

Not Mutually Exclusive

State and Local Defense Organization *or* and DRI

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“Should I join my SLDO or DRI?”

All too often this is the question posed to attorneys or one that they may ask themselves. The inquiry may arise from the cost, albeit nominal, to join an SLDO and DRI or firm management’s offer to cover only a limited number of professional relationships. Time constraints placed on the attorney may also cause a focus on one organization or the other. A lack of information about the organizations and their respective roles may also contribute to the questions of which and why. The competition for membership by the SLDOs and DRI themselves may also contribute to this perception. There are a variety of reasons why attorneys come to see their respective SLDOs and DRI as alternatives rather than complements.

Based on my background and involvement with the Illinois Association of Defense Trial Counsel (IDC), I especially recognize the value of my SLDO. We are able to focus on state issues important to our members. We are also able to focus our education and advocacy on Illinois cases, legislation, procedures, and skills. My reputation as an attorney has developed locally and within my SLDO. Business development is often much easier on the state and local level.

However, my involvement with DRI, which has primarily been through the IDC, has also exposed me to the bigger picture offered by DRI to its members. Trends in the law, particularly in areas significant to my practice, and other issues of national significance such as the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and class actions, are more likely the subject of education and advocacy through DRI.

It is an oversimplification to say that the SLDOs relate only to state issues and that DRI relates only to national issues. It is true, however, that they do fulfill different roles for their members.

At the same time, both the SLDOs and DRI offer the development of personal relationships and professional networks for attorneys that can last for years. Both also

offer great opportunities to become involved in specific areas of the law and to publish articles of significance. It must also be recognized that the individual growth that develops through these organizations also offers good public relations for the firm, as well as notoriety and recognition for the firm of each respective member.

And, perhaps most importantly, while the SLDOs and DRI have a somewhat different focus, they do often work hand in hand. They are not mutually exclusive organizations. Rather, the SLDOs are a big part of DRI, and DRI is able to offer much to the SLDOs. The ability to tap into DRI resources should not be overlooked on the SLDO

level, and this access definitely trickles down to individual members with specific issues. The DRI Center for Law and Public Policy, for example, is an excellent source of information and support on nationally significant issues and the integrity of the civil justice system. Substantive committees also offer the opportunity to learn and to network nationally in specific areas of law.

Similarly, DRI is able to learn from individual SLDO experiences and to utilize this information in the development of its substantive seminars and advocacy on a national scale. Efforts to regulate autonomous vehicles on the state level are now on the radar of our SLDOs but this is undoubtedly a significant issue in the future for DRI. The impact on the practice of SLDO and DRI members, as well as their clients, could be dramatic.

The bottom line is that the SLDOs and DRI work together. Development of membership in these organizations is not a competition but should be considered a common goal. I encourage everyone to join both your SLDO and DRI. I also urge DRI and the SLDOs to continue to work together to offer the greatest professional and personal opportunities for all members of both organizations. Any time and effort that you are able to devote to each of these organizations will be repaid many times over.

So, should you join your SLDO or DRI? The answer is both.

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