



NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
2018 EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTION

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

Valerie Brender (California)

Date of admission to practice: **2014 (CA), 2014 (NY)**

Your present position: **Associate Attorney**

Size of your firm: **5 attorneys**

Year you became a NELA member: **2016**

Name of NELA Affiliate(s): **California Employment Lawyers Association**

What percentage of your professional legal work is devoted to the representation of employees and/or their interests? **90%**

I am passionate about NELA's work and have two primary goals in seeking NELA Board Membership. The first is to improve engagement among newer attorneys in NELA; the second is to help support and propel NELA's legislative and policy work in the Trump era through The Institute, the Legislative Action Team, and NELA's committees.



I am committed to building on NELA's institutional strength through expanding our new lawyer membership base and helping to identify leadership and engagement opportunities for lawyers who are beginning to build their practice on behalf of employees. I will bring to this effort my past experience in helping bar associations develop their newer lawyer engagement. For example, I currently serve as the Co-Chair of the Bar Association of San Francisco, Barristers Labor and Employment Section (dedicated to attorneys in their first 10 years of practice), where I work to engage newer lawyers through CLEs geared toward their interests and concerns, networking events, and committee service. Since I have been a NELA member I have pushed newer attorneys to join and participate in NELA. It would be a privilege to impact NELA's newer lawyer engagement on a broader institutional level through Board Membership.

As a Board Member I will also work to propel NELA's policy and advocacy work. Shortly after Trump was elected I rolled up my sleeves to help our Legislative & Public Policy Director put together opposition research on Jeff Sessions and Andy Puzder in advance of their confirmation hearings, and I now serve as a Team Captain on NELA's Legislative Action Team. I am committed to ensuring that NELA's legislative work continues to reflect issues that are of the highest concern to our members and that this work receives sufficient support, funding, and member engagement to make the biggest impact possible.

As a developing lawyer, NELA's Annual Conventions, seminars, and committees have been hugely rewarding both professionally and personally. The connections that I have made with seasoned attorneys across the country have been invaluable. But I have noticed that newer lawyers like myself are often absent from NELA's events and committee work. This means that these lawyers are missing out on the vast knowledge and experience of NELA's membership and the opportunity to confront powerful interests and institutions through NELA's committees and programs. And without these newer

lawyers in our ranks, NELA misses out on the impact, enthusiasm, and fresh perspectives that they bring.