



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF CIVIL TRIAL ATTORNEYS  
The Source for Defense Success

# THE UPDATE

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### President's Message

**By: Daniel Richards**  
**2026 OACTA President**



Spring is here. Leaves are appearing on the trees, flowers are popping up and Ohio is finally starting to head into the warmer months. It is hard to believe that we are over a fourth of the way through 2026. In looking back on the past few months, I am glad to say that OACTA has been busy.

OACTA's Coffee Chat series continues to flourish. We have had two highly informative coffee chats this year, both of which provided valuable insights to our members. Our first coffee chat featured a presentation on employment law issues by Brigid Heid, Chair of our Employment Law Committee. Our second coffee chat offered a status update on third party litigation funding in Ohio, presented by Michael Farley from the Ohio Insurance Institute. This emerging area continues to generate significant interest among our membership. We have three more coffee chats planned for this year on a variety of relevant subjects. Stay tuned for the announcement of those topics. If you have not attended a coffee chat, I strongly encourage you to check one out. They are free, only a half hour long and always helpful.

I want to extend a special thanks to Stu Harris and the Insurance Coverage Committee for organizing another excellent and well-attended Insurance Coverage Seminar. This seminar is another example of the valuable educational content which OACTA delivers to our members.

[READ MORE](#)

Mark Your Calendar

### **OACTA Lunch and Learn Webinar**

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

"Premises Liability – Expert Insights"

Presented by Richard C. Stone, P.E.

Sponsored by RIMKUS

[Register Here](#)

### **OACTA Lunch and Learn Webinar**

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

"Root Cause of Engineering Failures:

Asking the Right Questions"

Presented by Andrew Schmit

Sponsored by Envista Forensics

[Register Here](#)

### **2026 Women in the Law Summit**

June 25-26, 2026

Homewood Suites Cincinnati-Downtown

617 Vine St.

Cincinnati, OH 45202

[Register Here](#)

### **2026 OACTA Foundation Golf Outing**

August 31, 2026

Pinnacle Golf Club

1500 Pinnacle Club Dr.

Grove City, OH 43123

*Save the Date!*

### **2026 OACTA Annual Meeting**

December 3-4, 2026

409 Altair Pkwy

Westerville, OH 43082

*Save the Date!*



**REGIONAL WOMEN IN THE LAW SUMMIT**

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**JUNE 25-26, 2026**

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**OACTA**  
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The Women in the Law Committees from Ohio, Kentucky & Indiana have teamed up to support, educate and advance women in civil defense litigation. This two-day seminar will combine speakers and panels to discuss ways to assist lawyers in their practices.

[Click Here for More Information](#)

**2026 Insurance Coverage Seminar**

The 2026 Insurance Coverage Seminar was held on Friday, April 17 at Grange Insurance in Columbus, OH. We had over 80 individuals in attendance. Once again, we were fortunate to receive wonderful hospitality from our hosts at Grange!

The program consisted of timely topics and excellent presenters covering a variety of information including presentations titled: “Primary and Excess Carriers – What Duties are Owed?”, “Triggering Events for Personal and Advertising Injury Under Coverage B” and “Ohio UM UIM What is Past is not Prologue” and many others.

The seminar was approved for up to 5.5 CLE credits and was open to Attorneys, Paralegals, and Non-Attorney Insurance Claims Professionals.



Dan Richards, OACTA President and Stu Harris, OACTA 2026 Insurance Coverage Seminar Co-Chair



Mike Neltner, OACTA Vice President



Stacy Berliner, Shumaker, Loop and Kendrick, LLP



Hon. Kevin Popham, Hon. David Gormley, Hon. Rob Montgomery. Ohio Fifth District Court of Appeals

***Thank you to our Insurance Coverage Sponsors!***



## Amicus Curiae Update

by Elisabeth Arko & Jennifer Nordstrom

OACTA's amicus program continues to make its presence felt before the Ohio Supreme Court, and 2026 has been no exception. These efforts reflect the tireless dedication of our Board and the attorneys who volunteer their time and expertise to author high-quality briefs on OACTA's behalf. To date in 2026, OACTA has filed multiple briefs in the Ohio Supreme Court, both at the merit and jurisdictional phases. These briefs are highlighted and discussed below.

First is *Cleary v. Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co.*, Case No. 2026-0403. In *Cleary*, OACTA filed an amicus brief at the jurisdictional phase in support of Appellants Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company and Allied Property & Casualty Insurance Company, asking the Court to accept jurisdiction. The case involves an appeal from the Tenth District Court of Appeals raising critical questions about an insured's duty to cooperate with its insurer during a claims investigation, whether a person's undefined status as a "rated driver" on a declarations page renders clear underinsured motorist coverage language ambiguous, and the limits of contract reformation. OACTA urged the Court to provide guidance on these issues, emphasizing that the appellate court's decision threatens to undermine longstanding principles of insurance policy interpretation and policyholder cooperation obligations. Thomas Glassman of Bonezzi Switzer Polito & Perry Co. LPA authored OACTA's amicus brief.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

## New DRI Regional Director, Natalie Wais

Congratulations to long time OACTA member, Past President, past Trustee and past committee chair, **Natalie Wais**. Natalie was recently appointed to serve as the Regional Director for DRI's Central Region. Natalie previously served a three-year term as the DRI state representative for Ohio. Thank you, Natalie, for your never-ending dedication to OACTA and DRI.

# DRI RECOGNIZES

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## NEW REGIONAL DIRECTOR



### CENTRAL REGION

NATALIE WAIS

*Young & Alexander*



### Leadership Spotlight

Mike Neltner has been a member of OACTA since 2008. He was Co-Chair of the Insurance Coverage Committee with John Farnan from 2009 to 2010, and then was Chair for 15 years from 2010 to 2024 with Laura (Megan) Faust. He joined the Board of Trustees in 2013 and is currently Vice President.



“OACTA has been a highlight of my legal career. I thank all current and past members for allowing me to be a part of this tremendous organization over these past years and permitting me to learn from the many fun and educational Seminars and attend Annual Meetings where I have been able to meet and greet the smartest and most ethical lawyers in the State of Ohio. I thank all current and past members for giving me the privilege of working with such great lawyers to ‘join the fray’ by writing amicus briefs, giving numerous presentations at the Coverage seminars, having loads of fun at the Annual Meeting outings (axe throwing and duckpin bowling comes to mind!), and calling ‘my friends’ these attorneys who are always so supportive in so many ways. I look forward to continuing this strong tradition and embracing the future of this great organization.”

In his career, Mike has handled insurance files from cradle through jury trial and appeals, including the Ohio and United States Supreme Courts, and has been privileged to experience litigation from various perspectives, having worked for over 35 different insurance companies as panel counsel for Am Law 200 and other law firms. He has been in-house counsel now for The Cincinnati Insurance Company since 2007, founding and handling Ohio for CIC's Coverage Unit. He has been blessed to win over 90 percent of his motions for summary judgment these past 30+ years and has never had a jury verdict higher than the last plaintiff demand before trial. He recently obtained his mediation certificate from the Harvard Mediation Program, and is looking forward to continuing to engage in the noble practice of law (for as long as his wife lets him) in whatever way he can best serve the citizens of this great State. If you are reading this and you haven't signed up yet for the Insurance Coverage Seminar coming up on April 17, he will be discussing the top insurance coverage Decisions from the various federal and state appellate courts this past year, so please stop by and say hello to Stu Harris and Mike at the seminar. Stu will buy you lunch.

## OACTA Law Student Scholarship Applications Available!

The 2026 OACTA Hilary S. Taylor Inclusion & Equity Scholarship Application is Now Available!

The completed application and all other requested material must be received by June 15, 2026. Scholarship recipients will be announced in July and recognized at the OACTA Annual Meeting in November. Funding is provided by the OACTA Foundation.

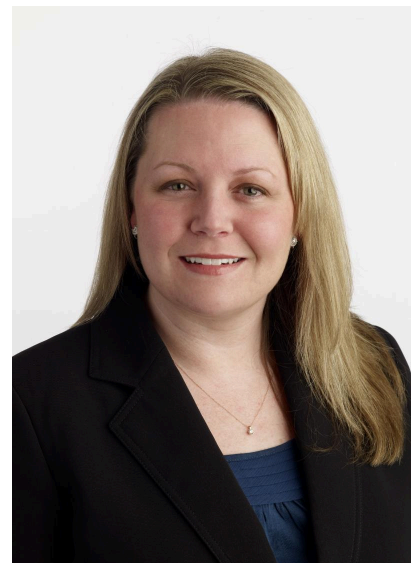
[Click Here for More Information](#)

## A Simple Message Can Make a Difference

by **Karen Ross**

Email is likely the most utilized form of communication in the legal profession. As long as you have a signal, you can send and receive emails. Most of us email with co-workers, colleagues from other firms, and/or clients on a daily basis; as part of my practice, I also email with lawyers, and their paralegals/staff, from the "other side of the v." each day. This means I have A LOT of emails to triage, analyze, and respond to - not to mention the emails I initiate to raise issues, make requests, etc. Emailing, therefore, is something I try to make as efficient and user friendly as possible.

To that end, I email when it best fits my schedule, which often occurs in the evenings and on weekends, even on some holidays. When I send those emails, I do not expect a real time response. But I noticed that many people who responded to my off-hour emails, including non-lawyer legal professionals, opened their email with an apology for not responding sooner, explaining how they were tied up with an errand, a family obligation, etc. Their responses made me feel terrible for causing them undue stress. I would then respond telling them they had no need to apologize. This email reply/response process, which was inefficient and unhealthy for all, continued until I saw an Instagram post from a CEO in England. Recognizing that personal and professional responsibilities are



different for everyone, he included a closing statement in his emails that fit exactly with what I was experiencing.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

## Court Surety Bond Agency Featured Article

### **A Defense Attorney's Guide to Supersedeas Bonds by Dan Huckabay, Court Surety Bond Agency**

For civil defense attorneys, “bond” is a four-letter word in more ways than one when it comes to appeals, because supersedeas bonds only come into play when something didn't go right at the trial level. That being said, when a court errors and an appeal is necessary, it's extremely important to stay enforcement of the erroneous judgment to protect the client's assets during the appeal.

In order to stay enforcement of a judgment during appeal, most state and federal courts require security to be posted with the court to protect the other party and maintain the status quo. The timeframe for posting the security after the judgment is entered is relatively short and varies depending on the jurisdiction. In the State of Ohio, there is no automatic stay of execution once a judgment is entered. The judgment creditor can begin to execute on the judgment immediately unless a stay is granted pursuant to Ohio Rule of Civil Procedure 62(A), or an appeal is filed and a supersedeas bond is posted and approved by the court in accordance with Civil Rule 62(B). The question then becomes, how can civil litigators help their clients stay enforcement of the judgment while the client pursues their appeal.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

## 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 December 2025

Please welcome our new OACTA members!

**Joseph Bjorkman**, Capital University Law School  
**Steven Chang**, Reminger Co., LPA  
**Cassia Curtis**, Capital Law School  
**Gary Deutsch**, Nationwide Insurance  
**Gracyn Eckert**, Capital University Law School  
**Charlotte Gross**, Gallagher, Gams, Tallan, Barnes, & Littrell  
**David Hanning**, Mollica Gall Sloan & Sillery Co. LPA  
**Jaren Hardesty**, Bieser Greer & Landis LLP  
**Bei Johnson**, Roetzel & Andress  
**Kaylin Paul**, Collins, Roche, Utley & Garner  
**Rebecca Singer-Miller**, Weston Hurd  
**Tyler Walker**, Gallagher, Gams, Tallan, Barnes, & Littrell

## Call for Speakers for the 2026 OACTA Annual Meeting!

The OACTA Annual Meeting Planning Committee is making plans for this year's Annual Meeting to be held December 3-4 at the Renaissance Columbus Westerville-Polaris. They need your ideas and input!

What topics do you want to learn more about? Please send your suggestions to [OACTA@AssnOffices.com](mailto:OACTA@AssnOffices.com).

If you would like to speak at the Annual Meeting, please submit your name, topic or presentation title, and brief description of the presentation to [OACTA@AssnOffices.com](mailto:OACTA@AssnOffices.com).

With your help, the 2026 OACTA Annual Meeting will offer topics of interest and provide value to our members!

***Save the date and plan to attend!***

## Thank you to the OACTA Annual Sponsors for their Support



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OACTA | 400 W. Wilson Bridge Road Suite 120 | Worthington, OH 43085 US

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