



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

Name James E. Weatherholtz

Firm/Company Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP

Address 5 Exchange St., Charleston, SC 29401

Telephone 843.720.4628

Cell Phone 843.425.7232

E-mail james.weatherholtz@wbd-us.com

How long have you been a member of DRI?

17 years

Areas of practice: construction law, product liability, class action litigation

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

- Equity Partner with Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP;
- Prior to that, equity partner with predecessor entity Womble, Carlyle, Sandridge & Rice, PLLC;
- Prior to that, equity partner, partner, and associate with predecessor entity Buist, Moore, Smythe & McGee, PA (essentially, I have been with the same firm my entire career, which has grown by merger).

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.

- Law Institute, member, 2022-present
- Blockbuster Speaker Chair, 2024 DRI Annual Meeting
- Speaker, 2024 DRI Annual Meeting (interviewed Mark Fava, Boeing)
- Nominating Committee, at-large member, 2023 DRI Annual Meeting
- Chair, Product Liability Committee, 2019-2021
- Vice Chair, Product Liability Committee, 2017-2019
- Program Chair, 2014 Product Liability Conference
- Chair, Building Products Specialized Litigation Group, 2010-2012
- Speaker - Defending Class Action Warranty Claims in Building Product Cases, February 2015, DRI Product Liability Conference
- Speaker - Psychological Impediments to Mediation Success, April 2012, DRI Product Liability Conference
- Speaker - I Like My Odds: Using Statistical Evidence to Defend your Building Products Case, February 2008, DRI Product Liability Conference
- Speaker - Separating Product Liability Claims from the Construction Defect Case, April 2010, DRI Product Liability Conference
- Speaker - Making Mediation Work - A Model for Clients and Lawyers, September 2006, DRI Construction Law Seminar
- Member, Class Action Task Force, Center for Law and Public Policy

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

- South Carolina Bar
 - Chair, Construction Law Section, 2012-2013
 - Member, Judicial Qualifications Committee, 2009-2012
 - Section Delegate, Construction Law, 2014-2015
- American Bar Association, Forum on the Construction Industry
 - Division 7 Steering Committee, 2006-2009
 - Division 7 Liaison to the Publications Committee
- Charleston County Bar Association
 - Member, Executive Committee, 2005-2006

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 have a long history of active participation in DRI. As former chair of a large committee (Product Liability), I have an in-depth understanding of DRI's organization and operation. As a member of the Law Institute, I help develop quality programming designed to educate and inspire our members and grow their networks and practices. I believe those experiences have prepared me well to serve on the governing board of the organization.

What suggestions would you make to move the organization forward?

I think programming and member engagement are critical to our success. In an era of increased competition for members and attendance, I think we should continue to work toward making in-person attendance at our events special and memorable (in addition to serving the primary purpose of educating and providing CLE credit). Speaker selection, format, delivery, and content are more important than ever, and participation - and interaction - among our members is critical to long-term success. We want people motivated to come, happy that they did, willing to come again, and inspired to invite their friends.

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

For the first 10 or 15 years of my career, lawyers in South Carolina were required to take on pro bono cases assigned by the Department of Social Services. I handled cases as counsel for parents whose parental rights were being terminated, as counsel for vulnerable adults, as *guardian ad litem* for children and litigants, and as counsel for guardians. In addition to gaining litigation experience in Family Court (where I tried a parental rights termination case), I was reminded that our lives as lawyers are privileged, and I came to appreciate that we have a duty to practice with care, compassion, and purpose. The work we do - even for corporations - is consequential for, and often supremely important to, our clients.

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

In order to stay healthy and grow, we need to maintain our focus on making the organization "work" for our members. It is easy for lawyers to get inexpensive and often high-quality CLE from the comfort of their homes and offices. Our in-person programming should be exceptional and our networking activities should be well-planned, easy to join, and designed for quality interaction among attendees. We should create space for small-group engagement, and perhaps establish a formal "grouping" of members similar to affinity groups, but smaller. I think there's something powerful about the accountability and intimacy of small group association that could be rewarding for members who seek that type of connection. Finally, the more we encourage members to participate in the work of the organization (writing, teaching, planning meetings, developing content, etc.), the more fulfilled they will feel and the more they will get out of the experience, to the betterment of both. That type of involvement will strengthen connections and give us a stronger presence in members' inboxes and newsfeeds. Creating membership engagement positions within the committees may help provide structure and drive creative thought for activating our existing members. We have the membership, leadership, and structure in place to capitalize on growing and bettering DRI through our existing members, which will ultimately lead to adding members.

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?

My firm has demonstrated a strong commitment to DE&I and I have participated in many of those programs over the years. Through reading, exploring, and talking with others, I work to educate myself about, and better understand, others' experiences and the importance of inclusion. I think reaching and motivating our diverse members as part of making DRI "work" for everyone is imperative for our success.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to be considered for this position and would love a chance to serve.