



Formstack Submission For: 2026 DRI Declaration of Candidacy

Position Sought: Second Vice President

If you have declared your candidacy for Second Vice President and are not the successful candidate, will you consider the Secretary - Treasurer Officer position?: No

Name: Michael D. Carter

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How long, in years, have you been a member of DRI?:

38

Areas of Practice:

Asbestos, talc, and silica litigation; products liability; environmental; workers' compensation; employment.

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

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

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

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

Lytle Soule & Curlee, Partner, 1990-1997;

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

Foliant, 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 Secretary-Treasurer, 2025-2026;

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, 2025-2026;

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 Service Award, 2024;

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

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

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

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

DRI Talc Seminar Marketing
Committee, 2023;

DRI Leadership Conference Participant
2014-2025;

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-present;

State of Oklahoma Advisory Council on Workers' Compensation, Chair, 2011-2026;

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, Master, 2009-present; 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?:

A. Why do you wish to become an officer?

I believe in DRI's mission: "Defend Business, Develop Defense Lawyers, Improve Civil Justice." I believe membership in DRI makes you a better lawyer and a better person. I want to spread that belief that DRI strengthens the defense bar and helps its members become better lawyers. As Secretary-Treasurer, I have seen that serving as a DRI officer is the best way to advance that mission and broaden DRI's influence among defense lawyers, whether or not they are current members. I want to continue serving as an officer and ultimately help lead this great organization as President.

B. What skills, abilities, and attributes identified in the Officer Competencies can you bring to the role?

The skills, abilities, and attributes I would bring to the Executive Committee align closely with DRI's Officer Competencies. I have served DRI as an officer, Board member, Individual Member, and fiduciary. I understand and support DRI's strategic leadership model and have remained deeply engaged in DRI for many years. I also understand that the Executive Committee must be accountable to the membership and that its highest responsibility, together with the Board, is to protect and strengthen DRI's long-term health. My experience in the remaining competency areas follows.

Marketing/Branding:

DRI has been known by several names and brands. Defense Research Institute. The Voice of the Defense Bar. DRI. Lawyers Representing Business. Association of Lawyers Defending Business. Through leadership in DRI

and other bar associations, including OADC and the American Inns of Court, I have learned the value of a clear public-facing brand. Unfortunately, the DRI brand is seemingly not as well understood by others as it should be. Casual viewing of a defense attorney's law firm bio will as likely show her to be a member of the "Defense Research Institute" as "Association of Lawyers Defending Business". DRI communicates very effectively through social media and publications, but it can do more to present one strong, consistent identity. I want to help DRI build on its communications strengths to advance its mission and reinforce its brand as the Association of Lawyers Defending Business. Every defense lawyer should not only recognize the DRI logo but understand what it represents.

Management/Governance:

I have represented large, complex organizations for many years and advised them through change and transition. In addition to my leadership in legal organizations, I served for many years as a board member and president of the University of Oklahoma's ATO fraternity chapter housing corporation, which gave me experience in all aspects of nonprofit governance. I have also been honored to serve on many Oklahoma state boards and commissions, including 15 years chairing and conducting official meetings for one such body.

DRI Leadership:

I have served DRI as Secretary-Treasurer, Southwest Region Director, Chair of the Membership Committee, and in leadership roles on the Steering Committees of the Asbestos Litigation

Committee and Workers'

Compensation Committee. I have also served as DRI State Representative for Oklahoma and State Membership Chair for Oklahoma.

- As Secretary-Treasurer, I oversee DRI's financial affairs, including budgeting and financial reporting, and prepare and report minutes for Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings. As Secretary, I made the Executive Committee minutes more accurate, detailed, and descriptive, and I compiled action items after each meeting for President Jeff Lowe. As Treasurer, I established bi-weekly meetings with COO Sean Dolan to review DRI's financial status and track revenues and expenses. During this year, while the EC and staff have been engaged in an ongoing process to create a more robust financial reporting system, I have in the meantime created templates that present our current financial reports in a more easily understandable format for the Executive Committee and Board. This new system of reporting was presented to the Executive Committee in June and to the Board at the Virtual Spring Board Meeting. I look forward to leading the 2027 budgeting process and DRI's annual audit.

- As Southwest Region Director, I helped plan and execute three Southwest Region Joint Region meetings, including preparation of programming and attendee activities. I led monthly Southwest Region meetings by Zoom and, on DRI's behalf, attended at least one meeting each year of each SLDO in the Southwest Region: 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.

- As DRI Membership Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, I led efforts to develop new membership strategies, including the Seminar Membership Program and the Membership Committee SLC liaison program, which produced action plans for several SLCs to meet membership goals. I also launched a monthly "Membership Minute" to keep the Board and Executive Committee informed of the Committee's requests, strategies, and accomplishments. In addition, I requested reinstatement of the Membership Committee fly-in meeting to build momentum and enthusiasm for 2024 membership campaigns. This meeting was held in conjunction with the 2024 Winter Board Meeting, and was highly successful, getting the Committee off to a great start and reinforcing accountability among committee members.

- Additional DRI Leadership: 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, and fly-ins, and served as a conduit between the Committee and the Board. Because my earlier DRI experience was primarily as an SLDO leader and State Representative, becoming involved in the

Governmental Liability Committee's organization and seminar planning process gave me valuable insight into how DRI's first-in-class seminars are developed and why they often serve as a gateway to DRI membership.

Although not an "official" DRI leadership position, I am proud to have contributed to Annual Meetings since 2021 (thanks to Douglas Burrell) as organizer and band leader of The Defense Never Rests, DRI's show band made up almost entirely of DRI members. Preparing that performance is a labor of love and a highlight for everyone involved.

Finally, I have a long record of leadership in DRI's Oklahoma SLDO, the Oklahoma Association of Defense Counsel. I served two terms on its Board, served as an officer and President, and later returned to the Board as DRI State Membership Chair and State Representative. A significant accomplishment in those leadership roles was my advocacy for making the chair of the OADC Legislative Committee an officer and director of OADC. This was necessary to establish credibility for that role when appearing before legislators or the governor at the Oklahoma State Capitol. I then served as the first OADC Legislative Director. Two significant accomplishments during my presidency of OADC were establishing a free 3-hour ethics seminar on "civility" in partnership with the Oklahoma Association for Justice, and a campaign offering free OADC membership to Oklahoma DRI members. Both efforts met with remarkable success. My service in OADC leadership roles also enabled

me to attend DRI Leadership Meetings and Regional Meetings beginning in 2014.

Leadership: Service in organizations has always been important to me. I served as President of the Luther Bohanon American Inns of Court XXIII, one of the original American Inns of Court. An Inn President is responsible for recruitment of new Associates, Barristers, and Masters to the Inn, developing monthly pupillage topics and schedules, and ensuring meaningful participation by all Inn members, including law students, through their respective Pupillage groups. I also served for many years on the Board and as president of my college fraternity's housing corporation. In that role, I was responsible for leading the design, planning, fundraising, financing, and construction of a \$6 million fraternity house for ATO at the University of Oklahoma. Finally, I was appointed to and chaired the State of Oklahoma Advisory Council on Workers' Compensation, leading meetings of that body for 15 years. My involvement in government leadership roles continued through my appointments by governors of both parties, beginning in 1995, to lead several task forces through the years that drafted proposed workers' compensation reform legislation.

Public Speaking/Spokesperson: One of my favorite duties as Regional Director was representing DRI at meetings of the five Southwest Region SLDOs. It was an honor to present outgoing SLDO presidents with DRI recognition for their achievements, but the most important duty was using the allotted

time to promote DRI, especially membership. To support that effort, I developed a speaking outline for all Regional Directors titled "Regional Director 5 Minute Pitch to SLDOs: 5 Things About DRI in 5 Minutes." The outline distills information about DRI membership, seminars, Legal Point, The Center, and NFJE into concise points that can be delivered in as little as five minutes. An unexpected benefit of having so little time to promote DRI was discovering that many attendees would follow up with additional questions during breaks or receptions.

Leads and Participates in Meetings:
One of my strengths is leading meetings, whether by Zoom or in person. In Southwest Region and Membership Committee meetings, my goal was to foster collaboration and create an efficient setting for discussing issues and solutions. For Zoom meetings in particular, I encouraged attendance and participation by making the meetings worthwhile and following up with those who did not attend to encourage them to prioritize that one hour each month. I also enjoyed leading discussions at Joint Region Meetings and encouraging all attendees to participate in our discussions.

Soft Skills: A key lesson from my leadership experience is that frank, effective communication builds trust. Combined with purpose and accountability, trust enables a team to address any challenge. I have consistently brought those qualities to my work and would welcome the opportunity to continue doing so as a DRI officer.

Strategic Skills: My service in DRI and other organizations demonstrates the strategic skills needed to help lead DRI forward. I believe DRI must anticipate issues facing the defense practice and the legal profession as a whole and use its excellent resources, including The Center, to craft creative solutions. We can and should leverage DRI's network to build stronger partnerships with our SLDO/NDOs and Sister organizations and develop long-term strategies to address these issues.

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

To advance DRI's mission and fulfill its leadership's highest responsibility—protecting the organization's long-term health—DRI must prioritize financial stability. That means improving budgeting and increasing operational efficiency while also enhancing the member experience. Revenue growth through membership expansion and new strategies can support those goals in three ways:

1. Grow membership to 15,000 within three years.

Membership offers DRI one of its strongest financial returns. Dues generate about 30% of total revenue, and DRI data shows that roughly 30% of members attend seminars, a percentage that remains consistent even as membership rises or falls. In other words, more members means increased seminar attendance as well. DRI already conducts several membership campaigns each year, and as a former Membership Chair I know the tremendous effort they require from the Staff and the Membership Committee. But in recent years, those campaigns have largely helped DRI maintain its numbers by replacing departing members with newly

recruited ones. Real growth requires a sustained, member-led strategy. I would establish a Membership Institute in which DRI members serve three-year terms on that body, similar to the Law Institute. This Membership body would create leadership continuity and the opportunity for member-led long-term planning beyond the normal Membership Committee cycle.

2. Restore seminar attendance to pre-pandemic levels.

Membership growth will increase seminar attendance, but even with 15,000 members, DRI must do more to return its best-in-class seminars to pre-pandemic attendance levels. Seminars account for about 60% of DRI's revenue, making this goal essential to long-term financial stability. Today's world has increasing competition for CLE and seminar dollars, and firms are gradually becoming less willing to support in-person seminar attendance. DRI must respond with innovation and offer the strongest value proposition in the field through excellent content, meaningful networking, and thoughtful site and hotel selection. New ideas for provision of in-person and on-line content are needed. The Law Institute, Staff, and Executive Committee are already making progress in these areas, and those efforts must be continued and expanded.

3. Grow through stronger integration among DRI, SLDOs, and Sister organizations.

All of these organizations serve defense lawyers. Although each SLDO and Sister organization has its own identity, DRI is the only national civil defense association open to all defense

lawyers. That position gives DRI a unique opportunity to lead greater cooperation among defense organizations for their shared benefit. DRI should study and develop a "Membership Advantage" model that makes dual membership in DRI and an SLDO or Sister organization attractive and mutually beneficial. Stronger integration with our fellow defense organizations can increase membership in DRI and the SLDOs while also creating financial benefits for Sister organizations.

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

In 1988, while I was an associate at an Oklahoma City insurance defense firm with few clients of my own, I received the assignment that changed my career: defending Georgia Talc Company in a mass asbestos filing in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma. No partner wanted the case because of prior negative experiences with asbestos litigation. The 375 cases, which arose from the closing of a Goodrich tire plant in Miami, Oklahoma, became part of the National Tire Workers Litigation. Over the next six years, we became national coordinating counsel for Georgia Talc and handled thousands of cases across the country. That assignment changed my career path, and I remain an asbestos defense lawyer today.

The representation was transformational because it taught me the importance of developing my own clients and understanding that a successful law practice requires more than waiting for assignments from others. After we became national coordinating counsel for Georgia Talc, another firm recruited my colleague

and me as partners. That lesson has stayed with me, and it also has an important DRI connection.

The assignment led my colleague and me to the 1989 DRI Asbestos Medicine Seminar because we needed to learn asbestos litigation quickly. There, we connected with lawyers involved in the National Tire Workers Litigation and learned from Al Parnell and leading defense experts about asbestos litigation, plaintiffs' tactics, and defense strategies. Those seminars helped us build a national defense network that strengthened our representation of Georgia Talc and created lasting professional relationships I still value. Each year, I look forward to returning to the Asbestos Medicine Seminar to renew old acquaintances, make new contacts, and share referrals over dinner and drinks. That seminar was my first meaningful exposure to the value of DRI membership. From then on, I realized that DRI was the very best path for developing a client base and professional network.

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

DRI's greatest challenge is increasing membership so more defense lawyers can benefit from all the organization offers. As noted above, DRI can address that challenge by growing membership to 15,000 within three years, restoring seminar attendance to pre-pandemic levels, and strengthening integration with SLDOs and Sister organizations.

Another major challenge is helping members adapt to the rapid changes AI is bringing to the legal profession. DRI can and should lead the field in helping defense lawyers understand

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?:

and respond to these new realities.

DRI must also remain nimble amid political turmoil and growing distrust of institutions. The judicial system is under increasing scrutiny, and some question the value of organizations like DRI. Through its example, DRI can help restore public trust in our institutions.

A continuing challenge is broadening the pool from which its members come. DRI and other legal organizations must reevaluate current efforts and pursue innovative ways to build a broader and more diverse membership. This is also DRI's greatest opportunity.

Recent national developments have led some institutions to reconsider their commitment to diverse and inclusive environments. DRI should not be one of them. DRI's Diversity Committee has repeatedly shown that it is the preeminent laboratory for developing DRI's future leaders. This year's 20th anniversary celebration in Louisville demonstrated the Committee's continued success and reminded us that DRI must continue to support the committee and its goals, because they are the same as DRI's goals. Personally, I have served in DRI leadership with many current and former Diversity Committee leaders and understand how much their contributions have strengthened DRI, from the Board through the Executive Committee and presidency. I recognize that I do not have personal experience in this area, but experience has taught me to listen closely to those who do. DRI will be stronger through continued commitment and focus in this area.

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

I have been a DRI member for 38 years, and that membership has enriched my professional and personal life beyond measure. I believe deeply in DRI's mission and am eager to help grow the organization and share its resources and strengths with colleagues throughout the civil defense community.

Thank you for the opportunity to help DRI achieve excellence.

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