

NACA Chapters in Law Schools

A joint project of the National Association of Consumer Advocates and the UC Berkeley Center for Consumer Law & Economic Justice

The recent surge in interest in consumer law among students has so far found only sporadic response in law schools. Indeed, most of the nation's law schools still don't have a single class in Consumer Law. A new generation of law students interested in vindicating the rights of consumers and promoting economic justice lawyers eagerly await an opportunity to leave their mark – but many of them will have to wait to leave law school to begin building their careers as consumer advocates.

We plan to change that.

There is currently no nationwide network of law school student organizations dedicated to the promotion of consumer law.

We plan to change that, too.

The National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA) is prepared to use its pre-existing nationwide network of consumer advocates to build a network of student chapters in law schools across the country. The UC Berkeley Center for Consumer Law & Economic Justice and the Berkeley Law students' group, the Consumer Advocacy & Protection Society, will partner with NACA to support this effort. By establishing law school NACA chapters, students will immediately be able to tap into NACA's extensive resources and networking opportunities. From organizing symposia to submitting comments in regulatory proceedings, NACA student chapters will be positioned to take a leadership role in addressing the most pressing consumer law issues of the day.

Project Sponsors

The National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA) is a nonprofit association of attorneys and consumer advocates committed to representing consumers' interests. Our members are private and public sector attorneys, legal services attorneys, law professors, and law students whose primary focus is the protection and representation of consumers. They represent consumers victimized by fraudulent, abusive, and predatory business practices. As a national organization fully committed to promoting justice for consumers, NACA's members and their clients are actively engaged in promoting a fair and open marketplace that forcefully protects the rights of consumers, particularly those of modest means. NACA also has a charitable and educational fund incorporated under §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

The UC Berkeley Center for Consumer Law & Economic Justice works to establish fair and equal access to a marketplace free from fraud and predation. Through research, advocacy, and teaching, the Center seeks to move closer to a society where economic security and opportunity are available to all. Committed to advancing the field of consumer law – the vast complex of rules shaping the goods and services we purchase, rent and borrow, and the information we provide and use – the Center fosters the development of innovative scholarship, curriculum and community. The Center offers a wide variety of courses; provides students with opportunities for

hands-on research and advocacy; and supports students in bringing their perspectives and benefits to the field.

The Consumer Advocacy and Protection Society (CAPS) is a student-run Berkeley Law organization dedicated to the promotion of consumer law and consumer protection. CAPS promotes student interest in consumer law by hosting consumer-related programming, and has also proposed and helped introduce new consumer law courses into the Berkeley Law curriculum. Outside of the classroom, CAPS members have submitted public comments to various federal regulatory agencies, and have drafted and filed *amicus* briefs in important consumer law cases across the country, including in the United States Supreme Court, the California Supreme Court, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Consumers benefit from strong consumer protections, unfettered access to the courts, and high-quality representation. To continue to foster and promote advocacy of this kind, NACA – along with the Berkeley Center and CAPS – is eager to connect with law students, law professors and law school administrations. NACA is dedicated to supporting the establishment of student chapters in law schools around the country to build awareness and foster an interest in consumer law and policy among law students. Through participation in the actions of their NACA chapter, and the work of NACA as a whole, law students will gain better understanding of the systems of state and federal consumer protection laws, the value of the civil justice system, and consumer law’s overall significance to the everyday lives of ordinary people.

Starting/Maintaining a Chapter

- *General guidelines*
 - Find a group of like-minded students to start a chapter.
 - Add a faculty adviser if required by your school. (If possible, add an adviser even if it is not required.)
 - NACA law school chapters should be open to all interested law student participants. The communities should connect with law faculty, consumer attorneys, other student groups, judges, public interest advocates, and government officials who share interest in consumer law and policy.
 - Contact NACA national to receive assistance in forming a chapter as well as guidelines and policies. Apply and register the chapter with NACA.
 - Contact campus office responsible for assisting student chapters.
 - Draft a chapter constitution or bylaws with a mission statement. Submit it to NACA national for our records. (CAPS and NACA have a model constitution that you can use as a template.)
 - Organize a slate of leadership positions for the chapter, including (for example) president, vice president, treasurer, secretary/historian, membership and programming chairs. Chapter participants who volunteer significant time to the chapter should receive a title to reflect their contribution.
- *Law school policies for student groups*
 - Law schools generally have policies on creating and maintaining student groups on campus. NACA chapters should comply with these policies.
 - Pay particular attention to your law school’s funding opportunities for student groups.

- *Activities and Programming*
 - We strongly encourage chapters to hold regular meetings with their members, and especially an annual meeting at the beginning of the year to introduce new students, discuss upcoming events, form planning committees, etc.
 - Chapters should seek to sponsor or co-sponsor at least 3 events or activities during the year.
 - Possible programming events include:
 - Symposiums/speaker programs
 - Networking events
 - Policy advocacy through written materials and meetings.
 - Policy advocacy allowed – NACA is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization. NACA chapters are encouraged to engage with state and federal legislatures to speak up on consumer law policy issues.
 - Political activity prohibited – using NACA’s name for political activities, including campaigning, fundraising, political endorsements, or political contributions, is strictly prohibited.
 - Please keep NACA national apprised of all programs and events.
- Chapter funds
 - Fundraising is NOT allowed except to request funds from the law school administration or NACA national.
 - Chapter funds should be held through the law school’s funding system for student chapters. Please do not open bank accounts in NACA’s name.

Engaging with NACA Headquarters

- *To support law school chapters, NACA will:*
 - assist with administrative issues;
 - suggest potential speakers;
 - connect NACA members (private attorneys and/or law professors) with student chapters;
 - help to promote chapter programming;
 - offer listserv for student chapter officers to freely communicate about chapter activities.
- *National Membership*
 - Student chapter members are welcome to join NACA to engage in networking and information sharing with other consumer advocates.
 - The minimum contribution for individual membership in national NACA is \$25. NACA membership is open to student chapter members.