

2026 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Amy Lucas

I am deeply honored to serve as your ABTL President this year, and one of the great joys of this role so far has been the opportunity to get to know so many of you—members of the bar and the judiciary—in a way that would not otherwise be possible. During my first Board meeting as President, and again at our recent Joint Board Retreat,

I intentionally incorporated activities designed to facilitate discussion and interaction on a more personal level than one might otherwise expect in a room full of lawyers and judges. These activities highlighted just how wonderfully diverse, yet also unified, we are as members of this organization. We are the products of vastly different upbringings, experiences, and interests. We grew up in different places, followed different paths to a legal career, and carry different passions outside of it. But there are common threads that bind us together: a genuine love of the law; a natural curiosity and drive that keeps us asking harder questions and pursuing the answers; and, for each of us, the privilege of having had someone, somewhere, who believed in us. I hope those of you in attendance came away with similar observations, and look forward to meeting and getting to know as many other ABTL members this year as possible at our events.

During our first event of 2026 in February, we had the pleasure of hosting LA28's Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel Elisabeth Freinberg and Senior Vice President and Deputy General Counsel Aaron Lowenstein for a fireside chat on the legal machinery behind the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic

Games. Elisabeth and Aaron described the staggering scale of the operation, which will be the largest peacetime gathering in history, and the complex legal ecosystem they are navigating. What struck me most, however, was the sense of mission that drives them. LA28 is a nonprofit organization pulling off a \$7 billion event, and every legal decision they make is in service of something much larger, not just for the partners, the audience, and the athletes, but also our community: Every dollar that LA28 ultimately makes will go to funding local Los Angeles youth sports programs, which are often overlooked but indescribably valuable for young people. It was a special evening, and if you missed it, I hope to see you at one of our upcoming events.

Our April 22 dinner program, titled *When Civility Breaks Down: Protecting Judges and The Rule of Law*, was one of the most important programs we will host this year. We are living in a time when the independence of the federal judiciary—a cornerstone of our democracy—is under extraordinary pressure, yet continues to hold. Judges are being asked to make difficult, sometimes deeply unpopular decisions, and too often they are met not with respectful disagreement, but with personal attacks and even threats to their own safety and wellbeing. An independent judiciary is a critical part of the foundation on which everything else is built. This program explored what happens when that foundation is tested, and what all of us—lawyers, judges, and citizens—can do to defend it.

On the same topic, I want to say a word about something that has become a central pillar of ABTL's mission and that I hope to carry forward: civility. ABTL and its members have

been leaders in changing in the way lawyers interact with one another. From the creation of our Civility Committee, to the work of the California Civility Task Force chaired by our own Justice Brian Currey (Ret.), to the mandatory civility CLE credit and the amendments requiring all attorneys to reaffirm their commitment to practicing with dignity, courtesy, and integrity—these are not minor feats. They are tangible, lasting, contributions that trace directly back to this organization.

Finally, and relatedly, I would be remiss if I did not close with the words of my own beloved mentor, the late Honorable Sandra S. Ikuta of the Ninth Circuit, who modeled an exacting standard of excellence paired with genuine humanity. Following her recent memorial, I was reading through my yellowed copy of the Chambers Guidelines that she distributed to each incoming clerk. Those Guidelines, our Bible for the year, were always to be treated as confidential, and I dutifully kept my copy locked in an office drawer for nearly 20 years. Now, however, I will take the liberty of

authorizing a limited waiver for our collective benefit, which I think Judge would have approved. The very first words she wrote to us as we started our legal careers were to remind us of the power of civility: “Welcome to our chambers! This job gives us an incredible opportunity for public service. One way in which we demonstrate our gratitude for this opportunity is in our effort to treat everyone (both inside and outside our chambers) with courtesy and respect.” Judge Ikuta lived those words every day. She wrote opinions or dissents on many important and, at times, divisive, legal issues, yet did it with grace, humor, and kindness. Civility, at its core, is about how we choose to show up—for our clients, for the parties before us, for our colleagues, for one another, and for the system of justice we all collectively serve. I carry Judge Ikuta’s example with me, and I hope it is one to which we can all aspire as we move through this year together.

Thank you for your support and your commitment to ABTL. I look forward to seeing all of you soon.

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