

UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS

Tuesday, February 25

ACC Georgia/DLA Piper "Introduction to Legal Due Diligence: What a Buyer Needs to Know"
DLA Piper Atlanta Office
CLE/CPD

Wednesday, February 26

ACC Georgia Roswell Small Group Networking Lunch
El Porton Mexican Grill

Tuesday, March 11

ACC Georgia Smyrna/Vinings Networking
Happy Hour
Zeke's Kitchen & Bar

Thursday, March 13

ACC Georgia/Ogletree Deakins "Navigating the Ethical Minefield: Best Practices for In-House Counsel in Internal Investigations"
IHG® Hotels & Resorts, 2nd Floor Conference Center
CLE/CPD

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Join ACC Georgia Colleagues on LinkedIn

One of the most important benefits of ACC Georgia membership is the professional networking. Show your online network that you're a member by following the ACC Georgia LinkedIn page. We've launched a new group to allow in-house counsel to network with colleagues and stay up to date on chapter news. Log in to LinkedIn and type "Association of Corporate Counsel Georgia Chapter" in the search bar to find our page. You'll learn of the latest member events, CLE luncheons and more. We look forward to connecting with you online!

NEW INITIATIVES IN 2024 SET US UP FOR SUCCESS IN 2025



Anne Kamosso
ACC Georgia President

As we settle into 2025, I'm excited to build on the growth ACC Georgia achieved in 2024.

We held dozens of events with broad participation, exemplified by our launching nine Member Interest Groups (MIGs), in which sponsoring law firms work with MIG group leaders to design informative, practice-specific CLE and other programming. Other highlights included a first-ever retreat for board members and MIG leaders in May and, more recently, the Legal Innovation Forum's first Atlanta event, which we sponsored in September. Speakers participated in five panel discussions about AI, digital risk, generational shifts, and more, delivered to 120 in-house and outside counsel audience members.

On a stormy night in November, we held a highly successful networking event in Savannah, which was also a first since I joined the chapter in 2018. Despite the weather, more than 40 in-house counsel joined us at The Drayton Hotel for cocktails and snacks provided by our sponsor, HunterMacLean.

We can be proud of helping bring back Street Law, a program in which attorneys teach high school students about legal concepts, after a pandemic-induced hiatus. Partnering with Street Law, Alston & Bird, and The Home Depot, we worked for several months with students at Benjamin E. Mays High School and DeKalb High School of Technology, giving presentations on employment and contract issues. The program capped with a half-day event in November in which over 100 students came to The Home Depot Store Support Center to debate a hypothetical case about sexual harassment and negotiate a contract. ACC also provided scholarships to six outstanding Street Law students (and perhaps future legal professionals) to cover their registration for the upcoming Business Leaders of the Future conference. We are especially grateful to The Home Depot Corporate Counsel Courtney Tucker (an ACC Georgia vice president) for her help with Street Law.

Other community service events included ACC members volunteering with the Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta to help spot lurking legal issues for area nonprofits and planting trees along the Beltline with Trees Atlanta. In 2025, I hope we can provide more service opportunities—both related to the law and addressing broader needs.

Our new initiatives did not diminish longstanding activities, such as the yearly Atlanta Braves game and technology CLE hosted by Nelson Mullins. We also continued our Women's Initiative events, one of which focused on mental health and wellness, including yoga and a sound bath.

On January 16, our GC/CLO event featured a keynote speech by Peter Carter, chief external affairs officer, chief legal officer and corporate secretary at Delta Air Lines. Our February schedule includes a CLE on legal due diligence and networking events in Roswell and Smyrna, while March includes a CLE on internal investigations. Those and more events are on our online calendar at <https://www.acc.com/chapters-networks/chapters/georgia>.

Finally, this past year's success would have been impossible if not for our incredible board of directors. Three members have just rotated off the board, their positions being filled by three new members. We thank at-large outgoing members Brittany Teal, Shaun Willie, and Josh Pila for their service, and we welcome incoming at-large members Mariette Clardy-Davis, Anna Grover, and Danielle Robbins.

As always, please contact me if you have any questions or thoughts about ACC Georgia, and I hope to see you at many events this coming year. My email is Anne.Kamosso@ohmium.com.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Dan Deckbar

VP & Deputy General Counsel–Americold Realty Trust, Inc.



Q. How did you grow up, and why did you want to go to law school and become an attorney?

Law school was, for me, a fallback option. As college graduation neared, I wasn't particularly thrilled with the job interviews I was getting in mostly consumer products brand management. I recall my parents telling me I should be a lawyer since I was good at arguing with them.

Q. What attracted you to the type of law you practice?

Having spent the first half of my career in litigation and litigation management in both private and in-house practice, the opportunity to broaden my work to transactions, deals and general corporate support was appealing. And I will say that seeing every document and deal through the lens of trial work has been very valuable to me.

Q. How'd you get involved in ACC Georgia?

I was initially a member during my first in-house role but was mostly just an attendee at luncheons and events. I then went back into private practice, and only recently, in my current in-house role, have I become more involved as a participant.

Q. How has your membership enabled a professional connection that benefitted your practice, client or career?

The latest example is my work with the Corporate Recoveries Member Interest Group. Meeting and learning from my counterparts in both private practice and in-house positions have given me access to their valuable experiences and resources to assist my company in finding opportunities to recover funds utilizing an organized methodology.

Q. What do you like about working at Americold?

Like most in-house roles, it allows the opportunity to get ahead of issues and truly collaborate with other leaders in the organization. But as a global leader in temperature-controlled warehousing and logistics services to the food industry, our work at Americold has tangible impacts where we really do fulfill our tagline: "We help our customers feed the world."

Q. What keeps you up at night?

Most common is a mental wrestling match with something uncontrollable.

Q. What is your responsibility for managing crisis?

I serve as the legal group representative on a first alert team in the event of disaster, critical injury or the like. Depending on the nature and status of the event, individual team members will continue to manage through addressing the situation and updating management.

Q. When would you get involved with corporate communications?

It's not uncommon for me to be asked to assist in proofing or messaging on sensitive topics and for issues within the Legal, Risk and Claims groups.

Q. What is your best advice for outside lawyers?

Learn as much as you can about your client's business—not just reading procedure manuals or going on plant tours or ride-alongs but inquiring about decision making internally and what/how your client contact is challenged so as to become an indispensable partner.

Q. What are your favorite words of wisdom?

A business leader of mine used to say, "Take care of the small things, and many big things will be avoided." I do believe attention to detail really is the hallmark of a good lawyer.

Q. What keeps you busy outside of work?

Other than trying to take at least one nice trip per year, I love living in intown Atlanta and taking advantage of the festivals, sporting events, and great places to eat and drink within walking distance.

Q. What are you reading right now?

I'm currently reading *Bad Monkey*, which—like most of Carl Hiaasen's work—is a fun, easy read after a heavy day. And I plan to binge the series on Apple as soon as I finish the book.

Q. What is your favorite legal movie?

"Witness for the Prosecution." The original shadowy 1957 version makes the twists and turns more impactful. Even if you get your desired result at trial, you may never know the real truth behind the "evidence."

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SPECIAL EVENTS

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Driving Value Through Corporate Recoveries

By Ben Thorpe, partner, Bondurant Mixson & Elmore



Ben Thorpe

Many of us begin our careers in law firms, where one can be forgiven for thinking that delivering sound counsel is the full scope of the mission. Indeed, that is the product that law firms sell. Upon entering corporate legal departments, however, many of us learn quickly that legal insight is no substitute for revenue generation in companies that sell wares other than legal services. Companies built for growth relentlessly focus on driving revenue in new and innovative ways.

While this can pose challenges for corporate legal departments, it also presents significant opportunities. One way corporate counsel can demonstrate the

revenue-generating capacity of the legal department—and in doing so, better align with broader corporate priorities—is to develop and implement an effective strategy for affirmative recoveries.

What do I mean by affirmative recoveries? In short, laying claim to value to which the company is already entitled. That could mean everything from pursuing insurance in the face of coverage denial to initiating trade secret litigation. As a practical matter, it also means evaluating and determining whether to file claims in class action litigation—including, and perhaps especially, antitrust litigation—where a company is already a member of a settlement or litigation class. What cuts across these disparate claims is (1) a willingness to enforce the company’s legal rights and (2) the development of internal processes to identify and vet potential recovery opportunities.

Objections abound. Among them:

- “Our department is stretched thin just playing defense. How can we possibly play offense?”
- “The business/my GC won’t go for this. We can’t be seen as plaintiffs, and it’s too expensive.”

These are reasonable objections, but—in my experience as both outside counsel and an in-house lawyer—they are ultimately wrong for at least some category of available recovery opportunities at most companies. That category will vary by company and legal department, but it is worth exploring for two basic reasons.

First, the financial impact can be significant. Nine-figure antitrust settlements are not uncommon, and deciding to monitor and pursue even just a class claim for one’s share of those settlement proceeds can provide an excellent return on investment. Similarly, aggressively pursuing insurance coverage in the face of known losses has the potential to offset otherwise substantial costs.

Second, an effective corporate recovery program can enhance the partnership between the legal department and the business units it serves. By generating revenue, the legal team demonstrates its capacity to contribute positively to the company’s financial goals, shedding (well, at least in small part) the “cost center” moniker. Moreover, an effective program with business buy-in promotes accountability from counterparties. The best lawsuit is the one that never has to be filed, and an awareness of and known willingness to pursue recovery claims can maximize negotiating leverage for the business.

That some of America’s largest and most growth-oriented companies have developed (and continue to expand) corporate recovery efforts within their exceedingly busy legal departments reflects an underlying corporate reality: It is incumbent upon every department within a business—whether a traditional revenue-generating function like sales or a traditional support function like legal—to align with the company’s strategy. And that strategy often depends on identifying new opportunities to generate revenue and defray cost. A corporate recovery program tailored to the company’s specific needs is one such valuable opportunity, and I encourage you to consider how that might serve both your company and your legal department.

Ben Thorpe is a partner at Bondurant Mixson & Elmore, where he represents plaintiffs and defendants in complex trial and appellate litigation and advises corporate clients regarding litigation and enforcement risk.

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