



## 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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

Name: Ricardo A. Woods

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Firm/Company: Burr Forman, LLP

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**How long have you been a member of DRI?**

18 years

**Areas of practice:** Toxic Tort, Product Liability, Insurance Litigation and Government Liability

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

Burr Forman, LLP—Partner (2012-present)

Burr Forman, LLP—Associate (2008-2011)

Bowron, Latta & Wasden—Associate (2004-2008)

**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.**

**Board Service:**

Member, DRI Board of Directors-National Director (2021-present)

ADR Committee Board Liaison

Chair, DRI Annual Meeting (2025)

Vice Chair, DRI Annual Meeting (2024)

Member, NFJE Seminar Planning Committee (2024)

Chair, DRI for Life (2024)

Member, DRI Foundation Board Member (2024)

Member, DRI Board Core Competencies Task Force (2023)

**Committee Memberships:**

Chair, DRI Diversity & Inclusion Committee (2019-2021)

Vice-Chair, DRI Diversity & Inclusion Committee (2017-2019)

Program-Chair, DRI Diversity for Success Seminar (2016)

Chair, DRI Diversity Scholarship Selection Committee (2018-2021)

Co-Chair, DRI Protect and Serve Task Force (2020-2022)

Member, DRI Annual Meeting Steering Committee (2019-2021)

Member, DRI Toxic Tort and Environmental Law Steering Committee (2020)

Member, DRI Government Liability Committee

Member, DRI Annual Meeting Steering Committee (2020)

Member, DRI Nominating Committee (2020)

**DRI/SLDO/NDO Presentations include the following:**

DRI Products Liability Conference: Chat GPT for Lawyers (February 2024)

SLDO Regional Women in the Law Summit for Indiana/Ohio/Kentucky: D&I Let's Talk (April 2024)

DRI Young Lawyers Seminar – Batson & Bias Problem Solved? (June 2024)

FDCC Winter Meeting – Panel Member re Drug, Device & Biotech/Premises Liability (February 2023)

DRI Diversity for Success Seminar/Corporate Expo: “How to Conduct a Zoom Pitch Meeting,” (June 2021)

DRI Diversity for Success Seminar/Corporate Expo: “Law Student Forum,” (June 2021)

DRI Toxic Tort and Environmental Law Virtual Seminar: “Environmental Justice in the Wake of a Disaster: Dissecting the Connection between Minority Communities and Disasters Through a Legal Lens,” (June 2021)

DRI Young Lawyers Seminar: “Beyond Lip Service: What Present and Future Managing Partners, Equity Partners, and Decision Makers Need to Hear About How They Can Meaningfully Advance Diversity and Inclusion from Within (And Ways to Tell Them)” (June 2021)

DRI Law Practice Management: Future Leaders Virtual Boot Camp: “How Do I Know What I Don't Know?: A Day In the Life of Management,” (March 2021)

DRI Asbestos Medicine Virtual Seminar: “Three's Company: Ethical Issues,” (November 2020)

DRI Employment and Labor Law Virtual Seminar: “Welcome Remarks and What Lies Beneath the Surface?” (November 2020)

DRI Life, Health, Disability and ERISA Seminar: Life, Health, Disability and ERISA Seminar” (April 2020) CANCELLED

DRI Litigation Skills Seminar: Deposition of Plaintiff's Damages Expert, Dr. Carson Jones (March 2020) RESCHEDULED

DRI Civil Rights and Governmental Tort Liability: “Ethical Issues in the Tripartite Relationship,” (January 2020)

DRI Insurance Coverage and Practice Symposium: “Ethical Issues with Sharing Information,” (December 2019)

DRI Diversity for Success Seminar: “Moving on Up or Out,” (June 2019)

DRI Product Liability Seminar: “Conducting Voir Dire in the Same Case, With the Same Product,” (February 2019)

DRI Product Liability Seminar: “Opening Statements in the Same Case, With the Same Product,” Moderator (February 2019)

DRI Diversity for Success Seminar and Corporate Expo: Law Student Forum: “A Frank Discussion on Succeeding As a Minority Attorney,” (June 2018)

DRI Diversity for Success and Corporate Expo: “Joint Workshop of Corporate Counsel and Managing Partners,” (June 2017)

DRI Insurance Bad Faith and Extra-Contractual Liability Seminar: “Crystal Ball: The Biggest Recent Bad Faith Decisions and Case Product Liability Conference,” (June 2015)

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**Articles Written For DRI Include:**

“Conducting Voir Dire in the Same Case with the Same Product, but in Different Parts of the Country,” *For the Defense* (November 2019)

“A New Skill Set: Navigating Your New Life as Corporate Counsel,” *For the Defense*, (September 2019)

“Trouble in Paradise: The Increasingly Dangerous Legal Landscape for Pesticide Exposure,” *Covered Events*, Issue 10 (October 2018)

“Message from the Diversity Seminar Program Chair,” *Diversity Insider*, Volume 9 Issue 1 (June 2017)

“*iCuidado!* Danger Ahead! The Heeding Presumption and the Duty to Warn in Spanish,” *DRI Diversity Insider*, (Spring 2013)

“Pitfalls and Opportunities: Avoiding the Cost of Spoliation,” *For the Defense*, (April 2011)

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

Managing Partner in the Mobile office of Burr Forman, LLP. I am serving in the second year of what is normally a three (3) year term.

Executive Committee for Burr Forman, LLP. I will end my seven (7) years of leadership/service and my third term in February of 2025. Term limits will not permit me to run again.

**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?**

I want to serve our DRI members. I want to contribute to the improvement in our profession and I believe I have an obligation to serve others.

DRI continues to serve as a driving force in both the professional development and the personal development for our lawyers. I am compelled to use the talent, investment and experience I have gained from others through this organization in order to continue the trend of improving our profession.

As DRI members we serve more than one role for the defense bar. We have not just the singular purpose as advocates. We serve many different roles for our members and that is a good thing. For some we are a leadership proofing ground for lawyers, a center stage for extroverts, a publications platform for introverts and a clearing house for the best experts.

We are a locally known, nationally recognized and internationally respected platform for the lawyers who represent the collective interest of the business community. To others we are a think tank full of professional advocates and a network of people striving to improve the way we practice law.

**DRI is a place where young lawyers and experienced lawyers can continue to grow their skill sets, expand their business contacts and enhance their professional networks. We are a repository for great ideas, valuable information, strong principles, stellar programs and most importantly a broad network of people who know a great deal about this profession.**

Simply put our purpose is to serve as the voice of the defense bar and the businesses we represent on an international level. Our role in this organization is unique because it allows us to enhance the profession by serving each other.

I am proud to be a part of that and I have more to give if you will let me.

## **Hard Skills**

*Marketing/Branding:* I like to think that I constantly and consistently promote, market and represent the DRI brand. This is an area where I need improvement. I am committed to working with our professional staff at DRI to focus more on this area.

*Management:* I currently serve as the managing partner of the Mobile office of Burr Forman LLP, where I work with twenty-five lawyers and twenty more professional staff. I was elected by my partners to our firm's executive committee and I served as the firm's Vice-Chair. I have served as both the associate liaison and the income partner liaison for our law firm as we moved to an open disclosure of metrics for partnership requirements and compensation. I also serve as the City Attorney of the second largest municipality in the state of Alabama and helped lead the successful transition of our city from a failing organization to an A rated municipality.

Great managers not only lead by example but they understand the mission and the capabilities necessary to accomplish the mission. We must not only equip our team members with the tools necessary to get the job done, but we must clearly and effectively communicate the "why" associated with how we are doing the job correctly.

I pattern my management style based on both the best manager and the worst manager I have ever had. I listen more than I talk, and I seek to understand what motivates people.

*Governance:* I currently serve as the chair of the governance committee for Feeding the Gulf Coast which is a non-profit organization charged with fighting hunger and food insecurity for adults and children in the tristate area. As the chairman of the governance committee I also oversee compliance with policies, procedures and member qualifications including but not limited to our conflict of interest policy, whistle blower protections and vetting potential new members.

I also serve as a member of the governance committee for the South Alabama Community Foundation which is the largest community foundation in the state.

*DRI Leadership:* Each time I moved up in the DRI Leadership ranks I realized how much more there was to learn.

When first I served as a member of the Toxic Tort Steering Committee/Seminar Planning Committee and the Government Liability Steering Committee, I thought I knew what it took to put on a successful program. I was mistaken.

When I moved on to become the Diversity and Inclusion Seminar Program Chair, I found out there was much more to programming than participating in the calls. It involved a great deal of time, planning and collaboration before and after the calls, but I still thought I knew a lot about DRI. I was wrong yet again.

I was appointed as the D&I Committee Chair and I figured out at the Leadership meeting in Chicago that there was a great deal more to learn outside of the SLC/committee structure.

I figured out I knew even less when I was appointed to the Nominating Committee during the first virtual Annual Meeting for lawyers representing business. I spent three (3) days eating breakfast, lunch and dinner with three (3) former DRI Presidents in a conference room in Chattanooga, Tennessee during the Covid-19 lock down. Additionally, I watched with great interest as our members appeared on screens via Zoom in their offices, board rooms, living rooms and patios all over the country to support each other.

I was elected DRI Board of Directors as National Director and had the chance to serve on the DRI Foundation, plan a NFJE seminar, provide input on the core competencies for future DRI leaders, help train the Law Institute on DE&I issues and it was not a surprise that I gained much more insight to SLCs, SLDO, NDO and DRI as a whole. More, importantly I was able to serve alongside an extremely talented board class and the national leaders of the defense bar.

Based on my experience I still know there is much more to learn about leadership in DRI.

*Leadership:* In the past I tried to avoid leadership, but now I embrace it.

I attended both college and law school on leadership scholarships. In college I was a part of a 128 student cohort that underwent leadership classes and training each year. In law school I served as the Chief Judge of Cumberland's Trial Advocacy Board. I have served as Vice-Chair of our law firm. I have served as either President or Chair of every organization I have been a member of since I became an adult. I have learned that people do not follow titles nor do they respect positions. People respect leaders who have vision and inspire them to be better versions of themselves.

I agree with Simon Sinek when he said, "leadership is not about being in charge or taking charge. Leadership is about setting the example and taking care of the people in your charge."

*Public Speaking/Spokesperson:* I love talking with people.

It does not matter if it is one person or one-thousand, people. I like to grab their attention. I want to tell them a story. When it is all over, I want them to have learned something interesting and have engaged with me in a meaningful way. I equally hope to have learned something about them.

DRI has given me more opportunities to speak to groups than any other organization. I have probably served as the DRI speaker for an SLDO group more than half a dozen times.

As far as speaking to the media is concerned I am media trained and I interact with the media on a monthly basis on behalf of my clients and my non-profit boards.

*Leads and Participates in Meetings:* My default in most meetings is to sit back and listen. I try to be the last one to speak when I am serving in a leadership role because I want everyone to be heard. I try to get everyone to participate by asking questions rather than making statements.

I have lead meetings as the chair of multiple non-profit boards, the managing partner of the law office, the chair of a bar association, the vice-chair of the law firm, the program chair of the DRI Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

### **Soft Skills**

*Conflict Resolution:* While this may come as a surprise to some there are a lot of diverse views, viewpoints and ideas in a diversity committee. The same is true of a law firm or a large city. The key is to get people to see what they have in common, especially when the same goals are being sought.

In local government I often work with different departments that have very divergent views on matters. For example, police departments want to purchase state of the art technology while finance departments want to see how long the old equipment will last. The common goal is to give the citizens the best delivery of services in a responsible manner. That is usually a great starting point; finding common goals.

*Influence:* This core skill is still a work in progress for me. I have strong relationships with many of the SLDOs/SLCs, but I have work to do with others. Chairing the D&I committee gave me the opportunity to work beside a number of other committee chairs and serving on the board has allowed me the opportunity to form even more relationships within the organization.

*Reputation:* I take giving my word and maintaining my reputation very seriously. I believe I am viewed as loyal, honest, hardworking, dedicated and focused.



*Accountability:* I have consistently met internal and external deadlines and actively participated in decision making processes where needed. This includes turning in reports, summaries and articles.

*Communication Style:* I pay attention. I listen carefully. I remember details.

I am a noticer. I notice when people are listening. I notice when they interrupt other people. I notice when they do not understand. I like to put myself in the listener's shoes as much as possible. I am polite but I am direct. I ask lots of questions and I try to be clear. I understand that different people observe, understand, and retain information based on different learning styles and communication preferences. Some people are auditory communicators, while others thrive when reading the written word.

*Conflict Management:* Friends would describe me as an eternal optimist, a peace maker and a good soldier. I try to find the positive side of everything.

Conflict management is a key part of running a law firm. Whether it is dealing with staff related issues, client matters or just good old fashioned egos we have to find the light at the end of the tunnel. We have to find common ground and move forward. I call it the "how do we get to yes" method. I often have people restate what they think the other person is saying. Most of the time there is a clear communication problem. Often time there is just a fundamental disagreement on the path to the same result.

*Team Orientation:* My father would not allow his three sons to use singular self-focused pronouns once we were teenagers. He only allowed us to use: *we, us,* and *ours*. We were not allowed to use the works *I, me, my* or *mine* unless it was absolutely necessary. This instilled in me the practice of putting yourself last.

This really shaped our outlook on family/team orientation. We think about what is best for our unit and the individuals within the unit. With this type of mindset we understand that everyone has a role and adds value to the team. Even when those roles shift the perspective that we operate as a unit does not change. Everyone has a seat at the table.

*Innovative:* I am more of an idea person than a materials and directions person. I know this about myself. When I come up with a great idea I need people to help me bring it to life. For example, I came up with the D&I Rainmaker idea but Stacy Douglas and Gary Howard helped me get to the finish line.

*Leadership Style:* I am a value based leader with a direct investment approach. I seek to find out what is important to people in the organization and how to help them obtain what they want for themselves while serving the organization. I

*Member focused:* The members are the most important asset the DRI has in its entire arsenal. I try to meet and talk to as many members as possible to find out what they have to say about their member experience. I ask for their input, answer their questions, and listen to their feedback. I do my best to help give first time seminar attendees the most positive experience possible.

### **Strategic Skills**

*Visionary:* Many voices and one vision! My vision is shaped by the needs I see, hear, and read based on information coming from our members. My vision is to have members get more out of DRI than they have given in the same manner I have for most of my career.

*Strategist:* I understand people and I love people. I understand history because I love history. I understand strategy because it is necessary to help people and it is necessary to make history.

The most important thing we can know about a strategy or a plan is why it will fail. Once we team up and we eliminate and/or account for the singular points of failure. Only then will we have a good strategy and the ability to pivot.

Emotional Intelligence: My EI and my EQ were both tested ten (10) years ago as part of joining our city's executive team. I understand that I have a higher EI than most people, but I have to work on how my directness makes people feel. I understand that people view me as an outspoken individual and as a peace maker. Some would say I like conflict, but the truth is it just does not bother me the way it bothers most people. I understand that people view things differently based on their experiences.

*Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:* The exact opposite of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is Inequality, Homogeneity, and Exclusion. Most of us know what that looks like and most of us know what it feels like to experience one or all of those latter three. There is room for an intellectual conversation about tailor fitting DE&I efforts to an organization, but the elimination of the effort altogether looks, sounds and feels like intolerance.

Most of my DRI career has been dedicated to making room at the table for any and everyone who wanted to be a part of the conversation. Diverging ideas, approaches and viewpoints make us all stronger. I remain committed to that effort and the work behind it.

**What suggestions would you make to move the organization forward?**

A. I would like to consider expanding our leadership meeting to a leadership academy. We can call Project Blueprint or DRI University. Here are the three (3) basic points:

1. Enlist former DRI board members, former DRI Program Chairs and former leaders from the other arms of DRI to teach one (1) hour classes or webinars leading up to the leadership conference.
2. We can focus on SLDO leaders, young lawyers, state representatives, future program chairs and future board members.
3. The membership value proposition is twofold: We get to capture instructional/institutional knowledge and we get to train the next level of leaders for the organization.

B. I want to us to focus on mending the SLC/SLDO fences going forward.

1. Focus on the master calendar with a common ground in mind for the SLC's/SLDOs.
2. Use the information gathered by the SLDO engagement committee to make meaningful changes.
3. Consider giving the SLDO members something no other organization can provide: full on access to DRI. That means more access to the Center, NFJE, and the Lawyers for Civil Justice.

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

In August of 2013, Mayor William S. Stimpson (the 108th Mayor of Mobile, Alabama) appointed me as the Mobile City Attorney, prior to officially taking office. The City of Mobile is the second largest municipality and the oldest city in the state. I was the mayor's second appointee following his chief of staff and I really did not understand the significance of my role at the time. I believed I was just going work on cases and give sound legal advice.

At age 35 I became the chief legal officer for the city, the executive director of the entire internal legal department (65 people) and a member of the mayor's kitchen cabinet. That was nearly a decade ago. I am a better human being and a better lawyer for it.

When we took office in November of 2013 the city was suffering a \$4,000,000 financial deficit with a declining work force and a crumbling infrastructure. It suffered from a lack of financial discipline and the collective failure to listen to the needs of the citizens. I had the good fortune of being not only part of the mayor's transition team, but a headhunter for the talent it took to build out the rest of our executive team. That was possibly the most important task: building a high performing/mutually accountable team around a shared vision. The experience of building and working with a radically different team in a high pressure political environment gave me a unique experience.

My mayor is a former CFO of a family owned company who previously served as the President of the Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of Alabama. He was highly regarded as a successful business man from a very wealthy family with connections at every level of government, but no experience in public office. He is one of the hardest working people I have ever met and he keenly focused on success on all things large and small.

Our first chief of staff came directly from being the Director of Communications at Pepsi Co., but he had previously spent a significant amount of time serving in the White House as the chief of staff for Secretary of Condoleezza Rice. As the first members of the team, he and I were tasked with vetting and recruiting the other members of our executive team and the director level appointees as well.

As we built our team we recruited a former CFO and retired general counsel from a regional home builder to serve as the Executive Director of Finance. He had also served as the chair to the city council citizen's finance committee for two years alongside me. Over the next few months we poured over each department's budget and finances. We made very hard decisions to cut departmental budgets but also retain our workforce. We used the Class 2 state law particular to Mobile to reorganize our departments for efficiency and greater operational capacity.

We also recruited an award winning journalist and investigative reporter with a background in economic development and a nose for bad news to serve as the Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs. He served as the direct conduit for the media outlets, but ensured that we all underwent yearly media training. He gave us a historical of view of every decision made by the previous administration as well as our state and federal level counterparts. He helped us understand dissenting views on some of decisions and gave us balance in our approach. More importantly, he made us sit down with everyone and listen to their side of the story.

The fifth member of our team came from within the previous serving as the second in command of public safety. He had over 25 years of experience in the police department and more importantly he understood the fourth branch of government, the bureaucracy. As a retired Marine he was keenly focused on

discipline and structure. He helped us understand how citizens in different communities view the government and those who represent government. He showed us the importance of belonging in government to social controls and the consequences for not respecting those controls.

The last member of our team was a political consultant and strategist who ran campaigns and gave us real time information. She saw everything through a different lens and interacted with our lobbyist alongside me. She made us rewrite everything over and over. She used data to back up her points about general public opinion and she shared case studies from other cities.

The six of us could not have been more different in our approach to getting things done based on our experiences. We worked 14 hour days for the first few months. We went over every detail of every major decision together. We made policy decisions together. We made budget decisions together. We made legal and political decisions together. It was never easy and we failed a lot. We struggled with defeat on major issues and learned from it.

As time went on we built out a top notch list of A team employees from all over the country at the director level, we balanced the budget gaining a \$150,000,000 surplus, restored the work force, lowered crime, won two additional elections, visited the White House with every sitting president since 2013, created a capital improvement program for infrastructure to the tune of \$28,000,000 a year (on top of the surplus), grew the city's population and won every major case over a 10 year period. We did all of this as well as dealing with protest, Covid-19 shut downs, hurricanes, legal disputes and the 365 day/24 hour life cycle of local government. The key is we did not do it alone.

We worked as a close knit team that did not always agree on everything and that team changed depending on the needs of the organization. Sometimes, I lead the team on major non-legal issues and at other times I played a support role to the others. This effort included enlisting the help of long time merit employees, subject matter experts, community leaders, former elected officials, and everyday citizens. The key was giving deference to each other based on experience and execution.

In addition to managing the litigation for the city (working with nine external law firms serve as outside counsel including my own) I have had the good fortune to work with the ten in-house lawyers who serve with me and some of the most dedicated professional staff with years of institutional wisdom much like our DRI professional staff.

Serving as the Mobile City Attorney has provided me the opportunity to work with City Council members, civil servants, key stakeholder groups, state legislators,

federal partners and key members of the business community. It has provide me with the opportunity of a life time.

*I can honestly say, I was in the room where it happened, but I cannot tell you much because it is privileged.*

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

The greatest challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for DRI over the next five plus years are the unknown actions of others and our opportunity to rediscover the value of the membership experience.

**1. Definition/Meaning of Membership (Value)**

The meaning of membership has changed for a number of lawyers because the value of membership has changed. We have to consistently evaluate what different members want and what has the most appeal to what they value. We have a lot to offer, but we need to know more about what our members need. In order to obtain that information we have to ask our members what they want across the board and we have to determine what they value. The means of gathering information from every level of engagement. We must ask the once a year attendee and the person who is fully engaged on the leadership level. Once we have the information we have to put it to good use but we need to test it first.

Wrong Question: Is \$1,395 too much for a seminar?

Value proposition question: How much is it worth to you to have access to the large group of the most well informed lawyers, experts and clients in the country?

**2. DRI for Life/Mental Health and Wellness**

Since Covid-19 our profession has seen an alarming spike in suicide and substance abuse. We have a unique opportunity to help our colleagues. As the Chair of DRI for Life I see firsthand how much sharing and normalizing asking for help in these areas can be going forward. As we continue to search for a national partner, providing a platform for informing and educating our members about where to get help is a keystone for us.

**3. The Commoditization of Professional Legal Services**

Yet another issue confronting the defense bar today is the commoditization of professional legal services coupled with the rapid change of the legal practice.

Far too often clients believe all lawyers/law firms have an equal ability to solve problems, provide guidance and garner superior results. Consequently, clients are consistently seeking to reduce the amount of their legal spend, sever relationships and treat our services like widgets. This problem has manifested itself in a number of ways including but not limited to; serious discussions about profitability by law firms, artificial rate pressure, consolidation of law firms and less time to teach the next generation of defense lawyers how to practice of law.

It is vital that DRI continue to provide our members with first class educational opportunities to learn and further develop their law practices. It is critical that we maintain our network of high level legal professionals who advocate for the people and places that create employment opportunities. And, it is supremely important that we strengthen our relationship with the business community at large. In order to accomplish these goals we need to maintain the pipeline of great leaders and strong networks.

Without real solution collaboration, a strong leadership team, a strong network and the ability to confront this issue using our platform we stand to lose the ground DRI has gained in the business community over the last 60 years.

### Solutions

As lawyers we are creative, collaborative and effective problem solvers. Each one of these challenges presents a unique opportunity to adapt, overcome and get it right in the end.

I think The Center can and should continue to serve as a leader on such issues in the same way it has done with the preservation of jury trials, social inflation, third party litigation funding, and nuclear verdicts.

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?

I grew up in the DRI D&I committee.

I attended the first Diversity for Success Seminar early on in my career, and I have been all in with DRI and the Diversity & Inclusion Committee ever since that day. Over the years my D&I team and I helped support diversity and inclusion as a core value of DRI.

D&I crafted and rebranded the DRI Diversity & Inclusion Manual. Working together we created a DRI Diversity Tool Kit. We collaborated with Women in the Law and CCC by combining our fly-in

meeting during the Diversity for Success Seminar which resulted in a much needed flow of information. In the wake of the death of George Floyd, we conducted a series of town halls in collaboration with the DRI Government Liability and Civil Rights Committee that lead to the formation of the DRI Protect and Serve Task Force.

In addition to working with the SLCs our committee created two new SLDO liaison positions last year (East Coast/West Coast). Our SLDO liaisons actively reached out to the SLDO community about increasing their diversity efforts. As a result, the D&I committee conducted diversity training for the Arizona Bar Association with a panel of past DRI presidents and board members. Our committee also conducted diversity training/presentations during the Employment & Labor Law Virtual Seminar on November 12, 2020, the DRI North Central Regional Meeting (North Dakota, South Dakota, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Indiana) on March 4, 2021 and the DRI Super Regional Meeting (Central, Mid, & Mid Atlantic Regions) on May 20, 2021.

We are consistently focused on the next eight generations of lawyers. We introduced the idea of a pipeline program for law students five years ago by placing a law student forum on the first day of our seminar.

We promote DRI Diversity Scholarship in a more robust fashion and the committee members take a very active role in the selection process. Additionally, we created a pilot “Rainmaker Mentoring Program” in collaboration with the Corporate Counsel Committee. The program enlist 20 diverse mentees, along with 10 D&I committee members and 10 CCC members to serve as mentors in a yearlong endeavor designed to expose young lawyers to the inner workings of the in-house/outside counsel relationship. The third cohort of mentors and mentees will begin at the *Annual Meeting* in Seattle.

The D&I Committee was the first SLC to hold an in person seminar in June of 2021 in New Orleans. We registered over a 150 people and lead the way to getting back to normal with in person meetings.

The D&I Committee created sub committees for women of color; LGBTQ+ lawyers and lawyers with seen and unseen disabilities in order to be more inclusive.

If my experience with the D&I Committee has taught me nothing else is that we can have many voices and still have one vision. The ability to see, hear and understand ideas, beliefs and experiences from a different vantage point is powerful.

As leaders we have to be able to consider the notion that we do not know all of the answers all the time. Even when we do have the answer it may not be the best answer or even the best time to communicate the answer.

I have learned many of those lessons the best way: the hard way.



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

I am prepared to win. I am prepared to lose. I am prepared to serve.