



**LSBA'S 18<sup>TH</sup> SOLO, SMALL FIRM & TECH CONFERENCE**  
**HILTON NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT HOTEL**  
**MAY 22, 2025**

**SPEAKER BIOS**

**Eric K. Barefield** is Ethics Counsel for the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). A law graduate of LSU, Eric began his professional career as an Assistant District Attorney in Orleans Parish. He later served as Deputy Disciplinary Counsel with the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and was responsible for investigating and prosecuting violations of the Louisiana Rules of Professional Conduct. He joined the LSBA staff in 2005, working first with the Practice Assistance Program's alternatives to discipline. Eric is responsible for the LSBA's Ethics Advisory Service which is comprised of attorneys across the state along with Ethics Counsel and provides confidential non-binding ethics opinions to Louisiana licensed attorneys.

**Austin Benton** is a practicing attorney at the law firm of Benton, Benton & Benton and focuses on domestic and civil litigation. He is also the owner of the legal technology company, Ayla, LLC. Ayla designs and builds document automation systems for practitioners of personal injury, family, successions, criminal, foreclosure, and commercial defense work. Ayla is utilized by firms located in Louisiana (including McGlinchey Stafford), New York, Texas, Florida, Mississippi, California, and Ohio. Austin works with over 100 law firms to assist in increasing productivity and decreasing the time required to generate simple and complex legal and administrative documents. Austin is also a member of the Access to Justice Technology Subcommittee.

**David Bienvenu** is a partner with the New Orleans' Firm, Simon, Peragine, Smith and Redfearn. He has extensive litigation experience in state and federal courts throughout Louisiana, representing clients in general casualty, insurance and commercial litigation. He is also a mediator on the Perry Dampf Dispute Solutions mediation panel and completed formal mediation training at the Straus Institute of Dispute Resolution of Pepperdine University School of Law. An active bar leader throughout his career, he is a former president of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), the Louisiana Bar Foundation and The Historical Society of the Louisiana Supreme Court. He is also active in the American Bar Association (ABA), serving as the Louisiana Delegate in its House of Delegates and as a member of the Standing Committee on Public Education. He previously served on the ABA's Board of Governors.

**Kristie L. Bowerman**, founder of Immigration and Nationality Law Group in New Orleans, represents clients around the world in a broad range of U.S. immigration matters, with a particular emphasis on employment-based immigration. Her clients have Fortune 100 and 500 companies, professional sports teams, a world-renowned circus arts entertainment company, oil and gas companies, colleges and universities, K-12 schools, IT companies, financial firms, television networks, hospitals, engineering firms, religious organizations, and marine companies, among many others. A Tulane law graduate, she also regularly represents clients with family-based permanent residence and U.S. citizenship.

**Honorable Susan M. Chehardy** is the Chief Judge of the Louisiana 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeal. She was elected to the appellate bench in 1998 as the court's first woman judge (and reelected in 2012). Prior to the appellate bench, she served as judge for the 24<sup>th</sup> JDC, after an active general litigation personal injury practice with the firm of Chehardy, Sherman, Ellis and Breslin; and later with her own litigation firm, Chehardy & Nielsen. She also recently served as justice *pro tempore* for the Louisiana Supreme Court. A law graduate of Loyola University, she is a member of the Fifth Circuit Judges Association, the Fourth and Fifth Circuit Judges Association, the Association of Women Judges and the American Judicature Society, among other organizations. A frequent lecturer for the Louisiana Judicial College and the LSBA, she serves several committees and boards by appointment of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

**Justin Chopin**, a New Orleans native born and raised, is the owner and managing attorney of The Chopin Law Firm LLC. A graduate of Loyola School of Law, he is licensed in Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi. His firm represents individuals who have suffered personal injury and small businesses. Prior to establishing his own firm, Justin worked for a large defense firm and for other regional firms. He provides legal services in the areas of personal injury, transportation, maritime and workers' compensation.

**Michelle Cumberland** practices in the Mississippi office of the law firm of Dunlap Fiore, LLC. Licensed in Mississippi, Louisiana, the Virgin Islands, and Washington, D.C., she has extensive federal and state litigation experience representing clients in various legal matters in all phases of civil litigation. Her current practice includes construction, surety, commercial contract disputes, environmental compliance-related issues, cyber contracts and incident response. She is also a Captain in the Louisiana Army National Guard serving as a Judge Advocate and senior advisor to the Commander of the 61st Troop Command. Her portfolio includes Cyber Operations, Administrative Law and Military Justice. In 2018 she deployed to Iraq where she advised the U.S. Garrison Commander. She is also a trained civil mediator for Louisiana and Mississippi.

**Davidson Ehle**, founder of Marino and Ehle, focuses on federal and state trial and appellate criminal practice and on personal injury and family law. In 2023, he was named President-Elect of the Jefferson Bar Association and is a certified instructor for the Gretna Police Academy. His early legal career was as an assistant district attorney for the Parish of Jefferson and later as a director and author of the Louisiana Crime Laboratory Study, a comprehensive and comparative analysis of crime laboratories in Louisiana, Virginia, and Florida. He hails from LSU for his undergraduate degree and from Mississippi College School of Law for his JD. He is also a board member of the Westbank Boys & Girls Club.

**Shawn L. Holahan** is the LSBA's Practice Management Counsel and administers its fee dispute arbitration program. A former member of the ABA's LP Publishing Board, TECHSHOW Planning Board, LP State and Local Outreach Committee, she serves as an editor for the ABA's Law Practice Today e-magazine. She is also a former Chair of the Practice Management Advisors of North America. Prior to her position at the bar, she was a partner with a medium sized law firm in New Orleans (labor and employment matters primarily) and had completed two federal clerkships in the USDC (E.D. La.). A frequent speaker on law office management and technology, she has also written related articles in the Louisiana Bar Journal and other publications. She is the author of *Hanging Out Your Shingle, Louisiana Style*.

**Joseph A. Marino III**, a founder of Marino and Ehle, has focused most of his more than 30 years in legal practice on criminal defense in Gretna, La. He was also elected to two terms as a Louisiana State Representative for District 85, serving the Judiciary Committee and the Civil Law Committee, and chairing the Administration of Criminal Justice Committee. He is also a former Gretna City Councilman and former president of the Jefferson Bar Association and a certified instructor for the Gretna, Kenner and Westwego Police Academies. Last year, the Supreme Court of Louisiana appointed him, ad hoc, to Division "D" of the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court through December 2023. He holds a journalism degree from LSU and a JD from the University of South Carolina School of Law (and is proud alumni of Holy Cross school in New Orleans).

**Honorable John J. Molaison, Jr.** has served the Louisiana Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal since 2018, after having served as district court judge of the 24th Judicial District Court for the Parish of Jefferson. While a district judge, he supported specialty courts and helped create the D.W.I. Treatment Court, the Veterans Treatment Court, the Re-entry Court, and the Swift and Certain Intensive Probation Court. Judge Molaison also established the court's supervised misdemeanor probation program. Prior to taking the bench, Judge Molaison was the managing partner of Molaison & LeBlanc and an Assistant District Attorney in Jefferson Parish for approximately 20 years until his election. He earned his undergraduate and law degrees from Loyola. He is on the faculty of the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada, and Loyola University College of Law in New Orleans.

**Jordan Turk** is a practicing family law attorney in Texas, and the Legal Technology Advisor at Smokeball. In addition to her law practice, she's passionate about legal technology and how it can revolutionize law firms. A graduate from the University of Texas at Austin with a B.A. in Classics, History, and Religious Studies, she received her JD from the University of Arkansas School of Law. After almost four years of practice with a high-asset family law firm in Houston (and after being frustrated at the lack of automation in her firm), she discovered the world of legal technology which ultimately brought her to Smokeball. In her podcast, *Hacking Law Firm Success with Jordan Turk*, she interviews law firm founders about how they grew and scaled their practices, as well as their ethos behind managing a firm.