

Leadership Academy: Day in the Capitol and at the Courts a Success

The halls of the Capitol building were a blaze with emerging OTLA leaders on March 8th as the 2022 and 2023 Leadership Academy classes navigated from office to office, practicing the art of lobbying legislators on OTLA's top priority, consumer protection bills, expanding the Unfair Claim Settlement and Unfair Trade Practices Act. Due to COVID, the 2022 class was unable to lobby so joined this year's class in the two day adventure.

The jam-packed day kicked off at Willamette University with a breakfast training on the legislative process and effective messaging with OTLA Political Director Arthur Towers before the group was visited by BOLI Commissioner and OTLA Leadership Academy alumni, Christina Stephenson. Afterwards, the group marched swiftly over to the Capitol, where breakout groups started their lobby visits and others attended a House Judiciary meeting. There were 5 groups in all, broken out into teams of 3-4 participants. Throughout the day, 33 individual lobby visits were accomplished in herculean fashion, with teams racing from office to office, sometimes traversing from House to Senate chambers.

Just before lunch, the entire group hustled back to Willamette University for a meeting with Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum to talk about her support of our priority consumer legislation, among other things. Governor Tina Kotek took time out of her incredibly busy schedule to join Chief Justice Meagan Flynn in addressing attendees and talking about their individual career paths. Both were generous with their open dialogue during Q&A. And the political VIP's kept coming! Former OTLA member and now Secretary of State, Shemia Fagan rolled her wheelchair in to visit with the Academy. Even her recovery from a torn ACL from playing basketball couldn't keep her away! It was not lost on all participants, the power of OTLA in fostering the careers of women leaders in state politics.

After lunch, it was back to the Capitol to continue lobby visits in earnest. The afternoon ended with House Speaker Dan Rayfield welcoming the Academy for a special tour of the House Floor, sharing the history of the space and his personal path from OTLA Guardian to Speaker. He was joined by Representatives Nathan Sosa and Paul Evans who spoke with the group about the nuances of working across the aisle to help protect Oregonians and what drives them to public service.

At the close of day, exhausted yet inspired, Academy members shuffled back to Willamette for a hosted social with law students, where they mixed, mingled and shared experiences from the day. After a brief check in at the Grand Hotel, members drove out to the lovely home of OTLA Board member Ryan Jennings, who graciously hosted a catered dinner party.

The following morning, the Leadership Academy was back up and out the door to head to the Supreme Court building to attend a Court of Appeals oral argument, arranged by none other than former OTLA President Judge Jim Egan. After the session, participants were allowed to ask general questions to the lawyers about their process and best practices. The Court of Appeals Judges also opened the floor for similar questioning. Afterwards, Judge Egan gave the group his now famous Leadership Academy tour of the Supreme Court building, regaling one and all with his exuberant historical knowledge and tales from the inner sanctum. Lunch was shared with the OTLA Board and most of the members of the Court of Appeals at the Oregon Convention Center before a breakout session with Governor Kotek's General Counsel and beloved OTLA alum, Richard Lane.

This amazing experience was only made possible with the generous gift of sponsorship from OTLA Past President Tom D'Amore, and program creator and chair Sheneea Payne.



Talia Guerriero, Maria Witt, Jovanna Patrick, Elizabeth Savage, Danny Kim, BOLI Commissioner Christina Stephenson, Apolinar Montero-Sánchez, Shannon Conley and Mona Moghimian

Testimonials from Academy members:

- “OTLA hosted a two day Lobby Day/Day at the Courts for our Leadership Academy in Salem this past month. We got to speak with Chief Justice Flynn, Attorney General Rosenblum, Governor Kotek and her in house counsel, Richard Lane, Oregon Senators and House of Representatives, Court of Appeals Judges, BOLI Commissioner Christina Stephenson, and others. I would be remiss to say that seeing firsthand the collective efforts of these individuals to speak with us so candidly was uplifting. This was a monumental and powerful experience for me.” -- *Apolinar Montero-Sánchez*
- “After spending two straight days with the people shaping our state, it was hard not to leave fully inspired. Out of all the Leadership Academy events, this was most effective at focusing your path toward community engagement. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity.” -- *Shannon Conley*
- “The best thing about Leadership Academy is getting to connect with my group. It’s nice to find community and learn from each other. We’ve got to do all this work together, and I’ve already learned so much from my peers. It makes me feel good about the future of OTLA.” -- *Shiwanni Johnson*
- “Thanks to OTLA, we were able to watch a Court of Appeals argument and receive a tour of the Oregon Supreme Court building from Judge Egan, who was so generous with his time. I felt lucky to have such an insider’s view into a beautiful building full of interesting history.” – *Maria Witt*
- “Participating in the Lobby Day as the final part of the Leadership Academy program was an awesome and eye-opening experience. Meeting face-to-face with my elected representatives and advocating for important issues (UTPA/Unfair Claims) was an empowering experience. It's easy to feel like one voice doesn't make a difference, but together with OTLA and its community network, we can truly make an impact and influence change.”
– *Danny Kim*
- "Lobby Day was great! We got to meet legislators, Secretary of State Fagan, Attorney General Rosenblum, Governor Kotek, and more. Speaker Rayfield took us on the house floor, which was awesome. It was educational, eye-opening, and took a lot of hard work for OTLA to pull off, so thank you OTLA Staff!" -- *Ashley Rosenbaum-DePalo*



Shenoa Payne, Chief Justice Meagan Flynn, Young Walgenkim and Tom D'Amore



Rep. Hai Pham, Sydney Montanaro, Talia Guerriero, Ashley Rosenbaum-DePalo, Alexis Andersen and Ron Cheng



Emily Johnson, Sean Stokes, Lauren Barnhart, Shiwanni Johnson, Nik Yanchar and Rep. Travis Nelson



Inner sanctum tour of the Oregon Supreme Court building with Court of Appeals Judge Jim Egan



The whole Leadership Academy group enjoyed a tour of the Oregon Supreme Court building



Shenoa Payne, Rian Peck, Rep. Farrah Chaichi, Melissa Hopkins and Apolinar Montero-Sánchez



Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum (middle, green scarf) with the full Leadership Academy group



Mona Moghimian, Young Walgenkim, Jovanna Patrick, Senator Wagner and Caroline Greenlaw



Shiwanni Johnson, Lauren Barnhart, Sean Stokes, Sen. Manning, Nik Yanchar and Emily Johnson



Rep. Valderrama and Shiwanni Johnson discuss Unfair Trades Practices Act and Unfair Claims Settlement Practice Act in their lobby visit