



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 Pamela W. Carter

Firm/Company

Address

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How long have you been a member of DRI?

23+ years

Areas of practice:

I have 23 years of broad civil defense trial experience representing small and large corporations, emerging businesses, individuals and insurers in general liability, products liability, construction-related litigation, employment matters and coverage litigation. The following is an example of the broad range of my cases:

- Defense of negligent design/installation cases involving products and components alleged to cause fire.
- Representation and defense of construction defect claims.
- Defense of wide variety of personal injury claims arising out of apartment complex shootings.
- Defense of a variety of personal injury claims involving trucks and motor vehicles.
- Noteworthy defense work before the State Appellate and La Supreme Court and submission of several key appellate issues involving experts and trial evidence.
- Defended clients against products liability claims based on alleged failure of production casing in a drilling operation.
- Defended multiple toxic tort wrongful death cases brought by plaintiffs alleging exposure to harmful chemicals resulted in death.
- For Fortune 100 pharmaceutical company, member of team on legal communications involving criminal investigation into allegedly false government disclosures about chemicals in children's vaccines.
- Representing Automotive Components Group North America, Inc. and one of its component parts manufacturers, as plaintiff in litigation involving breach of non-competition agreement and tortious interference with contract.
- Represented General Motors in putative class action alleging safety defects and property design violations. Obtained pre-discovery dismissal with prejudice.
- Defense of multiple employers in several discrimination claims of gender discrimination, age discrimination and racial discrimination.
- Lead Louisiana litigation counsel for automotive parts manufacturer in various asbestos survival and wrongful death actions. Successfully obtained dismissal of multiple actions in state and federal court.

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

Date	Employer
2021- 2023	Managing Partner, Quintarios, Prieto, Wood & Boyer, P.A., Metairie, LA
2010 -2021	Founder, Owner, Carter Law Group
2003-2010	Partner, Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell Berkwoticz
2000-2003	Associate, Phelps Dunbar
1999-2000	Associate, Deutsch Kerrigan & Stiles Law Firm
1997-1999	Judicial Law Clerk to Judge Niles Hellmers, New Orleans Civil District Court

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 LEADERSHIP POSITION HIGHLIGHT:

- DRI NATIONAL DIRECTOR, 2015-2018
 - In the role of DRI National Director, I encompassed a range of responsibilities. As the board liaison to the Governmental Committee, I attended committee seminars and championed new initiatives in line with DRI's strategic plan. I also helped strengthen the committee by encouraging the leadership to submit innovative proposals to the DRI Executive Committee. Additionally, I ensured the committee's ongoing engagement with DRI by finding them leadership roles within other substantive law or standing committees.
 - I attended the Mid-Atlantic/Southeast/Southern Regional Meeting, fostering dialogue and exchanging ideas with defense organization leaders from these regions.
 - Lastly, at the Annual DRI Leadership Conference, I presented DRI's Diversity & Inclusion initiatives to state and local defense organizations and leaders of substantive law committees, further underlining my commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive organization.

DRI COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT:

2010 - Present	Mentor to Multiple DRI Young Lawyers and Women
11/1/2022	Life, Health and Disability Committee

9/20/2021	Member, DRI Law Institute
2019-2020	Corporate Counsel Roundtable
2019	Membership Messaging Task Force
2018-2020	Small Firm Membership Initiative
2017-2018	Board Liaison to Substantive Law Committee
2016-2017	Board Liason to Substantive Law Committees
2016-2017	Diversity & Inclusion Committee
2016	Managing Partner Advisory Task Force
2015-2018	Board of Directors
2015-2017	Committee Engagement Committee
2015-2016	Government Enforcement and Corporate Compliance
2015-2016	Board Liason to Substantive Law Committees
2015	Co-Creator of DRI Diversity ToolKit (and its revision)
6/2/2015	Member Solo and Small Law Firms Committee
10/16/2012	DRI Leadership Academy Project
09/20/2012	Speaker Trucking Law Seminar
06/07/2012	Speaker Diversity Committee Fly-In Meeting
05/18/2012	Speaker Regional Meeting
5/16/2012	Member of Diversity Committee
04/27/2012	Attended Central/Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting
12/29/2011	Member of DRI Women in Law Committee
10/19/2011	Diversity Committee Chair
2009-2011	Vice-Chair, DRI Diversity Committee
2009-2011	Member, DRI Membership Committee
04/18/2008	Presented at Regional Meeting
02/27/2008	Insurance Law Committee Member
02/27/2008	Construction Law Committee Member
2007-2009	Membership Chair, DRI Diversity Committee
10/15/2007	Diversity Committee Vice Chair
2007	Originating Member, DRI Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee
06/01/2006	Diversity Seminar Presentation
2006	Program Vice Chair for First DRI Diversity Seminar
7/27/1999	Member DRI Trial Tactics Committee
7/27/1999	Member DRI Product Liability Committee
7/27/1999	Member DRI Professional Liability Committee
7/27/1999	Member DRI Insurance Law Committee

DRI PRESENTATIONS:

- DRI Annual Meeting

Selected by Toyja Kelley to introduce Valerie Jarret to the main stage presentation at the

DRI

annual meeting.

- 2012 DRI Annual Meeting Moderator

I was selected to moderate a diversity presentation at the DRI Annual Meeting.

- 06/01/2011 SLDO Relationship Committee Presentation “Diversity Through DRI: How the DRI Diversity Committee Can Help With Your Diversity Initiatives”

- 2009 DRI Recognition

Featured in DRI’s March 18, 2009, edition of the Voice in the Leader Spotlight Section.

- 2008 DRI Seminar Speaker, Chicago, IL

Speaker at the 2008 DRI Diversity Seminar. Topic: Considerations and Strategies for Women and Minorities Navigating the Minefield of Law Firm Politics.

DRI PUBLICATIONS:

- “It Pays to Improve Boardroom Diversity,” 5/17/2022
- “Championing Diversity and Inclusion,” 3/1/2022
- “Coronavirus: Big Disruptions, Opportunities, and Excelling Women,” 6/16/2021
- “Using the Power of Your Voice to Tell Your Story,” 2/25/2020
- “It’s All About Integrity: Lessons that I’ve Learned: Speak Up, and Stay Real,” 4/13/2018
- “Cultural Change: Leadership-Leveling the Playing Field with the Mansfield and Rooney Rules,” 2/16/2018
- “The Solo or Small Firm Counselor: Strategies to Improve the Operation and Profitability of Your Law Firm,” 7/7/2017
- “Introduction - A Vital Place for Opposing View,” 2/8/2017
- “Setting Examples and Making Strides: Interview with Debra Coleman of Macys,” 5/13/2016
- “Message from the Chair,” 10/6/2015
- “From the Chair - What a Difference Ten Years Makes,” 8/1/2015
- “From the Chair: Soaring Ahead Into the Future: Reflecting and Embracing Differences,” 5/14/2015
- “How Can DRI Lawyers Help Lead the Nation: As We Celebrate Our 10th Anniversary of the Diversity Seminar and Corporate Expo,” 1/14/2015
- “A Renewed Commitment to Reflect, Refocus, Challenge and Change: Let’s Make This a Year of Action,” 8/1/2014
- “Regulations and Laws in Flux: What’s the Big Fracking Deal?” 5/12/2014
- “An Imperative No One Can Afford to Ignore: Diversity Equals Profitability and Sustainability,” 3/1/2014
- “Shattering the Glass Ceiling: A Survival Strategy for Women,” 2/1/2012
- “Diversity on Trial: Integrating the Legal Profession,” 5/12/2010
- “How to Prepare the Corporate Representation for Deposition and Trial,” 2/11/2010

- “Managing Diversity: Continuing the Journey to the Perfect Mosaic,” 8/21/2009
- “Product Liability Committee Perspectives - Limiting Admissibility: Defending Against Product Recall Evidence at Trial,” 4/1/2002
- “Product Liability Committee Perspectives - Product Liability Litigation: Applying Negligent Advertising Theory,” 7/1/2000

STATE AND LOCAL DEFENSE ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT:

Louisiana Defense Lawyers Association Member, 2012-Present

Attend and participate in Board Meetings, 2013 - 2016

Attend and participate in Annual Meeting 2019

MISCELLANEOUS:

I helped to institute a structure, protocols and vision for the Diversity Committee and worked with Toyja Kelley, John Cuttino and Douglas Burrell to add substance and vision to the Diversity Committee. We worked together to help the Diversity Steering Committee members with defined roles and goals they could achieve. As a result, the DRI Diversity & Inclusion Committee became a high-functioning committee that has and is developing future DRI leaders and speakers. I was instrumental in the creation of the DRI Diversity Toolkit (and subsequent revisions); created to help law firm navigate DEI efforts within their law firms.

When I became Vice Chair of the committee in 2009, then Chair in 2011, Douglas Burrell and I continued to follow the blue-print laid out by Toyja Kelley, John Cuttino and Douglas Burrell, and built on that foundation.

Listed below are some of the committee’s noteworthy accomplishments during my service:

- Diversity & Inclusion Committee’s Leadership Development

One of the missions of DRI’s Diversity Committee is to identify and develop leaders. that can ultimately have an impact within DRI’s substantive law, standing committees, SLDO’s, Board and Executive Committee.

During my service, Rosevelie Marquez Morales, Rosary Hernandez, Stacy Douglas, Allison Ashe-Card, and Mary Peyton were featured in the leader spotlight of The Voice; Allison Ashe-Card was nominated and received the DRI lifetime community service award at the 2012 annual meeting; and the following committee members spoke at DRI seminars: Eileen Buholtz (2013 “Retail and Hospitality”), William Sherman (2013 “Trial Tactics”), Rosary Hernandez (2013 “Construction Law”), Ricardo Woods (2013 “Toxic Torts”), Tanya Lawson (2013 “Diversity Seminar”), and Toni Anders (2012 “Diversity Seminar”).

In 2013 under the leadership of Toyja Kelley and Douglas Burrell, we collaborated with multiple DRI substantive committees to help it increase the number of diverse attorneys on its steering committee. We asked DRI staff to identify diverse attorneys who belonged to both committees before identifying four (4) of our high-performing members to be considered for the commercial litigation steering committee.

In 2013, Diversity Committee leader, Melanie Lockett, has also accepted positions with the Insurance Law Committee as the co-chair of new member recruitment and on the Insurance Coverage and Claims Institute Steering Committee.

- Diversity & Inclusion Committee's Collaboration with Other DRI Committees

In 2012 and 2013, we worked with the DRI trial tactics seminar planning committee to help bring a diversity component to their seminar. We helped the planning committee develop diverse topics and recommended diverse speakers that had not previously spoken at DRI seminars. The main topic we proposed was titled "When and Why to Diversify your Trial Team." John Pierce, stated that the presentation "was a big success in my opinion. You all ought to can that presentation and offer it at other conferences."

Over the years, we have also sent countless letters to national Managing Partners of DRI Law Firms Nationwide supporting the leadership and work of Diverse DRI Members thanking them and their law firms for their support and encouraging them to continue to grow Diverse Lawyers who were on the rise within the DRI Organization. These efforts have resulted in corporate positions for DRI Diverse lawyers and movement into partnership and other leadership positions. Examples of success have been the following: Taren Buren, Natalie Bolling, Joy Monahan, Atoyia Scott Harris, and Melissa Lin, to name a few.

In 2013, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee was approached by the leadership of the commercial litigation committee to assist it in its plan to invite members of over 19 diverse bar organizations to attend a reception during their 2013 seminar, which was held in Chicago. The goal of the commercial litigation committee was to obtain increased exposure to DRI and the commercial litigation committee for diverse attorneys in Chicago with the hope of increasing the number of diverse attorneys that participated in the committee. This outreach effort was a worthwhile attempt to increase participation and to enhance DRI's brand.

- Diversity & Inclusion Committee's Collaboration with SLDOs

While I served as Vice Committee Chair, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee developed an outreach program to help substantive committees diversify their panel presentations, speakers and documents. We put together a compendium of

diversity-related articles and a list of speakers to utilize in regard to their own diversity efforts. We believe our efforts substantially impacted the relationship between DRI, substantive committees and the SLDO's. This impact is shown below:

In 2013, we were asked to recommend a speaker to the Arizona SLDO to speak on a diverse topic during its annual retreat. In 2012, we helped the North Carolina Defense Lawyers Association develop a diversity committee, and two of our steering committee members helped it plan its first diversity seminar.

- Diversity & Inclusion Committee Seminars

Our 2012 and 2013 diversity seminars received great reviews. The success of the 2013 seminar is reflected in the fact that Elizabeth Fitch, co-creator of Ladder Down, an innovative year-long program designed to empower women attorneys by giving them direct training in three key areas of career development: leadership, rainmaking, and mentoring, brought many of her program participants to DRI's diversity seminar.

Other diversity-related organizations had best take care because I think DRI's diversity for success seminar is offering depth and breadth in quality that surpass much of what they are offering in their diversity arena.

In addition to the quality of the programming, the diversity seminar introduced many diverse attorneys to DRI and some of those diverse attorneys have become involved with DRI's Diversity & Inclusion Committee.

- Diversity & Inclusion Committee's Outreach Efforts

During my service with DRI's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, the committee became known as the acknowledged leader among bar and other diversity-focused organizations. As a result, on March 26, 2013, DRI hosted a meeting at DRI headquarters with leaders of the National Bar Association ("NBA"), The Minority Corporate Counsel Association ("MCCA"), the American Bar Association ("ABA"), the National Association of Minority and Women on Law Firms ("NAMWOLF"), the Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession ("IILP"), Hispanic National Bar Association ("HNBA"), National Asian Pacific American Bar Association ("NAPABA"), and other diverse bar associations to discuss how these organizations could work together on diversity-related issues.

By all accounts, this meeting was a resounding success and the parties asked that we meet again to continue our dialog. During the meeting, all participating organizations acknowledged and expressed their excitement and appreciation that DRI was leading the effort to have this dialog. They also acknowledged that this was the first time leaders of the various organizations came together to

discuss common goals and they recognized the significance of DRI making it happen.

Since this meeting, DRI strengthened its partnership with some of these organizations and continues to be known as the leader among bar and diversity-focused organizations.

In 2013, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee completed an upgrade to DRI's Diversity Retention Manual. I had the pleasure of leading the charge on the creation of the first Retention Manual as well as subsequent versions.

This was significant because many law firms' diversity efforts had stagnated. These updated diversity retention manuals have become a resource that DRI members and their firms could utilize to enhance their diversity efforts.

Worked on the proposal along with Douglas Burrell and Demarcus Gordon for the creation of DRI Diversity Pioneer Award, later renamed "the Sheryl J. Willert Pioneer Diversity Award"

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

- Member of IADC – International Association of Defense Counsel
- Louisiana Association of Defense Counsel – Active Member; Worked with Presidents Mickey DeLaup and Marta Schnabel to establish the Women in Law Initiative
- Louisiana State Bar Association – responsible for organizing and chairing numerous seminars and programs through the years and speaking on various panels. I organized and presented at numerous seminars and programs through the years through the Louisiana State Bar Association, Loyola University, Southern University and Tulane University.
 - Young Lawyer's Division
 - Board of Governors
 - Diversity 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?

My aspiration to join the Board of Directors is borne out of a profound respect and commitment for DRI, deepened by my personal journey as a legal professional. The principles of service and dedication have guided my career and personal evolution,

shaping my engagement with DRI and fostering my enthusiasm for the tasks and responsibilities ahead.

Having been immersed in DRI since 1999, starting at the DRI Tort Liability Seminar, my participation has significantly honed my capabilities as an attorney, enriched my leadership skills, and fundamentally shaped me as an individual. This transformative journey, initiated by the inspiring mentorship of Barbara Arras, a Partner at Phelps Dunbar, led me to find my footing and voice in a room where diverse women lawyers were scarce.

My professional trajectory, which spans roles in prominent law firms to becoming the managing member of the Louisiana Office for Quintairos, Prieto, Wood & Boyer, P.A. (“QPWB”), the largest woman and minority-owned law firm in the nation, has provided me with valuable experience and insight. With over 400 attorneys and a presence in 31 states, the extensive reach of QPWB and our commitment to civil litigation has enabled me to acquire skills and understanding that I believe would be invaluable as a DRI Officer.

The foundation of my commitment to DRI lies not only in my professional engagement but also in my personal transformation over the years. As an attorney, leader and mother, my affiliation with DRI has empowered me to become more perceptive, empathetic, and effective, qualities that would further our collective mission. My DRI journey, which began at the DRI Toxic Torts Seminar in 2002, has fostered my growth and catalyzed my career, shaping a passion I am keen on sharing with others, particularly young and diverse legal professionals.

Crucial to my professional accomplishments has been the cultivation of key skills such as collaboration, active listening, and flexibility. My experience in client relationship building, managing an office, and steering a law firm has underscored the importance of these competencies. Listening involves understanding unique personalities and business needs to deliver the most suitable services, while inspiring a team driven by diverse goals. Flexibility requires recognizing that the definitions of exceptional service can vary and that being responsive to specific needs always keeps you ahead of the curve.

I look forward to contributing these acquired skills to the Board, helping DRI stay on the cutting edge of its strategic objectives and ensuring its continued relevance and vitality. My vision for DRI is informed by my past experiences, guided by a sincere desire to serve, and is focused on the collective strength of our organization to evolve and flourish.

What suggestions would you make to move the organization forward?

If elected to this position, my primary objective will be to align with the goals and initiatives established in the DRI strategic plan. Additionally, I will propose to the executive committee to consider the following:

1. To ensure financial stability: We should aim to expand membership and identify alternative sources of revenue. This will require us to market DRI as the home of the best defense trial lawyers globally and highlight the benefits of DRI membership to law firms. This may involve reviewing our membership model to attract diverse ideas and thoughts. For instance, we could consider bundling memberships with seminar attendance or offering a corporate membership plan. The legal profession has undergone significant changes. It's critical to identify alternative sources of revenue that can bolster DRI's mission. This is particularly important as we transition into an era marked by the retirement of baby boomers and the arrival of younger lawyers deciding on their professional affiliations. Additionally, the emergence of online CLE offerings also necessitates the diversification of revenue sources. By collaborating with new businesses and establishing new committees, we can increase DRI membership and capitalize on the evolving digital landscape.
2. Enhance DRI membership: We need to focus on expanding DRI's membership base, especially among young lawyers, women, small law firms and diverse attorneys. My leadership journey within DRI began as the membership chair for the Diversity & Inclusion committee, which gave me deep insights into the importance of active membership for the vitality of our organization. As such, it's essential to emphasize the personal benefits that members derive from their affiliation with DRI. This may involve working with law schools to emphasize the benefits of DRI membership beyond legal education. I also intend to work with substantive law committees to increase collaboration and develop creative ways of organizing regional events for relationship-building opportunities.
3. Foster collaboration among DRI's substantive law committees and other organizations: I firmly believe that DRI benefits tremendously when its substantive law committees engage in collaborative efforts with other entities. As chair of the Diversity & Inclusion committee, I experienced the impact of such collaborations firsthand. These partnerships, including those with sister organizations like ADTA, FDCC, IADC, enhance DRI's overall strength and effectiveness.
4. Amplify DRI's brand: Continual growth of DRI's brand is paramount. We need to introduce more business leaders, attorneys, and members of bar organizations to DRI. My experience has shown that people, once introduced to DRI, are often impressed by our work and express interest in joining or collaborating with us.

To usher the DRI organization towards progress and tackle the challenges of membership and financial sustainability, I propose the "**WISER**" framework:

1. **Well-Being:** Promote the financial, physical, and emotional health of our members and their families while ensuring DRI's fiscal stability. This can be achieved by encouraging member contributions to the Fund for Justice and Education to support community programs.
2. **Innovation and Inclusivity:** Foster a culture of innovation and inclusivity by amplifying young leaders' voices. One approach is the creation of a DRI Leadership Academy or Training Class for young lawyers, offering them exposure to Steering Committees, fostering engagement and aiding their leadership journey.
3. **Service:** Extend valuable, tangible benefits to our members and better cater to small law firms by improving outreach efforts. Encourage member involvement in community services.
4. **Engagement and Experience:** Increase opportunities for members to share their insights and experiences. Develop stronger relationships with law students and young lawyers and create more flexible membership models to accommodate diverse needs. On a strategic level, I aim to strengthen DRI's core strengths of fostering personal and professional connections. I propose to enhance engagement opportunities at all events and develop new platforms to deliver exceptional education to members and prospects.
5. **Relevance:** Ensure DRI remains a relevant voice for the Defense Bar by advocating on issues important to our members, such as rule of law, judicial independence, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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

Surviving and prospering during the COVID years in my small law firm had a tremendous impact on my professional life and imparted many valuable lessons. My learning experiences were amplified when my state was directly impacted by Hurricane Ida, damaging not only my office but also the homes of my staff, along with destroying over 60% of my family home.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ida provided a harsh tutorial about how swiftly circumstances can change, irrespective of prior stability. It was a period filled with doubt, fear, and unrest. Numerous small law firms within my city had to shut down; all were impacted to varying extents. I was among the fortunate few who, due to their resources, networks, DRI colleagues, and bar association friends, could navigate the uncertainty and shift the focus of my law firm to survival mode.

Here are some of the key lessons I learned:

1. Don't take things for granted.

Perhaps the biggest lesson of all learned was to never to take things for granted. My business was in great shape with four solid employees and a financial safety net. What I learned was that while my business went into the pandemic in great shape, COVID painfully illustrated, everything can change quickly. Suddenly, every decision I made was magnified by the employees and the families who depended on me to keep the finances coming in and the case moving despite court closures, canceled mediations and frozen files. Luckily, I contacted DRI Member, John Trimble who helped me to transition to the virtual platform quickly allowing my staff to work from home, effectively communicate with clients and continue to work and resolve assigned cases.

2. Be prepared for hard times.

Another major lesson was that I can never be too prepared. While I realized that it is smart to continue business during a pandemic or other national crisis, the reality is the process was easier “said than done.” I thought that I had strategically prepared financially along with ample operational processes; however, not for two hits at the same time. Again, I reached out to DRI Member, Marta Schnabel, who offered her home and resources to me and my family. As the owner of a small law firm, she helped me to navigate the ever-changing waters while we rebuilt.

Careful financial planning inclusive of an emergency fund along with my relationships with local businesses filled in the many gaps as we operated our office without lights to retrieve files that had not yet been converted to the virtual cloud. It all worked out and we survived and began thriving again.

3. Optimize the cash flow.

This was very challenging to stay on top of the cash flow and keep it optimized. At the recommendation of Mickey DeLaup, another DRI colleague, I was able to successfully navigate the cash flow issues. I was afraid that if I didn't partner with my local banker that I would not have cash in hand. Again, they were quick to respond once I implemented Mickey's suggestions and my firm was able to maintain business operations including making every payroll and vendor payment timely.

The pandemic and Hurricane Ida forced me to establish stronger strategies for my firm, humble myself to ask for the help of colleagues, the grace and strength to assure my employees and clients that we as a small law firm were in for the long haul. These lessons were a wake-up call for me as a solo business owner. As we live our lives, we repeatedly make decisions that shape our future circumstances and affect the level of integrity we maintain personally and as a business. My steadfast decision to build alliances and establish friendships and create networks with other DRI firms was a saving grace for me, my family, and my employees.

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

DRI faces significant challenges in the coming years, which are also gateways to tremendous opportunities.

One of the key challenges is talent retention and acquisition, particularly given the changing dynamics of law firm structures and practice norms. The quest to attract and retain high-quality talent in an increasingly competitive landscape is an ongoing concern. Linked to this challenge is the critical issue of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a profession, we must ensure that our practices are not just diverse but also inclusive, fostering an environment where all members feel valued and can thrive.

Balancing work-life commitments and promoting lawyer wellness are also key challenges that require our attention. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of mental health and well-being in our profession, and we must continue to work on strategies that promote a balanced lifestyle.

Moreover, in this era of alternative and flat fee arrangements, maintaining profitability remains a persistent challenge. Navigating this new terrain requires innovative business models that provide quality service while also ensuring firm profitability.

Turning to opportunities, the Center for Law and Public Policy's work on issues pertinent to the defense bar provides an excellent platform for progress. Their task force's work on non-attorney ownership of law firms underscores the potential for strategic evolution within our profession.

Two crucial matters that require emphasis are attorney well-being and the integrity of the judicial system. These have been topics of ongoing discussions within DRI, given their significance, especially in the wake of the pandemic and an increasingly polarized political climate. These issues present us with opportunities to fortify our profession and enhance our service to society.

I look forward to engaging in these discussions and working towards strategies that leverage these challenges into opportunities for growth and progress in DRI and the broader legal profession.

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?

For me, DRI is belonging and inspiration. It is the opportunity to connect, learn, lead, and grow professionally and personally, and serve goals that are bigger than me.

DRI is not just a place to obtain top-notch quality CLE (which is great), but a community that means much more than that. DRI's key role is to create a collaborative, inclusive, diverse, and welcoming environment for defense lawyers to connect, engage, learn from one another, and help each other thrive.

DRI's community pages (previously known as listservs) are priceless. I have experienced that first-hand as part of the Employment Law, Women in the Law, Diversity and Inclusion and Young Lawyers communities. The benefit of hiring DRI lawyers is that DRI provides a platform to connect and brainstorm with talent throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada, and these connections and knowledge serve not only our individual goals but those of our law firms and our clients. Encouraging the free flow and exchange of ideas, knowledge, referrals, and experience among DRI members plays a key role in enhancing the skills and effectiveness of defense bar.

Because the practice of law by its nature is challenging and stressful, DRI has a unique role in helping lawyers to support one another, inspire each other, and focus on improving our civil justice system.

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

DRI, as the national defense bar organization, has a multi-dimensional role. It must be a staunch advocate for defense practitioners and their clients. Furthermore, DRI, including its substantive law committees, should actively advocate for necessary changes within the practice areas. A notable example is the DRI Protect and Serve Task Force which facilitates critical dialogue and fosters positive change around the issue of law enforcement interactions with diverse populations.

In addition to advocacy, DRI should serve as a leading educator. It needs to consistently continue to uphold the gold standard in legal education and content delivery, whether that be through in-person seminars, virtual options, or hybrid models. In the context of skill-based learning, DRI is uniquely positioned to nurture young lawyers, especially when trial opportunities are becoming rarer.

Furthermore, DRI should be an information hub for lawyers, especially small law firms, to evaluate their practices. From toolkits offered by affinity groups to best practices for remote work, to information portals, DRI's role should be to enhance the quality of the profession. There is a very viable and important aspect of DRI wherein solo and small law firms are underserved and underused to some degree. Hundreds of small law firms and solo practitioners who are DRI Members have relied on the organization to boost and

sustain their practices. Many have evolved from big law and could use the direction and support of DRI to further advance their reinvented practices. Launching a small law firm portal through DRI with resources would be a worthwhile initiative that could result in expanded membership and increased practical value to our small firm members.

Lastly, DRI also has a social role to play. With initiatives like DRI Cares and various task forces, we should encourage our members to contribute positively to society.

DRI is poised to transition into the next century as the premiere national defense organization which provides a comprehensive platform for lawyers, young leaders, and corporations enabling them to enhance their practice, skills, knowledge, relationships, and friendships in ways that no other organization can. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my Declaration of Candidacy. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves to serve and work with leadership and members to build a stronger, more profitable, and future ready (and WISER) DRI organization.