

NEWSLETTER



Ivan Hannel
General Counsel
Zoe Holding Company

Message From the Network Chair

Years ago, marijuana use was illegal in all states, starting with the vilification of the hemp plant in the early 1900s. Besides the unrecompensed criminal repercussions for too many, there was a widespread social stigma about its use. At the near end of the 20th century, things began to change but notice the change did not come from on high—in fact, the opposite is true. Recall that during the so-called war on drugs, President Clinton famously said he “didn’t inhale” while President George Bush Jr. reportedly obliquely acknowledged using marijuana but would not openly admit it. Now, about half of all states have legalized the medical and/or recreational use of marijuana. In time, I predict nearly all states will move toward legalization.

Did this change come about because any major medical or legal organization charged forward against the social stigma of marijuana and led the movement for legalization? The AMA or ABA certainly didn't lead the way, even if they may have diffidently agreed with the direction towards legalization when the tides of public opinion shifted. What did lead to this change? Individuals and small groups of people who wanted things to be different pushed for legislation in California and Washington and that's what got things rolling (pun intended). The genesis of most societal change comes outside of organizations from passionate—and sometimes angry—individuals.

Like the stigma against marijuana, there is a strong stigma against talking about UFOs in general and in the legal profession. The stigma against discussing UFOs may have started in earnest with HG Wells' War of the Worlds or in 1947 after the famous "Roswell" flying saucer incident, despite heroic airmen reporting "foo fighters" as they fought for freedom in the skies of Europe and elsewhere. The government even had to recently relabeled UFOs as Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena ("UAP") partly to allow the phrase to include unknown objects that aren't "flying" but mostly it was done as a rebranding to ameliorate the stigma associated with taking the topic seriously. We can more easily talk about UAP but not UFOs for whatever that suggests about human cognition and reasoning and its deficits.

Fortunately, people are taking the UAP subject seriously. Indeed, I have been lobbying to get the ACC to allow us a webinar on the topic but with little success. I have personally spoken to US senators and representatives on both sides of the aisle who take this issue very seriously—to say the least—but they hesitate to admit it for a variety of reasons, some reasonable and most questionable. The social stigma against UAP is still powerful like the dark side of the force.

Change is coming, however. For instance, Harvard's Journal of National Security just published my friend Dillon Guthrie's article, "Flying Saucers and the Ivory Dome: Congressional Oversight Concerning Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena," a fascinating 70-page overview of Congress's efforts to understand UAP from the days of Roswell. When such change happens, it is because of people like Mr. Guthrie or my inspiration and our mutual friend, Luis Elizondo.

Luis Elizondo was the head of the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program in the Department of Defense. He reported to the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community and Congress that there was an ongoing, hidden government program to capture and reverse engineer UAP by unaccountable elements of the US government and select defense companies. Last year, Mr. Guthrie and I got to join Mr. Elizondo before a subcommittee of the House of Representatives to hear him and other witnesses, including an admiral and a high-ranking NASA official testify about UAP, where Mr. Elizondo powerfully argued that "America can handle the truth."

I admire Mr. Elizondo and Mr. Guthrie for fighting against stigma about UAP. And I am sometimes angry at the frustrating efforts made to suppress Mr. Elizondo and the high price he has paid to bring this issue of UAP to Congress and the American people. Knowing these things too well, I find myself driven by anger. But I do not regret my anger. Curiously, I am grateful for it like an ember that starts a furnace to produce useful steam. I think my anger has value, as odd as that may sound. But the conventions of today are so peculiar that we rarely speak about or even acknowledge anger as an important emotion that we should employ as we do fire—when needed, measured, and directed. Note that anger as a topic of discussion appears far less frequently than "self-care" in so many legal webinars and publications, as if in the pantheon of human emotions self-care is what changed history.

Which brings me to the role of anger and its use as a powerful force for us as attorneys and even in-house counsel. St. Augustine is attributed to have written, "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and the courage to see that they do not remain the way they are." Anger can be a powerful emotion for good. When properly yoked, it can lead to important change. As attorneys and in-house counsel, is there anything that makes you angry? I know it's a funny thing to advocate for anger, but I do. We must allow ourselves to be angry to find the courage to challenge the status quo and fight whatever stigmas we must disarm or disabuse.

Now what's all this to do with a fantastic older British TV drama called *Downton Abbey* that my wife got me hooked on about an English family estate going through the tremendous changes prior to and after World War I? I'm only on season two of seven, so no spoilers for me, please, but the characters are so interesting because of how they deal with their feelings, in particular, how they repress their anger against one stigma or another often because of the conventions at the time that we now recognize as utterly absurd. Women struggle to find wealthy men of status because they cannot inherit wealth and are considered old at 25. Men who failed to physically qualify for the trenches of France are portrayed to be angry with themselves for being failures to their country and king. Servants struggle with anger at being unable to improve their position in society. The gentry struggle to contain their anger at feeling isolated and passed by history.

The characters all struggle to contain anger, repress it, and of course it all bursts out at one point or another for each of them. At the heart of it all are stigmas and the attendant pain and resulting anger they yield, producing in some the courage to attempt to change things or adapt to change with dignity. I hope you find something that angers you and use that powerful emotion for the good of all. As a belated Valentine's Day present to yourself, go find a stigma you don't like, get mad about it, and then do something to change it.

February 25, 2025

I-9 Audits, site visits, and ICE raids: What this means for in-house counsel - Litigation Network February Legal Update

– [**REGISTER HERE**](#)

Have an idea or request for a legal update topic? Email the program chair at: Julianna Hanlon at jihanlon@mgb.org.



Upcoming Events



Cozen Spotlight

Scott Bettridge
Chair
Immigration Practice
Cozen O'Connor

Scott represents both corporate and individual clients in all aspects related to U.S. immigration law. Scott's corporate clients include major global organizations in the financial services, hospitality, fashion, media, IT, energy, agriculture, insurance, and health care sectors, along with organizations specializing in professional services and private club industries.

He provides an array of immigration services, including nonimmigrant visas, permanent residence (green card), labor certification, and citizenship, along with I-9 review and compliance services, with a focus on global workforce mobility issues such as due diligence considerations and risk management assessments for mergers, acquisitions, restructurings, downsizings, and startups. Scott also represents individuals with entrepreneurial options as well as with family-based immigration matters. He also represents both regional centers and individual investors in the EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program.

**Cozen
Spotlight**

David Adams
Counsel
Cozen O'Connor

David focuses his practice on corporate immigration law. He has experience advising multinational corporate clients, including dozens of Fortune 500 companies, on a variety of immigrant and nonimmigrant visas, PERM, permanent residency, and consular processing issues. David provides enterprise-wide advisory services to support corporate clients on a programmatic level and works alongside clients' legal departments, mobility groups, HR, talent acquisition, and business stakeholders to help them understand policy changes, assess the impact of these changes on their workforce, and modify their immigration program accordingly.

Austin is Associate General Counsel and Head of Litigation at Mercedes-Benz USA. A native of the suburbs surrounding Atlanta, Austin returned to Georgia after graduating from the University of North Carolina School of Law. He was a partner at an Atlanta-based litigation boutique before beginning his in-house career at Mercedes-Benz.

Mercedes-Benz USA is the U.S. headquarters for Mercedes-Benz, and Austin and his team are responsible for a broad portfolio of cases including product liability matters, class actions, labor and employment issues, consumer claims, and intellectual property disputes. The primary goal of the team is always to help the business "get the job done" with the least legal disruption. He describes the Mercedes-Benz USA legal department as full of tremendous professionals who collaborate across teams and subject matter areas to fulfill the company's mission. He says there's no greater calling for a lawyer than to work for a company and people you're proud of, and he is happy to have found his home at Mercedes-Benz.

When Austin isn't at work, you can find him with his better half, two kids, and one rescue dog. He enjoys playing (mediocre) golf and would love to have you join him if you're ever in his neck of the woods. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for his career at Mercedes-Benz, he still gets excited whenever he sees a great car in the company garage.

**Litigation Network
Member Spotlight**

Austin Ellis
AGC, Head of Litigation
Mercedes-Benz USA

Would you like to be featured in an upcoming Litigation Newsletter? We would love to hear from you! This is a great opportunity to feature your role, your company, or your #morethanalawyer achievements!

Have you ever considered joining our committee? The Litigation Network committee is always open to potential new members for upcoming years. If you have any questions about available roles, time commitments, etc., please reach out to shane@neweraadr.com with your interests and questions!



Litigation Laughs

Encountering any nuanced procedural or case law issues?

Need any general guidance on navigating new legislation or regulations?

Let's hear from you in the Litigation Discussion Forum!

Lawyer: my client is trapped inside a penny
Judge: what?
Lawyer: he's in a cent
Judge: you're going to jail with him





Leadership Team

2025 ACC Litigation Network Leadership

Chair

Ivan Hannel
General /Counsel
Zoe Holding Company
(602) 710-7573
ihannel@zoeholdingco.com

Vice-Chair

Jennifer Denny
Senior Litigation Counsel
Cardinal Financial Company, LP
(636) 565-0716
jennifer.denny@cardinalfinancial.com

Legal Update Program Chairs

Julianna Hanlon
Legal Counsel
Mass General Brigham
jihanlon@mgb.org

Annual Meeting Chairs

Abby Adams
VP, General Counsel
National Association of Home Builders
(212) 266-8345
aadams@nahb.org

Membership Chairs

Shane Mulrooney
Co-Founder & General Counsel
New Era ADR
(630) 853-8536
shane@neweraadr.com

Brian Murren

Assistant General Counsel
Pennsylvania Automotive Association
(717) 255-8311
bmurren@paa.org

Where to find the ACC Litigation Network:

LinkedIn: [Click Here](#)
ACC Litigation Network
Website: [Click Here](#)