hundred members in 2014 to over 2,500 the past few years. Even COVID did not slow us down. The reason for ABTL's continued success is its mission and its members. ABTL fosters community in what is otherwise viewed, and I believe inaccurately, as a hostile environment. It allows our common bond—a commitment to the professional, ethical and civil practice of law—to thrive. And most importantly, through our dinner programs, lunch programs, judicial reception, YLD events and our statewide annual meeting, ABTL gives us a chance to “break bread” in person and establish true, meaningful and lasting friendships.

This past year has marked an incredible achievement for ABTL, and specifically our chapter. As some may recall, about six years ago at an ABTL joint board retreat, an impromptu discussion about incivility occurred. Such discussions have happened frequently, but this one was different. This time the conversation did not just come and go. Action was taken. The Los Angeles chapter created a Civility Committee to identify ways to address incivility and to do something about it. From those early meetings, which were heavily attended by lawyers and judges, two immediate goals were identified: create a mandatory CLE specialty credit dedicated to civility and require all attorneys, not just those licensed after 2014, to confirm their commitment to civility by taking the revised California Attorney Oath. Fast forward a few years and these goals took flight. A California Civility Task Force was formed as a joint project of the California Judges Association and the California Lawyers Association and chaired by our very own board member, Justice Brian Currey. The Task force issued a report, [“Beyond the Oath: Recommendations for Improving Civility,”](#) identifying and discussing the case for four proposals: requiring a CLE specialty credit for civility training in each CLE reporting cycle; requesting the Judicial Council and the Center for Judicial Education and Research Advisory Committee (and CJA) to provide specific training to judges on promoting civility inside and outside

courtrooms; requesting an amendment to the Rules of Professional Conduct to clarify that repeated incivility constitutes professional misconduct; and requesting an amendment to Rule 9.7 requiring all attorneys to confirm the civility portion of our attorney oath. Through the incredible efforts of many members of ABTL chapters, but in a very substantial part our Los Angeles chapter, we are seeing the initial goals of our chapter's Civility Committee come to life. Starting in 2025, a Civility CLE credit is required and the proposed amendments—requiring all attorneys to affirm annually their commitment to practice civilly and clarifying that incivility is a breach of our ethics—is awaiting Supreme Court approval. While these changes will not end incivility, they are major steps in the right direction and steps that are traceable directly to ABTL and our chapter. We should all be incredibly proud of our organization and its commitment to its mission and our profession.

As we move through this election year, I hope we can serve as models for those inside and outside our profession. Models that demonstrate disagreement does not need to be met with disrespect; adversaries in the courtroom are not enemies outside the courtroom; and our system of justice mandates and embraces a diversity of thought, experience and background. To that end, I invite and urge everyone to engage in the incredible programs and opportunities ABTL offers. Attend our Judicial Reception in June and spend quality time in an amazing outside setting just talking with our judicial officer members and fellow lawyers. Calendar our next two dinner programs on September 26 and November 21 and make time to attend. Draft articles for the ABTL Report and encourage young attorneys to participate in the YLD. All of these opportunities are available to better ourselves and our profession.

While this year is marked with achievement, I would be remiss if I didn't say a word about our former ABTL Board member, Judge Richard Burdge, Jr., who passed in January. I met Dick in a very contentious litigation about 15 years ago before he was appointed to the bench. I was a young partner. We each represented co-defendants with divergent interests. Dick was incredibly smart, kind, supportive and extremely effective for his client; an embodiment of ABTL values. I considered him a friend and looked forward to seeing him at ABTL events, which he always attended, health permitting. ABTL is where we would reconnect. Dick was a wonderful man and will be missed, and his memory serves as an example of how ABTL brings us together.

I have spent nearly a third of my professional career on the board of ABTL, dedicated to its mission. I have cherished all this time, the friendships it has created and the professional opportunities it has presented. I invite all of you to do the same.

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