



Our opponents are coming for us

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ATLA President-Elect

There are thirty-five State Senators in Arkansas. Don't feel bad if you didn't know that right off the top of your head, I had to check myself. During this election cycle thirteen Senate seats are open. That means that approximately 37% of the Senate is up for grabs this time. Add to the mix thirty-four out of one hundred contested House races, the national Senate and House Races, and the host of judicial races. Needless to say there is a great cry and clamor for every political dollar each of us has to spend.

Where will your dollar have the most impact? How can your voice be heard when you have only \$100 to spend and on the other side you see the huge sums of money corporations, the insurance industry, and the tort deformeders throw at political races to buy influence? You aren't an insurance company or a natural gas company. You aren't a hospital that cloaks itself as a "charity" while maintaining incredibly aggressive collection practices.

You're a lawyer.

And probably you aren't one of the big shots who get the seven digit jury verdicts. Maybe you don't handle medical malpractice cases at all, and rarely even do red car / blue car collisions. Family law, criminal law, and throwing in a will now and again: maybe that's your practice. If Act 649 hasn't affected your practice or your clients one whit since 2003, then why should you spend your money on politics? Why even read about IMPACT? The big dollar lawyers will take care of that. You pay your ATLA dues, you read the listserv and the ATLA Docket, and show up at the CLEs. What more does ATLA want?

Friends and associates have asked me each one of these questions. When I'm hitting them up for a donation waiting

on a judge in a docket call, and a few times over a beer, questions arise. They are all good questions.

Here's the answer: our opponents are coming for us. To have a full understanding of what I'm talking about I've got to define my pronoun. "Us" doesn't just include medical malpractice lawyers. "Us" doesn't just include personal injury lawyers. "Us" includes family law lawyers, criminal lawyers, bankruptcy lawyers, workers' compensation lawyers, and general practitioners. If you aren't an insurance defense lawyer or a fulltime prosecutor, then you're one of us.

Our opponents want to cap damages, limit fees, and tilt the playing field to the point that insurance industry and the state dictate what rights everyday citizens will enjoy, not the rule of law and the Constitution. How will they do this? They will do it through the legislature, by electing lawmakers beholden to the great golden trough; votes assured to limit the protection of the average citizen.

IMPACT is the voice for us. Through this tool, we become an effective political voice. While \$100 from an individual gets lost in the cacophony of checks and contributions a candidate receives, IMPACT is a voice that the candidates listen to. Through IMPACT they hear us.

This election cycle presents a tremendous opportunity for us. This Fall we'll have an opportunity to elect Arkansas Senators and House members who will allow us to get off our heels and press our legislative agenda: an agenda for us. The opposite is just as true. Our opponents see this election as a huge opportunity too. An opportunity to further strip away the rights of our clients and an opportunity to put us out of business.

Through IMPACT, help us. •