

Hope

By Matthew P. Keris, DRI Atlantic Region Director

As I sit here in December 2020, I realize this is the most bittersweet period during the COVID-19 Pandemic. With vaccinations ready to start, I see a tangible return to normalcy. However, as we wait for the vaccine distribution, we have to endure a long, dark winter with spiking infection rates and overwhelmed hospitals. I feel both optimism and dread at the same time, knowing that this pandemic will end soon, but with great cost.

Hope is what will get me through these last, harsh months of the pandemic. It is what helped us through the September 11, 2001, attacks, the wars that followed, and economic recession. For me, it also provides inspiration and introspection to our current situation.

What I hope we learn from the pandemic is that life is short, and it is important to enjoy the small things. More time with family. No work commute. Learning to be productive while working from home. These are some of the silver linings of the pandemic. When the world returns to what it was, we should not quickly forget how important this is. Carry over the good parts from the pandemic, if there were any for you.

What I hope for in the future is the return of meaningful personal interactions. I had the good fortune of participating in a week-long, jury trial during the pandemic. I say this because it gave me a taste of what I had been sorely missing. I cannot tell you how wonderful it was to wear courtroom attire and interact with live witnesses after months of isolation at home, attending Zoom depositions in sweatpants, and preparing overdue claims evaluations. It felt great being exhausted at 11 p.m. while preparing for the next day, uncertain how the case would turn. I could not believe I missed feeling the pit in my stomach as the jury deliberated. When you have your first trial after the pandemic, I hope you feel as great as I did. I never thought the stress of a trial would make me feel so alive.

It has been difficult to not see my DRI friends and colleagues over the last several months. If it were not for

DRI, I would not have had an opportunity to meet so many smart, funny, and compassionate legal professionals from across the country. With COVID-19 forcing several meeting postponements, I lost opportunities to make new acquaintances and reconnect with others.

It denied me the opportunity to say goodbye personally to members of the DRI board whose terms expired during this time period—no handshakes, hugs, or personal farewells. There is a good chance that I will never see many of them again in person, which saddens me. I regret not being able to tell them in person how great it was to get to know and work with them.

The COVID-19 pandemic should remind us that life is unpredictable. When the world returns to what it

was, leave no regrets. Whether it is a trip you want to take, an experience you want to try, or a purchase you have been delaying, know that there are few “do-overs” in life. It has also showed me that the strength of DRI is its members and the relationships made. One of the finest benefits of being an active member of DRI is the personal connections that you make by simply participating. When we return to normal, do not wait to become involved. DRI membership affords so much more than website access, legal updates, and a magazine subscription. It offers you the opportunity to meet some of the best people you will ever know. After this is over, I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting, participate in a DRI for Life event, and work on a service project. At a minimum, let’s have a cocktail. It will be my treat.



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