



## Declaration of Candidacy

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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:

X 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?

X Yes      ☐ No

**Name**      Michael D. Carter

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**Firm/Company**      Hall Booth Smith, P.C.

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

37 years

**Areas of practice:** Asbestos, talc, and silica litigation; products liability; environmental; workers' compensation; employment.

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

Hall Booth Smith, P.C., Partner, 2022-present;

Phillips Murrah P.C., Of Counsel, 2004-2022;

Carter & Kirk P.C., Founder/Partner, 1997-2004;

Lytle Soule & Curlee, Partner, 1990-1997;

Foliart, Huff, Ottaway & Caldwell, Associate, 1984-1990;

Foliart, Mills, & Niemeyer, Associate, 1982-1984.

**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.**

DRI Board of Directors, Southwest Region Director, 2021-2024;

DRI Membership Committee Chair, 2024;

DRI Membership Committee Vice-Chair, 2023;

Board Liaison to DRI Asbestos Litigation Committee, 2024;

Board Liaison to DRI Governmental Liability Committee, 2022-2023;

National Foundation for Judicial Excellence, Member, 2021-2024;

DRI State Representative for Oklahoma, 2018-2021;

DRI Kevin Driskill Outstanding State Representative Award, 2021;

DRI State Membership Chair for Oklahoma, 2017-2018;

DRI Exceptional Performance Citation, 2017;

DRI Membership Committee Liaison to Governmental Liability Committee and Asbestos Litigation Committee, 2024;

The Defense Never Rests, Organizer and Band Leader, 2021-2024;

DRI Asbestos Litigation Committee Membership Chair and Steering Committee, 2024 - 2025;

DRI Workers' Compensation Committee Membership Vice-Chair and Steering Committee 2025;

DRI Talc Seminar Marketing Committee, 2023;

DRI Leadership Conference Participant 2014-2024;

Planning group for DRI Joint Regional Meetings in 2022, 2023, and 2024;  
Toxic Torts and Environmental Committee, Member;  
Attendee at DRI Asbestos Medicine Seminar since 1989

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

Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel, President, 2017;  
Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel, Board of Directors 2010-2012, 1998-2001;  
Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel, Legislative Director, 2012-2014;  
Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel, Legislative Committee, 2012-2025  
State of Oklahoma Advisory Council on Workers' Compensation, Chair, 2011-present;  
State of Oklahoma Self-Insurance Guaranty Fund, Board Member, 2012-2018;  
State of Oklahoma Indigent Defense System, Board Member 1999-2001;  
Luther Bohanon American Inns of Court XXIII, President, 2016-2017;  
Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel, Member, 2020-present;  
Oklahoma Bar Association, Member;  
Oklahoma County Bar Association, Member.

**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 was honored in 2024 with the opportunity to stand for the Executive Committee. While I was not successful, the many expressions of support from DRI members were humbling. Now, a year removed from serving in leadership, my thoughts on the future of DRI and willingness to serve have only become clearer. I offer my candidacy this year for similar but more focused reasons as 2024. The goal I expressed for DRI in 2024 remains the same: making the civil defense community view DRI as the foundational civil defense association. The way DRI can achieve this goal is to grow by returning to a focus on the two pillars upon which DRI has always stood: our best-in-class seminars and our state, local, and national organizations. I can best contribute to the achievement of that goal as an officer of DRI.

The skills, abilities, and attributes I bring to the Executive Committee fit well within the Officer Competencies as published by DRI. More specifically, as for the Minimum Requirements, I have served as a Board member, an Individual Member, and have served as a fiduciary of DRI. I understand and agree with the strategic leadership model and have for many years demonstrated high levels of engagement in DRI. I understand and agree that the EC must be responsible to the membership and believe the highest responsibility of the EC and Board is insuring the health of DRI. My fit into the remaining listed competencies follows.

**Marketing/Branding:** As a leader in DRI and other bar associations such as OADC and American Inns of Court, I have focused on marketing through the use of social media, and in some instances initiated the first successful uses of social media to market those organizations. DRI already does an excellent job in communicating and innovating through the use of social media platforms and publications. I want to leverage that current robust presence to an even greater extent in positioning DRI as the foundational civil defense association. No civil defense attorney should be able to log into a computer without seeing a DRI logo.

**Management/Governance:** I have represented many large and complex organizations over the years and advised them in regard to change and transition. In addition to leadership roles in legal organizations, I served as a board member and president for the University of Oklahoma's ATO fraternity chapter housing corporation for many years and am familiar with all aspects of non-profit governance.

**DRI Leadership:** I have served DRI through my duties as a Board Member, as Chair of the Membership Committee, and as a Steering Committee member of the Asbestos Litigation Committee. I have also served as the State Representative for Oklahoma, as well as State Membership Chair for Oklahoma.

As Southwest Region Director, I helped plan three Joint Region meetings in which the Southwest Region participated. I also attended at least one meeting each year of every SLDO located in the Southwest Region, which includes Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel, Louisiana Association of Defense Counsel, New Mexico Defense Lawyers Association, Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel, and Texas Association of Defense Counsel. I also led monthly Southwest Region meetings.

As DRI Membership Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, I led efforts to create new membership strategies such as the Seminar Membership Program, the Membership Committee SLC liaison program (which resulted in action plans for meeting membership goals from several DRI SLCs) and initiated a monthly "Membership Minute" to keep the DRI Board and EC informed of Membership Committee asks, strategies, and accomplishments. A Membership Committee fly-in in conjunction with the 2024 Winter Board Meeting was instrumental in getting the committee off to a great start and reinforcing accountability among its members.

I currently serve on the Steering Committees of two SLCs, the Asbestos Litigation Committee and the Workers' Compensation Committee. As a director, I served as Board liaison to the Governmental Liability Committee and attended the Committee's seminars, Steering Committee meetings, fly-ins, and served as a

conduit between the Committee and the Board. As someone whose experience in DRI was primarily on the “SLDO side”, getting involved in SLC organization and planning has been a tremendous experience and has helped me better understand “how the sausage is made” when it comes to DRI’s fantastic seminars, which are often the gateway to DRI membership.

Although not an “official” DRI Leadership position, I am also proud of contributing to Annual Meetings since 2021 (thanks to Douglas Burrell) as the organizer and band leader of The Defense Never Rests, our show band made up (mostly) of DRI members. Putting on this performance for the Annual Meeting is very worthwhile and a blast for all of us!

Finally, I also have a long record of leadership in DRI’s affiliated SLDO for Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel. I served that organization for two terms on the Board, as an officer, and as President. I am proud of advocating that the chair of the OADC legislative committee become an officer and director of the organization. I then served as the first OADC Legislative Director. During my term as President, we also offered a free membership in OADC to Oklahoma DRI members and had a remarkable success rate.

**Leadership:** Serving in organizations is important to me. I served as President of the Luther Bohanon American Inns of Court XXIII, one of the original American Inns of Court. The President of an Inn is responsible for membership, developing topics and schedules for monthly pupillage sessions of the Inn, and ensuring that all Inn members participate and contribute to these sessions through their respective Pupillage Groups. I also served as my college fraternity’s housing corporation President. In that role, I was responsible for leading the design, planning, fundraising, and execution of the construction of a \$6,000,000 fraternity house for ATO at the University of Oklahoma. Finally, I have served as the Chair of the State of Oklahoma Advisory Council on Workers’ Compensation for 14 years, and as such have served with many legislative working groups on proposed legislation related to that field.

**Public Speaking/Spokesperson:** The favorite among my duties as Regional Director was representing DRI at meetings of the five state SLDOs in the Southwest Region. It is a great honor to appear at these meetings on behalf of DRI and recognize SLDO leaders for their contributions to their SLDO and to DRI. But the most important Regional Director duty at these SLDO meetings is to use the time allotted by the SLDO to promote DRI and especially membership in DRI. To this end, I developed a speaking outline for use by all Regional Directors called “Regional Director 5 Minute Pitch to SLDOs: 5 Things About DRI in 5 Minutes”. This outline condenses information about DRI membership, seminars, Legal Point, The Center, and NFJE into sound bites that can be pitched in as little as five minutes. An unexpected benefit of speaking so briefly is that I found

many people have additional questions about a short topic that piqued their interest and follow up at an ensuing break or at a reception.

***Leads and Participates in Meetings:*** One of my strengths is leading a meeting, whether by Zoom or in person. My goal for Southwest Region meetings and Membership Committee meetings was to foster collaboration and create an atmosphere where we could discuss issues and solutions in an efficient way. I also enjoyed leading discussions at Joint Region Meetings and encouraging (some might say coercing) all to participate and speak up.

***Soft Skills:*** An important lesson learned over a career in leadership is that the ability to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts is a key to inspiring trust among team members. When combined with a purposeful mentality and a reputation for accountability, a team can tackle any problem presented to it. I have a record of bringing these skills to the table and would like to do so as an officer of DRI.

***Strategic Skills:*** My service in DRI and other organizations demonstrates the strategic skills necessary to lead DRI going forward. In addition to those listed here, I believe it is critical to anticipate issues facing the defense practice and legal profession as a whole and use DRI's many excellent existing resources such as The Center to craft creative solutions. We can and should leverage DRI's network power to create new and stronger partnerships with our SLDO/NDOs and Sister organizations through which long-term strategies to address these issues can be developed.

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

***Back to the Future:*** DRI has weathered the pandemic, when all professional and affinity organizations lost significant membership and were scrambling to stay afloat. DRI's membership has stabilized, but now is the time to grow DRI once again by returning to a focus on the two pillars on which DRI stands, seminars and state, local, and national organizations. In my view, this can best be done by first, an intense focus on seminars, the bedrock of DRI's original growth and its greatest organizational asset. Seminars must return to and exceed pre-pandemic levels of attendance. Next, DRI must equally focus on its greatest partnership asset, the state, local, and national organizations, forging new, innovative, and mutually beneficial relationships with them. This renewed focus will cement DRI in its place as the foundational defense association.

There are three parts to growing by returning focus to seminars and SLDO/NDOs:

**Grow through increasing DRI seminar attendance to surpass pre-pandemic levels.** DRI's fantastic seminars have always been the foundation of the organization and have often been the gateway to membership for many civil

defense lawyers and others in the civil defense arena. My number one priority is getting seminar attendance back to and above pre-pandemic levels. In a world of more and more competition for the CLE and seminar dollar, DRI must be innovative in addressing these challenges and provide the greatest value proposition in the field. Greater seminar attendance can only lead to increased membership in DRI.

**Grow through new partnerships with the SLDO/NDO organizations.** Coming from the SLDO and Regional Director experience, I have seen what can sometimes be a disconnect between the SLDO/NDOs and DRI. We must show the SLDOs that DRI is not their competition but instead their partner. I believe there has never been sufficient one-on-one focus with each SLDO to learn how we can benefit each other. One example is developing, in collaboration with the SLDO/NDOs, a membership-advantage model beyond the SLDO Free Membership Program that makes dual membership in the SLDO and DRI a “no-brainer”. Greater SLDO partnership can only lead to increased membership in DRI.

**Grow through greater integration of DRI seminars and SLDOs.** A story I have told many times involves my attendance at the 2017 DRI Annual Meeting in Chicago as an SLDO President. Walking down the hotel hallway, I heard a familiar voice coming from a meeting room. I looked in the room and noticed that my friend Jeff Curran, with whom I had played in a band for 30 years, was presenting at the Products Liability Committee meeting. Until that moment, I had no idea that Jeff was a member of DRI, much less an engaged member! That experience made me passionate about furthering the integration of the two “sides” until there is only one “side”, the DRI side. When our SLDO/NDO members have more exposure to seminars and SLCs, and vice versa, the synergistic effect can only lead to increased membership in DRI.

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

In 1988, I was an associate at an insurance defense firm in Oklahoma City. I did the work I was assigned but had few clients of my own and was not a hot partnership prospect. That year, a case was assigned to me that would become transformational in many ways. The assignment was to defend Georgia Talc Company in a mass asbestos filing in the USDC for the Northern District of Oklahoma. No partner at the firm wanted the assignment, having been burned by the original round of asbestos litigation in the 1970s. These 375 cases arising from the closing of a Goodrich tire plant in Miami, Oklahoma were part of what became known as the National Tire Workers Litigation. We became NCC for Georgia Talc, handling thousands of cases all over the United States for the next six years.

Representing Georgia Talc helped me realize the importance of having your own clients, and that law practice was more than sitting around waiting for assignments from other lawyers. Transformational? Once we were made NCC of Georgia Talc another firm reached out and brought us over as partners. This was a valuable lesson I have never forgotten but it is not the whole story.

Equally transformational was talking with my colleague and suggesting that we attend the DRI Asbestos Medicine Seminar in 1989 for the excellent reason that neither of us knew that much about asbestos and should probably try to learn. I will never forget going to that first seminar and networking with other lawyers who were also involved in the NTWL, as well as hearing from Al Parnell and the best defense experts in the country about asbestos litigation, plaintiffs' experts and tactics, and defense strategies. From these DRI seminars was built a national network of defense cooperation that greatly assisted us in defending Georgia Talc. More importantly, it built a personal network of defense colleagues and friends that I still call on today. Over many years we gathered, and still gather, at the DRI Asbestos Medicine Seminar where we shared dinner, drinks, and referrals. This was truly my exposure to the value of DRI membership.

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

The number one challenge for DRI is growing its membership so that more of our colleagues can take advantage of the many great things DRI has to offer. We can do this by focusing on seminar growth and a new partnership with SLDOs.

Another challenge will be in confronting the constant change in the profession caused by the ubiquitous use of AI. DRI can and should be the leader in the legal field for helping its membership adjust to very new realities.

An equally daunting challenge is remaining nimble in the face of political turmoil and the increasing distrust of institutions generally. The judicial system in particular is under fire, and some question the value of organizations such as DRI. By our example, DRI can and should be a leader in working to restore the public's trust in our institutions.

A continuing challenge for DRI and other legal organizations is broadening the pool from which our members come. We must reevaluate our current efforts to this end and be innovative in achieving a broad and diverse membership. This is also the greatest opportunity for DRI.

**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?**

DRI's affinity committees, Diversity, Women in the Law, and Young Lawyers, are the strength of the organization. While I have not been a member of those committees, I have served in DRI leadership with many of their leaders and former leaders. Our organization would be much poorer without their contributions and leadership, from the Board all the way up to the EC and President positions. While I do not have personal experience here, what experience has taught me is to listen closely and carefully to those who do. DRI can only be strengthened by increased focus in this area.

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

My 37-year membership in DRI, attendance at DRI seminars since 1989, and leadership roles in my SLDO and as Regional Director provide a unique perspective on what it will take to lead DRI into the future. DRI must grow, and the way to accomplish that is staring us in the face: return to a focus on seminars and SLDOs. The way forward is growth, and we already have the playbook.

My DRI experience gives me a passion to grow this organization and share its tremendous resources and attributes with all our colleagues in the civil defense world. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to help DRI attain this goal.