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The Future of Advocacy:

The Trial Lawyer's Guide to Large Language Model Generative AI

Trial lawyers are teetering on the brink of an unparalleled technological transformation, destined to eclipse the all-encompassing change wrought by the internet that enabled it. Those who have been practicing for at least 30 years remember that before the mid-1990s, very few law offices were connected to the internet. This slow adoption gave way to increasingly rapid acceptance, and by the late 90s, virtually all law offices had some way of connecting to the World Wide Web.[1]

The swift integration of this technology was made possible by and with the introduction of the 56k modem in 1996.[2] This allowed data to travel fast enough to download small documents and simple web pages. From this point forward, advancement was all about improving speed. Modems were soon replaced by routers and starting about 2000, fast broadband was introduced and became ubiquitous by 2010.[3] Speeds increased further with the introduction of fiber optic cables and broadband in 2011.[4]

By then the internet was blazingly fast, making it possible to download large data files, images and even video, very quickly. Video transmission in fact went both ways, with video conferencing becoming nearly universal in the legal arena about the same time COVID hit in 2019. In total, it took about four decades for the internet to enter and eventually, in many cases, dominate our lives, including the practice of law.

Just as in the 1990s, the world is at the outset of what promises to be an even more transformational technological change.[5] For trial lawyers, Large Language Model Generative Artificial Intelligence (LLM) systems such as ChatGPT may signify an even more profound transformation in legal practice than the advent of the internet.[6] Large Language Models are a subset of AI technologies capable of generating new content from training data, ranging from text to images, that resembles human-like creation.[7] With its continuous progression, LLMs are expected to transform various industries, overhaul economic structures, and significantly alter societal norms.[8]

LLMs also hold immense potential to transform the legal field. Their applications range from automating routine tasks like document review to creating complex legal documents and arguments, limited only by user creativity. The power of LLMs to analyze vast amounts of legal text can offer unprecedented insights and efficiencies.

Understanding How LLM Generative AI Works

Large machine learning models, including LLM services such as ChatGPT, are based on deep neural networks (DNNs) that resemble the multilayered human cognition system.[9] Like a series of connected nerve cells, computer-based DNNs consist of layers of nodes, or "neurons," each of which is designed to process aspects of the input data and pass it on to the next. The "deep" in DNN refers to the number of these layers, which can range from a few to hundreds, enabling the network to learn highly complex representations of data.[10]

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Deep neural networks learn through intense supervised learning, unsupervised learning, reinforcement learning, and evolutionary computation.[11] Training these networks involves feeding them large datasets and adjusting the connections between neurons to minimize the difference between the actual and predicted outcomes. Reinforcement learning takes place when an agent, such as a human or robot, learns to make decisions in an environment from simple feedback, such as reward or punishment, without detailed explanations of actions' contributions.[12] Evolutionary computation uses evolution as an algorithmic tool, applying random variation, reproduction, and selection to design and improve software, including LLMs.[13]

ChatGPT uses a type of DNN called a Transformer, hence the name (Generative Pre-Trained Transformer). The same is true of similar LLM products like Copilot and Gemini, as these machine learning models rely on complex algorithms and feedback loops to analyze input data and generate new output that resembles the input. These algorithms enable the LLM to learn from vast amounts of data and then make predictions or generate content that aligns with what it has learned.

These breakthroughs in natural language processing enable machines to understand and communicate like humans.[14] When a user provides an LLM program with a prompt, it responds by predicting the most likely next word in the sequence. This prediction considers the context provided by all the previous words. The process repeats for each new word until the output is completed. The model's training involves adjusting its parameters to minimize the difference between its predictions and actual human-written text, enabling it to generate coherent and contextually relevant outputs.[15]

Will I Be Replaced by a Robot? The Evolving Role of Lawyers in an AI-Augmented Future

The short answer is no, robots will not unseat lawyers. However, LLM generative AI has demonstrated significant potential to revolutionize some aspects of the legal profession. Tools powered by LLM generative AI can sift through vast amounts of legal data, identify relevant case law, and draft legal documents with efficiency, speed, and accuracy far beyond human capability, potentially saving hundreds of hours of work.[16] This aspect of LLMs is widely acknowledged and welcomed for its potential to increase productivity and reduce costs.

However, this automation applies primarily to tasks that are procedural and data driven, and the notion of LLMs fully replacing lawyers overlooks the complexity of legal work and the nuanced role that lawyers play in society. Legal work often involves complex decision-making, ethical considerations, negotiations, and a deep understanding of human contexts and justice — areas where AI currently falls short. Lawyers' roles as advisors, negotiators, and advocates involve emotional intelligence, ethical judgment, and creative problem-solving that LLMs cannot replicate.[17]

Furthermore, the legal profession is governed by strict regulatory and ethical frameworks that require human accountability. Issues of confidentiality, professional responsibility, and client representation are central to legal ethics and currently beyond LLM's capacity to navigate autonomously.

This is not to say that LLMs will have no impact on the employment or future employability of lawyers. One authoritative source estimates that one-fourth of all current work tasks could be automated by AI in the United States.[18] The legal field has a particularly high exposure with up to 44% of a law firm's current work subject to automation.[19] Of course, the celerity with which LLMs are advancing makes predictions difficult. What seems certain, though, is that the overall impact of LLMs in law is bound to be extraordinary.

In its current manifestation, however, it appears that considerable time will pass before LLMs achieve the capability to mimic human intuition for making judgments, something they may never be fully capable of doing.[20] This is especially true when the legal issue is multifaceted. While a chatbot's response might be accurate for one specific issue, it could be detrimental when considering other related matters.[21] This limitation underscores that chatbots cannot fully replace human professionals, as generative AI lacks the empathy and personal touch needed to provide the emotional support and guidance often required in legal services.[22] Nonetheless, in the near-term, LLMs could undertake roles commonly filled by paralegals and junior lawyers. For example, LLMs can be effective in performing initial legal tasks, including the collection of information and preliminary analysis, thereby allowing senior legal professionals to concentrate on more complex aspects of a case or document preparation.[23] For these reasons, LLM generative AI might be seen as a tool to augment rather than replace human lawyers.[24]

As the technology advances, one expert believes that "the impact will be to force everyone in the profession, from paralegals to $1,000-an-hour partners, to move up the skills ladder to stay ahead of the technology."[25] Because the work of the trained professionals will increasingly be focused on developing subject matter expertise, new lawyers and those who otherwise lack adequate specialization will be first to feel the impact of the technology.

Additionally, as these models continue to rapidly improve, lawyers exploring and understanding this technology will find new uses, thereby gaining a significant edge. Just as calculators replaced manual calculations, LLMs are expected to transform legal writing. In the very near future, it will become an indispensable tool for legal drafting and analysis. Early adopters, particularly criminal defense trial lawyers leveraging LLM technology, will possess the advantage in producing better work product and achieving better outcomes for their clients.

The Ethical Dilemmas Posed by LLM Generative AI

LLMs are an emerging technology with seemingly novel, yet impressive, capabilities. Because it is so new, the law has yet to catch up to the rapidly changing reality. Consequently, lawyers have few cases or professional ethics opinions to rely upon when considering how to adopt this technology ethically or whether to use it at all.

This topic has been considered within the profession. As early as August 2019, the American Bar Association House of Delegates promulgated Resolution 112, urging courts and lawyers to address the emerging ethical and legal issues regarding the use of artificial intelligence in the legal sector. This resolution discusses the implications of LLM generative AI in legal practice, including the ethical responsibilities of lawyers when incorporating LLM technologies. The New York Bar Association Task Force on Artificial Intelligence has also published a report that covers this topic extensively.[26]

The ABA resolution highlights concerns with LLM bias and the importance of transparency in LLM systems used within the legal field. It concludes with

ABA Guidance on GAI Tools

Formal Opinion 512, issued by the ABA on July 29, 2024, further elaborates on the ethical issues involved in the use of generative AI tools and offers additional guidance.

recommendations for lawyers and legal institutions on adopting LLM technologies responsibly, emphasizing the importance of understanding LLM's ethical and legal challenges.

In 2023, the ABA reiterated that organizations and individuals involved in the creation of LLM systems ought to be subject and adhere to certain guidelines.[27] These guidelines urge developers of these systems to offer assurance that the systems are subservient to human authority, oversight, and control. Also, those who develop and use LLM systems must adhere to guidelines emphasizing human oversight, accountability for LLM-induced consequences, and transparency in LLM operations. The ABA resolution further calls for documenting key design and risk-related decisions to ensure LLM products are transparent and traceable while protecting intellectual property.[28]

Moreover, the ABA resolution urges Congress, federal agencies, and state legislators to incorporate these guidelines into LLM-related legislation and standards. The aim is to address the significant legal and ethical challenges LLM generative AI poses, such as algorithmic bias, privacy concerns, and the need for accountability in LLM decision-making processes. By promoting principles of accountability, transparency, and traceability, the ABA resolution seeks to maximize LLM GAI benefits responsibly and minimize risks, ensuring LLM development and deployment align with legal standards and societal values.

One month later, the Harvard Law School Center on the Legal Profession closely followed the ABA in discussing the transformative potential of ChatGPT and other LLMs in the legal profession.[29] The discussion highlights the rapid advancements and ethical considerations and touches on regulatory challenges and societal implications of this technology, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to harnessing LLM's benefits while mitigating risks. Some ethical concerns set forth in the article include a recognition of the challenge of ensuring that it produces accurate and reliable results, and that it may not always be able to account for the subtle complexities of the law.[30]

Bias is a closely related issue, and there are potentially dozens of different kinds of bias that may be introduced through and may occur in the use of LLMs and other AI systems. In a 2021 Georgetown Law journal article, Mark Shope sets forth 19 different types of bias that may infect LLMs.

Shope highlights how the various biases in artificial intelligence and machine learning can skew data analysis and algorithm development. These biases range from assumptions made about large groups not applying to subgroups (aggregation bias), to biases inherent in algorithms themselves (algorithmic bias), and the influence of outdated historical data (historical bias). Other forms of bias are based on social norms, inadequate population representation, and the presentation of information. He indicates further that "this is not an exhaustive list of all the biases that can creep into datasets and algorithms, but illustrates the major issues present in AI tools."[31] Collectively, these biases underscore the challenges in ensuring LLM systems are fair, accurate, and reliable, necessitating careful mitigation strategies.

This bias problem is one all too familiar to criminal defense lawyers. For example, in the report "Garbage In, Gospel Out" by the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, the authors demonstrate how data-driven policing technologies perpetuate systemic racism and bias by relying on flawed and racially skewed data, exacerbating the overpolicing of minority communities.[32] When combined with biases inherent in LLMs, these AI technologies create harmful feedback loops that reinforce existing disparities, lack transparency, and complicate legal defenses. Lawyers and judges must know of these types of inherent imperfections in AI tools so they can understand their limits when using or encountering them professionally. Once uncovered, such AI biases must be questioned proactively as part of a zealous criminal defense practice.

Given these ethical considerations, it is crucial for trial lawyers to critically evaluate the use of LLMs in their practice and remain vigilant to the latest developments, both technological and regulatory. Furthermore, it is important to frequently consult the most recent updates to state-specific rules and guidelines that may impact the ethical use of LLMs in legal settings.

The Balancing Act: Upholding Legal Ethics with LLM Generative AI in the Courtroom and Beyond

In addition to the regulatory challenges and the many types of bias inherent in LLM generative AI, the third tranche of possible LLM pitfalls that trial lawyers must consider is the wide variety of potential ethical issues. First among them is client confidentiality. Lawyers have a fundamental duty to protect client confidentiality. Yet, this principle is challenged by the advent of LLM technologies that process vast datasets, theoretically also including sensitive client information, which could lead to unintentional disclosures of client confidences.

Rule 1.6[33] of the American Bar Association's Model Rules of Professional Conduct emphasizes the importance of safeguarding client information. This rule permits disclosure only under certain conditions and requires lawyers to manage the balance between maintaining confidentiality with the potential benefits of disclosure in specific instances. This duty extends to the client information a lawyer may share when using generative AI tools.[34] Confidentiality concerns arise when entering information into AI chatbots when such entries are then added to the training set for the AI.[35] The use of cloud-based LLM tools thereby heightens the risk of breaches or unauthorized access to client information, necessitating stringent measures to ensure that using such AI tools does not violate confidentiality obligations.

This does not mean that the use of LLM tools in a legal practice is invariably unethical. On Jan. 19, 2024, the Florida Bar issued an ethics opinion[36] authorizing the professional use of LLM tools but emphasizing the issue of possibly compromising a client's confidentiality. The opinion highlights the importance of obtaining informed consent from clients before using LLM tools that may disclose confidential information and recommends measures to prevent unauthorized access or disclosure of such information. Lawyers are advised to be aware of the potential for LLMs to store client information, thereby posing a risk of future inadvertent disclosures to third parties. The opinion also reflects on the applicability of existing ethical opinions on technology use, emphasizing the continuity

of lawyers' ethical obligations to safeguard client confidentiality in the context of emerging LLM technologies.

One solution proposed by the Florida Bar is the adoption of a "private" AI system that operates on a closed network, such as a law firm server, to mitigate risks associated with cloud storage. Use of such private, noncloud-based LLM systems would not require a client's advised consent.[37] The opinion also indicates that the guidelines for using LLMs are similar to those for other cloud-based services with the crucial distinction being this: data should not be stored by third parties but on in-house servers. Lawyers are already familiar with this distinction as it has previously been applied to file storage services like Box, OneDrive and Google Docs, as well as to hosted email.

Closely related to the duty of confidentiality is the duty of disclosure. While there appears to be no rule of professional responsibility currently on point, lawyers are almost certainly required to disclose to clients or courts that they are using LLM tools. It has been suggested that because "lawyers are required to communicate with clients and gain their approval when they are bringing in a consultant to help them better understand, for example, a case involving complex financial litigation, using LLMs to augment your analysis, or inform the strategy of your case, activates the same principle.[38] A disclosure clause can be incorporated into a lawyer's engagement agreement, providing further that the client consents to the use of LLM tools.

Another consideration is professional competence, and this is a dual-edged sword. On the one edge, the ABA Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.1 requires lawyers to be "competent"[39] in their use of new technology. As Comment 8 states, "to maintain the requisite knowledge and skill, a lawyer should keep abreast of changes in the law and its practice, including the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology."[40] Clearly, technical competence is part of a lawyer's overall competency. What is left undefined is what technological competence might precisely entail, how it is to be judged, and who exercises this judgment.[41] Considering the many benefits that may inure to the client, it does seem reasonable to assume nonetheless that understanding, if not using LLM tools, is embraced by the rule's competency requirement. However, attorneys using LLM tools like ChatGPT must understand the technology or seek help from knowledgeable lawyers or IT experts who do. If they cannot achieve this competency, they should not use such technologies.[42]

Tightly connected to the issue of competency is the sword's other edge, i.e., the issue of independent judgment. In Rule 2.1, the ABA model rules emphasize that lawyers must maintain independence in their judgment when providing legal services to their clients.[43] This rule would be violated if a lawyer relies excessively on LLM-generated output without proper oversight. This reliance would compromise a lawyer's ability to assess the client's legal situation independently and offer personalized advice.

Moreover, if a lawyer does not critically evaluate LLM suggestions and allow LLMs to dictate legal strategies or decisions, it would lead to a delegation of professional responsibility to the technology, thereby undermining the lawyer's duty to exercise independent professional judgment on behalf of the client. This responsibility is critical to ensure that the advice provided is not only accurate but also tailored to the specific circumstances

of the client's case. The use of LLMs should complement, not substitute, the professional judgment of a lawyer, ensuring that all legal actions and decisions meet the required ethical and professional standards.[44]

A crucial component of maintaining independence is avoiding conflicts of interest. Consequently, this rule extends beyond legal aspects to include moral, economic, social, and political considerations relevant to the client's circumstances. Due to inherited biases of LLM tools, simply using them could create a violation of this rule.

This last point naturally segues to the allegory of the mushroom hunter discussed below — an overreliance on this technology can be fatal. "Generative AI lacks the nuanced understanding and legal expertise that human lawyers possess. Complex legal matters often require the interpretation of law, ethics, and context, which generative AI may not fully grasp. There is a risk that lawyers may become overly dependent on generative AI tools, potentially neglecting their own critical reasoning, legal skills, and professional judgment."[45] The brain is like a muscle, and like all muscles, it will atrophy from non-use. Indeed, how many people have lost the ability to perform basic math due to reliance on calculators, or struggle with following paper maps because of their dependence on phone-based global positioning and mapping services?

Consequently, while lawyers are free to leverage LLM tools to stimulate and inspire their own thoughts, insights, and perspectives, the essential duty of critically assessing these outputs remains the sole province of the attorney. Lawyers may not delegate their duty to make impartial decisions, devise authentic legal strategies or create client-centered arguments to LLMs. Neglecting this responsibility undoubtedly breaches a lawyer's ethical obligations to the client.

Firmly related to the duty of independent judgment is the lawyer's duty of candor to the court. Essentially, lawyers have a duty to be honest with the court. Presenting fictitious case law or distorting the findings of a case constitutes a false declaration to a court. The fact that LLM generative AI was the source of this information is irrelevant.[46] Additionally, lawyers may have a duty to disclose to a court their use of LLM generative AI. However, existing legal frameworks like Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 11 and 26(g) already impose obligations that would cover the responsible use of AI, and additional disclosure and certification may not be necessary.[47]

Finally, lawyers must adhere to ethical guidelines when using LLM tools and ensure fairness and transparency in charging clients. This includes avoiding billing practices that would be considered duplicative or otherwise excessive or deceptive.[48] When billing clients, lawyers must be transparent about any costs associated with these tools and ensure that such costs are reasonable and directly related to the client's matter, and any increase in efficiency due to LLM generative AI should not result in unjustified billing. Lawyers using LLMs may avoid many of these issues by considering alternative billing arrangements, such as flat fees or contingency arrangements, that would pass on the benefits of LLM's efficiency to both the lawyer and the client.[49]

Overreliance Leading to Death: The FungiVision Allegory

FungiVision has developed and implemented an AI-based fungi species recognition system to help a community of citizen scientists collect fungi data. This system includes a mobile app, and with human confirmation, the system correctly identifies edible mushrooms and distinguishes them from poisonous mushrooms with nearly 93% accuracy.[50] However, without human confirmation, the accuracy plummets to a mere 44% accuracy.[51]

The associated mushroom identification apps, which are multiplying across digital platforms, pledge accuracy and reliability, yet often fall short, emphasizing the precariousness of mistaking a poisonous mushroom for an edible one based on an unreliable app's assurance. As the use of these apps has increased, so have mushroom poisoning and associated hospitalizations.[52]

The situation is exacerbated by a phenomenon known as automation bias, where users may place undue trust in technology over their own judgment or expertise.[53] This trust is problematic, especially when AI tools, like those that produce inaccurate mushroom images or guides, could perpetuate misinformation and erode the confidence of future AI use and adoption.

The same accuracy issues abound in the legal field. Because LLM models compose text "by making statistical predictions of what is the most likely word to occur next in the sentence that they are constructing,"[54] a lawyer using an LLM tool is entrusting the program to make predictions that are correct. When they are not, these incorrect guesses are euphemistically called "hallucinations" — which is a nicer way of saying they are lies.[55] Hallucinations occur in large LLMs because they generate responses based on patterns in the vast data they are trained on rather than understanding factual accuracy.[56] This pattern recognition can lead to responses that seem relevant but are nonsensical or incorrect, as the LLM predicts what might be appropriate without verifying the truthfulness of the information. And like mushroom hunters, lawyers are also prone to automation bias.

Yet, users must remember one of the fundamental rules in computing, GIGO — garbage in, garbage out. This adage is especially relevant to LLMs because their effectiveness is also directly tied to the quality of the training data they receive.[57] Consequently, thus far, LLM tools like ChatGPT are incapable of producing fully referenced and well-argued legal materials such as motions and briefs. This limitation persists even with industry-specific LLM tools like LexisAI and Westlaw Edge, which claim, in the case of LexisAI, to bridge this gap by providing "100% hallucination-free linked legal citations connected to source documents, grounding those responses in authoritative resources that can be relied upon with confidence."[58] Although these AI-powered research platforms effectively utilize company- or domain-specific data to produce more detailed and accurate answers than may be possible with generic tools like ChatGPT, at least one study has demonstrated that they still hallucinate, generating incorrect or misleading information in a statistically significant number of searches.[59] Thus, use of these tools still necessitates careful supervision and verification by legal professionals.

This issue is highlighted by the well-publicized case of attorney Steven Schwartz, who is ignominiously known for filing a Summons and Verified Complaint in the Southern District of New York that cited several fake cases.[60] Because Mr. Schwartz is not admitted to practice in this court, the summons and complaint was filed under the signature of an attorney who was. However, Mr. Schwartz continued to do the necessary legal work. The judge in the case, U.S. District Judge Kevin Castel, was perplexed after he discovered inconsisten-

cies in the cases referenced in the Complaint and asked Schwartz to provide copies. Later, when the judge learned the cases were non-existent, he issued an Order to Show Cause why sanctions should not be imposed.[61] In his response to the show cause, Mr. Schwartz filed an affidavit[62] indicating that he relied on ChatGPT, which generated the fabricated cases that he mistakenly included in his filing. Schwartz further indicated that he prepared the pleading "in consultation with the generative AI tool," and that he had never used ChatGPT previously. He stated he was "therefore unaware of the possibility that its content could be false." There is no doubt that Mr. Schwartz's predicament, including the resulting fine of $5,000, would have been avoided had he checked his work more carefully.

Bringing It All Together: Use with Trust but Verify

The mushroom hunter's tale of overreliance without verification leading to possible hospitalization and death serves as a cautionary metaphor for lawyers tempted by the efficiency and novelty of LLM tools without due diligence. Just as automation bias can lead foragers to trust flawed identification apps over their better judgment, lawyers too might find themselves ensnared by overreliance on AI, accepting its output with blind trust, even when it contradicts their expertise or common sense. Lawyers who use LLMs must tread carefully, mindful of the automation bias and the potential for AI to lead them astray.

Another useful parallel consists of an examination of the responsibilities that lawyers have toward nonlawyer assistants. Likewise, when using LLM tools, lawyers are ultimately responsible for verifying the accuracy and adequacy of work produced by LLMs, like overseeing nonlawyer assistants' work. This includes ensuring that LLM-generated research, drafting, or any work product meets legal and ethical standards before it is finalized or presented in any legal context.[63] Lawyers are therefore cautioned against delegating tasks that require professional judgment to AI and are reminded of their duty to supervise work delegated to LLM tools closely, ensuring it conforms with legal and ethical guidelines.

As more Bar Associations around the country follow the Florida Bar in authorizing the use of LLMs, the inevitable integration of LLMs into the legal field marks a profound shift in our professional lives. Just as the World Wide Web redefined information accessibility, processing, storage, assimilation, communication, and legal commerce, LLM generative AI promises to similarly, if not more profoundly, revolutionize the legal profession.

However, this era also brings challenges and ethical considerations. The reliability of LLM-generated legal advice, the protection of client confidentiality, and the maintenance of professional integrity are paramount concerns. Furthermore, the potential for LLMs to disrupt traditional legal jobs requires careful navigation to ensure that the benefits of technology do not come at the cost of professional livelihoods.

In essence, the advent of LLM tools in the legal field is not just an incremental change but a fundamental shift that could redefine the practice of law. Much like the advent of the internet, it holds the promise of making legal services more efficient and accessible, but it also requires a reevaluation of ethical standards, regulatory frameworks, and the role of legal professionals.

As society stands on the brink of this new era, the legal community faces the dual challenge of harnessing AI's potential while safeguarding the values of justice, equity, and professional integrity that underpin the legal system.

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61. *See* Mata v. Avianca Airlines, No: 22-cv-1461 (PKC), (S.D.N.Y May 4, 2023) (The judge ordered sanctions in the amount of $5,000.00).; *See also* Pamela Langham, *Latest AI Legal Implications*, June 12, 2023. https://www.msba.org/latest-ai-legal-implications/.

62. Mata v. Avianca Airlines — Affidavit in Opposition to Motion, available at: https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23826751-mata-v-avianca-airlines-affidavit-in-opposition-to-motion?responsive=1&title=1.

63. *Id.*

About the Author

NACDL MEMBER

Patrick T. Barone founded the Barone Defense Firm, which focuses on DUI, criminal sexual conduct, medical fraud, and self-defense firearms cases. He is a board-certified trainer, educator, and practitioner of psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy. Barone is the author of five books, including the two-volume treatise *Defending Drinking Drivers*.

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Neal Sonnett Memoriam

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profound loss to the American legal community."

"I had the pleasure of serving on the NACDL Department of Justice Liaison Committee with Neal Sonnett and Albert Krieger," said NACDL Past President Jeff Weiner. "We met with several Attorneys General to discuss key issues of importance to the defense bar. Neal's input was always important and insightful. I will miss him and his wise counsel. Many people did not know that Neal was also a gifted lounge singer."

"Neal was an accomplished entertainer," said NACDL Past President David Russell. "Several times over the years, we would go to meetings and at night go to clubs. More than once, Neal would know the entertainer and Neal would end up singing and playing the piano. What a great guy and man for all seasons."

"He was an extraordinarily kind and wise man," said Barry Scheck. "Neal helped engineer a very effective ethical opinion that lawyers assigned to the Guantanamo tribunals had an ethical duty to protest and decline the assignment because of the extraordinary and unconstitutional limitations tribunal rules placed upon representation. It led to high level meetings with the Secretary of the Navy at the Pentagon. It all worked, like so many other initiatives Neal led. I could never thank him enough for his guidance, patience, and encouragement over the years."

A titan in the field of criminal defense, Sonnett was celebrated for his expertise in white collar, corporate, and complex criminal cases nationwide. Sonnett's impact extended far beyond the courtroom. In addition to his years of service on the NACDL board of directors, he held leadership positions in numerous legal organizations, including the American Bar Association (ABA) — where he served as a member of the Board of Governors and as the chair of the ABA Criminal Justice Section. Beyond his Miami practice, Sonnett previously served with distinction as an assistant United States attorney and chief of the Criminal Division for the Southern District of Florida.

In keeping with the wishes of Neal R. Sonnett's family, charitable gifts in his memory may be made to the NACDL Foundation for Criminal Justice (NFCJ) at **NFCJ.org/NRSonnett**.