

I have practiced plaintiff-side employment law for more than 25 years in Chicago. I am also a clinical professor at Chicago-Kent College of Law, where I run the Civil Litigation Clinic and teach courses on employment law. In these roles, I have met and connected with many lawyers, judges, and academics in the employment law arena.

I have experience with leadership at Chicago-Kent, where I successfully spearheaded a campaign to persuade the administration at Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago-Kent's parent school) to reinstate a 9% salary match for staff and faculty retirement accounts that had been cut last year. To do so, I solicited support from staff and faculty throughout the college, met with the college's top officials, and educated them on their litigation risk.

I have taken on several other leadership roles at Chicago-Kent, including sitting on the admissions committee and the diversity committee.

I am also active in local politics in Berwyn, where I live. I work to support local candidates who are seeking to replace the entrenched, calcified local government with new, progressive candidates. I am also a member of a collective that welcomes migrant families to Berwyn and provides them with material and legal resources.

NELA has been a resource for me since my earliest days as a plaintiff-side employment attorney. Attending NELA conferences was a primary source of my education in the early years. Later, as my practice grew, NELA became an invaluable source of connections: I consistently reach out to my NELA colleagues to refer clients, ask for help with thorny legal issues, and offer advice and assistance when other members need help. Serving on the NELA board would be an honor that would allow me to give back to an organization that has been so important to my practice.

I would like to see NELA become more active in mentoring young lawyers in their first years of practice. Those can be the hardest times, and I know from my teaching experience at Chicago-Kent that many students want to practice plaintiff-side employment law but have no idea how to make a living doing it.

I also think it would be fantastic for NELA move into impact litigation funding. There are so many clients I would like to be able to help, but the modest size of their economic loss is a deterrent for any plaintiff's lawyer who needs to make a living. I would be excited to help with a fundraising campaign to build a fund to assist lawyers in representing lower-income workers whose cases may be small in size but involve considerable injustice. I know that NELA works closely with the Impact Fund, which funds class actions and other impact litigation with progressive goals. The Impact Fund model would be a good place to start.

NELA's education programs are top-notch. As a participant and a presenter, I have learned so much from NELA seminars and conferences throughout my career. The NELA listserv is also an important resource for attorneys to connect and talk about local issues, exchange briefs, and workshop ideas for litigation strategies.

If NELA has done anything poorly, I am not aware of it. I might suggest a greater emphasis on supporting the “whole lawyer” – there are many plaintiff-side employment attorneys who struggle with isolation, frustration, and disappointment that can stem from litigating the hard cases. Having a forum to talk about more than just the law – to talk about coping with being a human being who is taking on great challenges and sometimes enduring great disappointments – would be wonderful.