

Connection, Support, Inspiration

Trial spoke with **Women Trial Lawyers Caucus (WTLC) Chair Kate Jaycox** to learn about her experience with the Caucus and all that it has to offer.

Officially established in 1994, the Women Trial Lawyers Caucus offers AAJ's female lawyers the opportunity to learn from each other, network, and participate in a range of activities. The Caucus focuses on membership, fundraising, education, and public service.

Why did you decide to engage with the WTLC and become involved in its leadership?

My very first event at my first AAJ Convention in 2011 was the WTLC welcome reception at Past President Julie Kane's house in Miami. I did not know a single person there when I arrived, but I left with new connections who helped me navigate AAJ. Every single woman I met was incredibly welcoming and open to forming new connections—and I immediately felt that I was with my people. As I became involved with the WTLC, I was so impressed and inspired by the professionalism, leadership, passion, and fun of the women I met. The connections that evolved into friendships helped me grow my practice and share vulnerabilities about being a woman in this profession. As I got to know more about the WTLC, I knew it was the place in AAJ where I wanted to spend most of my energy. From that first event, the WTLC felt like a home within AAJ to me, and I became involved in its leadership to ensure that other women had that experience too.

What has been your most memorable Caucus experience?

I love the WTLC Lobby Days—being trained by the talented AAJ staff, hearing from some of the powerful women in Congress, spending time prepping to

lobby, networking with other WTLC members, trying to influence the laws being made for the better, and debriefing after an exhausting and exhilarating day. I worked on political campaigns before I became a lawyer, so Lobby Days blend my love for politics with the law, all while representing injured people in a different way from my everyday practice. WTLC Lobby Days allow me to connect with all the women in the Caucus, doing this thing that is a little bit outside of our comfort zones and working toward a common goal for all of the types of people we represent.

What three words would you use to describe the value of the Caucus to a new member?

Connection, support, inspiration.

What is one thing you'd like to see for the Caucus this year?

Connection with all of our members in the WTLC, especially coming off of a

couple of hard years when so many of us were disconnected from other people. I want all WTLC members to have a feeling of support from the Caucus, regardless of whether we've met in

WTLC Lobby Days

The WTLC Lobby Days, held biennially starting in 1997, has drawn hundreds of female plaintiff attorneys to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress on behalf of their clients. In 2020, due to the ongoing pandemic, this event took place virtually. Nearly 150 women, representing 49 states, attended a Zoom panel on forced arbitration, along with two victim advocates. After the panel, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi addressed the group along with other members of Congress. The WTLC will host a Lobby Days event in 2023. To stay updated on WTLC events, join the list server by emailing membership@justice.org.



WTLC members attend the 2019 Lobby Days. (L-R) Lauren Barnes, Marion Munley, Kate Jaycox, Kristen Miller, Krisi Kastl, Brandi Denton Gatewood, Jennifer Greene, and Laura Yaeger.

person before or whether they're able to go to our conventions or in-person events. On the bright side, the pandemic gave us an opportunity to connect in different ways and do things virtually, and I plan for the WTLC to continue to use the tools we were forced to use in the pandemic to connect with all of our more than 4,000 members.

What is something you wish you knew as a new lawyer?

Chart your own path, create your own opportunities, take ownership of your career, and know your worth. Don't expect that someone is going to take care of your career path for you or tell you what to do. There are a lot of people who will help you, but you must figure out which way you want to go and then ask for help.

I also think it's important for all lawyers to pick a professional organization and get really involved. It could be AAJ, the WTLC within AAJ, your state TLA, or a state or federal bar association. There's incredible value in having a professional network outside of your firm or outside of the people you always interact with to provide mentorship and perspective on your career and your cases.

How has your involvement with the WTLC and AAJ impacted your professional development and career?


The education that I receive from the WTLC and AAJ is second to none. I value the resources that allow me to troubleshoot any issue I'm having, grow my practice, and better serve my clients by finding answers or by helping connect people who I can't represent to other attorneys who can.

The WTLC is like my family within AAJ. There are at least 25 women I could

call or text right now if I had any kind of issue with a case, with a client, with my career. That connection has kept me relatively sane in this profession and during the pandemic. Seeing what other women have done inspires me, and I see so many role models around me within the Caucus.

All of this year's Caucus chairs are Leadership Academy graduates—what was that experience like?

The Leadership Academy was fantastic and so unique in my more than 17 years of practicing law. It allowed me to learn so much about myself—about how to affect change, how to manage people,

how to be a leader, how different people have different styles and values, how to understand my own values and my own style and then how to use that in my career. It gives you tools and skills that you just don't receive other places. The benefits go on after you graduate because of the Leadership Academy alumni network, which frequently troubleshoots issues in your cases with you. And every year, it's a growing network of attorneys who value their personal development and who also value AAJ. 

Kate Jaycox is a partner at Robins Kaplan in Minneapolis and the 2021–2022 chair of the WTLC.

2021–2022 WTLC Executive Committee

Chair:

Kate Jaycox
Minneapolis, MN

Chair-elect:

Kristen Miller
New York, NY

First Vice Chair:

Jennifer Greene
New Orleans, LA

Second Vice Chair:

Bridget Long
Petersburg, VA

Secretary:

Emily Peacock
Berkley, MI

Immediate Past Chair:

Laura Yaeger
Tierra Verde, FL

Representatives to the AAJ

Board of Governors:

Diane Cardoso
Springfield, NJ

Kelly Hyman
West Palm Beach, FL

Miranda Soucie
Danville, IL

Sharon Zinns
Atlanta, GA

Representative to the AAJ Executive Committee:

Brandi Denton Gatewood
Forest, MS