

# President's Message

*Nobody knows how things will turn out, that's why they go ahead and play the game...  
You give it your all and sometimes amazing things happen, but it's hardly what you expect.*

My term as President of the TLA is concluding and this is my last President's Message. When I was elected to the officers' ladder in 2016, there was no way any of us could have imagined what was in store for 2020-21. While the problems presented to the TLA pale in comparison with what we see daily in the news, three consecutive conferences had to be cancelled or transitioned to virtual events (more on the annual conference is below). This has affected everything from our ability to see one another to TLA's membership numbers, revenue and budget.

How the TLA has met the challenges of this year has reinforced my belief that it is the best bar association around, and it has been my great honor to serve as the TLA's President. The TLA is an amazing organization because it is made up of amazing people, many of whom stepped up during this challenging time. Many thanks are in order, starting with my fellow officers. President Elect **Steve Canty** has done a fantastic job working with and encouraging TLA's various committees to be more active and engaged. Steve and I have had the opportunity to speak at least every other week and I truly appreciate his assistance during this past year. I am confident that his term as President will be a resounding success. First Vice President, **Chris Kelly** served as the Editor of *TTL* and he put together five outstanding and informative editions of the *TTL*. Second Vice President **Eric Benton** did a great job keeping the TLA website up to date with news affecting the transportation industry. Secretary/Treasurer, **Kathy Garber** had the thankless task of preparing financial reports and taking Executive Committee meeting minutes. Kathy's reports and minutes were always timely and accurate, which was particularly impressive given that the Executive Committee meetings to date have been conducted remotely. Immediate Past President **Jeff Simmons** was always there to offer needed insight. In addition, Jeff volunteered to take the lead in finalizing the TLA's diversity statement which was approved at the November Executive Committee meeting.

I also want to thank the five Voting Past Presidents, **Kathleen Jeffries, Greg Summy, Sam Hallman, Frank Botta** and **Marc Blubaugh** for their sage advice and counsel. I could always count on Kathy, Greg, Sam, Frank and Marc when I sought assistance during this crazy year. The same goes for the Past Presidents **Pat McMonigle** and **Ken Hoffman**. When I needed to bounce ideas off someone, it has been great to have two Voting Past Presidents just on the other end of the office.

I am grateful to Representatives-at-Large **Ian Culver, Coby Page, Melissa Richardson, Hans Huggler, Stephanie Penninger, Roger Watts, Paul Mello** and **Tom Reardon**, as well as CTLA Representative-at-Large **Israel Ludwig** for their leadership and support.

Special thanks goes to **Fritz Damm, Patrick Foppe** and the rest of the Membership Committee. The committee members always work hard and spend substantial time recruiting new members and retaining current ones. This became a monumental task this year with the pandemic and accompanying economic downturn. With law firms and businesses tightening their belts, there was some fear that the TLA, like other voluntary associations, would suffer very significant membership losses. TLA's membership is now nearly eight hundred. Although Fritz and Patrick likely wouldn't admit it, this is excellent given the circumstances.



John Wilcox

Thank you to all of the other committee chairs for their contributions. A couple of committees deserve additional recognition for going above and beyond in adding value to the membership. First, the Webinar Committee, led by **Stephen Dennis**, put on several outstanding and well attended webinars. Given that we have not been able to meet in person, the Webinar Committee has done a great job in keeping people active and engaged. The same goes for the Freight Claims Committee, co-chaired by **Fred Marcinak, Beata Shapiro** and **Jason Orleans**. The Freight Claims Committee is now meeting monthly via Zoom. These meetings include substantive presentations that have been excellent.

It would be impossible to practice law and serve as TLA President without the assistance of Kellen Company, TLA's management partner. TLA's Executive Director **Jill Gabbert**, Meeting Manager **Rebecca Pierucci** and Senior Account Coordinator **Colin Hamman** have done a great job making sure our virtual conferences and meetings have gone smoothly, negotiating with hotels when we were not able to attend in-person events and generally keeping me focused on the task at hand.

I again want to take the opportunity to thank **Charlie Riley** and **Clark Monroe** for co-chairing the Transportation Law Institute and **Bill Pentecost, John Lane, Jason Orleans** and **Tom Martin** for putting on the Chicago Regional and Bootcamp. Under the best of circumstances, it can be challenging to organize the educational portion of any conference. Despite having to move to remote events, Charlie, Clark, Bill, John, Jason and Tom put together excellent and interesting programs. I'm pleased that 104 people

registered to attend the TLI and 192 registered for the Chicago Regional and Bootcamp.

As of the time of this writing, difficult decisions are being made regarding the TLA Annual Conference and CTLA Midyear Meeting currently scheduled for May 19-22 at the Resort at Squaw Creek in Olympic Valley, California. Three options are currently under consideration. The first is to move forward with yet another Zoom event. The second is to keep the current dates and hold a hybrid event, where both the speakers and attendees can participate remotely or in-person at the resort. The final option is to hold a hybrid event with the dates moved to June 23-26, 2021. I know that none of these options are perfect. I understand that as things currently stand, many people cannot travel. I strongly believe that the TLA should have an in-person conference, but only if it safe to do so.

<sup>1</sup> Choldenko, Gennifer, *Al Capone Does my Shirts* (2004).

Regardless of what form the Annual Conference takes, Co-Chairs **Bridgette Blich** and **Jeff Pincus**, along with Program Committee members **Melissa Richardson**, **Peggy Bush**, **Matt Barrette**, **Stephanie Penninger**, **Marshall Pitchford** and **Gordon Hearn** have planned a exceptional Olympic themed event which will keep us informed in all aspects of the rapidly changing transportation industry. I very much appreciate their efforts, especially given the uncertainty surrounding the Annual Conference.

Finally, I would like to thank the TLA membership for its enthusiasm, support and patience throughout this past year. Whether it is in Olympic Valley or some later conference, I cannot wait to see everyone in person. In the meantime, I hope that you all stay safe and well.



### TLA Mission Statement

The Transportation Lawyers Association ("TLA") is an independent bar association, comprised of in-house, government and private practice attorneys. Its members assist providers and commercial users of domestic and international logistics and transportation services, in all modes. TLA is dedicated to keeping its members ahead of the constant changes in the specialized legal environment governing all aspects of the supply chain and passenger travel. With commitment to excellence in continuing legal education, and a long tradition of collegiality and exchange of ideas, TLA is a collaborative resource for lawyers seeking to maximize the quality of the legal services they provide and enhance their professional lives.