



55th Annual Meeting – Trial Attorneys of America

Sable at Navy Pier
Chicago, Illinois
June 10-12, 2026

Conference Agenda

WEDNESDAY – JUNE 10, 2026

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. **Welcome Reception** – Lirica Private Dining Room
Join us for a networking reception at the Sable Hotel – all are welcome!
Cocktails provided.

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. **Flight Club – Social Darts, Drinks, and Danger!**
(Advance registration required)
Drinks and light snacks provided, food available.

Special Thanks to our Event Sponsor: [Legal Concierge, Inc. \(LCI\)](#)



9:00 p.m. **Navy Pier Summer Fireworks Show** (*on your own*)
Gather your friends, grab (another) drink, and watch the show!

THURSDAY – JUNE 11, 2026

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m. **Continental Buffet Breakfast** – Huron, Ontario, Erie Ballrooms

8:20 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
John T. Wagener, Executive Director, Dressler & Peters (Chicago, IL)
Melissa Dorman Matthews, President, Steptoe & Johnson (Dallas, TX)
Stephen G.A. Myers, Vice President / Program Chair, Irwin Fritchie (New Orleans, LA)

THURSDAY – JUNE 11, 2026 – CONTINUED

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

AI & The Justice System: Shaping Tomorrow's Legal Landscape

Speaker: **Hon. Schott U. Schlegel**, Louisiana Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals (New Orleans, LA)

Discussion: Artificial intelligence is no longer a future issue for the legal profession—it is already changing how lawyers practice, how courts operate, and how litigants experience the justice system. This presentation will offer a broad overview of AI's growing role in the law, as well as the ethical and professional responsibility issues it raises. The program will also examine the threat posed by deepfakes, including the challenges they create for evidence, authenticity, credibility, and trust in the legal process.

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

AI in the Practice of Law: Client Expectations, Practical Adoption, and a Live Demonstration

Moderator: **Jay Mattappally**, Irwin Fritchie (New Orleans, LA)

Speakers: **Brett D. Carroll**, VP, Global Litigation, Risk+Real Estate, Smith & Nephew (Andover, MA)

Nathan Walter, Co-Founder and CEO, Briefpoint (Santa Rosa, CA)

Christopher M. Jacobs, Houston Harbaugh (Pittsburgh, PA)

Discussion: Clients increasingly expect their outside counsel to understand and responsibly use these tools to deliver greater efficiency, insight, and value. This panel will examine how AI is being adopted in real-world litigation practice from multiple perspectives: what in-house counsel expect from their law firms, how litigators are integrating AI into their day-to-day workflows, and what practical AI tools can actually do in a live demonstration setting.

10:30 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.

Networking Break

10:40 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.

Short Circuits

1st Circuit: **Bryan Connor**, Nutter (Boston, MA)

2nd Circuit: **TBD – Stay Tuned!**

3rd Circuit: **TBD – Stay Tuned!**

4th Circuit: **Alexandra H. Austin**, Maynard Nexsen (Charleston, SC)

11:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Trial Lawyers and the Modern Client: Cost, Communication, Collaboration, and Confidence

Moderator: **Michael C. Zogby**, Barnes & Thornburg (Morristown, NJ)

Speakers: **Kelly Kosek**, Asst. Gen. Counsel, Lubrizol Corporation (Wickliffe, OH)

Kirstin Abel, Senior Corporate Counsel – Litigation, Daimler Truck North America (Portland, OR)

Discussion: This in-house counsel panel will connect the morning's AI programming to the broader forces reshaping client expectations for trial lawyers. Panelists will discuss modern litigation management, including AI, RFPs, alternative fee arrangements, budgets, experts, company witnesses, eDiscovery, and reporting, with practical guidance on what clients value, what frustrates them, and how outside counsel can become a trusted strategic partner. The discussion will offer concrete insights into how trial lawyers can better align case strategy with business objectives, risk tolerance, budget expectations, and internal reporting needs. Panelists will also address client expectations around technology, outside counsel selection, alternative fees, communication, early case assessment, witness preparation, and avoiding surprises.

THURSDAY – JUNE 11, 2026 – CONTINUED

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch – On Your Own

(TAA Board will meet for lunch in a separate location)

1:30 p.m. – 1:35 p.m.

Introduction of Louis Lehr, Saul Ewing, Chicago, IL

1:35 p.m. – 2:10 p.m.

Short Circuits

5th Circuit: **Kevin Brown**, Thompson Coe (Dallas, TX)

6th Circuit: **Lindsey Nelson**, Kirkland & Ellis (Nashville, TN)

7th Circuit: **Sarah J. Kinter**, Goldman Ismail (Chicago, IL)

8th Circuit: **Elizabeth Sorenson Brotten**, Foley Mansfield (Minneapolis, MN)

2:10 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.

Life in a Virtual Law Firm

Moderator: **Katelyn Ashton**, Kirkland & Ellis (Nashville, NT)

Speakers: **Elizabeth Curtin**, Goldman Ismail (Chicago, IL)

Robert H. Akers, Thomas Combs (Charleston, WV)

Discussion: The defense of mass tort litigation is increasingly being handled by “virtual law firms” (VLFs)—multi-firm teams assembled to handle complex litigation across jurisdictions, workstreams, and trial settings. This panel will explore how clients and coordinating counsel build high-performing VLFs, what makes these teams succeed or fail (spectacularly), and how lawyers can grow from task-level roles into leadership positions.

3:10 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Networking Break

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Mock Trial, Real Strategy: Making Jury Exercises Count

Speakers: **Claire C. Weglarz**, Womble Bond Dickinson (Los Angeles, CA)

Faye Honig, Director of Jury Research, DRC Litigation Strategies (New York, NY)

James Haase, CEO, Immersion Legal (New York, NY)

Michele Bogosh, Sr. Counsel, Litigation and eDiscovery, Archer Daniels Midland (Chicago, IL)

Discussion: An effective jury exercise is more than a rehearsal—it is a pressure test of themes, witnesses, graphics, strategy, and trial team coordination. This panel will explore how trial counsel, jury consultants, graphics experts, and clients can work together to design, prepare for, and execute a mock jury exercise that produces meaningful insight rather than noise. Panelists will discuss what each team member should contribute, how in-house counsel evaluates the process, and how the lessons learned can shape trial strategy, settlement posture, and the final presentation to the jury.

DRAWING FOR DOOR PRIZE 1 – COMPLETE YOUR NOMINATION CARDS! – MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN

THURSDAY – JUNE 11, 2026 – CONTINUED

6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Gala Reception: Dinner & More (Cocktail Attire) – *Advance registration required*
Musical Entertainment by [Cary Kanno](#). Huron, Ontario, Erie Ballrooms

Special Thanks to our Event Sponsor: [DRC Litigation Strategies](#)

The logo for DRC (Diversity Resource Council) features the letters 'DRC' in a large, bold, dark grey sans-serif font. A small yellow square is positioned to the left of the 'D'. The logo is centered within a white rectangular box that has a thin grey border.

DRAWING FOR DOOR PRIZE 2 – COMPLETE YOUR NOMINATION CARDS! – MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN

FRIDAY – JUNE 12, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Continental Buffet Breakfast – Huron, Ontario, Erie Ballrooms

9:00 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.

Day Two Welcome

Stephen G.A. Myers, Vice President / Program Chair, Irwin Fritchie (New Orleans, LA)

DRAWING FOR DOOR PRIZE 3 – COMPLETE YOUR NOMINATION CARDS! – MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN

9:10 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Red Flags and Fire Drills: An In-House Counsel Roundtable

Moderator: **Melissa Dorman Matthews**, Member, Steptoe & Johnson (Dallas, TX)

Speakers: **Don Parshall, Jr.**, Senior Counsel, Nissan Group of North America
(Farmington, MI)

Ellen Wisniewski, Deputy General Counsel, Cordis (Toledo, OH)

Dana Davenport, Managing Counsel, Commercial Transactions & Operations,
OSI Group, LLC (Chicago, IL)

Discussion: In-house counsel are expected to spot risk early, manage crises efficiently, and keep the business moving while litigation, regulation, technology, and budget pressures continue to evolve. This panel will touch on all these issues, and provide practical insight into how outside counsel can become part of the solution (and avoid being part of the problem).

10:15 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.

Short Circuits

9th Circuit: **TBD – Stay Tuned!**

10th Circuit: **John T. Wagener**, Dressler & Peters (Chicago, IL)

11th Circuit: **Bo Bledsoe**, Maynard Nexsen (Birmingham, AL)

10:40 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.

Networking Break

FRIDAY – JUNE 12, 2026 – CONTINUED

10:55 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.

Genomic Causation Analysis in Mass Tort Cases: Past, Current, and Future Developments

Speaker: Kirk T. Hartley, LSP Group LLC (Chicago, IL)

Discussion: Genetic causation evidence in litigation is becoming increasingly common in mass tort cancer cases, including benzene, ethylene oxide, asbestos, drugs, fungicides, and pesticides. The presentation will provide specifics on genetic evidence and tactics used (and in some very recent trials and ongoing MDLs), address the extensive advances in genetic science over the past 5 years, forecast the tidal wave of advances that will arrive in the next 5-10 years, and explain that clients need lawyers who have invested time and money to understand genetics at a meaningful level and know how to leverage the evidence in litigation on their behalf.

DRAWING FOR DOOR PRIZE 4 – COMPLETE YOUR NOMINATION CARDS! – MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN

Safe travels home! See you all next year in June!