



Education: University of Arkansas, BA in Political Science in 2007; University of Arkansas, JD in 2010 (Magna Cum Laude)

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Awards and achievements:

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Litigation "Rising Star" Mid-South Super Lawyers 2013-2019

DRI Young Lawyers – Outstanding Subcommittee Chair/Vice Chair - 2015

Areas of practice:

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Products liability; commercial litigation; transportation and trucking litigation

Years as a defense attorney:

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9 years

Employment history:

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Wright, Lindsey & Jennings LLP (2010-2016, Associate) (2017- Present, Partner)

Noteworthy defense work:

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I have broad civil defense experience representing small and large businesses, insurance companies, municipalities, and individuals in general liability, products, premises, construction, and transportation and trucking litigation throughout Arkansas and in other states in the midwest and southeast United States.

This experience includes serving as lead counsel in hundreds of cases and trial counsel in over a dozen cases. The following is an example of the broad range of my litigation experience:

- Trial counsel for an FBO in a malicious prosecution claim brought by a former employee;
- Trial counsel for a retail chain in a slip-and-fall claim;
- Trial counsel for an international manufacturer in a "bet-the-company" products liability claim involving a multimillion dollar lost profits claim;
- Trial counsel for an automotive manufacturer in multiple products liability claims involving catastrophic injuries;
- Trial counsel for an agricultural chemical applicator in environmental claim;
- Trial counsel in numerous automobile collision claims; and
- General counsel for a municipal utility company.

Professional affiliations:

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I am a member of the following associations:

- Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel;
- Arkansas Bar Association; and

- American Bar Association.

DRI member:

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Since 2010

Please describe your previous involvement in DRI, including but not limited to, leadership positions held. Projects contributed to, Committee memberships, presentations given, and written materials authored. Special accomplishments should also be noted.

**Young Lawyers Committee:**

- Chair (2018-2019)
  - As the Chair of the Young Lawyers Committee, I am primarily responsible for the oversight and operations of its Steering Committee. For 2019, the Steering Committee consists of 23 subcommittees ranging from Activities to Women in the Law and over 90 individual members. This year, one of my goals was to ensure that every member of the Steering Committee had an opportunity for meaningful engagement in DRI. Through phone calls, emails, and meetings we have worked to make sure that everyone has a significant role to play. It is still a work in progress, but we have ultimately been able to make changes that will benefit young lawyers for years to come. In addition, the Steering Committee has focused on implementing a number of the strategies identified by the Young Lawyers Task Force, discussed below. Finally, the Committee has expanded the content of our newsletter *Raising the Bar* providing additional value to our members. The newsletter now features regular articles on membership and engagement in DRI, Diversity, Health and Wellness, and Philanthropy, along with the traditional substantive articles. We have a very active Steering Committee that is committed to improving the practice of law for DRI's young-lawyer members.
- First Vice Chair (2017-2018)
- Second Vice Chair (2016-2017)
- Chair – Marketing Subcommittee (2015-2016)
- Vice Chair – Marketing Subcommittee (2014-2015)
- Chair – Legislative Subcommittee (2013-2014)
- Vice Chair – Legislative Subcommittee (2012-2013)

### **Membership Committee**

- Member (2017-2019)
  - Prepared recruiting and engagement plan to serve as model for the membership subcommittee of each SLC;
  - Membership liaison to several SLCs, resulting in multiple reaching their recruitment goals; and
  - Studied membership best practices for Women in the Law, Diversity, and Young Lawyers.

### **Annual Meeting Steering Committee**

- Vice Chair – Marketing Subcommittee (2018-2019).
  - Responsible for promotion of the 2019 Annual Meeting.

### **Young Lawyers Task Force**

- Chair (2017-2018)
  - As the chair of the Young Lawyers Task Force, I led a study and evaluation of young-lawyer engagement in DRI. The Task Force met regularly in-person and over the phone throughout the year and identified five key needs of young lawyers with regard to DRI: recruitment into DRI; opportunities for growth; education; long-term engagement; and support. The Task Force then made recommendations for improvements related to each key need. Through that work, I oversaw the preparation of a report that identified key actions that DRI could take to recruit young lawyers as members and keep them engaged in the organization long term. To date, DRI has now implemented several of the Task Force's recommendations, including the following:
    - Creating on-boarding communications for new young-lawyer members sent at intervals of 30, 60, and 90 days designed to ensure that each new, young-lawyer member is well informed of opportunities for engagement;
    - Focusing on “on-demand” programming that will allow lawyers to obtain information on their schedule from anywhere;
    - Creating a new Young Lawyers Pricing Package that allows young lawyers to pay for their membership fee and for two seminars for \$1,500, which allows them to make only one request for funding per year and results in a savings of almost \$500; and
    - Creating new subcommittee positions in each SLC and new Membership Committee positions to assist young lawyers in becoming actively engaged in other SLCs.

**Nominating Committee:** Member (2018)

**Management Council for the Center for Law and Public Policy:** Member (2019)

- Responsible for the oversight of all Center activities.

Presentations:

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**Young Lawyers Seminars**

- Ethics in Negotiations and Mediations; and
- Starting and Growing Young Lawyer Committees in State and Local Defense Organizations.

**DRI Leadership Meetings**

- Using Social Media to Promote Your Organization;
- Engaging Young Lawyers in SLDs; and
- Best Practices for Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs.

**Webinars**

- Ethical Pitfalls of Representing Friends and Family (national focus);
- 2019 Products Liability Caselaw Update;
- Pathway to Partnership: Making Oprah Proud – Become a Presenter Extraordinaire.

**Southwest Regional Meeting**

- Don't Hate, Appreciate Millennials – Building Bridges and Finding Common Ground.

**Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel**

- Ethical Pitfalls of Representing Friends and Family (Arkansas specific focus); and
- Luddite or Technophile: Stark Warnings of Technology Competency Requirements.

**Nebraska Defense Counsel Association**

- Ethical Pitfalls of Representing Friends and Family (Nebraska specific focus).

Articles:

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**For the Defense**

- DRI's Young Lawyers Committee: The Place for Young Lawyers to Thrive;
- What I Wish I Knew Then: Your Law Practice is a Business, Plan for It; and
- DRI – It's Personal.

**Newsletters**

- 2019 Products Liability Case Law Update;
- FYI re DRI;
- Young Lawyers Committee – New Year, New Ideas;
- Embrace Millennials; and
- The Purpose of the Young Lawyers Committee.

List any leadership roles in other defense organizations.

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Treasurer of the Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel (2018-2019)

- As treasurer of the AADC, I have focused on recruiting and engaging new members, including hosting AADC's first recruitment event.

Describe your goals if you are elected to the above position.

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Because of my work with the Center for Law and Public Policy, the Young Lawyers Committee, and Membership Committee, I understand the need to show members and prospective members new and continued value for their membership. This is particularly important now with the changing demographics of DRI's pool of members. Because of that, my initial goals for service on the board largely relate to recruiting, retaining, and engaging members.

- The Center for Law and Public Policy is often referred to as the "Crown Jewel of DRI." I agree. The important work that the Center does on behalf of defense lawyers and their clients is remarkable. However, that work is largely unreported or underreported to our membership and clients. DRI should work to increase its promotion of the Center's work. One of my goals as a board member would be to increase the promotion of the Center's work through the creation of a marketing committee within the Center. The committee would be responsible for promoting the work of the Center to our current members, recruiting new members for DRI, and garnering support for the Center from the business community. By highlighting the work of the Center, DRI members will understand their membership supports the work of the Center and that they receive value from their membership, even if they do not actively participate in any of the other benefits of DRI membership.
- Through my work on the Young Lawyers Task Force and other membership initiatives and my experience in leading the Young Lawyers Committee, I have had unique opportunities to study, address, and understand recruitment, engagement, and retention of young and diverse lawyers. We have had tremendous success implementing new membership initiatives in the Young Lawyers Committee. An example of those initiatives is the 30, 60, and 90 day on-boarding communications referred to above, which has resulted in increased engagement from new members. As a member of the Board, I would work to expand those membership initiatives and to spread the information we have gained to other SLCs.
- Again, through my work on the Young Lawyers Task Force, the Young Lawyers Committee, and Membership Committee, I have seen first hand the difficulty that DRI has in transitioning members that are actively engaged in the Young Lawyers Committee into active engagement in other SLCs. We frequently lose members or their engagement during the time after young lawyers experience out of the Young Lawyers Committee. DRI

has started new efforts to assist those lawyers both through the Young Lawyers Committee and also the Membership Committee. As a member of the Board, I would work to fully implement the Task Force's recommendation and continue working to keep our young lawyer members actively engaged.

- Having had the opportunity to attend DRI's Leadership Conference for several years and speak with leaders of other SLCs, I have seen the lack of uniformity of information and committee practices amongst the SLCs. We have leaders who are involved in committee leadership for a few years and then move on. This creates a lack of continuity in leadership and a lack of knowledge about best practices. As a member of the Board, I would work to create a handbook for committee leadership that would allow new committee leaders to have the information needed to successfully lead their committee on their first day in their leadership role.
- My final goal as a Board member would be to work to increase the value of DRI membership for less active members. This can be done by focusing on the core role of DRI for the defense bar. Please see appropriate role section below for more details.

What do you believe is the most important issue confronting the defense bar?

There are number of important issues facing the defense bar, but the most pressing and long-term issue is the increased demands on a lawyer's time. These increased demands have come in the form of decreased profitability per hour and additional non-billable time requirements. Specifically, more and more client-specific overhead is being transitioned from being billable costs or billable time (e.g. travel time) to being uncompensated time or overhead. To maintain his or her profitability, a lawyer must work more or charge more. Because many lawyers cannot unilaterally raise their rates, the solution is often to work more. This problem is compounded by additional competency and other non-billable requirements, which take away from billable time. While DRI may not be in a position to assist lawyers with issues related to their bills, it can serve as a resource to reduce the amount of non-billable time that must be spent to maintain competency, both substantively and with regard to technology. This will allow a lawyer to have more time to focus on billable work or other personal activities.

**Define the appropriate role for DRI as the national defense bar organization.**

As the national defense bar organization, DRI's primary role should be to serve as an advocate and resource for defense lawyers and their clients. While there are a number of noble causes that DRI can and should support, its primary focus should be in the following areas:

- **Legislative and Rule-Making Representation:** Each member of the defense bar, along with their clients, needs representation at the national, state,

and potentially local level to ensure that the laws and procedures impacting the practice of law are fair and just. In 2018, the American Association for Justice PAC gave almost \$8 million in campaign contributions to federal candidates. Over 6,000 donors gave \$200 or more. Funds raised and used by one organization to support federal election candidates is only one part of the story. The plaintiffs' bar is both well-organized and well-funded and is using its influence at every legislative and court level and also with other influential organizations like the American Law Institute. Defense lawyers must have an equally well-organized and well-funded representative on their behalf. Through its work with the Center for Law and Public Policy and the National Foundation for Judicial Excellence, DRI is and must continue to be that representative.

- **Educational Resource:** Knowledge, skill, and preparation are the strategic advantages that every defense lawyer can have over opposing counsel. Historically, DRI has provided superior CLE on cutting edge substantive topics. DRI must continue to expand its substantive educational offerings, both in scope and format, but it also should expand its skills-based training. Right now, there is no organization that specializes in skills-based training in a substantive context. By offering both, DRI could be in a unique position to provide these hybrid trainings, which would allow a lawyer to maintain his or her professional skills while also learning new substantive information.
- **Technology/Business Practices Resource:** As the practice of law continues to rapidly evolve in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the requirements to operate a law practice and to be a profitable lawyer continue to increase and change on an almost daily basis. For example, since the ABA's amendment of Rule 1.1 of the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, and its adoption by a majority of states, lawyers are now required to maintain technological competence along with substantive competence. Ethics opinions and experts have interpreted this technological-competency requirement to mean that a lawyer must be proficient in data privacy, social media, and electronic discovery, along with those technologies necessary to run an efficient law practice and to best present information to a court or client. It would be next to impossible for a lawyer to conduct the research and perform the analysis necessary to maintain competency in each of these areas while maintaining a profitable legal practice. A core purpose of DRI is to be a resource on issues like these, and DRI could offer a tremendous benefit to its attorney members by providing the resources that would allow its members to use less billable time to maintain or become competent in these areas.

**Hobbies and/or interests:**

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I am a devoted Arkansas Razorback fan. From football to gymnastics, I can often be found rooting on the Hogs. I also enjoy reading, including biographies, historical fiction, business, science fiction, and, of course, legal thrillers. Finally, when I have time, I like to fly fish for trout.

**Family:**

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My college sweetheart Allison and I have been married since 2009. We have two children, Anna Leigh (6) and Duke (2).