

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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On May 1, the AAJ Board of Governors voted unanimously to hire Linda Lipsen, AAJ's senior vice president of Public Affairs, as our new CEO. Linda assumes this position after 17 years with AAJ, during which she has distinguished herself as a force on Capitol Hill, working to promote access to justice against well-funded and relentless efforts to legislatively and administratively immunize wrongdoers from liability.

One year ago, then-AAJ President Les Weisbrod appointed me to chair the CEO Search Committee. This diverse group—comprising women and minorities and spanning a wide age range—included AAJ officers, members, and staff; representatives from our state-affiliate trial lawyer associations; and acting AAJ CEO Tom Henderson. The committee retained a premier executive search firm to recruit candidates.

In January, the committee interviewed a number of qualified candidates. Not satisfied that we had found the right person to take the helm at this challenging time, we asked the search firm to identify additional candidates. After interviewing the second group of candidates in April, the search committee asked Linda to consider taking the position, with the understanding that she would continue to head the Public Affairs Department. AAJ will also hire a chief operating officer, who, together with our chief financial officer, will handle administrative and financial matters, allowing Linda to continue her important public affairs work.

What makes Linda a superb choice for CEO is her commitment to our core mission and beliefs, her passion for justice, and her profound understanding of what it means to speak up against the powerful interests that seek to run roughshod over the rights of injured workers, patients, and consumers.

Linda understands what it means for Jamie Leigh Jones—an Halliburton employee working in Iraq who was raped by coworkers and effectively held prisoner for days—to have her day in court despite Halliburton's efforts to enforce a mandatory arbitration clause in her employment contract.

Linda understands what it means to give voice to the families who participated in our Patients Lobby Day during debate on the recently enacted health care reform law. Against all odds, Linda and her team thwarted a well-financed effort to impose caps on

damages and other liability restrictions in the law.

In commenting on Linda's leadership on the health care bill, Victor Schwartz, a lobbyist and well-known proponent of liability restrictions and corporate immunity, told a *Legal Times* blogger, "Her strength is Washington. She really understands Congress, and she properly boasted about their victory in health care. They gave up no yardage."

In Linda's words, as reported in the *Washington Post*,

I've always had a dislike for bullies Everyone needs to be given a chance. That passion has guided me through my career I've always had a heart for making a difference for people who are in some sort of crisis. Representing the trial lawyers helps me make a systemic difference so that the crisis never happens [to others]—whether it involves negligence in hospitals or people who have lost their life savings from negligence from a financial institution. That's what always drives me.

Whether speaking to members of Congress, trial lawyers, the press, or families who have suffered the devastation of serious injury or death from a preventable medical error or corporate wrongdoing, Linda knows what and how to communicate. She will serve the interests of our clients well.

A word about Tom Henderson. I don't know what we would have done if Tom hadn't agreed to return to the helm at a very challenging time for the association. His strong and compassionate leadership helped restore confidence and a sense of calm at AAJ headquarters.

Tom was the right person to serve as CEO during this past year, and now Linda Lipsen is the right woman for the job. Please join me in welcoming Linda and wishing her every success as our new CEO.

Anthony Tarricone is a partner in the Boston office of Kreindler & Kreindler.