

NEWSLETTER



Ivan Hannel
General Counsel
Zoe Holding Company

Message From the Network Chair

I went to a Jesuit high school in Phoenix, and I still remember something my freshman English teacher used to say about summer: “Vacations are to be vacated.” He meant it. But in our line of work, it’s incredibly difficult to truly disconnect.

Even when I’m technically “off,” my mind drifts back to cases and concerns—often at odd hours. If the day of the week ends in “day,” I’m probably thinking about something legal. I know that’s not healthy—for my family, my friends, or even for myself—but I honestly don’t know how to turn it off.

I've been thinking lately about why this profession feels so saturated with conflict and tension. Part of it is simply the nature of the job. Just as people don't typically see a doctor when they're well, they don't come to us just to check in. It's always because something is wrong.

I also realize we might have a distorted view of the world—seeing it as more troubled than it really is—because we only see the parts that are in crisis. That's the slice of life brought to our desks every day.

I do believe there's more conflict and blame in the air now than there was when I was younger. I can't cite statistics, but the overall levels of negativity, anxiety, and angst seem noticeably higher than even a decade ago. And if that perception is accurate, what might explain it?

One possibility is that many people are struggling with inner turmoil and end up projecting it outward. When individuals feel powerless—over money, status, opportunity, or uncertainty about the future—it's easy to start looking for someone or something “out there” to blame. That sense of helplessness can morph into the belief that unseen forces are keeping them from the happiness they seek.

In such a mindset, the legal system becomes a stage where people seek resolution to what are, at their core, emotional or existential struggles. But not everything can be solved in court. Some of life's hardest lessons require perspective: giving more than you get, letting things go even when you weren't at fault, and accepting that some people—and some circumstances—simply won't change.

Accepting life's imperfections doesn't mean giving up. It means making peace with the reality that not everything unfolds the way we think it should. And that kind of acceptance opens the door to something bigger: seeing the broader picture, appreciating the present moment, and pursuing happiness with clarity and intent.

So, as summer takes hold, I encourage you to loosen your grip just a little. Savor the sunsets. Let the small things slide. The people, the problems, and the legal questions—they'll all still be there tomorrow. Today, try to enjoy what's right in front of you.

May 27, 2025 – Litigation Network Legal Update – What Changes do Federal Inclusivity Regulations Mean for In-House Counsel? – [REGISTER HERE](#)

May 27, 2025 – Legal and Governance Risks for Canadian Companies as a Result of US Government Rollback of DEI Initiatives and Programs – [REGISTER HERE](#)

June 24, 2025 – Litigation Network Legal Update – Topic to be determined – [REGISTER HERE](#)



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

*Have you ever considered joining our committee? The Litigation Network committee is **currently recruiting for several open co-chair roles**. If you have any questions about available roles, time commitments, etc., please reach out to shane@neweraadr.com with your interests and questions!*

October 18 – 22, 2025 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The ACC Annual meeting will be occurring this October in Philadelphia. This year's conference will be packed with several practical, interactive, and engaging learning formats such as microlearning (TED-style Talks), roundtables, workshops and panel discussions that will help you and your colleagues from around the world dig deep into substantive matters.

[See the schedule here](#)

[Register for the Conference here](#)

Our Litigation Section will be presenting on several engaging topics relevant to the in-house practice. Congratulations to the Section for having several topics approved and selected for the event!



**Cozen
Spotlight**

Nicole Herter Perkin
Member
nperkin@cozen.com

Nicole is a member of Cozen O'Connor's Labor & Employment Department and represents clients in all aspects of employment litigation, including defending them against claims for wrongful termination, discrimination and harassment, and wage and hour violations. She also provides advice on compliance with federal and state medical leave laws, employee handbooks and personnel policies, and other employment issues.



**Cozen
Spotlight**

Walter Stella
Member
wstella@cozen.com

Walter is a member of Cozen O'Connor's Labor & Employment Department with more than 30 years of experience advising employers on challenging workplace issues and providing practical solutions that minimize legal exposure in a heavily regulated business environment. He represents some of Silicon Valley's most dynamic corporate players, from Big Tech giants and high-profile tech-adjacent foundations to emerging businesses and ambitious startups.



**Cozen
Spotlight**

Bethany Vasquez
Member
bavasquez@cozen.com

Bethany is a member of Cozen O'Connor's Labor & Employment Department. with more than 20 years of experience providing comprehensive management-side counsel in workplace disputes. She leads defense of claims involving wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, breach of contract, and other employment-related matters and frequently achieves quick success through dispositive motions and favorable settlements.



Litigation Network Member Spotlight

Barbara Darkes
Senior Counsel
Phoenix Contact

Barbara is Senior Counsel with Phoenix Contact North America focusing her practice in Regulatory and Compliance law. She handles a wide range of legal issues for Phoenix Contact including regulatory compliance, risk management, insurance, data privacy and entity management. Additionally, she regularly provides the company counsel and direction on import and export compliance matters and other supply chain matters. Barbara further supports the company in litigation, whether it be active litigation, anticipation of litigation, or litigation mitigation efforts.

Barbara's move to Phoenix Contact in 2024 rounds out her three-prong legal career, having previously been in both private practice and government.

Prior to joining Phoenix Contact, Barbara spent close to 24 years in private practice at McNees Wallace & Nurick LLC. There she practiced in the Automotive Dealer, Litigation, and Transportation practice groups. She also had the opportunity to serve as co-Chair of the Litigation Group and the Chair of the Transportation Group during her tenure at McNees. Barbara's practice also regularly included Pennsylvania liquor license matters, professional licensing at the Pennsylvania Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs, and other licensing matters.

Barbara's legal career began with the Pennsylvania Office of General Counsel assigned to the Department of Transportation. She began there as a Legal Intern while still in law school, and was hired full-time upon graduation.

Barbara received her J.D. from the Widener University School of Law and her undergraduate degree from West Chester University. She has actively participated as a member of her state and local bar associations and has held leadership positions within those associations. Barbara has also been active in her local community serving on multiple non-profit Boards throughout her career.

Barbara was born and raised in central Pennsylvania and currently resides in Camp Hill where she can often be found walking her pup. She enjoys spending time with her two teenage grandsons, riding bicycle, reading and continuing to explore personal growth in all areas of life.

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!](#)





Leadership Team

2025 ACC Litigation Network Leadership

Chair

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