



**2026 OACTA Annual Meeting
December 3-4, 2026
Renaissance Columbus Westerville-Polaris**

PROGRAM AGENDA

Thursday December 3rd

8:00am – 8:30am **Registration / Continental Breakfast / Exhibits Open**

8:25am - 8:30am **Welcome**

Daniel Richards, Esq., OACTA President
Patrick Cannell, Esq., OACTA Annual Meeting Chair
Melanie Irvin, Esq., OACTA Annual Meeting Moderator

8:30am - 9:30am ***“Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Better Time Management”***

Paul J. Unger, Esq.
Affinity Consulting

This program explores the transformative role of artificial intelligence (AI) in helping lawyers manage their time more efficiently. Learn how to leverage AI tools to automate routine tasks, prioritize their workload, and optimize your daily schedule for better productivity. The session will provide practical insights into integrating AI into your practice, ensuring that you stay ahead.

9:30am - 9:45am **Networking & Break with Exhibitors**

9:45am - 10:45am ***“Ohio Legislative Update”***

Mike Farley, Esq.
Ohio Insurance Institute

This session offers a practical rundown of the legislative developments most likely to affect civil defense practitioners and their clients in the year ahead. Michael Farley will walk through the bills and budget measures moving at the Ohio Statehouse, covering what has passed, what is stalled, and what to watch. Attendees will leave with a clear sense of how these changes may shape their practice and their clients' exposure.

10:45am – noon ***“Employer Intentional Torts in Ohio: The Defense Landscape and Return of Co-Employee Claims”***

Steve Carlino, Esq.

Weston Hurd LLP

Kaitlyn Madigan, Esq.

Weston Hurd LLP

This session walks through Ohio's employer intentional tort standard under R.C. 2745.01, covering the deliberate-intent requirement, the equipment-safety-guard presumption, and where the pending Ohio Supreme Court case Camara v. Gill Dairy may take it. It then turns to the recent wave of co-employee intentional tort claims and offers practical guidance on how the defense bar can respond.

Noon- 1:30pm **OACTA Legal Excellence Awards Luncheon & Annual Business Meeting**

1:30 pm- 2:00 pm **Networking & Break with Exhibitors**

2:00 pm - 3:15pm ***"The Mediator's Lens: How a Mediator's Background Shapes the Path to Resolution"***

Paul McCartney, Esq

McCartney Mediation Services

Dan Mordarski, Esq

Mordarski Law

Patrick M. Cannell, Esq- moderator

Weston Hurd LLP

Every mediator brings the perspective of the practice they came from, and that background shapes how they read a room, frame the issues, and move parties toward settlement. In this panel, two mediators with different professional roots discuss how their prior and current practice experiences inform the way they build credibility with each side, manage expectations, and break through impasse. Attendees will gain practical insight into what mediators are really thinking, and how to use that perspective to their client's advantage.

3:15 pm – 3:30pm **Networking & Break with Exhibitors**

3:30pm - 4:30pm ***"Update on Recent SCOTUS & Ohio Supreme Court Decisions"***

Christopher J. Belmarez, Esq.

Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP

This session reviews the most significant recent decisions from the United States Supreme Court and the Supreme Court of Ohio and explains what they mean for civil trial practice. We will focus on the practical takeaways from each ruling and how they may shape case strategy, motion practice, and client counseling in the year ahead.

5:00pm - 6:00pm **OACTA Networking Reception**

6:30 pm **Dine-Arounds**

Friday, December 4th

8:00am - 8:25am **Continental Breakfast / Exhibits Open**

8:25am - 8:30am **Welcome**

8:30am - 9:30am ***“Social Inflation & Nuclear Verdicts: What’s Driving Claims Costs & How the Defense Can Respond”***

John C.S. Pierce, Esq
Dentons Sirote

Social inflation is pushing claims costs and jury awards well beyond ordinary economic inflation, driven by nuclear verdicts, third-party litigation funding, and shifting juror attitudes toward corporate defendants. Drawing on his work chairing DRI’s Social Inflation Task Force, John Pierce breaks down what is fueling these trends and offers defense counsel and their clients practical strategies to manage the exposure.

9:30am - 10:30am ***“A View from the Bench: A Fireside Chat with Judge Chad Readler”***

Hon. Chad Readler
United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

Elisabeth C. Arko, Esq
Tucker Ellis LLP

A candid, conversational session with Judge Chad Readler of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, in conversation with Elisa Arko of Tucker Ellis LLP. They will explore effective appellate advocacy from the perspective of the bench, including what makes briefs and oral arguments persuasive, common missteps to avoid, and current trends at the Sixth Circuit and beyond, with time for audience questions.

10:30am - 10:45am **Networking & Break with Exhibitors**

10:45am - 11:00am **Exhibitor Door Prizes**

11:00am - Noon ***“Ethics & Professionalism: Pitfalls for Lawyers including an Update on AI & Why Professionalism Matters”***

Elizabeth Smith, Esq.
Director, Board of Professional Conduct, Supreme Court of Ohio

This presentation touches on the most common ethics dilemmas for lawyers in a changing legal landscape, including conflicts of interest, self-reporting, the First Amendment, artificial intelligence, the disciplinary process, and professionalism and self-governance of the profession.

Noon **Adjournment**

12:30pm **OACTA Past President’s Luncheon – invitation only**