

A MESSAGE FROM THE INCOMING PRESIDENT

Stephanie Z. Roberge



Greetings to all! It is an honor to be the new President of CTLA.

First and foremost, I want to congratulate Paul Slager. With just 3 months remaining of an already successful term, Paul was faced with the state of emergency. Somehow

Paul was prepared. He immediately appreciated the impact this crisis would have on our membership. Through his leadership our concerns have been and continue to be conveyed to our friends in the legislature and the Governor's Office. He set up an information line on our website to keep the membership informed about available resources. He understood that our food banks would be depleted, so he spearheaded our Help for the Hungry campaign which has already raised over \$54,000 for the State's Food Banks. In collaboration with the CLE committee, 11 continuing education programs were offered to our membership, free of charge. I know that he has worked tirelessly to protect our interests and has continued to do so right up to the very last day of his Presidency. THANK YOU, PAUL!

Six years ago, when I became an officer, 2020 was years away. Taking your place as an officer is designed to prepare you for the inevitable day that you become president, undoubtedly an incredible honor and an even greater responsibility. As June 1, 2020 approached, I thought about what I might say at the annual meeting when I took my place as President. I thought about how there were just 3 women presidents who preceded me, Kathleen Natri, Kathryn Emmett and Rosemarie Paine and remarkably 3 women currently serving as officers, myself, Marisa Bellair and Alinor Sterling. How our Executive Director, Joan Maloney has grown into a true leader. How Katie Marino, our Director of CLE has helped to develop the CLE program into one of the best in the country. How so many of our women members serve as committee chairs and faculty at CLE events. How as a result of its co-editors, Carey Reilly and Kelly Reardon, FORUM has become a premier legal publication. How women have become leaders in CTLA and how we as an organization should be proud of that.

I also thought about the women in my life; my grandmother, orphaned at 8 years old and a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, and my mom who immigrated to the US from Aleppo, Syria when she was just 3 years old. How my life is so different because of them but also because of what we do. Through the pursuit of justice, trial lawyers challenge economic, racial and social barriers and in the process advance the rights of all. Ours is an important responsibility and I was looking forward to having my family at the annual meeting so that they could appreciate the importance of CTLA and why we dedicate so much time and energy to it.

But, due to our current state of affairs, my presidency begins virtually. What I thought I might say in person, I provide in print. The importance of CTLA remains steadfast and clear. What I have learned as a member and officer of CTLA is that the strength of the organization is in our collaborative approach to our mission, "trial lawyers protecting individual rights through fair laws and access to justice". We have the benefit and guidance of past-presidents, the insight of founding and longstanding members, as well as the energy and perspective of our younger membership. Albeit through new platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, through masks and social distancing, CTLA is prepared to continue to advance our legislative agenda, provide quality continuing legal education, offer guidance to our membership and to collaborate.

Now more than ever we welcome the participation of all of our members. I look forward to the year ahead and I am optimistic that next June, we will gather at the Annual Meeting to welcome Andy, enjoying the cocktail hour on a beautiful day in Westbrook having weathered this crisis together.

Thank you and stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Z. Roberge'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stephanie Z. Roberge