

Younger Criminal Defense Lawyers are the Future of PACDL

As we continue together in 2016, the future of PACDL is brighter than ever. Our membership is growing, our services are expanding, our advocacy is strong and our leadership is focused. This combination is a recipe for success in the short term but our long-term success is found in our younger members.

Not too long ago, I was beginning my journey as a lawyer, eager to practice law but lacking in practical experience. Everything was new to me. As I have said before, I have been blessed with a number of mentors in my career who told me either in words or through their actions that “it will be okay” and helped me to be a better criminal defense lawyer. However, benefiting from a wise mentor is only half of the solution that guides a young lawyer through those formative years. It is a sense of not being alone, of not being the only one who doesn’t know the answer and feeling insecure. It is having a network of individuals who are of the same generation, having the same experience, and working through the issues together. It is no different than how most of us experienced law school and that support system can be lost when one begins to practice.

The Young Lawyers Committee of PACDL is a place where a new generation of criminal defense lawyers can come together, network among themselves, share experiences, and support one another through the formative years of one’s criminal practice. It is a place where lawyers can develop a support system better than the one enjoyed in law school.

We cannot forget that PACDL was founded by a group of younger criminal defense lawyers nearly 30 years ago. Back then, a group of younger lawyers came together, worked together for a common cause, supported one another, networked with one another, and most importantly, developed friendships that continue 30 years later. Some things have not changed over time. PACDL has always been a group of criminal defense lawyers from across the Commonwealth with diverse backgrounds and practices, but sharing at least one thing in common: We are all advocates for our clients and for one another. We must continue to work together to protect the right to counsel in every circumstance and teach the public that this right is of paramount importance. This basic mission does not change if you were a younger criminal defense lawyers 30 years ago or today as this is the common bond that holds each generation together.

Younger criminal defense lawyers are the future of PACDL and the continuation of its fundamental mission rests in your hands. Through your participation in the Young Lawyers Committee and other committees, new relationships will be formed among members, trust will be earned and the future of PACDL will be secure just as it was nearly 30 years ago.

Philip Gelso, President