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THE BIG 3... Size Matters

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PUBLISHER

If you are a *PI Magazine* reader, there's no doubt you have come across a frequent theme which is our continued encouragement of professional investigators to join and support their respective state professional investigator associations. The state PI association is what I would consider to be the backbone of this profession. Whether you are a new PI or a veteran PI, the state association offers so many benefits for networking, learning, and growing your business. So, what if several state PI associations joined forces? Well, this is exactly what three of the "biggest" PI associations in the nation decided to do! It's called **The Big 3**. And yes, **SIZE DOES MATTER**. In 2013, the Florida Association of Licensed Investigators (FALI), the Texas Association of Licensed Investigators (TALI), and the California Association of Licensed Investigators (CALI), decided to partner up to form an alliance. Having been the executive administrator for the New Jersey Licensed Private Investigators Association (NJLPIA) for three years and the owner/publisher of *PI Magazine* for over six years, I am personally familiar with just about every state PI association in the nation and have supported their associations through sponsorship of their conferences. Some say there are truly no coincidences in life and this story is borne from a very unexpected encounter.



True story...This past summer, I was in Sonoma, California with *PI Magazine* attending the 2023 Annual CALI Conference hosted by CALI President Frank Huntington, III. I had deboarded my plane at the quaintest airport in Santa Rosa, CA. I was walking up to the shuttle stop for the hotel and who do I bump into also waiting at the stop? Tim O'Rourke and Amy O'Rourke, vice president and administrative director respectively of the Florida Association of Licensed Investigators (FALI). My immediate thought was, "What are you folks from Florida doing in California?" Well of course, Tim and Amy were attending the conference as representatives of The Big 3 from FALI. (Remember this point for later...) More significantly about this encounter was that I was chatting at a bus stop with "The Father" of The Big 3! Tim, Amy, and I chatted all the way to the hotel. Fast forward, a day into the conference we decided what better way to spread the word about The Big 3 than through *PI Magazine* which reaches PI's nationwide. Also at this conference was the president of the Texas Association of Licensed Investigators (TALI), William Ferguson, attending the conference as a representative of The Big 3 from TALI. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Nothing depicts better the comradery and unity of these three associations than in the picture below!

THE IDEA

I spoke with Tim extensively to learn just how The Big 3 was born. In 2013, Tim was in his second year as the President of FALI. He was looking at the benefits package offered to the association members and thought, "How can we expand benefits?" Even though many of the associations have monthly meetings, an annual conference, newsletter, and a listserv, he wanted to expand the benefits to members where they could have more benefits and save money. Because FALI, TALI, and CALI already had many cross members, it simply made sense to extend the privileges and benefits of all three associations to the members of each association at a reduced cost. At the time, all three associations had a combined membership of approximately 3,500 members. All three were heavily involved in legislation regarding regulatory issues for PI's. Tim believed that this partnership would be a great opportunity to "expand the footprint" and "cultivate more partnerships."

Tim presented his idea to the then president of TALI, Mark Gillespie, and then president of CALI, Michael Julian. All three had already developed a professional and friendly relationship with each other which had already led them to attending each other's conferences. They agreed that this partnership would be mutually



(L-R) Michael Julian – past CALI President, Tim O'Rourke – past FALI President, Mark Gillespie – past TALI President

beneficial to all their associations. I had the opportunity to speak to former TALI president, Mark Gillespie, and former CALI president, Michael Julian about it. Mark remembered while at a TALI conference he had mentioned the idea of all three associations having one big conference because they were “the big 3.” Naturally all three agreed partnering was the perfect idea. Michael also “wanted to branch out and work along with the other associations.” Mark and Julian stated that the three were already such good friends. While chuckling, both provided almost exact responses by saying they were probably sitting around drinking scotch and whiskey and smoking cigars while discussing the idea. Mark and Michael carried the idea back to their association boards and it was accepted. While Tim “fathered” the idea he extends credit to TALI and CALI for seeing the value in it.

SPREADING THE WORD

The next step was to disseminate the information to the three associations. The very next year The Big 3 tablecloth was created for a table that would be set up at each conference. An open invitation would be made to the president or representative of the other associations to attend. To join, a member would need to belong to their home state association. Once the member decided to join the other association, the administrative director would correspond with the administrative director of the of the other association and verify that the member was in good standing,



The Big 3 table at the TALI 50th Anniversary Conference 2021

or in many cases they could visit that association’s website to verify that the member was a current member of that association, meaning they were already vetted.

Through this partnership that started to expand and grow, it was not long before the three associations began to lean on each other for legislative and regulatory support and they were learning from each other how each handled association issues and legislative issues. Soon, The Big 3 meetings were being conducted and all three associations could now compare notes as to how each addressed certain matters and make recommendations on ways to save money.

Mark commented that The Big 3 partnership, “Offers mutual benefits, networking, job prospects, a more enriched speaking bureau, closer friendships, and more revenue for the associations while saving the members money.” He described this as allowing the PI’s in these three states the ability to “spread their wings out of their states and become part of a larger group of PI’s allowing them to broaden their horizons and develop professional relationships and great friendships.” Michael believes that The Big 3 “allows the PI to grow their business and network, and being on the listservs presents more opportunities. Also, because of having access to all three PI associations, you don’t have to turn away clients.”

THE BIG 3 TODAY

The current FALI, TALI, and CALI association presidents have continued to develop and support the benefits and continued efforts of The Big 3. I was also fortunate to speak to TALI President-elect Bob Washington who will be coming in as president for TALI in the fall of 2024.

FALI President Dan Riemer reiterated the value and success of the FALI BootCamp training which was a shared idea from CALI. The benefit of the three associations being able to share information back and forth is invaluable. It is also so beneficial to the association members who can join the other associations for half the price with not only those association benefits but also reduced conference rates to their respective conferences. They have access to three association listservs which triples the opportunity for the PI in every facet of their profession. The access to shared information, knowledge, and ideas is so important because things are always changing in the professional investigation world.

CALI President Frank Huntington III, who was on the CALI board when this conception was being presented, remembers everyone being in favor of it. He considers this partnership a great benefit because it spans from east coast to west coast with Texas right in the middle which provides great coverage. CALI also provides online webinars available to all three association members. When asked about the consideration of including other state associations, he expressed that it was limited to three because it would turn into a



Dan Riemer - FALI President

William Ferguson – TALI President

Frank Huntington, III – CALI President



(L-R) CALI President Frank Huntington III, FALI President, Dan Riemer, TALI President-elect, Bob Washington at the FALI Annual Conference 2023



(L-R) FALI Vice President Tim O'Rourke, CALI President Frank Huntington III, TALI President William "Bill" Ferguson at the CALI Annual Conference 2023

fifty-state association which is already in place by NCISS (The National Council of Investigation & Security Services), and the idea was to limit inclusion to the three largest state associations membership. Currently, CALI has a membership number of 1,100. FALI has a membership number of 758. TALI has a membership number of 645. TALI President, William Ferguson was not available, so I spoke with TALI President Elect, Bob Washington. He commented on the increased strength in lobbying on legislative issues with the backing and support of the other associations. TALI is also currently working on a mentorship program that will model after the FALI and CALI programs. The continuing goal is to inform current and new members of all three associations of the benefits available to them by joining The Big 3. He did mention thoughts about a Big 3 conference taking place in the future, but you didn't hear that from me...wink, wink.

Examples of the association sharing ideas can be illustrated by FALI and CALI purchasing their own PA systems for use at the hotels for their annual conference. Instead of renting the very expensive systems provided by hotels, each association has their own which amounts to thousands of dollars in current and future savings. CALI also has a program for newly licensed professional investigators in California called NLITE (Newly Licensed Investigator Training & Education). The course covers the basics that every new licensee needs to know to begin a career as a private investigator in the State of California. FALI has a very similar program for Florida private investigators with 3 or less years of experience called FALI BootCamp. This program for "new" private investigators and agency owners is an introductory, best practices program for new investigators and agency owners looking to begin their career with a solid foundation. FALI, CALI, and TALI all offer educational, training, and professional development programs for their association members.

Why should I become a member of THE BIG 3?

Active, Associate and Affiliate Level members within each association (FALI, TALI, CALI) can join the other two associations, as out-of-state members, for half of the standard dues. This provides every Big 3 member access to a network of over 3,000 private investigators and agencies with which to do business, increasing potential business or employment opportunities. The information below is mirrored on each association's websites. Please visit your respective association listed here to learn more information.

What will this partnership enable you to do, besides save money?

- **Increase Your Network** - Let's face it, size matters when it comes to increasing your potential business or employment opportunities. You can network among a few, or you can cast a wide net to gain valuable exposure to thousands.
- **Obtain New Clients** - Many of us have clients that need services in Florida and/or California and/or Texas from time to time. Now you have more resources to assist those clients locally.
- **Provide New Services** - Expanding your network can also mean expanding your services and exploring additional revenue streams.

- **Expand Your Footprint** - By cultivating relationships/partnerships with local investigators in these states, you can focus on growing your business opportunities.

Unmatched support and revenue opportunities

- **Legislative and regulatory support** - CALI, FALI and TALI have all been around for decades and are no strangers to the legislative process. Board members attend all regulatory meetings and legislative sessions are consistently monitored. The goal of each of these associations has always been to protect their interests and their membership.
- **Lead generation** - After the homepage, our search features for locating an investigator are the most used on the website. It does not matter if it is a local business, attorney or private citizen seeking an investigator, many turn to us as the first stop on the internet for locating an investigator. Additionally, each association website and private listserv is also a great way for other members to communicate with, and to locate someone to help with that new case.
- **Administrators** - Each association has their own administrator who can assist you with membership questions, local laws, and regulatory information. When you need to speak to someone who knows about the investigative business and state regulations, you can contact the administrator via phone or e-mail. (see contact information below)
- **Recognition** - As a member of the oldest, and largest statewide PI associations you are among your professional peers in every state.

Things to Remember:

- One of the associations must be your "home" association to which you pay regular dues.
- You must join each association individually based on their requirements.
- Renewals are also by association.
- Online registration is the easiest way to join but if you prefer to mail an application, the addresses are below. Please mail a copy to each association individually.
- You must mail the application to the association(s) you have selected below. **PI**



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