



## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

MEI TSANG

# Summertime and the Livin's Easy

As we welcome July and the heart of summer, many of us are looking forward to long days, well-deserved vacations, and maybe a moment to breathe. But in the legal world, the wheels of justice never really slow down—even when we wish they would. This month, I want to touch on three important areas: a promising new initiative to ease discovery disputes in civil litigation, what to know if you're traveling abroad this summer, and an overdue conversation around disability in the legal profession.

Let's start with something that might actually make civil litigation a little easier to manage: a promising new initiative from the Orange County Superior Court designed to reduce the backlog and stress of discovery disputes. The court has seen over 2,000 new civil filings this fiscal year alone. That's 2,000 new cases joining 862 already-active matters, all under the watchful eye of just 24 judges. The math speaks for itself and the result is often procedural gridlock.

To address this, the court will pilot an Informal Discovery Conference (IDC) Program starting this month. Instead of sending every discovery dispute through the full-motion wringer, a designated "discovery judge" will handle these issues informally first. The IDC is created to streamline the resolution of discovery disputes and reduce calendar congestion in the participating departments by centralizing discovery motions in a single, dedicated department. On an expedited basis, all discovery motions filed in the participating departments will be set for an informal discovery conference in the dedicated discovery department with the Hon. Andre De La Cruz presiding. Only if the conference is unsuccessful will the motion proceed to full briefing and a formal hearing in the discovery department.

The pilot program will include five departments: Hon. Michael Strickroth; Hon. Lindsey Martinez; Hon. Thomas McConville; Hon. Donald Gaffney; and Hon. Sheila Recio.

The aim is to increase judicial efficiency, cut down on costly motions, and maybe even encourage us all to be a little more collaborative. There are already suggestions provided to strengthen the program: (1) requiring a formal motion before scheduling an IDC to ensure parties are serious about resolution, (2) written summaries from judges after each conference, and (3) the continued ability to impose sanctions for bad behavior. If you find yourself involved in one of these IDCs, the OCBA and the court would love to hear your feedback. This could be a real shift in how we practice civil litigation: less adversarial and more efficient.

Now, if you are one of the lucky ones with a trip on the calendar

this summer, a word of caution: know your legal rights before you pack your suitcase. For U.S. citizens, international travel is usually straightforward, but certain unresolved legal issues such as child support, warrants, or even tax problems can cause potential issues. So can content that you have been surfing or downloading on your phone. And for green card holders or those with other immigration statuses, reentry isn't always as simple. So, check your documentation, understand your rights, and consult an immigration attorney if anything's unclear. Understanding these issues is important not just for ourselves, but because our clients often face the same questions so they rely on us to have the answers. We are lucky to have a robust immigration section within the OCBA. We also are coming up with some helpful tips for traveling abroad as we navigate complex immigration realities.

Finally, as we observe Disability Pride Month, it's time to have an overdue conversation about how our profession supports (or doesn't support) lawyers with disabilities. According to the ABA, only a small fraction of attorneys report having a disability, even though we know the actual number is higher. Why the gap? Because disclosure is hard when silence feels safer.

Whether it's a chronic illness, neurodivergence, mental health condition, or physical disability, many of our colleagues are managing challenges that others never see. Yet conversations around accommodations, flexible policies, or simply acknowledging disability remain rare. And that's a loss—not just for those directly affected, but for our entire profession.

We pride ourselves on advocating for others, but we must do better advocating for each other. That means creating safe environments for disclosure, pushing for policies that go beyond the bare minimum, and expanding wellness programs to reflect a broader range of needs. Inclusion isn't complete unless it includes disabilities.

So this month, let's ask ourselves: does my workplace normalize requesting accommodations? When you see someone struggling, how should we help them? If we want to be better lawyers, better colleagues, and better humans, we have to be willing to talk about the hard stuff and make space for more empathy in our profession. After all, we're all just trying to do our best: one motion, one contract, one human moment at a time.



*Mei Tsang wants to remind you to take a break this summer and send in some of your vacation photos! Feel free to send her a few at [mtsang@umbergzipser.com](mailto:mtsang@umbergzipser.com).*