



# Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel

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## THE AADC SHOULD BE PART OF THE PROCESS

### Opinion/Editorial by Michael Langley

The AADC needs a PAC. Regular interaction with the legislators is essential to the future success of the defense bar. For eight years I served as the Director of the Arkansas Alcoholic Beverage Control Board. As a result, I spent many hours in the halls of our capitol. I learned the “inside baseball” of the system; which committee handled what issues, most favorite/hated issues for certain legislators, which lobbyists handled which subjects and whose interest they represented. The defense bar had no presence in the capitol halls or the process itself.

The plaintiffs’ bar, prosecuting attorneys and the Arkansas Bar Association all have lobbyist. Each of these groups are active participants in the governmental and legislative process. Consequently they have some role in shaping the law and again, the defense bar has been absent.

There was a time when roughly one third of the members of the legislature were lawyers. However, the lawyer led legislature is no more. Consequently, it is more important than ever to have a distinct voice in support of the defense bar.

The membership of the legislature turned over completely while I was in government and will soon do so again. The number of lawyers in the legislature will continue to decrease in every election cycle. These new legislators are ordinarily not familiar with our issues and don’t have the time to learn those issues independently. Consequently it falls to this group to supply that information. That means a lobbyist and that means money..

It is incumbent on this association and its members to be active in the legislative process. We must educate legislators about how their actions affect OUR practices.

Many legislators do not understand how a given piece of legislation impacts those involved as defendants in the legal process and historically, we haven’t told them. On the other hand, our legislators hear from judges, prosecutors, the plaintiff’s bar, and the business community; but, they do not hear from the defense bar. I believe the AADC should have a presence. The organization should take the necessary steps, starting today.

Go to the legislature’s website <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015S1/Pages/Home.aspx>; learn who is on the judiciary committee of each house. Learn the members of the state agencies committees. These are

the folks deciding the path of your practice. Judiciary handles procedural and substantive changes to the laws. The state agencies committee handles initiated acts, like tort reform. Meet the members. Interact with them whenever possible. Let them know our input is essential.

I support the creation of a political action committee for this organization for the purpose of supporting legislative candidates and providing information to legislators in general. We are way behind the other legal organizations in this respect. It is the best way forward.

Issue 3, passed in 2014, eliminated the ability for your firms or any other corporate entity to donate to candidates. The only remaining avenue is Political Action Committees, PAC's.

A corporation or other business entity can donate up to \$5000.00 per PAC, per year. There is no limit to the number of PAC's to which you can give or create. Each PAC can donate \$2700.00 per election, per election cycle, per candidate. Campaigns are expensive and difficult. Helping to elect and re-elect people who see the value in our input can only improve the process and the end result. This is the only way we can give as a unified group.

Creating a PAC is the best first step. It will give the association a presence; open doors for our input; and support those that value our opinion. What do you think?

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The thanks of the AADC go out to Michael Langley of the Barber Law Firm ([www.barberlawfirm.com](http://www.barberlawfirm.com)) for this *opinion/editorial*.



We welcome your articles and thoughts for future editions.

## We Are Better Together: Support The AADC

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