



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 Tom Wyatt

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How long have you been a member of DRI?

7 years

Areas of practice: Commercial Litigation, Products Liability, Property Litigation

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

2020-Present: Member, Quattlebaum, Grooms & Tull PLLC

2013-2020: Associate, Quattlebaum, Grooms & Tull PLLC

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.

I joined the Young Lawyers steering committee in 2018 after my first Young Lawyers Seminar. From 2018 to 2019, I served as the Co-Vice Chair of the Expert Witness subcommittee. From 2019 to 2020, I served as the Co-Vice Chair of the Membership subcommittee. From 2020 to 2021, I served as the Chair of the Membership subcommittee. I also served as DRI's Arkansas State Membership Chair from 2019 to 2021. From 2021 to 2022, I served as the Co-Vice Chair of the Networking & Activities subcommittee. I was appointed to the Young Lawyers executive committee in 2022. Appointments are a three-year commitment. Accordingly, I served as Second Vice Chair of the Young Lawyers Committee from 2022 to 2023, Vice Chair from 2023 to 2024, and I have served as Chair from 2024 until my term ends at Annual Meeting in 2025.

In 2020, I co-hosted a webinar for DRI with Emily Ruzic (Bradley Arant Boult Cummings) on trial and hearing presentation in a virtual setting. In 2022, I co-hosted a young lawyers breakout session at the 2022 Drug & Medical Device Seminar with Madeline Dennis (Tucker Ellis) on conducting discovery using remote technology. In 2024, I co-hosted a young lawyers breakout session at the 2024 Products Liability Seminar with Christian Castile (Reed Smith) on the use of artificial intelligence in product research and development. In 2025, I presented a young lawyers breakout session at the 2025 Business and Intellectual Property Litigation Super Conference on developing a big picture strategy from the outset of a case. I was asked to repeat and to expand upon this presentation at the 2025 Young Lawyers Seminar when one of our speakers had to unexpectedly withdraw approximately one week before the Seminar.

I am currently a member of the Commercial Litigation and Products Liability committees. I also serve as a member of the DRI SLC Engagement Committee's SLC Toolkit task force.

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

In 2021, I was nominated and appointed to serve as an officer for the Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel, DRI's partner SLDO in Arkansas. Appointments are a four-year commitment. Accordingly, I served as the AADC's Treasurer from 2021 to 2022, Secretary from 2022 to 2023, President-Elect from 2023 to 2024, and I have served as President from 2024 until my term ends at the conclusion of the AADC's Annual Meeting in August 2025.

From 2022 to 2024, I served as a mentor to first-year law students at my alma mater, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law. I am also a co-chair of my law firm's associate hiring and retention committee.

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 wish to join the board of directors to serve DRI and its membership. My involvement in this organization has been the best decision of my career. I am a champion for DRI and its mission. I maintain a desire to "give back," and I feel a sense of duty to continue serving DRI and its membership after my leadership paths on Young Lawyers and AADC end.

My Hard Skill attributes are Management, Governance, and Leadership. I have served as a leader of Young Lawyers and the AADC simultaneously for three years, and I understand and have employed and managed the multiple strategies that DRI uses across different organizations within its structure to market, recruit, and retain members across various practice disciplines. My Soft Skill attributes are Accountability, Communication Style, and Member Focused. I believe leaders must lead by example and strive to build a consensus among different viewpoints, objectives, and strategies. I have often facilitated compromises between DRI, committee membership, and SLDO membership to achieve the stated goals for Young Lawyers and the AADC, aiming to reach a consensus that ends in win-win scenarios for all stakeholders. My Strategic Skills are Strategist, Emotional Intelligence, and Ability to Collaborate. I set defined goals for the Young Lawyers Committee and the AADC at the beginning of my leadership terms, and I developed multiple pathways to achieve these goals before working on them, allowing for contingencies and providing a defined vision for my Young Lawyer executive committee members and AADC officers to follow. I strive to be a professional in everything I do, and I take criticism in stride. I believe my simultaneous service on the Young Lawyers executive committee and as a SLDO officer would provide a unique perspective to assist with DRI's strategic visions for cross-collaboration with its SLCs and SLDOs and to recruit and retain young lawyer members and leaders in both types of organizations.

What suggestions would you make to move the organization forward?

DRI should continue its organization-wide goal and objective of working to include and invite young lawyers to deepen their involvement in DRI and its SLCs and SLDOs. My predecessors on the Young Lawyers Executive Committee designed and implemented the Young Lawyer Liaison program that uses an application and interview process to select and appoint young lawyers as liaisons to DRI's SLCs. The program has been very successful in providing an avenue for young lawyers to continue their involvement in DRI as their time in Young Lawyers is about to end because they will soon experience out of the Committee. Young lawyers at this juncture in their DRI careers offer a leadership pipeline to DRI's SLCs and SLDOs, but young lawyers either have no exposure to professional organizations and their benefits, they do not understand the benefits, or they wait to be invited and asked to join and deepen their involvement in a professional organization before they will take the step to become more involved or to apply for leadership positions. The liaison program and a continued focus on young lawyer development and involvement will overcome these hurdles.

DRI should continue to develop multiple avenues for lawyers to receive continuing legal education outside of in-person attendance at seminars and meetings, but these avenues should serve as an opportunity to market and solicit attendance at in-person events without becoming a substitute for them. The Young Lawyers Online Programming subcommittee hosts four webinars per year specific to young lawyer development and practice tips. The webinars often attract attendees who are not members of DRI or DRI members who have not attended an in-person event. The Online Programming subcommittee uses the webinars to advertise and solicit membership, to announce upcoming in-person events specific to young lawyers, and to highlight the advantages of attending DRI's Annual Meeting. We have found a heightened interest among webinar attendees to attend an in-person event after their positive experiences attending our webinars.

DRI should continue to deepen its organizational ties and strategic objectives with SLDOs. SLDO membership typically consists of a significant percentage of members who are not members of DRI, or their involvement in DRI is limited. DRI's marketing and recruitment efforts are bolstered by DRI's speaker program and the SLDO Free Membership program.

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

My client contact was out of pocket and my partner and I could not get his approval to file a closing brief in a bench trial that was due. We called opposing counsel to ask for an extension, but opposing counsel was hesitant because he had already mailed his service copy to us, and we would have it before the extended deadline. My partner gave opposing counsel his word that the service copy would remain sealed in its envelope. Opposing counsel said that my partner's word was good enough for him and agreed to the extension. This experience taught me that a reputation for professionalism and honesty in this business is earned, and my partner earned that reputation because, throughout the life of that case, he treated opposing counsel with respect that was not always deserved, he played everything straight with opposing counsel, and he never denied opposing counsel a courtesy extension even though it sometimes made our client angry. As one of my founding partners told me when I began to practice law, "It costs nothing to be nice, but it can cost you a lot more to be mean."

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

I believe DRI will continue to be challenged by the post-pandemic tension between obtaining CLEs virtually through webinars and obtaining them through in-person events. This challenge can be overcome by opportunities to transition webinar attendance to attendance at in-person events, as explained above.

I believe that DRI will be challenged by the continued development and implementation of artificial intelligence because the legal profession will be challenged, too. AI will touch every segment of a lawyer's professional life, from the way a lawyer prepares briefs and for depositions and trial, to the way a lawyer's client expects litigation matters to be handled and billed, to the way a lawyer's client will implement AI in their businesses and the challenges and new legal issues that implementation will bring. The challenge can be overcome through education. DRI can develop CLEs, host task forces, and publish white papers on the latest advances of AI and their implementation in legal practices and specific industries.

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?

During my terms on the Young Lawyers executive committee, we created a Diversity & Inclusion subcommittee specifically to highlight, promote, and recruit our diverse young lawyer members. The subcommittee consists of four breakout subcommittees -- one that focuses on publishing articles in *For the Defense*, *The Voice*, and *The Brief Case* regarding diversity or topics of interest to diverse young lawyers, one that prepares and hosts a webinar on diversity for CLE credit, one that coordinates and presents an educational topic or activity on diversity at the Young Lawyers Fly-In meeting, and one that prepares and hosts a networking event specific to diverse young lawyers at each in-person event (i.e., Fly-In meeting, Young Lawyers Seminar, and Annual Meeting). The Diversity & Inclusion subcommittee is led by a Diversity & Inclusion Chair who sits on the Young Lawyer Council, a group of the chairs of nine select subcommittees within the Young Lawyers Committee that reports directly to the executive committee.

In my role as co-chair of my law firm's associate hiring and retention committee, we have designed and followed an associate training and professional development program that aims to recruit and retain diverse lawyers. This program was developed in consultation with a law professor and expert who identifies and highlights issues with associate retention and specifically provides recommendations for firm leadership to advance and develop the careers of diverse attorneys. Outside of work, my wife and I are leaders and volunteers with our local church that makes outreach and ministry services to diverse populations within my city one of its primary missions.

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

DRI is a special organization that is well-deserving of the praise it receives. Thank you for considering me to be an applicant for National Director.