



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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Get Involved With an Affiliate in 2023

The OCBA has fifteen affiliate bar organizations, including the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association, Orange County Trial Lawyers Association, the Orange County Lavender Bar, and the Orange County Women Lawyers Association, just to name a few. Generally, affiliates have at least twenty-five members, at least sixty percent of whom must also be members of the OCBA. OCBA affiliates play essential roles in the Orange County legal community, such as increasing diversity, providing resources, and enriching people's legal experiences.


My first exposure to the greater Orange County legal community was through the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association (TMBA). On October 15, 2009, a small group of individuals including Marion Wheeler, Judge Daphne Sykes, Carolyn Carlisle, Connie Jean Louis, and myself met for lunch at Mimi's Café in Tustin and decided to form TMBA. At that meeting, I agreed to serve in the roles of Secretary and Treasurer, and later had the privilege to serve as President. Through my experience with TMBA, I learned about, and collaborated with, other organizations within the Orange County legal community including the OCBA. As a result of my experience with TMBA, I have a greater appreciation of the important role affiliates play in enriching our legal community.

Affiliates help attract and retain diverse legal professionals in Orange County, including individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, diverse beliefs, and diverse sexual orientations, and, as a result, benefit the legal and business communities as a whole. TMBA, for example, provides law school students with access to coaching, mentorship, and employment opportunities through its Summer Associate Program, which provides law school students from underrepresented backgrounds with direct access to big law, government, and non-profit legal employers. Similarly, the OC Hispanic Bar Association (HBA), founded in 1970, awards scholarships and bar stipends to deserving law students each year and has awarded scholarships to eighty-seven law school students. Since 2018 alone, HBA has awarded \$105,000 in scholarships to law school students. In addition, the Orange County Lavender Bar Association (OCLBA) serves and unites the LGBTQ community and allied attorneys, judges, and law students and provides networking, educational, and mentorship opportunities and resources to its members and the community. The Iranian American Bar Association, Orange County chapter, has a mentorship program to guide law students and young practitioners as they begin their journey in law. Through this program, mentees are paired with a mentor, empowered to pursue their personal career objectives, learn from others, and raise their professional confidence. There is no doubt that OCBA affiliates benefit the larger legal and business communities in Orange County. True diversity is not just about having diverse organizations; it requires interacting and sharing ideas with individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives.

Please help further true diversity by getting involved with an affiliate.

Affiliates also provide practice resources, opportunities for networking, and skills enhancement. As an example, the Orange County Trial Lawyers Association (OCTLA) provides a forum for plaintiff's attorneys to share trial tips and strategies. OCTLA also provides members with access to vast amounts of resources, including a deposition and document bank stocked with motions, pleadings, and depositions transcripts. OCTLA also provides members with many opportunities to build relationships through its annual golf tournament, networking mixers, and other events. The Association of Business Trial Lawyers (ABTL), another OCBA affiliate, includes both plaintiff and defense perspectives and provides a forum for litigators and judges to meet and address issues of importance to business trial lawyers. ABTL is also known for its annual seminar, which is set to take place in Hawaii this year.

Affiliates also enrich the legal experience and our community by providing opportunities to learn about and experience different cultures, traditions, and foods. The Celtic Bar Association (CBA), for example, promotes a greater awareness of Celtic culture and history, particularly its contribution to the law. The CBA is also known for its great MCLE travel seminars to areas such as Ireland, Scotland, Iceland, France, Italy, England, Spain, and Wales. The Italian American Lawyers of Orange County—Lex Romana (IALOC) provides opportunities to learn about Italian culture and has a "CLE in Italy" program where attendees obtain MCLE credits while experiencing the history, food, wine, and culture available only in Italy. The Orange County Jewish Bar Association (OCJBA) creates camaraderie among members based on Jewish traditions of Torah (law), Mitzvot (good deeds), and Tzedakah (justice). The Orange County Asian American Bar Association's (OCAABA) signature social events include the Moon Festival and Holiday Dim Sum mixers which create opportunities for students, attorneys, and judges to create friendships and professional connections.

There are too many OCBA affiliates to cover in this space, but the point here is to highlight a few of the many benefits our affiliates provide and emphasize the essential roles they play in enriching our legal community. For a list of all fifteen, please visit <https://www.ocbar.org/About/Affiliate-Bar-Associations>. Sign up to be a member, attend one or more events, and/or provide a little financial support to advance their efforts at engaging and empowering members. 

Michael A. Gregg is the 2023 OCBA President and a shareholder at Littler. He represents companies in all aspects of labor and employment law. He has attended events sponsored by numerous affiliate bars, all of them great experiences. You may reach him about these or other issues by emailing michael@ocbar.org.