

American Association for Justice

An update on lobbying, conventions, education and political fundraising.

By Ingrid M. Evans

The American Association for Justice (AAJ), formerly known as the Association of Trial Lawyers of America (ATLA®), is steadfastly fighting to ensure that medical malpractice reform does not creep into the comprehensive health care legislation being voted upon by Congress this term.

Also on its legislative agenda for the upcoming year are the Medical Device Safety Act (which would overrule *Riegel v. Medtronic*), several bills that would disallow forced arbitration in certain types of contracts such as employment and many consumer agreements, legislation to restore notice pleading in federal court, and provisions to amend the tax code to allow expenses to be deducted in the year they are accrued instead of when the case is settled or decided.

One of the most important areas that AAJ has made significant strides in is the area of preemption – combating the detrimental effect that preemption has on our civil justice system. In order to continue to fight preemption and tort reform nationwide, it's imperative that we support AAJ through our membership. AAJ is the sole entity fighting federal tort reform legislation and AAJ allows our clients to continue to have their day in court and constitutional right to a jury. AAJ cannot continue these efforts without our financial support and active participation from potential members. Your membership in AAJ pays for us to have some of the best federal lobbyists representing our interests on Capitol Hill. To learn more about becoming an AAJ member, please visit www.justice.org.

Winter convention, class-action group

The upcoming 2010 Winter Convention will be in Maui from January 30 to February 3, and the Annual Convention will be July 10 to 14 in Vancouver, Canada. Each of these conventions will have fantastic education and social networking events, both of which are a critical part of the conventions and a great way to increase your business with referrals from fellow trial lawyers outside California. To register now for the AAJ Annual Convention, visit http://www.justiceannualconvention.org/.

For those practicing in the area of class actions, AAJ has one of the most active Class Action Litigation Groups around – with an active listserv, substantive newsletter, legal reporter with monthly updates on the substantive law in each of the circuits, an objector database, a document repository and exceptional educational programs (soon to be partnered with Consumer Attorneys of California - CAOC). To join this litigation group, you must join AAJ at www.justice.org. If you are a new member to AAJ and if you join both CAOC and AAJ, we will permit you to join AAJ's Class Action Litigation Group for free from now through February 2010. E-mail BSantos@waterskraus.com to take advantage of this limited offer.

Political fundraising

On October 30 AAJ hosted a fundraiser and raised over $700,000 to support three Democratic senators who support our positions: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (Nevada), Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (Rhode Island) and Congressman Bruce Braley (Iowa). At this event we also learned that Roxanne Conlin, the first female president for ATLA, will be running an extremely tough senate race against Republican Chuck Grassley (Iowa) in 2010. We look forward to congratulating future Senator Conlin in 2010.


Evans

Ingrid M. Evans is Of Counsel at Waters Kraus & Paul in their San Francisco office. Ms. Evans is on the Executive Committee for CAOC, and on the Board of Governors and Co-Chair of the Class Action Litigation Group for AAJ.

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