

Honor, Integrity, Civility and Decency Defines Our Country, or Does It?

By Geoffrey Wells, CAOC President



We are a body that represents consumers who have been wronged by the negligence of others. We do this with honor, integrity, civility and decency. I feel like our country is failing to stand up to these – the principals of honor, civility and decency. As I watched the news of ICE agents tackling and striking a landscaper in the face while he was on the ground only to find out that he has 3 sons who are serving our country in the armed services. Then we hear he has a path to citizenship because of his sons' service. When I watch reports of ICE agents chasing farm workers in the strawberry fields of Oxnard and Ventura, I don't feel like we are living up to our creed of honor and decency in this country.

When I watch on TV a local law enforcement officer aim his weapon at a reporter who was on the air and she is shot with rubber bullets while doing her job, I don't feel like we are living up to our creed as

Americans. This behavior is on all of us! I don't feel like we as Americans are operating under the rule of law anymore.

What can we do about this seemingly unlawful violation of basic human rights in our cities and towns? Some of our members can help with referrals to immigration lawyers and civil rights lawyers. Some of our members are representing people who were beaten, shot or attacked during the LA protests. Thank you.

One of the important items we can do as an organization, I feel, is to make sure we police ourselves and make the necessary changes to our profession to counter the growing public perception that we are only out to make money for ourselves and our firms.

This is one of the reasons why we are supporting SB 37. This bill seeks to strengthen oversight of attorney advertising by toughening advertising rules and closing enforcement gaps.

Additionally, we are seeking to eliminate the illegal practice of "capping" which occurs when a non-lawyer seeks out and sends a case to a particular lawyer or law firm for financial gain. I have heard from many members that this practice is going on and it must stop. We are seeking to strengthen the Rules of Professional Conduct with the State Bar, but we need all of us to speak to our colleagues. We need to police ourselves too. If you see or know something, you need to say something. There is an old saying "Just because you 'can' do something doesn't mean you 'should' do something."

Now is the time to police ourselves, and restore the honor and dignity to the plaintiffs' bar. If you are going to advertise, do it with the class and the honor that reflects well on our profession. Advertisements like "Uber/Lyft Accident? Get Millions" is not it!

We are fighting the fight of tort reform in Sacramento on a weekly if not daily basis. We are now fighting for the hearts and minds of the Legislature and the communities we represent. Out of control billboards and TV ads are going to make caps on damages, immunities and caps on attorney fees a reality. This will hurt your clients who are seeking justice and accountability.

Let's all come together and figure out the best way to recommit to seeking justice for consumers and reinforce our values on "why" we are plaintiffs' lawyers. We represent people who don't have a voice, who can't advocate for themselves, who can't afford a big expensive hourly law firm! Now is the time to double down on "why" you are a Consumer Lawyer! Let's do it together with honor, decency and civility to make a difference in our cities, counties and State. There has never been a more important time to do this for the families and people we represent! ■

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A blue rectangular graphic with white and yellow text. At the top left is the CAOC logo (Consumer Attorneys of California). To the right is a circular seal featuring a portrait of a man and the text "ELECTION 2025" and "READY FOR ELECTION TIME". The main text reads "LAST CALL FOR LEADERS!" in large white letters. Below that, in smaller white text, is "Officer and Director Nominations Close August 8, 2025". At the bottom, a yellow button contains the text "caoc.org/25Nominations". A white arrow points from the button towards the right.