



Declaration of Candidacy

Candidates for election as Second Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, or Director Elected Nationally must complete this form and submit it to the Chief Executive Officer at the principal headquarters of DRI by 5:00 PM (CDT) on July 1st of the year in which the election is held.

National Director Requirements - Directors Elected Nationally or by Region must be Individual Members of the Corporation admitted to the practice of law. Each such director must meet the following qualifications at the time of election: (a) The candidate shall have been a DRI member for a total of at least five (5) years, and (b) The candidate shall have been a member of at least one DRI substantive law committee for at least three (3) years, and (c) The candidate must have registered for and attended at least one (1) DRI Annual Meeting within the previous three (3) years, and, within the three (3) years prior to the final day of the Annual Meeting, the candidate must have 1) registered for and attended at least two (2) DRI seminars, or 2) registered for and attended one (1) DRI seminar and one (1) DRI Regional Meeting.

Please also see the DRI Board of Director and Officer Competencies, attached.

Position sought:

Second Vice President* Secretary- Treasurer National Director

*If you have declared your candidacy for Second Vice President and are not the successful candidate, will you consider the Secretary - Treasurer Officer position?

Yes No

Sara M. Turner

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How long have you been a member of DRI?

20 years

Areas of practice:

Please provide your employment history in chronological order beginning with the current position.

2006 – 2023 – Shareholder, Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., Birmingham, Alabama

2003 – 2006 – Associate, Larson King, LLC, St. Paul, MN

Please describe your previous involvement in DRI, including but not limited to, leadership positions held, projects contributed to, committee memberships, presentations given, and written materials authored. Special accomplishments should also be noted.

Below is a summary of my current DRI Leadership Positions and Involvement:

- Board of Directors – National Director (2020-2023)
- Annual Meeting Steering Committee Chair (2023)
- Women in the Law – Board Liaison (2020-2023)
- Products Liability Steering Committee Member
- Retail and Hospitality Committee Member
- Drug and Medical Device Committee Member
- Diversity Steering Committee Member

Below is a summary of my former DRI Leadership Positions and Involvement:

- **Retail and Hospitality Committee**
 - Committee Chair (2018-2020)
 - Committee Vice Chair (2016-2018)
 - Seminar Chair (2016)
 - Seminar Vice Chair (2015)
 - Speaker, Retail and Hospitality Seminar (2013)
 - Seminar Planning Committee Member (2012-2013)
 - Steering Committee Member (2012-2013)
 - Co-Author, Franchisor Liability for Franchisee Actions, In-House Defense Quarterly (2012)
- **Technology Committee**
 - Committee Chair (2011-2013)
 - Committee Vice Chair (2008-2011)
 - Teleconference Chair (2007)

- **DRI For Life Committee**
 - Committee Chair (2020-2022)
 - Steering Committee Member (2014-2016)

- **Annual Meeting Steering Committee**
 - Chair (2023)
 - Vice Chair (2022)
 - Chair, Substantive Law Committees Subcommittee (2022)
 - CLE on the Go, development and planning (2022)
 - Rocky Run / Walk and River Run / Walk development and planning (2022)
 - Vice Chair, Substantive Law Committees Subcommittee (2021)
 - Young Lawyer Steering Committee Member (2009)

- **Product's Liability Committee**
 - Steering Committee Member
 - Chair, Products Manufacturer's Risk SLG (2014-2015)
 - Vice Chair, Products Manufacturer's Risk SLG (2013-2014)
 - Chair, Panel Counsel Meetings (2012-2014)
 - Vice Chair, Panel Counsel Meetings (2011-2012)
 - Chair, Membership (2011-2012)
 - Speaker, Products Liability Seminar (2011)
 - Chair, 50th Anniversary Task Force Subcommittee for Products Liability Committee (2010)
 - Chair, Chemical and Toxic Torts SLG, Products Liability Committee (2008-2010)
 - Seminar Planning Committee Member (2009, 2010)
 - Liaison to Diversity Committee and Plan Diversity breakfast at Products Liability Seminar (2008-2009)
 - Coordinating Author, Nationwide Products Liability Caselaw Update (2007)
 - Diversity Subcommittee Chair (2007)
 - Strictly Automotive Seminar Steering Committee Member (2007)
 - Chair, Automotive SLG (2006)

- **Women in the Law Committee**
 - Board Liaison (2020-2023)
 - Steering Committee Member (2010)
 - Vice Chair Liaison from Products Liability to WITL (2010)
 - Seminar Marketing Committee Member, WITL (2010)
 - Seminar Planning Committee "Sharing success: A Seminar for Women Lawyers" (2007)

- **Young Lawyer’s Committee**
 - Seminar Chair (2011-2012)
 - Seminar Vice Chair (2010-2011)
 - Seminar Second Vice Chair (2009-2010)
 - Chair, Annual Meeting Subcommittee (2008-2009)
 - Liaison to Products Liability Committee (2007-2008)
 - Chair, Teleconference Subcommittee (2006-2007)
 - Vice Liaison to Products Liability Committee (2006-2007)
 - Chair, SLDO Subcommittee (2005-2006)
 - Vice Chair, SLDO Subcommittee (2004-2005)

- **Trucking Law Committee**
 - Seminar Planning Committee (2010-2011)
 - Steering Committee Member (2006-2012)
 - Chair, Annual Meeting Programming Subcommittee (2009)
 - Speaker, Trucking Seminar “Development and Use of Transportation Experts” (2008)
 - Teleconference Chair (2007)
 - Seminar Planning Committee, Chair of Young Lawyer Track (2007)
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- **Other Taskforces, Committees, and Seminars**
 - Data Management and Security Committee, Steering Committee Member, Annual Meeting CLE Planning Chair (2015)
 - Speaker – Rainmaking Seminar, Las Vegas, NV (2012)
 - 21st Century Lawyer Taskforce Member (2012-2013)
 - Insurance Roundtable – Steering Committee Member and Speaker (2010)
 - Social Networking Committee Taskforce (2010-2011)
 - Climate Change Taskforce (2009)
 - Speaker and Marketing Chair, Best Practices for Law Firm Profitability Seminar (2009)
 - DRI Representative to the Trial Advocacy Initiative / Law School Advisory Committee (a project of the Civil Bar Roundtable) (2009)
 - Planning Chair, Webconference – “Legal Blogging – Prepare to Practice in the Blogosphere” (2008)
 - Large Law Firm Initiative, Steering Committee Member (2007)

List any significant leadership commitment and involvement within the legal field other than DRI, including but not limited to other legal organizations.

Current

- IADC Member (2010-Present)
 - Annual meeting speaker (2021)
- FDCC Member Spouse (2007-Present)

- Alabama Defense Lawyer’s Association
- Chair, Hospitality Industry Service Team, Baker Donelson
- Member of the Diocesan Advisory Council for Catholic Education, Birmingham, AL (a/k/a Birmingham area Catholic Diocesan School Board)
- Women’s Initiative Steering Committee, Baker Donelson
- International Franchise Association

Former

- Minnesota Defense Lawyers Young Lawyer’s Section – Founder and Chair
- US Law Young Lawyer’s Section – Founder and Chair
- Speaker, Tennessee Defense Lawyer’s Association / Alabama Defense Lawyer’s Association Joint Meeting
- Alabama ACC Chapter Meeting Host (2012-2013)
- Webinar Presentation – Preparing for and Defending Big Food Lawsuits
- September, 2012 – Inside Counsel Publication – “What to Know About the New Big Food Law” (2012)
- President, Homewood Youth Cheerleading Board of Directors (2011-2012)
- Vice President, Homewood Youth Cheerleading Board of Directors (2010-2011)
- Member of the Board of Directors, Homewood Youth Cheerleading (2007-2018)
- Baker Donelson Women’s Initiative Speaker (2008)

Why do you wish to join the board of directors or become an officer and what skills, abilities and attributes identified in the Board of Director/Officer Competencies can you bring to the role?

Having been an active member and leader in DRI for nearly twenty years, I am eager to further my commitment by joining the executive committee. I am passionate about the work DRI does as leader of the defense bar and I believe I have a clear understanding of its mission, vision, and governance through my years of service in various leadership roles. My current position as a National Director on the DRI Board of Directors, alongside my history of involvement in numerous committees, including having served as chair of two separate committees, has allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the many working levels of the organization and its essential role in the legal community. My leadership roles within DRI have also given me a comprehensive understanding of DRI's operations and the ability to navigate its changing complexities effectively.

My leadership experience extends beyond DRI, with significant involvement and membership in other legal and business organizations such as the International Association of Defense Counsel, Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel, the Alabama and Minnesota Defense Lawyers Associations, and the International Franchise Association. I have also had the benefit of holding various leadership

positions in my firm and community. Through my work, I have honed my abilities to manage diverse teams, navigate complex organizational structures, and lead with both vision and empathy.

I bring robust marketing and branding skills, having demonstrated my commitment to enhancing DRI's image and reach through my work on the Annual Meeting Steering Committee and the Retail and Hospitality Committee. I have also contributed to DRI's reputation in the legal community through various speaking engagements and publications, showcasing my public speaking skills and ability to serve as a spokesperson for the organization.

Moreover, my experience with the Women in the Law and Diversity Committees aligns with DRI's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. I have a working knowledge and commitment to these principles and am eager to promote equitable access and opportunities within DRI and the broader legal community. Within my firm, I have been involved in Baker Donelson's Women's Initiative and was instrumental in authoring our parental leave policy.

In terms of soft skills, I have a history of resolving conflicts positively and converting them into opportunities. My years of experience in committee leadership have required effective communication, teamwork, and innovative problem-solving, all of which I would bring to the executive committee. My accountability is demonstrated by my consistent follow-through on assignments and active participation in numerous DRI initiatives over the past twenty years.

I am also committed to furthering DRI's strategic goals. As an inclusive leader, I have consistently sought to motivate others to support DRI at all levels. My experience as Chair of various committees has honed my strategic thinking skills, allowing me to adapt and plan for both the short and long term.

Lastly, my commitment to DRI is not merely professional; it's personal. I have consistently shown dedication to the organization by actively recruiting new members, regularly attending board meetings and seminars, and sponsoring DRI's in-person events. My financial support for DRI-supported entities is a testament to my unwavering commitment to the organization's success.

My extensive experience, strong skills, and unwavering dedication make me well-equipped to serve on the DRI executive committee and contribute meaningfully to its ongoing success. I am excited about the opportunity to further serve DRI and its members and look forward to the possibility of bringing my skills and commitment to the executive committee.

What suggestions would you make to move the organization forward?

1. Enhanced Member Engagement: While DRI already has a robust and engaged membership, consistently improving member engagement is critical to retaining members and to continuing to grow our membership. Some ways I believe we could enhance member engagement involves creating new innovative and targeted networking events, enhancing digital engagement, and creating new, innovative programming opportunities such as CLE on the Go.
2. Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives: DRI should continue to emphasize and expand its diversity and inclusion efforts. Allowing affinity committees the opportunity to develop and embrace their unique seminar and networking experiences is one way I believe we can support this goal.
3. Technology and Innovation: As the legal field continues to evolve in the digital age, DRI should prioritize staying ahead of the curve in terms of technology and innovation. This could involve expanding online resources and learning opportunities, exploring virtual or hybrid event formats, or even leveraging AI and other advanced technologies to enhance member services.
4. Strategic Partnerships: DRI could also benefit from continuing to form and strengthen strategic partnerships with the sister defense organizations as well as other legal organizations and companies. These partnerships can provide opportunities for collaborative events and shared resources.
5. Public Relations and Branding: Enhancing DRI's public image and brand visibility is key to attracting new members and partnerships. We should consider a focused PR campaign, continued increased presence on social media, and a possible rebranding related to the acronym "DRI" to provide more robust brand identity.
6. Professional Development: DRI should continue to offer and expand professional development opportunities for its members. This should include new and innovative ideas for legal education beyond traditional seminars, possibly including more interactive training opportunities – even for senior lawyers and experienced litigators.
7. Policy Advocacy: Given our influential position, DRI should continue increasing our policy advocacy through The Center.
8. Member Feedback: Continuously seeking and implementing feedback from members is crucial. This could involve more regular surveys or open forums. By listening to its members, DRI can ensure it remains relevant and continues to meet the needs of its community.

Describe one transformational/defining experience in your professional life you have been involved with and what you learned from that experience.

One of the most transformational and defining experiences of my professional life occurred early in my career, when I moved from Minnesota to Alabama as a third-year lawyer in order to marry my husband (and fellow defense lawyer), Kile Turner. The move represented a significant shift, not just geographically, but also in terms of the legal landscape and cultural context.

In Minnesota, I was getting comfortable with my practice and starting to establish a professional network through both MDLA and DRI. However, the move to Alabama was like a reset button, forcing me to adapt quickly to new legal rules, courtroom norms, and networking dynamics. It felt as if I was starting from scratch, with the added challenge of being an outsider in a tightly knit legal community.

Despite the initial challenges, this transition turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I had to push myself out of my comfort zone and quickly learn to navigate a different legal system, which accelerated my growth as a lawyer. I had to become proactive in reaching out and building relationships in the local legal community, which expanded my professional network significantly.

Additionally, the move provided me with a broader perspective on the practice of law. Seeing firsthand how different states handle similar legal issues gave me a greater understanding of the variability and complexity of practicing across the country. This experience has proven invaluable in my later career, particularly in my work as national counsel for my clients.

From this transformative experience, I learned that change, although challenging, can be an incredible catalyst for growth. It taught me resilience, adaptability, and the importance of a strong professional network. It also reminded me that our profession is not just about understanding the law, but also about understanding the people and communities we serve. This experience continues to shape my approach to my work and my leadership style.

Describe the greatest challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for DRI over the next five+ years.

Over the next five years and beyond, DRI faces a number of challenges that will shape its trajectory and necessitate innovative solutions:

1. Competition with Other Legal Organizations: The legal landscape is increasingly competitive, with many organizations offering unique networking opportunities. DRI will need to differentiate itself by offering unique value to its members. This could be through high-quality programming, unique networking opportunities, or

specialized resources that are not readily available elsewhere. A strategic focus on enhancing member benefits and creating unique, valuable experiences can help DRI to stand out.

2. Decreased Need for In-Person CLE: While the pandemic has accelerated the shift towards virtual learning and remote work, leading to a decrease in the demand for traditional in-person CLE, this was a trend that was long coming. DRI will need to adapt by offering more flexible, unique, and innovative learning options to remain relevant and interesting. This could include on-demand webinars, interactive workshops, and virtual or unique in-person networking events that provide the same value as their in-person counterparts or offer new and interesting ideas to keep members engaged.
3. Changing Dynamics of Attendees' Interest: There's a growing trend of legal professionals showing less interest in attending traditional in-person CLE. Attendees are now seeking more engaging, interactive, and practical learning experiences. DRI has the opportunity to innovate by reimagining its CLE programming to cater to these changing preferences. This could involve incorporating more hands-on learning experiences, integrating technology to enhance engagement, or focusing on emerging areas of law that are of interest to our members.
4. Lack of Engagement of Corporate America in the Defense Bar: There's a noticeable trend of corporate America not investing as much in the defense bar, especially when compared to the investment plaintiff's lawyers are making in the training of their lawyers. This challenge can be addressed by building stronger relationships with corporate partners and demonstrating the value that DRI brings in terms of providing high-quality training for defense lawyers. DRI can also work to showcase the benefits of investing in the defense bar, such as improving the quality of defense, reducing litigation costs, and enhancing corporate reputation.

These challenges present DRI with the opportunity to evolve and innovate in order to stay relevant and valuable to its members and partners. By addressing these challenges head-on and leveraging them as opportunities for growth and improvement, DRI can turn these challenges into opportunities.

DRI strives to be governed by a diverse board of directors—in terms of race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, location, and/or professional level, and other facts that enhance diversity and inclusion --- who can and will help advance DRI's goals through the power of collaboration. In what ways have you demonstrated a commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in your work, and how will your DE&I experience inform your contributions as a Board member?

Throughout my professional journey, I have deeply committed myself to advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, both within and outside the legal field. I firmly believe that diversity in all its forms — race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, location, professional level, and other facets — is a powerful driver of innovative thinking, nuanced problem-solving, and effective decision-making.

As the Board Liaison for the Women in the Law Committee from 2020 to 2023, I have been actively involved in promoting gender diversity and empowering women in the legal profession. In this role, I was privileged to work with an incredible group of female leaders, learning from their unique experiences and perspectives. We strived to create an inclusive environment that acknowledged and celebrated women's contributions to the legal field, while also addressing the unique challenges they face. The WITL committee focused on fostering mentoring relationships, providing skill-building opportunities, and advocating for policies that support women's professional growth.

Furthermore, I used my position to ensure that the voices and perspectives of women were heard and incorporated in the broader decision-making processes within DRI. By serving as a bridge between the Women in the Law Committee and the DRI Board, I helped to bring gender diversity to the forefront of DRI's strategic discussions and initiatives.

In terms of my contribution on the executive committee, my experience with DE&I will inform my approach in several ways:

1. Inclusive Leadership: I will continue to champion diverse voices and perspectives, ensuring that they are represented and valued within the Board's discussions and decisions. This involves actively seeking out and listening to diverse viewpoints, and fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels comfortable to share their ideas and experiences.
2. Advocacy: I will leverage my position on the executive committee to advocate for DE&I initiatives within DRI, including efforts to increase diversity among DRI leadership, members, and event participants. This includes advocating for policies and practices that support diversity and inclusion, and actively engaging with diverse groups within DRI.
3. Accountability: I will work to ensure that DRI remains accountable in its commitment to DE&I, by monitoring progress, providing feedback, and pushing for continuous improvement in this area. This includes supporting efforts to track and report on diversity metrics and holding DRI leadership accountable for advancing DE&I goals.

4. Collaboration: I believe that collaboration is key to advancing DE&I. As an executive committee member, I will work to foster collaboration between different groups within DRI and leverage the collective power of our diverse membership to advance DRI's goals.

In all these ways, I am committed to leveraging my DE&I experience to contribute to DRI's mission and goals as an executive committee member. Diversity is not just a 'nice-to-have', but a 'must-have' for any organization seeking to thrive in today's complex and interconnected world, and I am excited to continue to be part of DRI's journey in this regard.

Is there anything else you would like to add that has not already been previously stated?

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to DRI. Over the years, DRI has been instrumental in my professional growth and development. It has provided me with invaluable opportunities to learn, lead, and contribute in meaningful ways to the legal profession. I am profoundly thankful for the trust and faith that has been placed in me to take on various roles and responsibilities within the organization.

Perhaps even more significantly, DRI has been the source of some of the most enriching relationships in my life. The friendships I have formed through DRI are not just professional connections, but genuine bonds that have enriched my life in countless ways. I am grateful for the camaraderie, support, and shared experiences that have come from being part of this incredible community.

Moreover, DRI has been a crucial factor in my client relationships. Many of the clients I have today are a direct result of the connections and credibility I've gained through my involvement with DRI. These relationships have not only helped me to grow my practice, but they have also provided me with opportunities to work on interesting and impactful legal matters.

As I reflect on my journey with DRI, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation. I look forward to the opportunity to give back to this organization that has given me so much, by serving on the executive committee and contributing to DRI's continued success and growth.

Thank you, DRI, for all that you have given me. I am excited for what lies ahead and for the chance to further contribute to our shared mission.