

## **Candidate Statement for FDCC Secretary/Treasurer – Jennifer E. Johnsen**

As I sit to write this statement it is the turn of the year. A time when we reflect on the past, take stock of the present and look ahead to the future. It is through this lens that I strive to explain why I wish to serve this organization as an officer.

### **Reflect and Measure**

I attended my first meeting as a member of the FDCC in 2008. It was in beautiful Banff, Canada (a bucket list venue) and Gary and I attended with our sons (age 10 and 6) in tow. To say we were impressed by the experience is an understatement. I remember getting an email and call from my new member host (Elizabeth Lorell) weeks before the meeting, introducing herself and explaining what I could expect at my first meeting. That was a first for me – an organization reaching out with a personal touch in advance of a meeting to ensure not only that I felt comfortable but valued.

When we arrived in Banff, it was more of the same. Gary and I were given blue name tags as first-time attendees. We met several other “blue taggers” also there with their children and spent time with more seasoned FDCC members with whom we became fast friends. And, of course, the substantive programming and social events were top notch. Everyone went out of their way to make us feel special. I quickly followed the Banff meeting with the Winter Meeting in Kauai, where I was given the opportunity to play a role in the mediation plenary program, and the Annual Meeting at the Homestead in West Virginia. These meetings proved that what I experienced in Banff was not an anomaly. Rather, my experiences were the result of deliberate application of the organization’s bedrock principles– fellowship, knowledge and justice. And these early experiences form the building blocks of my now 16+ year tenure in the organization.

Before joining the organization, a then-member explained to me what he believed set this organization apart from others:

- (1) it provides members with the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with fellow members;
- (2) it provides members with opportunities - early and often – to demonstrate their leadership and substantive skills;
- (3) it provides members with resources to grow as lawyers, professionally and personally;
- (4) it is a meritocracy, providing opportunities to lead based on hard work, demonstrated leadership and commitment; and
- (5) it faces challenges head on and is willing to adapt and change.

As a defense lawyer I was understandably skeptical, but looking back on my personal experiences, I could not agree more. These are the hallmarks of the FDCC, and I have experienced each of them first-hand.

As I reflect over the past 16 years (and the more than 80-year history of the organization), these principles have served us well and continue to be relevant. They have guided us as we consider the value proposition of the organization for our members – whether through the storm of Covid-

19 when interactions were limited to virtual meetings and happy hours; when faced with hard decisions about what programming to keep, reinvent, retire or create; or handling the changing landscape of law firm and company economics in a post-pandemic world. They will continue to guide us as we look to the future.

So where are we today as an organization? We have 1398 members, consisting of 1064 defense counsel members, 242 corporate counsel and industry members, and 92 members in special categories (i.e., Emeritus, Special Active, Special Retired). Our Board is engaged. Our Sections are active. Our programming is timely, innovative and adds value for members. Our webinars and podcasts are popular, experiencing high traffic from members and non-members, and are providing enhanced visibility for our members. The Friday-5s are a resounding success. Our profile as an organization is elevated. We continue to recruit high quality members. We are expanding our diversity efforts.

### **Looking to the Future: The “Blue Tag Experience”**

What I experienced in 2008 is what I want every FDCC member to experience long after their first meeting. That “Blue Tag Experience” is like receiving the iconic Tiffany blue box – it makes you feel special, and you know something great is inside. This is how we set the FDCC apart from other defense organizations. As we look ahead, my goal is to create the Blue Tag Experience for everyone. My vision to achieve this goal it is simple: (1) focus on what has made the organization great – vetted, quality members; unmatched, innovative programming; premiere (and fun) events that provide opportunities to develop meaningful relationships; (2) enhance ROI for all members; and (3) ensure the decisions we make are in line with the FDCC’s strategic plan.

For example, we know one of the most effective ways to keep members engaged is to provide them with opportunities to showcase their knowledge. We have done this successfully through our Annual and Winter Meetings, I-3, CCS, Fed Tech U and other stellar programming. We do CLE well and need to continue to excel in this area. We can (and should) be innovative in our approach, but we cannot lose sight of the importance of this aspect of the organization. Our members are at the top of their game, and they expect and deserve programming that will challenge them. Our programming accomplishes more than just passing on knowledge, it creates opportunities for members to highlight their knowledge and build relationships with other members. In time, these relationships inevitably result in referrals and networks that enhance ROI. This is just one example of how we perpetuate the FDCC’s iconic Blue Tag Experience.

In closing, I am humbled and honored to stand for Secretary/Treasurer. Not only has this organization made me a better lawyer, it has given me the opportunity to build meaningful professional and personal relationships. Needless to say, I cherish my membership in the FDCC and thank all of you (you know who you are) who helped me along the way. There really are too many of you to mention here and I fear if I tried to list you all I would miss someone. This fact alone is indicative of what the FDCC is all about – an inspired community of vetted defense counsel, exceptional leaders, and even better people.

---

Jennifer Johnsen is a partner with Gallivan, White & Boyd, P.A. and a Senior Director of the FDCC. Jennifer can be reached at [jjohnsen@gwblawfirm.com](mailto:jjohnsen@gwblawfirm.com).

---

Call Out:

What I experienced in 2008 is what I want every FDCC member to experience long after their first meeting. That “Blue Tag Experience” is like receiving the iconic Tiffany blue box – it makes you feel special, and you know something great is inside. This is how we set the FDCC apart from other defense organizations. As we look ahead, my goal is to create the Blue Tag Experience for everyone.