OACTA
Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys
The Source for Defense Success

THE UPDATE

News & Practice Pointers from OACTA

In This Issue

A Message from Daniel Richards, OACTA President

Upcoming OACTA Events

2026 OACTA Annual Meeting

Women in the Law Breakfast

OACTA Awards

Leadership Spotlight

17th Annual OACTA Foundation Golf Outing

OACTA Committees

New OACTA Members

OACTA Board of Trustees

President's Message



By: Daniel Richards
2026 OACTA President

As we move into the fall season, the leaves outside my window are turning from green to deep reds and oranges. Sweatshirts and sweaters are popping up, and the Buckeyes are off to a strong start. It's college football season and October baseball playoffs are fully underway. It is hard to believe how fast a year can go. However, before summer is a distant memory, I want to take a moment to recognize the tremendous success of one of OACTA's signature events and express my gratitude to the many volunteers and supporters who made it possible.

On the Monday before Labor Day, OACTA members, sponsors, and friends gathered at Pinnacle Country Club for the annual OACTA Foundation Golf Outing. The event was an overwhelming success, bringing together 78 golfers for a day of camaraderie, networking, and friendly competition, all in support of the important work of the OACTA Foundation.

A special thank you goes to **Brigid Heid**, Chair of the OACTA Foundation Golf Committee, whose leadership, dedication, and attention to detail were instrumental in planning and executing another outstanding outing. Thanks to Brigid and the efforts of her committee, this year's event not only provided a terrific experience for all who attended, but it also shattered previous fundraising records. Together, they raised more money than ever before in the history of this event, providing valuable support for the Foundation's continuing mission which includes providing scholarships to law students in need and the pursuit of judicial excellence.

READ MORE

Mark Your Calendar

OACTA Lunch and Learn Webinar
Wednesday, October 28, 2026
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
"Motor Carrier vs. Facility Liability in Freight Shipment Injuries"
Presented by Jeffrey Boesger
Sponsored by Robson Forensic
Register Here

OACTA Lunch and Learn Webinar
Wednesday, November 4, 2026
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
"Challenging the Allegation: Using Physical Evidence to Strengthen Your Case"
Presented by Daniel Carabell
Sponsored by ESi
Register Here

2026 OACTA Annual Meeting
December 3-4, 2026
The Renaissance Columbus Westerville-Polaris
409 Altair Pkwy.
Westerville, OH 43082
Register Here

Register for the 2026 OACTA Annual Meeting

Join us December 3 - 4, 2026 for a two-day program featuring outstanding speakers and interesting topics with something for everyone!

Presentations include the following:

- Paul J. Unger of Affinity Consulting will explore the transformative role of artificial intelligence (AI) in helping lawyers leverage tools to automate routine tasks, prioritize workloads, and optimize daily schedules in ***Using Artificial Intelligence for Better Time Management.***
- Steve Carlino and Kaitlyn Madigan, both from Weston Hurd LLP, will present ***Employer Intentional Torts in Ohio: The Defense Landscape and Return of Co-Employee Claims.***
- Legislative developments most likely to affect civil defense practitioners and their clients in the year ahead will be explored in the ***Ohio Legislative Update,*** presented by Michael Farley, Ohio Insurance Institute.
- Paul McCartney, of McCartney Mediation Services, and Dan Mordarski, of Mordarksi Law, will discuss how their prior and current practice experiences inform the way they build credibility with each side, manage expectations, and break through impasse in ***The Mediator's Lens: How a Mediator's Background Shapes the Path to Resolution.***
- **An Update on Recent SCOTUS and Ohio Supreme Court Decisions** will be presented by Christopher J. Belmarez from Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP.
- Elisabeth Arko from Tucker Ellis LLP will join Hon. Chad Readler in a conversational session exploring effective appellate advocacy during ***A View from the Bench: A Fireside Chat with Judge Chad Readler.***
- John C.S. Pierce, of Dentons Sirote and Chair of DRI's Social Inflation Task Force will present ***Social Inflation & Nuclear Verdicts: What's Driving Claims Costs & How the Defense Can Respond.***

- We will hear ***Ethics & Professionalism: Pitfalls for Lawyers including an Update on AI & Why Professionalism Matters*** from Elizabeth Smith, Director, Board of Professional Conduct, Supreme Court of Ohio.

In addition to the educational program, a **Networking Reception** will be held following the last presentation on Thursday and is included in your meeting registration! Also included, is the **OACTA Legal Excellence Awards Luncheon & Annual Business Meeting,** where we will present the 2026 OACTA Awards! See below for the list of this year's recipients. **Exhibitors** will be available to share the latest in products and services with you.

Attendees **can earn CLE credits**! The Annual Meeting program has been approved by the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on CLE for 8.5 hours, including 1.0 of APC credit. The program has been approved by the Kentucky Bar Association CLE Commission for 8.5 General credits, including 1.0 hour ethics.

Hotel Information

Renaissance Columbus Westerville-Polaris
409 Altair Pkwy
Westerville, Ohio 43082 United States

Make your reservation today at the Renaissance Columbus Westerville-Polaris through the OACTA room block and receive the group rate ($174/night). To make your reservation through the block and receive the discounted rate, **CLICK HERE**. The group rate will be available until November 11, 2026 or until the group block is sold out, whichever occurs first.

Parking:
Complimentary, on-site parking is available.

Register by November 10th to receive the discounted rates!
We hope to see you there!

Learn More and Register Here

Women in the Law Breakfast at the 2026 Annual Meeting

Plan to attend the WIL Breakfast on Friday, December 4 prior to the Annual Meeting sessions. Join us for informal networking with your colleagues. All are welcome! We hope to see you there!

Nicole Mitchell & Gretchen Mote
WIL Committee Co-Chairs

Thank You to Our 2026 Annual Meeting Sponsors!



Congratulations to the 2026 OACTA Awards Recipients

OACTA Award Recipients
During the OACTA Legal Excellence Awards Luncheon on Thursday, December 3rd, Noon-1:30pm, the following awards will be presented, in addition to other OACTA member awards. Join us in recognizing these outstanding individuals!

Excellence in Advocacy Award
Gary Grubler, Esq.
Grange Insurance

Lifetime Achievement Award
Fred Hunker, Esq.
Ret., Ohio Bar Liability Insurance Company

Respected Adversary Award
Chris Snyder, Esq.
McKenzie & Snyder

Outstanding Advocacy Awards
Michael Farley, Esq.
The Ohio Insurance Institute

Frank Scialdone, Esq.
Mazanec, Raskin & Ryder

Public Service Award
Justice Patrick Fischer
Ohio Supreme Court

Outstanding Young Lawyer Award
Austin Richards, Esq.
Reminger

Leadership Spotlight

In this edition's Leadership Spotlight, we are pleased to feature **Hannah Heinmiller** and **Austin Richards**, Co-Chairs of OACTA's Young Lawyers Committee. Both are dedicated to connecting to other young lawyers and all OACTA members, fostering professional

development, and strengthening OACTA's community. Their experiences highlight the value of active involvement in OACTA and the professional relationships and opportunities that come with it.



Hannah Heinmiller is a current co-chair of the OACTA Young Lawyers Committee. She has served in this role for the past four years. Hannah received the OACTA Outstanding Young Lawyer Award in 2025. This year, Hannah was invited to serve on the OACTA Board and looks forward to continuing her leadership and commitment to OACTA.

Hannah became involved with OACTA shortly after she began practicing in 2023. This was due in large part to her partner, Nicole Mitchell's suggestion and her own significant involvement with OACTA. Hannah did not know all of the benefits of being part of an organization such as OACTA at that time but quickly learned how rewarding it was. Hannah's experience with OACTA has broadened her relationships and connections with attorneys and expert organizations; she has gained leadership and management skills that carry over to her practice of law and learned real-world practice lessons from some of the many respectable attorneys that are part of OACTA. Hannah is so thankful for the friendships and practice techniques she has developed during her time with OACTA and is eager for future engagements.

Hannah is an Associate Attorney at Garvey Shearer Nordstrom in its Cincinnati office. There, she represents clients in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana for the defense of general tort claims, premises liability, construction negligence, insurance coverage disputes, bad faith claims, and fire and casualty matters.



Austin Richards is the Co-Chair of the Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys (OACTA) Young Lawyer Committee. As Co-Chair, Austin works to connect young lawyers throughout the state with a network of defense lawyers.
Austin has this to say about OACTA:

"OACTA offers benefits not only to those who serve on its committees, but to all lawyers who attend and participate in its events. Speaking for myself, OACTA participation has allowed me to better connect with the legal community across Ohio. More than that, my connections with OACTA's partners have assisted my practice tremendously. Just this last week, I was able to assist a client in a difficult situation thanks to my expert referral connection made through OACTA"

Austin is a trial lawyer at Reminger Co., LPA who has taken over a dozen trials to verdict. He has also secured dozens of defense judgments through dispositive motion practice and has recovered over $10 million in damages on behalf of individual and organizational clients.. Austin's practice focuses on catastrophic injury, governmental/public entity liability, product liability, and professional negligence. He handles matters in both state and federal courts, including representing clients from pre-suit investigation through trial and appeal.

17th Annual OACTA Foundation Golf Outing

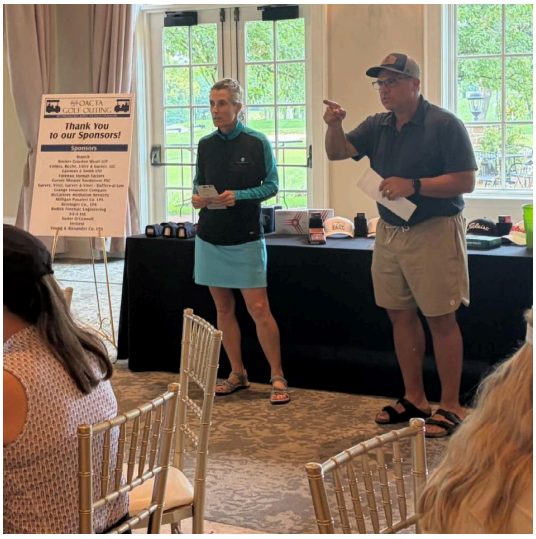
Thank you to all who participated in the OACTA Foundation's 17th Annual Golf Outing!

The OACTA Foundation Golf Outing was held on Monday, August 31st Pinnacle Golf Club in Grove City. Over **80 golfers** came out to support the OACTA Foundation. Thank you to all who participated as a sponsor or golfer!

Net proceeds from the Golf Outing benefit the OACTA Foundation. The OACTA Foundation funds projects consistent with the mission of OACTA, such as the annual Hilary S. Taylor Inclusion and Equity Scholarship Program and the National Foundation for Judicial Excellence (NFJE).

This year, over **$15,000** was raised for the OACTA Foundation for the scholarship program and NFJE! Thank you to Golf Outing Co-Chairs **Brigid Heid** and **Elisabeth Arko** for all their efforts!





Thank you to our 2026 OACTA Foundation Golf Outing Sponsors for their support!

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Learn More About OACTA Committees

Click on the names of the committees below to download their current roster as an excel spreadsheet.

OACTA Substantive Law Committees:

- Appellate Advocacy
- Business & Commercial Litigation
- Construction Litigation
- Employment Law
- Government Liability
- Insurance Coverage
- Litigation & Trial Skills
- Medical Negligence
- Personal Injury
- Product Liability & Toxic Tort
- Professional Liability

Click Here to Update your Committee Interest

New OACTA Members since August 2026

Please welcome our new OACTA members!

Katherine Clemons, Young & Alexander LPA
Lydia Handy, University of Cincinnati College of Law
Ashley Hetzel, Freeman, Mathis and Gary LLP
Anthony Lombardi, Gallagher, Gams, Tallan, Barnes & Littrell, L.L.P
Zachary Sterling, Freeman, Mathis and Gary LLP

Thank you to the OACTA Annual Sponsors for their Support



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