



AMERICAN BOARD OF TRIAL ADVOCATES®

To Promote The Art Of Advocacy
And The Efficient Administration Of Justice

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

HOW DOES ONE BECOME AN ABOTA MEMBER?

Recently, a lot of questions have been asked regarding the process of becoming an ABOTA member. We have been working hard to recruit new members, and to increase our membership diversity. As part of the process, current Michigan ABOTA Members are asked to privately comment about folks who have been nominated. This is just one of the many steps of the vetting process.

This article is intended to outline the criteria for membership, and the steps involved in the vetting process. Hopefully, after reading this, you may be in a position to nominate a deserving colleague.

OVERVIEW

Membership to the American Board of Trial Advocates is by invitation only. In order to be considered for membership in ABOTA, you must be a trial lawyer who has been in practice for a minimum of five years, who has demonstrated civility, integrity and professionalism consistent with ABOTA's Code of Professionalism and Principles of Civility. These documents can be viewed on ABOTA's website.

ABOTA is intentionally composed of an equal percentage of plaintiff and defense trial lawyers who are dedicated to the preservation of the Seventh Amendment's right to trial by jury.

As you review the criteria for membership, listed below, please keep in mind that it is our intention to identify the very best trial lawyers in Michigan to be considered for membership. The Michigan Chapter seeks to be as diverse as possible, while maintaining the standards of membership.

When evaluating a potential candidate, the number of trials is important, but the sophistication and complexity of the cases is also considered. Having a sufficient number of civil jury trials is a prerequisite for membership, but it is certainly not the sole criteria. Individuals who meet or exceed the trial requirement may nonetheless be declined, due to a lack of civility, professionalism or other reasons. A candidate must have the support of the existing Chapter members.

THE CRITERIA

- A candidate must be nominated by an existing Michigan ABOTA member.
- A candidate must be a trial lawyer who has practiced for at least five years.
- A candidate must have a minimum of seven (7) civil jury trials to verdict, or hung jury, as lead counsel, in courts of general jurisdiction. (The number of trials beyond the minimum will be considered with respect to the membership rank.)

In order to ultimately be approved, a candidate must possess excellent trial lawyer skills and integrity.

THE PROCESS

The first step to being considered for ABOTA membership, is to be nominated by a current member. (The nomination forms are available on the abotami.org website). If you are nominated for membership, this means that you have been recognized by an ABOTA member as having outstanding personal character, as well as excellent trial lawyer experience and skills. Before a nominated individual is sent an application, the Michigan Chapter's Executive Board must approve the nomination. If the Board agrees that the nomination should move forward, the entire Michigan Chapter is asked to send their thoughts or comments regarding the candidate to the Board. The Board will then reevaluate the candidate, in light of the comments received. If the candidate receives favorable comments, and appears to meet the membership requirements, an Application is sent to the candidate.

The Application form must be filled out as completely as possible. Information must be provided regarding each case that went to trial. The applicant must sign, date and certify that the information is correct. The information in the Application, and the attached worksheets, must be filled out to verify that the applicant meets the strict criteria for admission. Before the Michigan Chapter submits the Application for consideration by the National ABOTA office, a sponsor for the candidate and a Chapter Executive Committee member must sign and date the Application. The candidate must also submit a \$300.00 application fee.

Before an Application is sent to the National office for further vetting and consideration, the Application is reviewed by the Board to make sure it is complete, and accurate. Applicants to ABOTA may find it difficult to recreate their history of jury trials. With the evolution of technology, some courts present an opportunity to search electronically stored court records. In some instances, an attorney can enter his or her name and identify matters in which an appearance was filed. In others, specific case names can be the subject of a search. These vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Several years ago, one ABOTA applicant was able to search electronically stored court records in Southeastern Michigan and was able to identify over 20 jury trials. This may not provide complete or exhaustive case lists for every potential applicant but it should be considered as part of the process of identifying applicable jury trials for a candidate's application.

After the Application is completed, with the best information available, the forms are sent to the National office for further vetting. The National ABOTA office must approve of the applicant before an invitation for membership is extended. The process is designed to honor the very best in our profession.

DO YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO MEETS THE ABOTA REQUIREMENTS?

Our current Officers and Board of Directors consist of Robert Riley (President), Thomas Behm (President Elect), Daniel Scully (Treasurer and National Board Representative), Judith Susskind (Membership Chairperson), Michael Janes (Secretary) and Thomas Waun (Immediate Past President). We are interested in seeing further growth of the Michigan Chapter. We have been working hard to implement our goals and mission of fostering improvement in the ethical and technical standards of trial advocacy. We are expanding our educational programs to help assure that litigants receive the most effective and skilled representation. We have great lawyers in the state of Michigan. The comradery and work of ABOTA help to perpetuate and promote civility and excellence in litigation.

The Michigan ABOTA website will help to highlight more of our mission, and our work. The website is <https://abotami.org>.

You can access the nomination forms from the website as well. We hope everyone is staying healthy during these difficult times.