

This year marks the second annual celebration of a highly impactful profession that has been around for centuries, but still remains relatively unknown. On October 10, 2019, we invite you to observe a day dedicated to the ombuds profession in an appropriate manner and in accordance with suggested activities. Ombuds Day is inclusive of all types of ombuds and will *occur on the second Thursday of October each year*.

Background: What's an Ombuds and why Ombuds Day?

Ombuds work in and with all types of institutions, including governments, colleges and universities, corporations, nonprofits, hospitals, and news organizations. As an informal channel through which constituents (employees, students, faculty, public citizens, specific populations, etc.) can discuss and surface problems. Ombuds programs provide a safe place to address issues without fear of retaliation. This in turn enhances governance, ethics, and risk management strategies, contributing to the overall well-being of public and private organizations, government, and the public. Accordingly, the ABA Ombuds Committee believes ombuds programs should be an integral part of any conflict management system.

Yet, the term “ombuds” and the practice are not widely understood. More than that, there are many variations or “types” of ombuds practices. Beyond the limitations to the credibility and legitimacy of the ombuds role and functions due, there is basic confusion and ignorance of what an ombuds is and does among the general public, senior leaders and executives, decision-makers, and the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) community. In order for the profession to continue growing and for ombuds programs to maximize their value, ombuds must begin unifying behind commonalities.

To further support the ABA Dispute Resolution Ombuds Committee's outreach efforts, the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution has designated the second Thursday of October Ombuds Day. Ombuds Day will serve as an opportunity to educate and raise awareness among the public about the history and practices of the ombuds profession including the importance of ombuds in our society. Celebrating and raising awareness of ombuds will help advance the profession and expand dispute resolution and conflict management functions to improve climate and functionality within institutions. Finally, by engaging the entire ombuds profession, we hope to assist individuals and entities develop a shared understanding of the value and services an ombuds provides.

Ombuds Day 2019

This year's theme is “Ombuds: Unusual name. Important service.” We selected this theme for a number of reasons:

- 1) The term “ombuds” is not well known and many are not familiar with the word, but a lack of familiarity should not undercut how important ombuds are to the people and organizations they serve.
- 2) Ombuds provide conflict management, investigative, coaching, training, reporting, feedback, and analysis services (and much more!), and helping people know about

all of the service ombuds provide is a primary goal of Ombuds Day.

- 3) We hope Ombuds Day will serve as a catalyst for developing greater unity and consistency throughout the profession. We felt the theme is applicable to as many variations of Ombuds as possible.

The targeted audience is everyone! We are especially interested in reaching people who have never heard of an ombuds before. The goal is to explain the value of having an ombuds program in organizations, government, etc.

The ABA Ombuds Day Task Force, in conjunction with liaisons from a variety of other ombuds groups and organizations, are in the process of developing materials, messaging, a toolkit, social media posts, templates, and more for Ombuds Day. Event leads are planning in-person events at the ABA Headquarters in Chicago, ABA Offices in Washington D.C. and at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Every product created by the task force is done through the lens of “How does this describe the value of ombuds” and “How will this help people understand the important services ombuds provide?”

If you have resources you think should be included in the Ombuds Day Toolkit, please let us know. The ABA Task Force has all Ombuds Day materials for the toolkit finalized and available for access at <https://abaombudsday.wordpress.com>.

Regards,

ABA Ombuds Day Task Force