

# LOUISIANA BAR JOURNAL

April / May 2026

Volume 73, Number 6

The  
Preference  
for Live  
Testimony in  
Court

# HEARSAY

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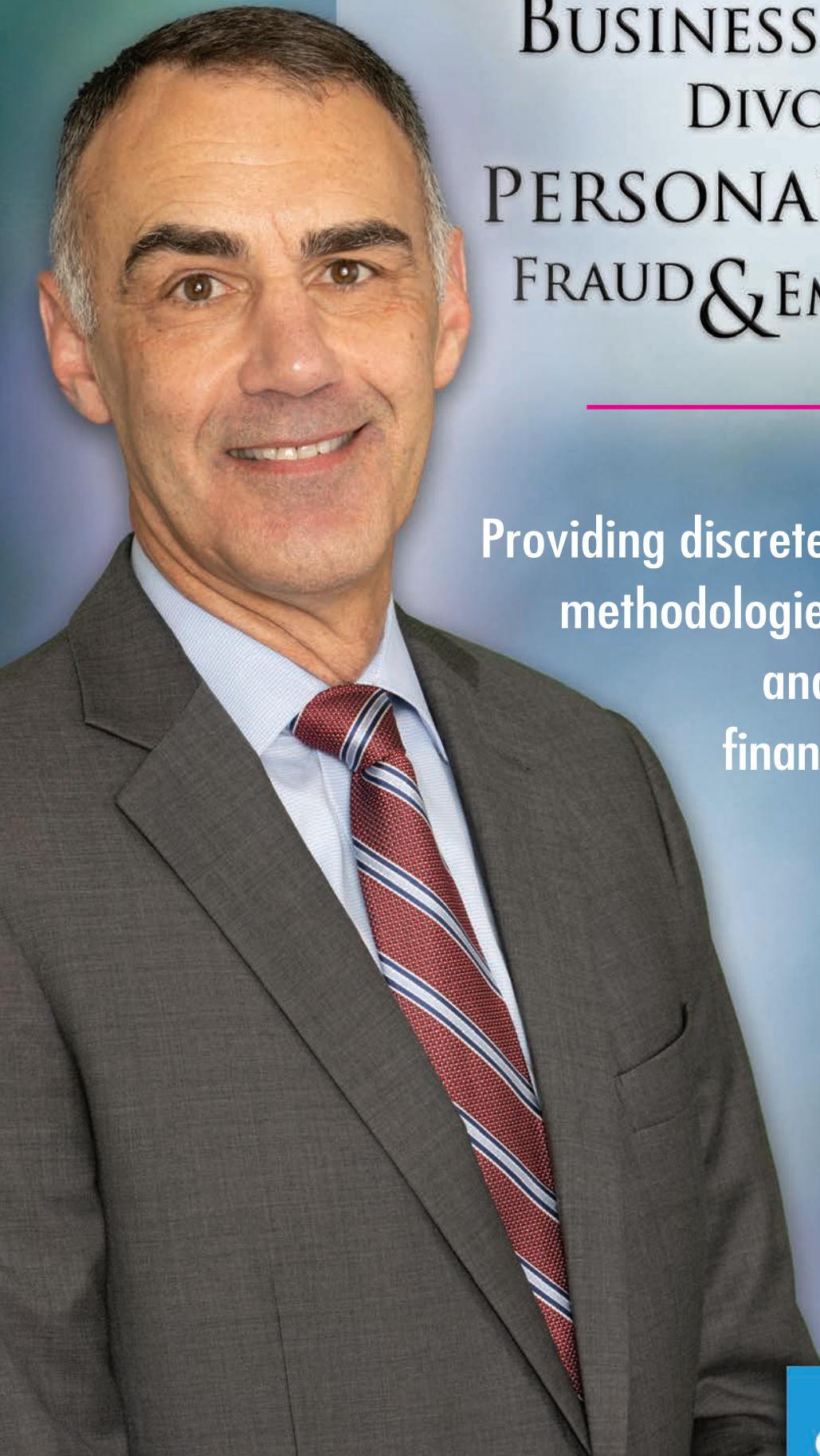
### Also Inside:

- From Collaboration to Code: Building Louisiana's Civil Justice Infrastructure
- YLD's Top Young Lawyers
- 2026 LSBA Annual Meeting and LJC/LSBA Joint Summer School

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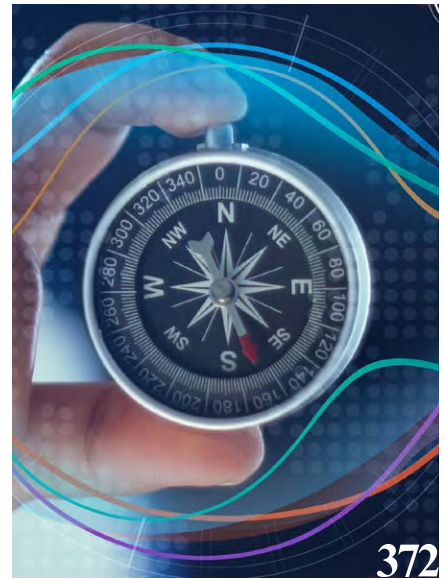
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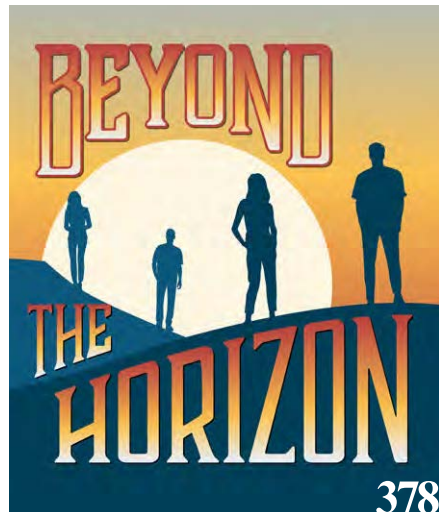


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# What I've Learned...

## ...Reflections From the Year

By Bradley J. Tate, 2025–26 Louisiana State Bar Association Secretary



From cover to cover of this issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal*, you'll find reflection and "What I've Learned." This year, I have taken a slightly different approach to the Editor's Message, drawing my thoughts from the content of this issue. The columns in this April/May issue of the *LBJ* speak volumes about reflection.

Ed Walters has been a guiding force for the LSBA this year. It has truly been a joy to serve alongside him. Much of my own "What I've Learned" began in a 3L class called Advanced Trial and Evidence, taught by Ed Walters and Mike Patterson. All these years later, I still have the opportunity to learn from him. His insight and wit have been a pleasure to experience—and to read in each issue. His President's Message in this issue is no exception, paying great tribute to Annette Buras.

Colin Melancon was a YLD Council member as I finished my time on the YLD, and he has since served the LSBA well as Chair. His reflections in this issue are poignant and demonstrate the leadership he has brought to the YLD, while also highlighting the outstanding work of its Council. Just take a look at the top young lawyers featured in this issue—an excellent testament to the impactful work being done by young lawyers across the state.

As I complete the first year of my term as Secretary of the LSBA and Editor of the *Louisiana Bar Journal*, I, too, have learned quite a bit. I have spent much of my professional career outside of traditional law firm practice. However, I returned to full-time practice around the same time I took on the role of Secretary last year. Now, I have the opportunity to go to the office each day and work alongside a group of lawyers dedicated to serving their clients. Learning from them daily makes me a better lawyer. Who knew a year ago how much I, a tax and estate planning lawyer, would come to learn about permits, employment law, or bankruptcy? Each day brings something new and there is still so much more to learn.

Over the past year, I have also learned from lawyers across the state, about their practices, their concerns, and what they want to see from the *LBJ*. Please continue to share your feed-

back, because this truly is your *Bar Journal*. I simply have the good fortune of helping ensure that each issue provides interesting and relevant information. We are always looking for contributors, so please reach out to [publications@lsba.org](mailto:publications@lsba.org). We would be happy to work with you.

As we close out this year of the *LBJ*, I look forward to another year of learning.

P.S. Don't miss this issue's "Last Word"—a reflection on what Ed has learned, written by Lewis Unglesby.



Have you ever wanted to publish a feature article in the *Louisiana Bar Journal*? Do you have a compelling, timely, substantive or just plain interesting idea focused on the practice of law?

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2) All feature articles and proposals are first reviewed by the *Louisiana Bar Journal's* Editorial Board. Your submission will be placed on the next Board agenda for discussion.

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Get thinking! Get writing! We hope to hear from you.

# What I've Learned...

## ...being the President of the LSBA

By Edward J. Walters, Jr., 2025–26 LSBA President

“If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room.”  
—Confucius

During my tenure as President, I certainly learned over and over that not only am I NOT the smartest person in the room, but I also learned that the smartest person in the room is not necessarily a lawyer . . . although it can be.

Smart has many qualities, parts, subparts, nuances, subtleties, hints, refinements and shades. There's "book smart" and there's "people smart." Many lawyers are good at being "book smart." Book smart is real good. I always wished I had the "book smart" qualities the smartest person in the room had.

But sometimes the "smartest person in the room" is "book smart" but not "people smart."

People smart is golden.

It is a rare commodity.

I learned that during my travels with the LSBA.

Having seen a bit of it from the inside, I can tell you that the LSBA has some of the smartest people around. People smart.

I learned that the people (staff sounds cold) our Executive Director, Loretta Larsen, has put together are some of the nicest most well-meaning "do the right thing for the right reason" people I have ever met.

They do their jobs, incredibly well, of course, BUT they are the nicest people I have ever met. And I haven't met all of them . . . although I tried.

Why am I telling you this?

Well, truly the highpoint of my legal career is having served as your President. Not because it is a cool position of honor, which it is, of course, but because of the fine wonderful SMART people at the Bar Office Loretta has recruited and I have met along the way . . . and have made my friends for life.

One of them, who many of you know, is . . . was . . . Annette Buras. She was the person in charge of all CLE, from alpha to omega. She was, I think, the nicest person I have ever met.

She always had a smile on her face, and she was cheerful (even chirpy) and nice to everyone. . . and I have seen a situation where she should not have been so nice, but she was, of course. It was her nature.

She was always the smartest person in the room.

You get it.

Unfortunately, she had a terrible cancer and hid it from



Annette Buras. Photo by Hon. W. Ross Foote (Ret.).

everyone for a very, very long time. Hardly anybody knew. She was that kind of person.

Smiling.

Making everyone else happy.

She always made you feel like you are the most important person in the room.

Everybody loved her.

People skills you wish you had.

These are the kind of people who Loretta surrounds herself with and who serve YOU at YOUR Bar Association.

So get involved with YOUR bar association. You won't regret it. Not only will it make you a better lawyer, you will make a difference in our world and you will meet some of the nicest people. It might make you the smartest person in the room.

Through my being President, I learned who is the smartest person in the room.

Adios, Annette. We will always love you.

Smartest person in the room.

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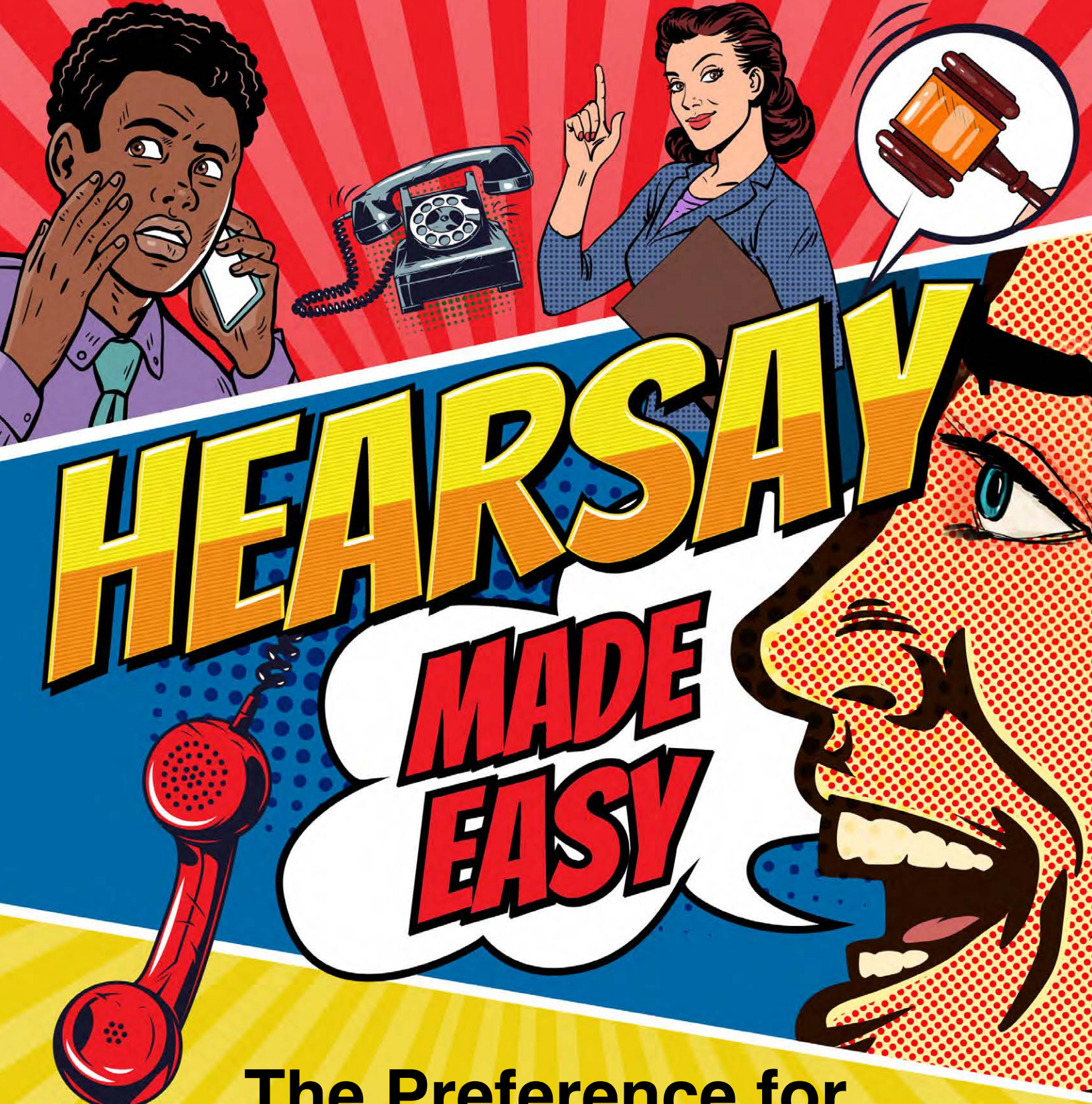
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# HEARSAY

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## The Preference for Live Testimony in Court

By Bobby Harges

**I**n court, there is a clear preference for live testimony, given that it is more reliable than second-hand statements and can be tested through cross-examination. When a witness gives live testimony, the factfinder can see the witness as she speaks, listen to how the witness tells her story, observe her sincerity and demeanor, and determine if the witness has a good memory of what she witnessed. However, live testimony is not always available, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, eyewitnesses die or disappear, cannot be found, forgot what they said, or are generally unavailable to testify in court to what they witnessed. As a result, hearsay evidence is sometimes necessary and admissible.

Hearsay is one of the most difficult topics to navigate in the law, for law students, lawyers, law clerks, and judges alike. An understanding of this topic is extremely important for those involved with learning the principles surrounding hearsay or trying a case, whether civil or criminal. Of course, the starting point must be its definition. Under Article 801(C) of the Louisiana Code of Evidence, hearsay “is a statement, other than one made by the declarant while testifying at the present trial or hearing, offered in evidence to prove the truth of the matter asserted.”<sup>1</sup> Much of the strife inherent in navigating hearsay stems from the ending phrase in that definition, so we start with what is meant by the “truth of the matter asserted.”

### **The Truth of the Matter Asserted**

I have found in teaching Evidence for over thirty years that the phrase “the truth of the matter asserted” presents the most difficult part of understanding what is hearsay, what is not, and when it can be admitted as evidence. At the outset though, introducing evidence for “the truth of the matter asserted” is just one reason to introduce evidence. But turning to that key phrase “[t]he truth of the matter asserted,” when the proponent is offering the “out-of-court statement”

(“OCS”) to prove that what is said in the statement is true, then it is hearsay. Conversely, as will be discussed below, if the OCS is not offered for that reason, then it is not hearsay (by definition).

The hearsay rule is based on the fact that when an OCS is offered for its truth, the factfinder is analyzing the credibility of the out-of-court declarant. In other words, when the OCS is offered for its truth, the factfinder is concerned with whether the declarant is telling the truth. Hearsay evidence is said to be unreliable because when the OCS was made, the factfinder was not able to see the declarant and thus could not possibly observe her demeanor, her narrative ability, and any other indicia that would tend to show whether the declarant was credible when the statement was made.

Whereas Article 801 of the Louisiana Code of Evidence defines hearsay, it is Article 802 that generally prohibits the admission of hearsay evidence. When we examine Article 802, we see that this rule seeks to keep out evidence that is offered for only *one purpose*, with the rule designed to prohibit, in court, the admissibility of “out-of-court statements” that are introduced for “the truth of the matter asserted in the statement.”<sup>2</sup> Importantly, that represents the only restriction on hearsay evidence.

So, if the OCS is being introduced for any other relevant purpose than for its truth, then the statement is not hearsay. And there are many other relevant purposes for introducing a statement such as, *inter alia*: i) to show that a statement was made, ii) to demonstrate that a person had notice or knowledge of a salient fact, iii) to illustrate the state of mind of the declarant or of the listener, or iv) to impeach a witness. In these instances, the statement is not being introduced for its truth; thus, the credibility of the out of court declarant is not important, although the statement itself is germane for other reasons, perhaps just its existence or timing.

As an illustration, let’s examine the OCS “*It is raining now.*” This statement could be introduced at a trial for many reasons. For example, if the proponent seeks to introduce the statement at trial

to *establish as a fact that it was raining that day*, then the statement is hearsay because it is an OCS being offered for its truth. On the other hand, if the statement is introduced to show that the store employee who was near the speaker *had notice of a dangerous condition on the floor*, then the statement is not hearsay – it is not being offered for its truth. Similarly, if the out-of-court statement “it is raining now” is introduced at trial to show *that the speaker could speak the English language*, then the statement is not hearsay – again, it not offered for its truth. Moreover, if the OCS is introduced to *impeach* the witness in court, then the statement is not hearsay. In each of the non-hearsay examples above, the statement was introduced for purposes other than its truth. In short, whether or not a statement is hearsay all depends on *the purpose* for which the statement is being introduced.

### **Hearsay and Human Declarants**

In examining hearsay issues, keep in mind that for the statement to be hearsay, the statement must be made by a human declarant, outside of the present trial, and be introduced for its truth. For instance, data compilations that are automatically generated by a computer are not considered hearsay because there is no human declarant; however, computer printouts which reflect computer-stored human statements are hearsay when introduced for the truth of the matter asserted in the statements.<sup>3</sup> For example, a printout of a telephone trace in an electronic telecommunications switching system with no manual involvement would not be considered hearsay, while a computer-generated letter typed by a human being and produced from a printer would be hearsay if it is offered for the truth asserted in the letter. The telephone trace system is simply recording the numbers dialed, while the letter is generated by a human declarant. Similar reasoning applies to the now-ubiquitous example of emails – an automatic email delivery notification generated by Outlook or Gmail is not hearsay, while

the statements asserted in an email between two individuals are hearsay if they are offered for the truth of the statements made therein.

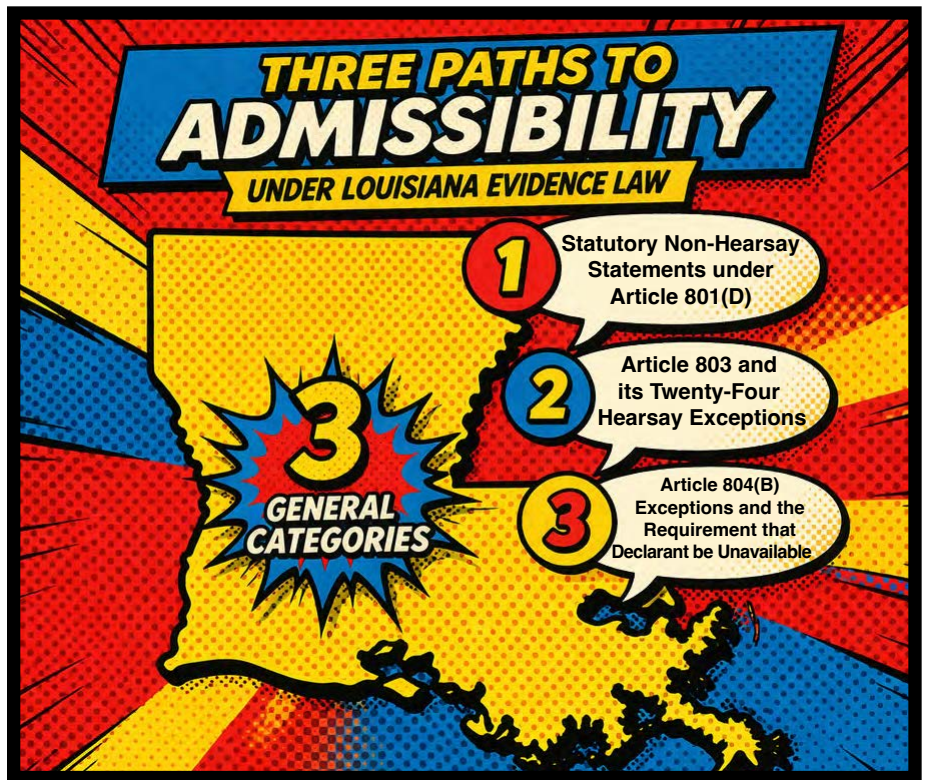
## Exceptions to the Hearsay Rule

Although Article 802 decrees that hearsay is not admissible, the rule also contains the phrase “except as otherwise provided by this Code or other legislation.” This clause contemplates the admissibility of hearsay evidence in a number of different contexts, and sure enough, the Louisiana Code of Evidence contains numerous articles that allow for the admissibility of hearsay-type statements. In fact, there are over forty-six (46) different ways to introduce statements that meet the definition of hearsay, with admissibility based upon their reliability and/or necessity. Each of the articles is said to have its own separate basis of reliability and/or necessity.

In addition to the class of statements mentioned above that are not hearsay because they are not offered for their truth, in Louisiana, there are three general categories of hearsay statements that are generally admissible. Understanding these categories will be a major step toward understanding the hearsay exemptions and exceptions.

### Statutory Non-Hearsay Statements under Article 801(D)

The first category of statements that are offered for their “truth” consists of hearsay-type statements that meet the definition of hearsay, but they are not classified as hearsay statutorily. Because the Louisiana Legislature has classified these statements as non-hearsay, we will refer to them as “statutory non-hearsay.” Article 801(D) of the Louisiana Code of Evidence contains fifteen (15) different out-of-court statements that are admissible even though they are introduced for the truth of the matter asserted. Examples include a prior inconsistent statement of a witness in a criminal case who testifies at the trial,<sup>4</sup> an out-of-court



statement of a testifying witness that identifies a suspect in a crime,<sup>5</sup> and a statement made by a party that is offered against that party.<sup>6</sup>

Starting with the first of those examples, a prior inconsistent statement in a criminal trial that is offered for its truth is considered reliable because the declarant of the statement is present at the trial and can be cross-examined about the statement. Thus, the factfinder can observe the declarant under direct, cross, and re-direct examination. An example of a prior inconsistent statement that is offered for its truth in a criminal trial is that of a victim of domestic violence who calls 911 for emergency assistance and states that her husband injured her by striking her several times on the face and body. If the husband is charged with domestic abuse battery,<sup>7</sup> and the victim-wife testifies at the trial that the husband did not strike her on the night in question, the prosecutor can introduce the wife’s prior inconsistent statement as substantive evidence of the battery. In this type of case, this prior inconsistent statement, along with other evidence, can be sufficient for the prosecution to meet its burden of proving the elements of the crime by proof beyond a

reasonable doubt.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, the out-of-court statement of a testifying witness that identifies a suspect in a crime is considered reliable because the witness testifies at the trial and is available for cross examination. The basis of admissibility of a statement by a party that is offered against that party is that the party made the statement outside of the court and if the party does not like the content of the statement, she can always take the witness stand at trial and explain the reasons for making the statement. Grounded in our adversary trial process, this rule basically states that if a party made an out-of-court statement, the other side should have the right to introduce that statement for any relevant purpose. The maker of the statement cannot successfully argue that it could not cross-examine the maker of the statement because it was his own statement.

### Article 803 and its Twenty-Four Hearsay Exceptions

Next, there are twenty-four (24) hearsay exceptions under Article 803 that allow statements to be introduced, regardless of whether or not the out-

of-court declarant is present in court or unavailable to testify. Examples of these include an excited utterance<sup>9</sup> (which is an OCS made while the declarant was under the stress of excitement caused by the event or condition) and the business records exception.<sup>10</sup> An excited utterance is considered reliable because it is the result of a spontaneous reaction to a startling event, while business records are considered reliable because such records are kept in the ordinary course of business activities and are generally relied on by businesses in conducting their daily activities. Beyond those two examples, the category of “availability of declarant immaterial” exceptions is wide-ranging, with the exceptions potentially covering a broad spectrum of circumstances that could be applicable to any given civil or criminal case.

### Article 804(B) Exceptions and the Requirement that Declarant be Unavailable

The third category of hearsay exceptions is reflected in Article 804(B), which sets forth seven (7) circumstances allowing hearsay statements to be admissible if the declarant is unavailable. That is, the declarant of the OCS must not be able to testify at the trial because of death, illness, or other good reason or be unwilling to testify at the present trial.<sup>11</sup> The primary basis

for the admissibility of these exceptions is necessity. Examples in this category include former testimony (testimony at another trial or hearing),<sup>12</sup> dying declarations (statements made under belief of impending death),<sup>13</sup> and the residual exception (for civil cases only).<sup>14</sup> Former testimony is allowed because the party against whom the hearsay evidence is used (or a party with a similar interest) had an opportunity to cross-examine or otherwise develop the testimony at the prior hearing, while a dying declaration has been allowed historically to prevent killers from escaping justice. Finally, the residual hearsay exception allows hearsay evidence in civil cases where no other hearsay exception applies, and the evidence is necessary and trustworthy.

### Conclusion

Out-of-court statements are sometimes necessary at a trial, despite the preference for live testimony. When the out-of-court statement is not offered for the truth of the matter asserted in the statement, there are no hearsay concerns, and there is no need to enter the quagmire. And when the out-of-court statement is offered for its “truth,” there are numerous articles in the Louisiana Code of Evidence allowing for the admissibility of hearsay-type statements, notwithstanding the general rule against hearsay in Article 802: the fifteen statutory non-hearsay rules contained in

Article 801(D); the twenty-four hearsay exceptions under Articles 803; and the seven hearsay exceptions under 804(B). Knowing the purpose for which a statement is introduced is key to determining whether it constitutes hearsay and its evidentiary value.

### FOOTNOTES

1. La. C.E. art. 801(C).
2. Article 802 of the Louisiana Code of Evidence states, in its entirety: “Art. 802. Hearsay rule. Hearsay is not admissible except as otherwise provided by this Code or other legislation.”
3. See *State v. Carter*, 1997-2902 (La. App. 4 Cir. 5/10/00), 762 So.2d 662, 678.
4. La. C.E. art. 801(D)(1)(a).
5. La. C.E. art. 801(D)(1)(c).
6. La. C.E. art. 801(D)(2)(a).
7. Under La. R.S. 14:35.3(A), “Domestic abuse battery is the intentional use of force or violence committed by one household member or family member upon the person of another household member or family member.”
8. See *In Interest of K.M.*, 2014-0306 (La. App. 4 Cir. 7/23/14), 146 So.3d 865 (holding that prior inconsistent statement qualified as statutory non-hearsay and was admissible as substantive evidence of guilt).
9. La. C.E. art. 803(2).
10. La. C.E. art. 803(6).
11. See La. C.E. art. 804(A) for more on the unavailability of witnesses.
12. La. C.E. art. 804(B)(1).
13. La. C.E. art. 804(B)(2).
14. La. C.E. art. 804(B)(6).

*Bobby Harges is the De Van D. Daggett Distinguished Professor of Law at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. He teaches Evidence, Mediation Law and Practice, Criminal Law and Procedure, and DWI Law. He has written several books on Louisiana Evidence, DWI, Criminal Law, and Alternative Dispute Resolution. He mediates and arbitrates with Mediation Arbitration Professional Systems, Inc. (MAPS) in Louisiana and Mississippi. He has been a neutral since 1990 in the capacities of special master, mediator, arbitrator, and a complaint hearing officer for energy regulatory matters. Portions of this article were taken from Harges and Jones' Louisiana Evidence (co-author with Russell Jones) (Thomson/Reuters 2024) and Louisiana Evidence, Cases, Problems, and Materials, Second Edition with Russell Jones 2016 (Esquire Books). (harges@loyno.edu; New Orleans, LA.)*



**In court, there is a clear preference for live testimony, given that it is more reliable than second-hand statements and can be tested through cross-examination.**

**LIVE**

See...  
listen...  
observe

**OUT-OF-COURT STATEMENT**

Live  
testimony  
is not  
always  
available



# From Collaboration to Code:

## Building Louisiana's Civil Justice Infrastructure

By Amanda Leigh Brown



Louisiana has never lacked commitment to expanding access to justice. For decades, civil legal aid organizations, pro bono programs, courts, libraries, and community partners have worked to help people facing civil legal problems. Bar leaders and members of the judiciary have convened commissions and task forces to understand the justice gap and test new approaches. Yet for many Louisianans navigating the civil justice system without a lawyer, the experience has remained fragmented, confusing, and uncertain.

This fragmentation persists even in a system filled with committed people and effective programs. The problem lies in how those efforts are organized. A person may find legal information in one place, a referral list in another, and an intake process somewhere else entirely. Each step introduces new terminology, new decisions, and new effort at precisely the moment when capacity is already lowest.

Consider a tenant who receives a notice to vacate. They do not identify their problem as a “housing law” issue. Instead, they describe it as: “My landlord says I have to be out in five days.” They search online and find scattered information, some of it accurate and some of it outdated. They might even ask ChatGPT for guidance and receive a confident but incomplete answer, unaware of the complexities of Louisiana housing law. As they continue their journey, they might download a list of attorneys from one website, or be directed to an intake form on another, with no clarity on whether they even qualify for help. They encounter a referral list, then an intake form they do not understand, with no clear indication of whether they qualify for help.

From the help seeker’s perspective, the system does not feel coordinated.

One of the most important insights from building the Navigator is that access to justice does not begin at a legal aid office. It begins wherever people are when they realize they have a problem.

It feels like a sequence of disconnected tasks, each requiring interpretation and persistence. At the moment they most need clarity, the system asks them to navigate complexity alone.

This is the experience many people encounter. Even when individual programs are effective, the overall system feels unpredictable and exhausting. What exists is a collection of services, not yet a system.

The Louisiana Legal Navigator (“Navigator”) was developed to address this gap—at first as a standalone resource, but now as shared civil justice infrastructure. Funded by the Louisiana Bar Foundation and built for partnership with legal aid organizations, courts, community stakeholders, and the LSBA’s Access to Justice Department, the Navigator serves as a statewide front door for access to Louisiana’s civil justice system. Its purpose has remained consistent: to help people understand what is happening to them, recognize when a problem may be legal, and take a meaningful next step toward resolution.

### **Better Together: Governance and Technology in Practice**

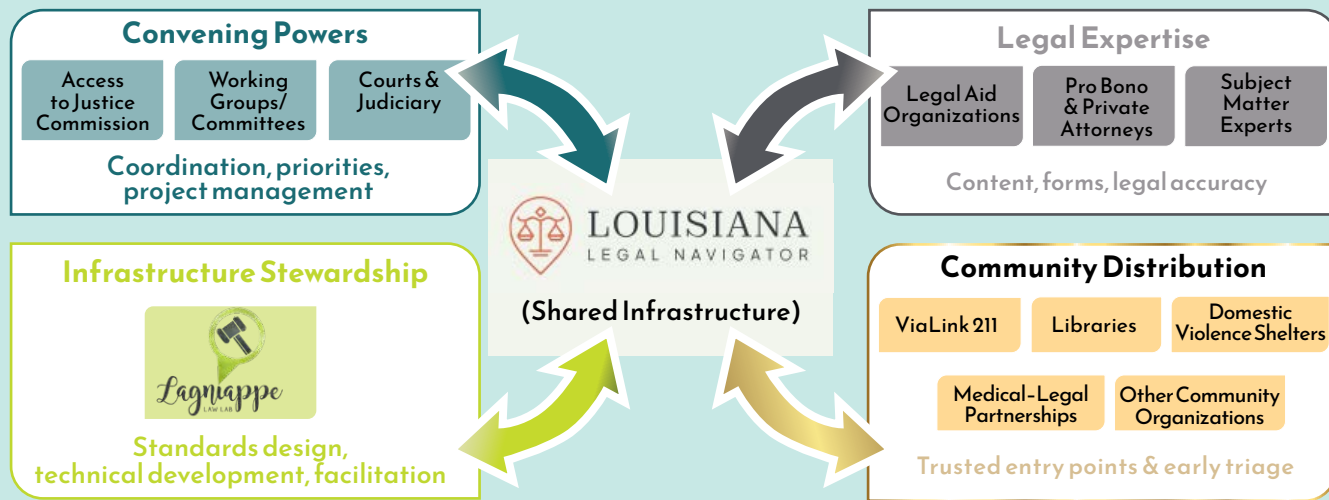
Over the years, building the Navigator revealed that technology and governance do not operate in sequence. They push on each other, and neither functions effectively without the other.

Louisiana’s civil justice ecosystem already had substantial human infrastructure in place. The Access to Justice Commission and its working groups convened subject matter experts, coordinated priorities, and supported access to justice work across organizations. But without shared technical infrastructure, that coordination often remained informal. Resources like brochures, videos, and forms were developed but without a consistent strategy for how they fit together or how the public could reliably find and use them.

As Lagniappe Law Lab began building the Navigator, a reciprocal loop emerged. The technology forced concrete questions that committees often

# The Human Layer:

## Shared Stewardship of Civil Justice Infrastructure



Technology evolves through human feedback

struggle to resolve in the abstract. What content do people actually need? In what format? At what reading level? Who approves it, and how is it maintained? In turn, the governance structure provided the answers that allowed the technology to reflect real institutional knowledge.

To organize this work, the Navigator adopted a framework centered on three operational pillars:

- **Inform:** Helping people recognize a potential legal issue and understand the law through accessible, plain-language explanations.
- **Empower:** Enabling action through self-help tools and forms designed for usability, accessibility, and real-world constraints.
- **Connect:** Reducing fragmentation by creating clear pathways to the right service provider at the right time, with fewer dead ends.

This framework functions as more than a slogan. It provides a shared language and set of goals that guide coor-

dination across the ecosystem. By anchoring work in Inform, Empower, and Connect, and pairing those pillars with shared standards—such as a common issue taxonomy, content design principles, and accessibility guidelines—the system can define what needs to be built, how it should function, and where gaps remain. This clarity turns collaboration into concrete work. Working groups are no longer asked to generate ideas in the abstract; they are able to focus on discrete contributions that advance the platform as a whole. The technology acts as connective tissue by encoding what collaborators already knew and enabling a consistent response and contributions across institutional players.

### A System, Not a Scavenger Hunt

The most recent and significant evolution of the Navigator has been the development of a screening and triage tool

in partnership with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services and with funding from the Legal Services Corporation's Technology Initiatives Grant program.

Early versions of the Navigator focused primarily on education and static referrals. These resources were valuable but limited. People could learn about their legal issues and then encounter a familiar drop-off point: uncertainty about eligibility, where to apply, or whether help was available. Many never took the next step and fell through the cracks.

The screening tool bridges this gap by creating an integrated pathway from issue recognition to eligibility matching to intake. It presents plain-language scenarios that allow people to identify their issues without needing legal terminology. It also includes an AI-assisted feature that accepts a person's plain-language description, tags it against a shared issue taxonomy, and surfaces relevant resources.

The tool performs preliminary eligibility screening using criteria provided and maintained by legal service organizations across the state. Those likely to qualify for participating providers can then apply directly online for legal help.

At a systems level, this matters because it is consistent and predictable. Instead of navigating dozens of disconnected entry points with varying requirements, the ecosystem gains a shared triage layer that reduces duplication and uncertainty for both help seekers and providers.

And importantly, the tool is designed to operate within a hybrid reality where help seekers might complete the screening independently through a link or QR code or with assistance from a community partner. In this case, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services is piloting this referral process with the generous support of ViaLink 211, enabling those on the front lines of supporting Louisianans through all sorts of needs to better connect to legal services. As the program expands, additional partners like libraries, domestic violence shelters, and medical clinics can use the tool while assisting people they already serve.

This approach is about giving trusted intermediaries a structured, reliable way to facilitate connection to legal services without requiring legal expertise or duplicating intake work.

### **Distribution Through Trust: Partnerships as Entry Points**

One of the most important insights from building the Navigator is that access to justice does not begin at a legal aid office. It begins wherever people are when they realize they have a problem.

People facing civil legal issues often turn first to trusted intermediaries, such as a helpline, a public library, a health-care provider, or a social service agency. The partnership model treats these touchpoints not as peripheral, but as essential components of the system.

Through customized screening links, community partners can help people identify legal issues and initiate intake within the context of services they are already providing. This creates an “affiliate effect,” meaning distribution through trusted human nodes rather than through isolated websites.

Customization within this partnership model is not just a branding feature. It is a trust and usability feature. People are more likely to engage when legal pathways are introduced through institutions they already trust and when the first questions reflect the context they are in. Prioritizing relevant scenarios, such as housing and family issues in a domestic violence shelter or estate planning needs in a medical-legal setting, reduces cognitive burden at moments of stress.

Operationally, this structure supports a “warm handoff” model. Community partners can assist with early triage and issue identification and then pass the pathway to the individual to complete asynchronously. This preserves continuity without requiring partners to duplicate intake or assume legal expertise.

In this way, distribution itself becomes part of the infrastructure. The system becomes discoverable by anyone whether through deliberate legal research or by seeking help wherever they can.

### **Shared Infrastructure, Shared Responsibility**

For Louisiana lawyers, the Navigator offers both immediate practical value and an invitation to stewardship.

The Navigator reduces the friction lawyers often experience when they must decline representation due to conflicts, capacity, financial constraints, or practice-area limitations. Rather than offering a generic referral list or an apologetic explanation, lawyers can direct people to a system designed to assess their issue and connect them to appropriate resources.

More broadly, the Navigator represents a shift in how access to justice infrastructure is conceived. In its ideal form, it is not owned or controlled by a single organization. Instead, it is a shared system that depends on distributed stewardship across the legal community. Lawyers contribute by serving on governance bodies, providing subject-matter expertise, and aligning pro bono efforts with documented system needs.

That stewardship can take several concrete forms. Lawyers with subject-matter expertise can help ensure that legal information and self-help resources remain accurate, current, and practically grounded. Those familiar with local procedure can support the development of usable forms and guided tools that reflect how courts actually operate. Others may choose to contribute through governance, joining working groups that define standards for accessibility, consistency, and quality across the system. And perhaps most importantly, lawyers encountering the system in practice can close the feedback loop — including points of confusion, subject matter needs, or referral dead ends, so the infrastructure can adapt.

Like any infrastructure, this work is never finished. It requires maintenance, calibration, and adaptation. As the Navigator technologically matures to support a truly contributory model, we recognize that sustainability depends on shared responsibility, not centralized control.

### **Building Systems that Can Respond**

This type of civil justice infrastructure cannot emerge from a single innovation or technical breakthrough. It emerges after years of collaboration, observation, and a deliberate effort to formalize what is already working, and thoughtfully redesigning what is not.

The Louisiana Legal Navigator is an expression of that type of work.

It reflects a shared commitment to three outcomes for people seeking help: that they are informed about the law and their legal issues in plain language, empowered to take meaningful steps through usable tools and resources, and connected to the right services at the right time.

The core focus moving forward is keeping content current, expanding partnerships, and making sure that however someone enters the system, they find their way forward. We're building a contributory content management system that will allow subject matter experts across the network to maintain and update resources more easily and reliably as it scales. We're also exploring branded mini portals — specialized entry points where domestic violence organizations, for example, can offer their communi-

ties access to all relevant civil legal resources within a focused, curated experience tailored to their needs.

As the ecosystem matures, the Navigator will continue to evolve on the principle that access to justice improves when people can understand their situation, act on it, and reach help without unnecessary friction—and when the legal community shares responsibility for the infrastructure that makes those outcomes possible. For Louisiana lawyers, this perhaps is an opportunity to participate in a system that functions more predictably for the public and more efficiently for the institutions that serve them.

*Amanda Leigh Brown is the founder and executive director of Lagniappe Law Lab, an organization focused on advancing access to justice through legal technology and innovation. She earned her JD from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and was admitted to the Louisiana State Bar in 2016. She serves as chair of the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission's Technology Subcommittee and is a member of the Legal Services Corporation's Emerging Leaders Council. Brown is also active in the American Bar Association, where she serves on the Governing Council of the Center for Innovation and as a special advisor to the Young Lawyers Division's Disaster Legal Services Program. Before founding Lagniappe Law Lab in 2019, she served as a legal technology consultant for the Louisiana Bar Foundation, supporting development of the statewide triage portal, the Louisiana Civil Legal Navigator. (amanda@lagniapplawlab.org; New Orleans)*



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[www.lsba.org/goto/ethicsadvisory](http://www.lsba.org/goto/ethicsadvisory)

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LSBA Ethics Advisory Service

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Effective 01/01/2026, the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) has endorsed Old Republic Lawyers Specialty Insurance (“ORLSI”) as the new insurance provider for the Lawyers Professional Liability Program administered by Gilsbar. As an AM Best A+ rated carrier, ORLSI brings program experience and unique policy enhancements to Louisiana law firms.

Learn more at [gilsbar.com/lsba-members-insurance-program](https://gilsbar.com/lsba-members-insurance-program)

# 2026 LSBA Annual Meeting & LJC/LSBA Joint Summer School

# BEYOND

# THE HORIZON



Join your peers as you **LOOK AHEAD** to what's shaping the future of the profession at these must-attend sessions. **EXPLORE** timely legal developments, emerging issues, and **EXPAND YOUR VIEWS** with innovative approaches designed to sharpen your perspective and strengthen your practice. Become equipped with ideas that extend well past the meeting itself.

Check the latest news and up-to-date schedules at  
[www.lsba.org/AnnualMeeting](http://www.lsba.org/AnnualMeeting)

**Don't miss LSBA Annual Meeting Events!**

Opening Reception in Exhibit Hall  
General Assembly and House of Delegates Meeting  
Installation Luncheon  
Bench Bar Boogie Bash  
Meetings, Receptions and Gatherings  
and...

**Top Notch Joint Summer School Sessions**

# FEATURING

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**Insights on Emerging Legal Trends and Practice  
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# 2026 LSBA Annual Meeting & LJC/LSBA Joint Summer School Highlights!

**We're going "Beyond the Horizon" this year!** Join your peers and ride a wave of TOP NOTCH legal insights at these **MUST-SEE SESSIONS**. Pack your curiosity and prepare for a journey across the legal landscape. From emerging technologies to time-tested strategies, this year's program is your guide to what's next in the law. With a dynamic lineup of seasoned leaders and rising voices, every session is designed to sharpen your perspective and expand your reach.

**Chart your course through must-see sessions on today's most talked-about topics:**

The Ethics of AI  
Deepfakes in the Court and the Impact on Evidence  
Let the Campaigns Begin: Disqualification Suits and  
Other Ethical Challenges in Political Campaigns  
LASC Updates  
Judge Versus Jury Trial Preparation  
SCOTUS Updates  
Beyond the Horizon: Polishing Legal Writing for  
Clarity, Credibility, and Persuasion  
Recent Developments in Contract Law  
Criminal Law for the Civil Attorney

**For the latest information, up-to-date schedules**

**Qualifying the Expert and  
Cross on the Tender**

**NIL (Name/Image/Likeness)**

**Federal Civil Procedure Updates**

**The Louisiana Constitution: Where We Are and  
Where We Need to Go**

**The Psychos of Mediation: Using Psychology  
to Successfully Reach Resolution**

**Access to Justice and Professionalism**

**Louisiana Civil Procedure Updates**

**Brain Teasers: State Court Litigation in Bankruptcy**

**How To Get The [Writ] Grant**

**Remote Signatures and Notary: When Transactions  
Turn into Litigation**

**Constitutional Criminal Law Updates**

**Protective Orders and Nuisances of  
High Conflict Family Law Situations**

**Tom on Torts**

**Family Law**

**The Don'ts of Courtroom Decorum**

**What Every Lawyer Needs to Know About Leases**

**Successions Law Recent Developments**

**Appellate Oral Argument**

***Brady* Evidence**

**Cross Examination: Choose Your Weapon**

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**GREAT DEBATES**

This year's topics include

Tort Reform Revisited

& 2026

Legislative Updates



**or to register, visit [www.lsba.org/AnnualMeeting](http://www.lsba.org/AnnualMeeting)**

**MAY 31–  
JUNE 5, 2026**



# BEYOND THE HORIZON

## 2026 LSBA 85th Annual Meeting & Joint LJC/LSBA Summer School REGISTRATION OPTIONS

<b>6-DAY PRICING</b>	<b>CHARTER</b> by 4/8/2026	<b>EARLY</b> by 5/6/2026	<b>ADVANCE</b> by 5/26/2026	<b>ON-SITE</b> after 5/26/2026
Lawyers	\$850	\$895	\$950	\$995
Judges	\$700	\$750	\$800	\$850
Legal Services / Gov't. / Academia / Young Lawyers / Misc. *	\$700	\$750	\$800	\$850

Our popular 4-day registration option is back, giving you the flexibility to chart your own course and map out your new experiences. Don't miss the opportunity to look beyond the horizon!

<b>4-DAY PRICING</b>	<b>CHARTER</b> by 4/8/2026	<b>EARLY</b> by 5/6/2026	<b>ADVANCE</b> by 5/26/2026	<b>ON-SITE</b> after 5/26/2026
Lawyers	\$775	\$825	\$875	\$925
Judges	\$650	\$700	\$720	\$750
Legal Services / Gov't. / Academia / Young Lawyers / Misc. *	\$650	\$700	\$720	\$750

- ▶ Includes seminar registration, programs, business meetings and admission to Exhibit Hall
- ▶ Electronic version of the seminar materials for attendees to download
- ▶ Daily continental breakfast/coffee/refreshment breaks
- ▶ Up to two adult tickets to the receptions, dinners, installations and other events planned as part of the Annual Meeting & Joint Summer School. Check back closer to the event for an up-to-date agenda.

Spouse/guest name must be indicated on the Registration Form to receive admittance to events included in registration. Additional admission for children and guests will be available for purchase for the social functions. Contact the LSBA or email [andrea.amor@lsba.org](mailto:andrea.amor@lsba.org) or by phone at (504)619-0137 for registration questions, to purchase additional tickets, or if you have any accessibility needs or require accommodations at this conference, including access to a private room for nursing or lactation purposes. The LSBA is committed to ensuring full accessibility for all registrants.

\*Special Pricing applies to judges, lawyers employed full-time by local, state, or federal government, and lawyers employed full-time by legal aid agencies or indigent defense agencies or members of the House of Delegates or the Board of Governors or the LSBA Young Lawyers Division. YLD Member qualifications: Every member of the Louisiana State Bar Association who has not reached the age of forty (40) years or who has been admitted to the practice of law for less than five (5) years, whichever is later, is by virtue thereof a member of the Young Lawyers Division. (Article I, Section 1, Bylaws of the Louisiana State Bar Association, Young Lawyers Division).

### CANCELLATIONS, REFUNDS & COURSE MATERIALS

Cancellation of registration must be received in writing by the LSBA no later than Friday, May 15, 2026. Cancellations will receive a full refund, less a \$30 administrative charge. Absolutely no refunds will be made after Friday, May 15, 2026. Requests should be mailed to the Louisiana State Bar Association, 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130-3404; faxed to (504)617-7050; or e-mailed to [andrea.amor@lsba.org](mailto:andrea.amor@lsba.org). Any questions, please contact Adrea Amor, CLE Department (504)619-0137.

**Important Note:** A link to the seminar materials will be emailed prior to the event; it is suggested you print the materials in advance and bring them with you. The link will be sent to the email address of record provided to the LSBA. If you choose to review the materials from your laptop, we strongly suggest you charge your laptop battery, as electrical outlets may be limited. **PLEASE NOTE:** Printed materials will not be available.

**To register or for more information, visit [www.lsba.org/annualmeeting](http://www.lsba.org/annualmeeting)**

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Check here or contact the LSBA if you have any accessibility needs or require accommodations at this conference, including access to a private room for nursing or lactation purposes. The LSBA is committed to ensuring full accessibility for all registrants.

**Registration Options**

	Charter (by 4/8/26)	Early (by 5/6/26)	Advance (by 5/26/26)	On-Site (after 5/26/26)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawyers .....	\$850	\$895	\$950	\$995	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawyers 4-Day .....	\$775	\$825	\$875	\$925	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges .....	\$700	\$750	\$800	\$850	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges 4-Day .....	\$650	\$700	\$720	\$750	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services / Gov't / Academia/ YLD Member / Misc.** .....	\$700	\$750	\$800	\$850	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services/Gov't/Academia/ YLD Member / Misc.** 4-Day .....	\$650	\$700	\$720	\$750	_____

\*\*Special Pricing applies to judges, lawyers employed full-time by local, state, or federal government, and lawyers employed full-time by legal aid agencies or indigent defense agencies or members of the House of Delegates or the Board of Governors or the LSBA Young Lawyers Division. YLD Member qualifications: Every member of the Louisiana State Bar Association who has not reached the age of forty (40) years or who has been admitted to the practice of law for less than five (5) years, whichever is later, is by virtue thereof a member of the Young Lawyers Division. (Article I, Section 1, Bylaws of the Louisiana State Bar Association, Young Lawyers Division).

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**Please return this form with your remittance to:**  
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# TOP YOUNG LAWYERS

2026

## Young Lawyers Division

The Top Young Lawyer Award is given to Louisiana's young lawyers who have made exceptional contributions to the legal profession.

### Lauren Brink Adams • New Orleans

Lauren Brink Adams is a shareholder at Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she advises and represents a number of national and international companies in complex matters. Her practice includes high exposure litigation at the district court and appellate levels involving environmental contamination, subsidence, coastal erosion, and other alleged property damages, including legacy lawsuits, Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) lawsuits, Ground Water Act claims, and citizen suits; torts related to property, including trespass, nuisance, premise liability, and abuse of right claims; and contract disputes, including adjudication of clients' rights and obligations under operating agreements, assignments/PSAs, leases, and personal and predial servitudes. Based on her successful representation of clients in bet-the-company litigation, Lauren has been listed in *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch in America* for Commercial Litigation (2021–2026), Environmental Law and Energy Law (2022–2026), and Litigation-Environmental (2026), along with recognition as *New Orleans CityBusiness* 2025 Leadership in Law Honoree.



Lauren Brink Adams

positive and *Daubert* motions, as well as pre- and post-trial briefs in both state and federal court, and regularly manages e-discovery for cases, including the development of tailored ESI protocols.

### Karly Kyzar Dorr • Lafayette

Karly Kyzar Dorr is an associate attorney at NeunerPate law firm in Lafayette, Louisiana. Karly completed her undergraduate studies at Louisiana State University with degrees in Political Science, Criminology, and History and graduated Order of the Coif from Louisiana State University's Paul M. Hebert Law Center in May of 2022. Her primary practice areas include commercial and business transactions; corporate advice; mergers & acquisitions; successions and probate; estate planning; and commercial litigation.



Karly Kyzar Dorr

### Chelsea Gomez Caswell • Baton Rouge

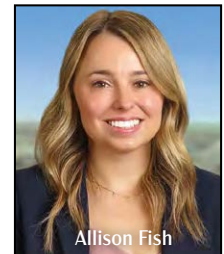
Chelsea is a Partner in the Baton Rouge office of Kean Miller and her practice includes helping employers navigate complex labor and employment laws, challenging workforce issues, day-to-day disputes, and employment litigation and regulatory proceedings. She represents employers in a variety of labor and employment matters in state and federal courts and before the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Louisiana Commission on Human Rights, and other state and federal agencies. Recognized for her impactful advocacy and practical counsel, Chelsea has earned professional recognition for her ability to solve complex problems and deliver results for employers across industries.



Chelsea Caswell

### Allison Fish • New Orleans

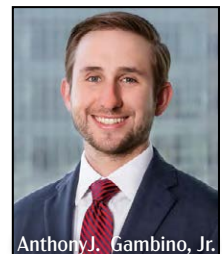
Allison Fish is a shareholder at The Kullman Firm where she represents employers nationwide in a range of labor and employment law matters. She vigorously defends clients against allegations of workplace misconduct in courts and governmental agencies across the country and is also well versed in traditional labor law, regularly representing clients in union grievance arbitrations and collective bargaining agreement negotiations. Before entering private practice, Allison served as a law clerk to Judge Tu M. Pham of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee.



Allison Fish

### Anthony J. Gambino, Jr. • Baton Rouge

Anthony J. Gambino, Jr. is a partner at Phelps, where he practices commercial litigation with an emphasis on resolving construction disputes for owners, engineers and contractors. He earned his JD from LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center in 2016 and is licensed to practice law in Louisiana and Colorado. He has held various leadership roles with the Baton Rouge Bar Association, including as a director at large, Bench Bar Committee co-chair and Law Day Committee co-chair, and he has coached the Baton Rouge Magnet High School mock trial team and presented CLEs on construction law. He is a diversity fellow with the American Bar Association Forum on Construction Law.



Anthony J. Gambino, Jr.

### Melanie Derefinko • New Orleans

Melanie Derefinko is a member of the Commercial Litigation practice group in the New Orleans office of Liskow & Lewis, APLC. Her practice focuses on complex business disputes, including intellectual property disputes, construction litigation, contract disputes between businesses, labor and employment matters, and collection actions. She has extensive experience drafting dis-



Melanie Derefinko

# TOP YOUNG LAWYERS

2026

## Young Lawyers Division

### Ellen D. George • New Orleans

Ellen D. (Ellie) George is an associate in Liskow's New Orleans office and advocates for employers in a wide range of labor, employment, and commercial matters. Her practice focuses on guiding employers through contentious human resources issues; all phases of litigation, particularly in discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and noncompete cases; and EEOC and NLRB proceedings. A New Orleans native, George graduated first in her class from Tulane Law School and clerked for the Honorable Kurt D. Engelhardt on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit and the Honorable Barry W. Ashe for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.



Ellen D. George

### Philip J. Giorlando • New Orleans

Philip J. Giorlando is a partner in the New Orleans office of Breazeale Sachse and a member of the firm's Labor and Employment Law section. He advises and represents employers across industries on compliance, discrimination, and wage-and-hour matters, including litigation and agency investigations before the Department of Labor and EEOC. Giorlando is a graduate of LSU and the Paul M. Hebert Law Center and serves as a contributing editor to *The Developing Labor Law* published by the American Bar Association.



Philip J. Giorlando

### Parker Marie Harrell • Lafayette

Parker Marie Harrell is an associate at Davidson, Meaux, Sonnier, McElligott, Fontenot, Gideon & Edwards, LLP, in Lafayette, Louisiana and has a litigation defense practice focused on premises liability, products liability, general insurance defense, and is actively engaged in representation of athletes helping them navigate endorsement deals. She graduated from the University of South Alabama with a bachelor's in Marketing and a master's in Sports Management while playing four years of Division I volleyball for the Jaguars. Harrell then went on to earn her JD from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, where she received certificates in Business, Entrepreneurship, & Technology as well as in Taxation. Parker is an active member of the Lafayette legal community, participating in the Lafayette Bar Association and its Young Lawyers Section, as well as the Acadiana Inns of Court.



Parker M. Harrell

### Michael S. Harrison, Jr. • New Orleans

Michael S. Harrison, Jr. currently serves as Senior Counsel for Kuchler Polk Weiner LLC, where his practice focuses on asbestos, commercial, and employment litigation. He is the current President of the Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society and serves as a hearing officer for the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board. He is also an active member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club. Michael is a proud resident of New Orleans East, where he lives with his wife and daughter.



Michael S. Harrison, Jr.

### Nicholas J. Hite • Dallas, TX

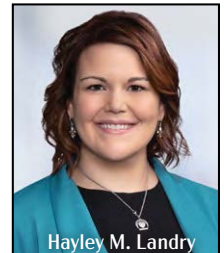
Following a decade in private practice as a statewide leader in LGBTQ+ representation and serving thousands of clients as an advocate for adult and child survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, Nicholas J. Hite joined Lambda Legal, the nation's oldest and largest legal non-profit working to protect and expand the rights of LGBTQ+ people and everyone living with HIV. At Lambda Legal, his nationwide impact litigation work has allowed him to represent parents, students, military service members, medical professionals and everyday Americans trying to live full lives free from governmental violations of their rights.



Nicholas J. Hite

### Hayley M. Landry • New Orleans

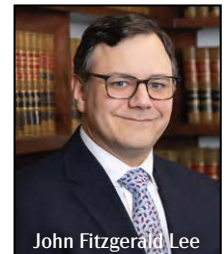
Hayley M. Landry is a member of Liskow's Energy Litigation practice group in the New Orleans office. She is committed to being involved in professional organizations, such as the New Orleans Bar Association Young Lawyers Section and the Women's Energy Network, while also dedicating time to various pro bono opportunities and giving back to the community. In her free time, Hayley's adventures include strolling bookstore aisles, enjoying coffee, trying new recipes, reading, and spending time with her pets.



Hayley M. Landry

### John Fitzgerald Lee • Metairie

John Fitzgerald Lee has served as a law clerk under three judges in the 34th JDC, is an associate at Mollere, Flanagan & Landry and maintains a small private practice. He is the Treasurer for the Jefferson Parish Bar Association, the Region 4 coordinator for the Richard N. Ware IV State High School Mock Trial Competition and serves as the chair of the one of the longest running legal study groups in Louisiana. John lives in Metairie with his wife Allie and their three dogs, a greyhound named Huey Z. Long, a miniature dachshund named Clark and a shepherd mix named Sable.



John Fitzgerald Lee

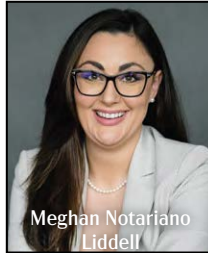
# TOP YOUNG LAWYERS

2026

## Young Lawyers Division

### Meghan Notariano Liddell • Ponchatoula

Meghan Notariano Liddell, a Hammond native, is an attorney at Parker Layrisson Injury Attorneys whose number one focus is helping people injured in wrecks recover the compensation they deserve. She was named as a member of the multi-million dollar advocate forum for being central in obtaining compensation for a single injured client of 2 million dollars or more and has been selected to *Super Lawyers* as a Rising Star for the last four consecutive years. Liddell's favorite thing to do in her free time is spend time with her husband Eric and their son, Beau, at their home in Livingston.



Meghan Notariano Liddell

### Hailey E. Manint • Baton Rouge

Hailey E. Manint is an associate attorney at Legacy Estate and Elder Law of Louisiana in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Hailey practices in the areas of estate planning, estate administration, elder law, trust law and special needs planning. Hailey graduated from Louisiana State University's Paul M. Hebert Law Center in the top 5% of her class and received her license to practice law in October 2021.



Hailey E. Manint

### Justin J. Marocco • Baton Rouge

Since earning his JD and comparative law degrees from LSU's Paul M. Hebert Law Center at the top of his class, Justin J. Marocco has built a distinguished career as a litigation attorney focused on complex commercial litigation across the energy, maritime, construction, and environmental sectors. His knowledge in carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) and energy infrastructure regulation, combined with his litigation success and legislative work, has placed him in pivotal roles in numerous high-profile legal matters across the region. Justin is a partner in Jones Walker LLP's Litigation Practice Group, a member of the firm's Hiring and Recruiting committee, co-leader of the firm's commercial disputes team, and a co-leader of the clean and energy transition team.



Justin Marocco

### Aspen Steib Murphy • LaPlace

Aspen Steib Murphy received her JD with Social Justice Certificate from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law where she graduated cum laude. She was also honored to be an Ignatian Law Scholar and be inducted into the Order of the Barristers. She is currently a



Aspen Steib Murphy

board member for the Jefferson Parish Bar Association's Young Lawyer Division.

### Jen O'Connell • Baton Rouge

Jen O'Connell is an equity partner of Taylor Porter and licensed in Louisiana and Texas. She is an appointed member of the Louisiana Law Institute's Committee for Torts and Insurance and the chair of LABI's Emerging Leaders Council. She is an experienced trial lawyer and business attorney.



Jen O'Connell

### Adam C. Patrick • Baton Rouge

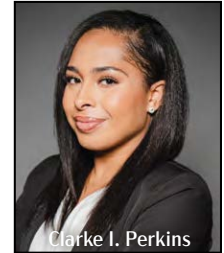
Adam C. Patrick serves as the Deputy Commissioner of Policy, Innovation, and Research at the LA Department of Insurance and an adjunct professor at the Southern University Law Center, where he primarily teaches legal ethics. During his tenure at the LDI and SULC, Patrick played a critical role in bringing forth reforms to tackle the high cost of insurance in Louisiana, while also preparing the next generation of attorneys to lead successful and ethical practices. In his spare time, Patrick has served as a councilmember of the Young Lawyers Section of the Baton Rouge Bar Association and is currently a member of the Young Professionals Committee at the City Club of Baton Rouge.



Adam C. Patrick

### Clarke I. Perkins • New Orleans

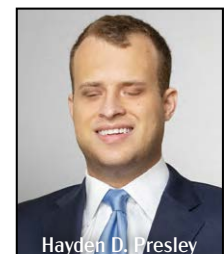
Clarke I. Perkins is a New Orleans-based commercial litigator at Gordon Arata, where she represents businesses in employment, contractual, and commercial disputes across Louisiana. A Tulane Law graduate and community advocate, she is deeply committed to expanding access to opportunity through mentorship, civic engagement, and service within the legal profession. Perkins is passionate about building institutions, supporting the next generation of leaders, and strengthening the communities that shaped her.



Clarke I. Perkins

### Hayden D. Presley • Lafayette

Hayden D. Presley is a dedicated litigator who combines thorough legal research and articulate advocacy with clear, responsive client communication. Before returning home to Louisiana, he practiced commercial litigation and federal law in Houston, representing major real estate clients and corporations, and now focuses on workers' compensation, corporate defense, and general civil litigation. Known for his personable and honest approach, Presley is committed to guiding clients through complex litigation with clarity and care.



Hayden D. Presley

# TOP YOUNG LAWYERS

2026

## Young Lawyers Division

### Meagan J. Raines • Lake Charles

Meagan J. Raines is an associate at Baggett McCall LLC in Lake Charles, where her practice focuses on personal injury litigation including motor-vehicle accidents, premises liability, workers' compensation and property damage matters. She earned her JD and DCL from LSU's Paul M. Hebert Law Center in 2019.

She remains active in her community serving on the Board of Directors for the Literacy Council of Southwest Louisiana and as the Community Director for the Junior League of Lake Charles. When she is not helping clients, Raines enjoys attending LSU football games, and exploring new restaurants with her husband and friends.



Meagan J. Raines

### Kelicia Davis Raya • Covington

Kelicia Davis Raya practices in Kean Miller's energy and environmental litigation group, defending major energy companies in high-stakes legacy litigation, land loss disputes, pipeline matters, and environmental contamination cases in state and federal courts. She is known for her precision, organization, and ability to distill complex discovery into clear, strategic talking points that shape effective case strategy. Raya supports all phases of complex litigation and brings a valuable perspective from her prior service as a federal judicial law clerk and as a diversity summer associate with ExxonMobil.



Kelicia Davis Raya

### Margo R. Richard • New Orleans

Margo R. Richard is an associate in Proskauer's Labor & Employment Law Department and a member of the Employment Litigation & Counseling Group. She defends nationwide employers in single-plaintiff discrimination, harassment, and retaliation matters in arbitration and state court, including serving on trial teams for healthcare and technology clients in California state court. Margo is an active member of Proskauer's Black Lawyer Affinity Group (BLAG), which is open to all, contributing to the firm's community engagement and inclusion initiatives through her work on the Black History Month Committee. Richard attended Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, where she graduated cum laude with a Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship Certificate.



Margo R. Richard

### Taylor M. Robinson • Lafayette

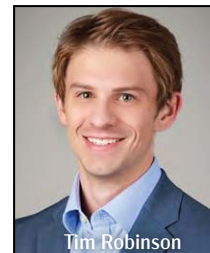
Taylor M. Robinson is the managing attorney of the Housing Unit at Acadiana Legal Service Corporation, where she represents tenants in eviction defense and subsidized housing matters. She is an active leader in the Louisiana State Bar Association and Lafayette Bar Association Young Lawyers Divisions. Robinson is committed to access to justice, mentorship, and public-interest advocacy.



Taylor M. Robinson

### Tim Robinson • Baton Rouge

Tim Robinson is a senior associate in the corporate transactions practice group at Kean Miller in Baton Rouge, where his practice focuses on mergers and acquisitions, commercial transactions, and general corporate governance. He serves as outside counsel to privately held and publicly traded companies across a wide range of industries, representing clients in connection with acquisitions, capital financing transactions, corporate governance matters, and other strategic business transactions. Outside of his practice, Robinson enjoys spending time with his wife and three sons, coaching little league, and referring living room wrestling matches between his five- and three-year old.



Tim Robinson

### Lauren Rucinski • Baton Rouge

Lauren Rucinski is a partner at Kean Miller in Baton Rouge and earned her JD / D.C.L., magna cum laude, from the LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center. She provides strategic counsel in environmental regulatory law, helping clients navigate complex compliance, permitting, and transactional matters. She is a registered patent attorney with BS degrees in Aerospace and Ocean Engineering from Virginia Tech, bringing a combined engineering and legal perspective to technical and regulatory challenges.



Lauren Rucinski

### Kansas Guidry Schneider • New Orleans

Kansas Guidry Schneider is an associate at Flanagan Partners LLP concentrating in civil appeals and commercial litigation. She had the privilege of clerking for the Hon. Jacques L. Wiener, Jr. on the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals and the Hon. Barry W. Ashe on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. She graduated summa cum laude from Tulane Law School in 2020 where she served as Editor in Chief of the Tulane Law Review.



Kansas Guidry Schneider

# TOP YOUNG LAWYERS

2026

## Young Lawyers Division

### Emma Kingsdorf Schwab • New Orleans

Emma Kingsdorf Schwab is an attorney at Irpino Avin & Hawkins in New Orleans, where her practice focuses on mass torts, class actions, and products liability. She earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and her JD from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. Before entering private practice, she served as a law clerk to Judge Sandra Cabrina Jenkins of the Louisiana 4th Circuit Court of Appeal. She has been recognized as a Louisiana Super Lawyers Rising Star from 2022 to 2026 and currently serves as Vice Chair of the Pro Bono/Philanthropy Committee of the New Orleans Federal Bar Association Younger Lawyers Division.



Emma Kingsdorf Schwab

### Rebecca Sha • New Orleans

Rebecca Sha is a partner at Phelps Dunbar specializing in labor and employment law as well as educational litigation for schools and universities. She holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and Tulane Law School, representing a diverse range of clients in matters spanning workplace discrimination to Title IX. Beyond her legal practice, she holds several leadership roles, including serving as President of the Louisiana Asian Pacific American Bar Association and contributing to various civic boards.



Rebecca Sha

### Karina Shareen • New Orleans

Karina Shareen is an associate at Deutsch Kerrigan who represents insurance companies and their insureds in complex matters involving auto and trucking accidents, premises liability, professional liability, toxic torts, and employment and education law. She is known for her practical, detail-oriented approach and her commitment to providing responsive, strategic counsel throughout all stages of litigation. Shareen earned her JD from LSU's Paul M. Hebert Law Center and is admitted to practice in Louisiana and multiple federal courts.



Karina Shareen

### Amber Sheppard • Mandeville

Amber Sheppard, associate with Pugh Accardo LLC, serves Louisiana and Mississippi clients with her service dog Tubbs, blending compassion and advocacy through her Be Fierce and Kind® philosophy. A national speaker and recognized leader in intellectual property law and workers' compensation, she promotes inclusion and access to justice throughout the legal community.



Amber Sheppard

### Russell J. Stutes III • Lake Charles

Russell J. (Russ) Stutes III is a Lake Charles attorney with Stutes & Lavergne, LLC. His practice is primarily devoted to tax, commercial, and estate litigation, but he also assists clients with successions, estate planning, general business counsel, and public sector counsel. Away from the office, Russ and his wife spend their time traveling and cheering on the Tigers with their daughter.



Russell J. Stutes III

### Kimberly D. Svetlick • Lafayette

Kimberly D. Svetlick is an associate at Galloway Johnson Tompkins Burr & Smith in the Lafayette office. She grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina and enjoys reading, baking, fitness and spending time with her cat, Daphne, and two dogs, Sadie and Wrigley, outside of work.



Kimberly D. Svetlick

### Christine Wells • Baton Rouge

Christine Wells is an associate attorney with Tanner & Justice, serving as in-house counsel for Bluefire Insurance Services, where her practice focuses primarily on motor vehicle accident litigation including Special Investigative Unit matters. Known for her diligence, analytical approach, and steady professionalism, she plays a key role in evaluating and resolving complex and fraud-related claims. Wells lives in Livingston, Louisiana with her husband, John Blanchard, their two dogs, Feeny and Max, and their cat, Wednesday.



Christine Wells

### William E. Wildman III • New Orleans

William E. Wildman III is an Associate in Baker Donelson's New Orleans office. He counsels clients across the health care, telecommunications, governmental, and energy sectors, advising companies and individuals on high-stakes issues involving fraud, regulatory compliance, and high-exposure commercial disputes. Wildman is a 2023 graduate of Loyola University New Orleans College of Law.



William E. Wildman III

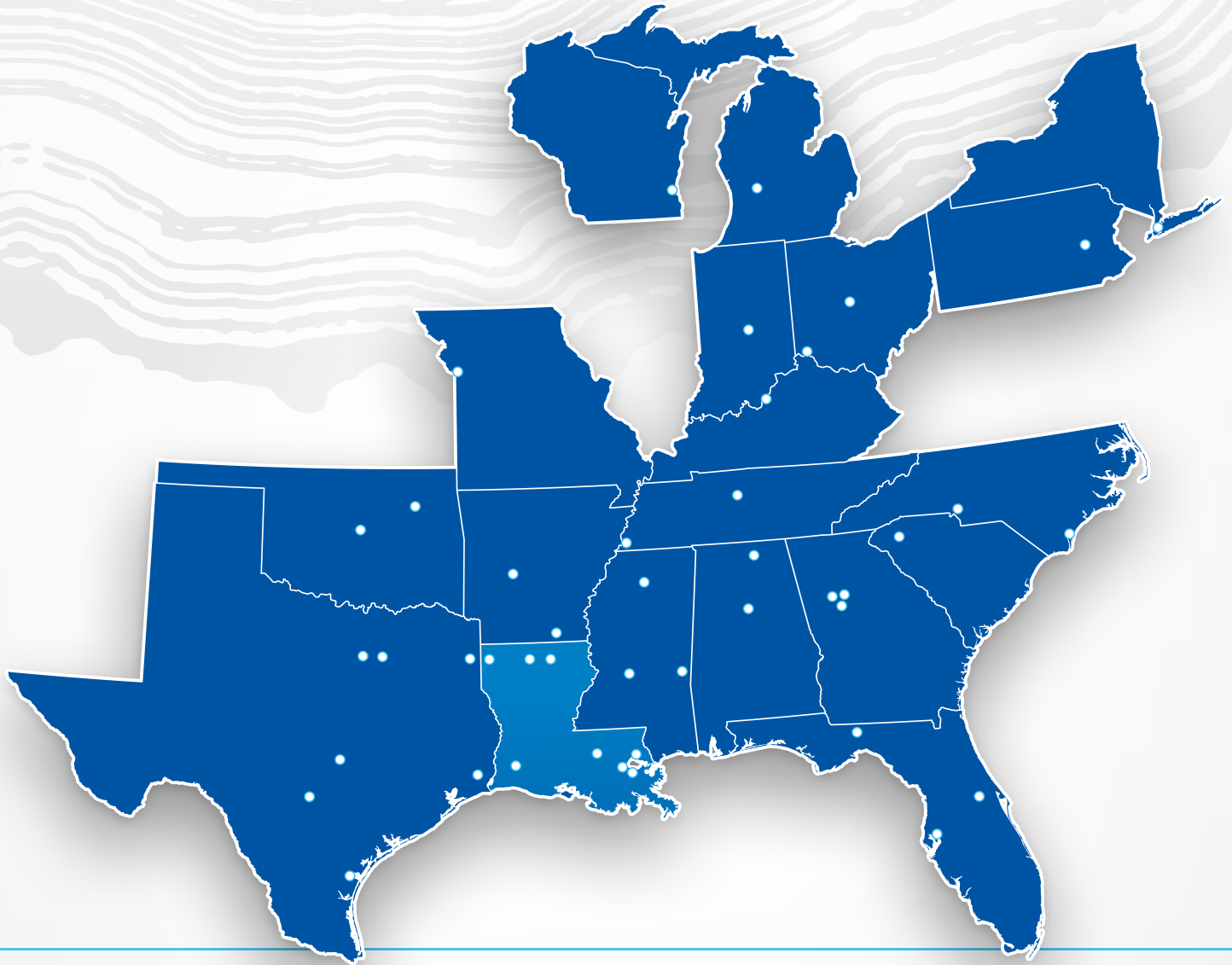
### Ava Maria Wolf • New Orleans

Ava Maria Wolf is an associate at Mouldoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett, LLC. Her area of practice focuses on the defense of employers and insurance carriers for claims arising under the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, Defense Base Act, and War Hazards Compensation Act. Wolf enjoys giving back to her community through speaking at her alma mater, Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, and participating in multiple charitable events hosted by the New Orleans Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section.



Ava Maria Wolf

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Argent serves clients across **44 markets** and **19 states** and has responsibility for client assets of more than **\$165 billion**. Headquartered in Ruston, Louisiana, Argent was formed in 1990 and traces its roots back to 1930.

## 2026-27 LSBA Dues and LADB Assessment Payment Cycle to Begin in May

**T**he purpose of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) is set forth in Art. III § 1 of its Articles of Incorporation. The expenditure of funds by the LSBA is limited as set forth in the LSBA's Articles and Bylaws; Supreme Court Rule XVIII § 6; *Keller v. State Bar of California*, 496 U.S. 1 (1990); *McDonald v. Longley*, 4 F.4th 229 (5th Cir. 2021); and *Boudreaux v. Louisiana State Bar Ass'n*, 86 F.4th 620 (5th Cir. 2023).

A member may object to the use of any portion of the member's bar dues for activities he or she considers inconsistent with constitutional standards. Members can object to LSBA expenditures based on the preliminary budget, the audited financial statements, the email alerts, the "Bar Briefs," the *Louisiana Bar Journal*, or any other notice that they receive. Member objections must be filed within 45 days of the date of the Bar's publication of notice of the activity to which the member is objecting. Details on the objection, refund and arbitration procedures are set forth in Article XII of the LSBA Bylaws. To review the objection, refund and arbitration procedures in Article XII of the LSBA Bylaws, go to: [www.lsba.org/BarGovernance/ByLawsAndArticles.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/BarGovernance/ByLawsAndArticles.aspx).

Additional information on annual LSBA expenditures will be made available for the May 2026 issue of "Bar Briefs." The LSBA's annual reports also are available at: [www.lsba.org/NewsAndPublications/AnnualReports.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/NewsAndPublications/AnnualReports.aspx).

### Payment of Dues and Assessment

LSBA members have the option to pay their 2026-27 LSBA dues and Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board (LADB) assessment by ACH electronic check, credit card, or download and mail their Attorney Registration Statement and checks for the payment of fees. Members are encouraged to pay and file electronically, through the LSBA website, which is available during times when the Bar Center is closed or if mail service is disrupted due to inclement weather. Further, electronic payment gives members more control over their information in the database and allows for more timely updates to their member records. The website is unavailable nightly between 10 p.m.-1 a.m. CST.

Filing the Attorney Registration Statement is an important part of an LSBA member's annual requirement and can be completed by mail or electronically. Mailing in the Attorney Registration Statement with two separate payments of Dues and Assessment constitutes filing. When paying online, verifying and/or updating member demographic information serves as electronically filing the Attorney Registration Statement.

Emeritus Status is available for lawyers who only handle pro bono work or uncompensated work for family members (both subject to certain guidelines and restrictions) and who meet age and practice criteria. Lawyers should review the Emeritus Status guidelines and restrictions for possible election. Election of emeritus status **MUST** be made prior to payment of the Dues and Assessment and the election deadline for

the 2026-27 membership year which is June 30, 2026. Review the "Emeritus Status Guidelines and Restrictions and Notice of Application" at: [www.lsba.org/Members/EmeritusStatus.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/Members/EmeritusStatus.aspx).

Filing electronically can be a quick and simple process, utilizing the online member accounts that participants have relied on for years to register for CLE seminars. If an attorney has not yet set up a member account, one can easily be created at: [www.lsba.org/Members/memberacct.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/Members/memberacct.aspx). This webpage also allows members to edit their existing account and reset a lost or forgotten account password.

After member data is confirmed but before the payment/filing process begins, members will be advised that they also need to go to [www.LADB.org](http://www.LADB.org) to complete the Louisiana Supreme Court Trust Account Disclosure and Overdraft Notification Authorization Form and will be asked to confirm that they understand this requirement. The Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board is the certifying agency for the Trust filing for LSBA members' IOLTA accounts. Filing is quick and easy at [www.LADB.org](http://www.LADB.org) and any issues concerning trust accounts should be directed to LADB at (504)834-1488.

The collection schedule will be the same as in prior years. In lieu of mailing a statement to each member, in mid-May, the LSBA will mail a postcard to each member, which will provide instructions to go online to [www.LSBA.org](http://www.LSBA.org) to complete the registration process, pay the annual dues and assessment, and go online to [www.LADB.org](http://www.LADB.org) to complete the Trust Account Form. **This is the only mailing members will receive prior to the July 1, 2026, due**

Continued on page 391

**Dues** continued from page 390

*date; attorney registration statements will NOT be mailed.*

Throughout the dues collection period, the LSBA will email reminders using the email address, [compliance@lsbamembership.com](mailto:compliance@lsbamembership.com). Members are encouraged to add this email address to their contact list to avoid missing important communications. Members should not reply to this email address, but rather direct questions to [processing@lsba.org](mailto:processing@lsba.org).

Once members have electronically filed their Attorney Registration Statement (including any necessary changes and/or updates) and made the required payments, they will receive email confirmations. The filing and payment deadline will remain July 1, 2026. The LSBA will continue to mail delinquency and ineligibility notices to those who fail to meet the deadline.

Members who elect to pay by electronic

check will continue to pay the following fees:

▶ LSBA dues (practicing more than three years): \$200;

▶ LSBA dues (Emeritus Status): \$100; and

▶ LSBA dues (practicing three years or less): \$80;

▶ LADB assessment (practicing more than three years): \$235;

▶ LADB assessment (Emeritus Status): \$117.50; and

▶ LADB assessment (practicing three years or less): \$170.

***Those who are planning to pay by electronic check should contact their financial institutions to confirm that their accounts allow payment by this method. If your account is Positive Pay Protected, update the Company ID 1016207445.***

As was the case last year, processing fees of 3%, plus a .20 transaction fee, will be assessed if choosing to pay by credit card. Total amounts, including assessed

fees, are as follows:

▶ LSBA dues (practicing more than three years): \$206.20;

▶ LSBA dues (Emeritus Status): \$103.20; and

▶ LSBA dues (practicing three years or less): \$82.60;

▶ LADB assessment (practicing more than three years): \$242.25;

▶ LADB assessment (Emeritus Status): \$121.23; and

▶ LADB assessment (practicing three years or less): \$175.30.

Bar staff members will be available to answer questions and provide assistance to members. All questions and concerns should be directed to:

▶ Email — [processing@LSBA.org](mailto:processing@LSBA.org)

▶ Telephone — (504)566-1600 or (800)421-LSBA; ask for Payment Processing.

## House Resolution Deadline is May 6 for Annual Meeting

The deadline for submitting resolutions for the next Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) House of Delegates meeting is Wednesday, May 6.

The House will meet on Thursday, June 4, in conjunction with the LSBA's Annual Meeting at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort in Destin, Fla.

Resolutions by House members and committee and section chairs should be mailed to LSBA Secretary Bradley J. Tate, c/o Louisiana Bar Center, 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130-3404. All resolutions proposed to be considered at the meeting must be received on or before May 6. Resolutions must be signed by the author. Also, copies of all resolutions should be emailed (in MS Word format) to LSBA Governance Coordinator Jen France at [jen.france@lsba.org](mailto:jen.france@lsba.org).

## Application Deadline is May 29 for the Leadership LSBA 2026-27 Class

Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) President-Elect Curtis R. Joseph, Jr. is currently seeking applications from young lawyers for the Leadership LSBA 2026–27 Class. The deadline for submission of applications is May 29.

The program, created in 2002 by then-LSBA President Larry Feldman, Jr., provides exposure to how the LSBA functions and to the pressing issues facing the association and the legal profession. Participants also receive information on the responsibilities of volunteer leaders. Beginning in 2008, classes have been required to organize an individual class project to address needs in the profession and the community at large. The goal of the class project is to further develop young attorneys' leadership skills and to provide them with opportunities for statewide networking.

Prior to applying, the candidate should consider the commitment required. The candidate should have the time and ability to participate and fulfill the class requirements. By the conclusion of the LSBA Fiscal Year 2026–27, class members will be required to:

▶ attend one meeting of the Board

of Governors;

▶ attend one meeting of the House of Delegates;

▶ attend one meeting of the Young Lawyers Division Council;

▶ attend one Budget Committee meeting;

▶ attend one meeting of the Access to Justice Committee;

▶ attend one meeting of an LSBA committee of their choice;

▶ work with the class to develop and implement a class project with the help of staff; and

▶ commit to serve on an LSBA committee the year following completion of Leadership LSBA.

The class term begins in late August (orientation) and ends in June (Annual Meeting).

Expenses for attendance at meetings and activities will be reimbursed in accordance with LSBA policies.

Interested candidates should submit applications online by May 29. Go to: [www.lsba.org/goto/LeadershipLSBA](http://www.lsba.org/goto/LeadershipLSBA).

To learn more about the program, go to: [www.lsba.org/members/LSBALeadershipclass.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/members/LSBALeadershipclass.aspx).

# “Serving the Public, Serving the Profession” Virtual Class Held During LSU Law Center’s Apprenticeship Week

For the past seven years, the LSBA’s Access to Justice (ATJ) Program has taught a weeklong virtual class for LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center’s Apprenticeship Week. The course, “Serving the Public, Serving the Profession,” focused on access to justice in Louisiana and how gaps in representation shape people’s lives, the ethical obligations lawyers carry in response, and the role of the profession in making legal systems more accessible to the communities they serve. Throughout the week, the class was joined by a range of guest speakers lecturing on what it means to serve both the public and the profession.

The first day began with an overview of the Louisiana State Bar Association, the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program, and the Louisiana Bar Foundation, led by Curtis R. Joseph, Jr., 2026–27 LSBA President-Elect. In the afternoon, civil legal aid attorneys from Southeast Louisiana Legal Services joined to provide students with a “Day in the Life of a Civil Legal Aid Attorney” perspective, sharing their experiences as civil legal aid attorneys and highlighting the importance of providing

civil legal aid to vulnerable populations.

On the second day, Sarah Berthelot of the Louisiana Association of United Ways (LAUW) joined the class to discuss the economic realities facing households that are asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed, adding essential context to why legal needs so often intersect with broader systems of inequality. Berthelot then led an interactive poverty simulation with the students to illustrate the decisions low-income people face every day in order to afford life’s basic necessities. That afternoon, Emily Belanger presented the LSBA’s Modest Means Online Directory, showcasing resources the LSBA provides to those who do not qualify for legal aid but cannot afford an attorney at market rate.

On the third day, Hon. Patti Oppenheim, 22nd JDC District Judge, and Paula Charles, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, discussed the various issues with self-represented litigants. The students were given an exercise to try to navigate how a self-represented litigant could find the information they need for a hypothetical divorce case. The final

presentation of the day was by Amanda Brown, Lagniappe Law Lab, on the Civil Legal Aid Navigator and the tech options that are available to self-represented litigants.

Day four speakers Kellie Johnson, Mental Health Advocacy Services; Luz Molina, Professor Emerita of Law of Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and Debra Weinberg of Disability Rights Louisiana presented interviewing skills tailored to specific client populations. These populations included representing children, working with interpreters for clients with limited English proficiency, and serving clients with disabilities. Students broke into groups to role-play different scenarios interviewing clients.

On the final morning, students listened to a discussion on pro bono opportunities in Louisiana and beyond. Volunteers from *LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org* and Lawyers in Libraries joined the class for a live, virtual clinic connecting students and volunteer attorneys to answer questions on *FreeLegalAnswers.org*, answering many of the questions in the website’s queue.

The program provided students with practical insight into the profession’s role in expanding access to justice across Louisiana.

## NOTICE / Attorney Fee Review Board

2001 Louisiana Acts 208 created the Attorney Fee Review Board (AFRB). The Act allows for payment or reimbursement of legal fees and expenses incurred in the successful defense of state officials, officers, or employees who are charged with criminal conduct or made the target of a grand jury investigation due to conduct arising from acts allegedly undertaken in the performance of their duties.

The AFRB is charged with establishing hourly rates for legal fees for which the State may be liable pursuant to R.S. 13:5108.3. Pursuant to R.S. 13:5108.4, the rates “shall be sufficient to accommodate matters of varying complexity, as well as work of persons of varying professional qualifications.”

The AFRB met on October 6, 2025. As directed by statute, the Board set a

minimum rate of \$150.00 per hour and a maximum rate of \$450.00 per hour. These rates will remain in effect through 2027.

Requests for payment or reimbursement of legal fees are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Attorneys who represent state officials and employees should be prepared to provide their clients and the AFRB with sufficient information to enable the Board to assess the reasonableness of attorney fees and expenses.

Any questions regarding the Attorney Fee Review Board should be addressed to Louisiana Supreme Court General Counsel Staff Attorney Jeigh Britton-Foil by mail, 400 Royal Street, Suite 1190, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130, or by telephone, (504) 310-2621.

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Louisiana State Bar Association  
Access to Justice

Louisiana State Bar Association  
Serving the Public. Serving the Profession.

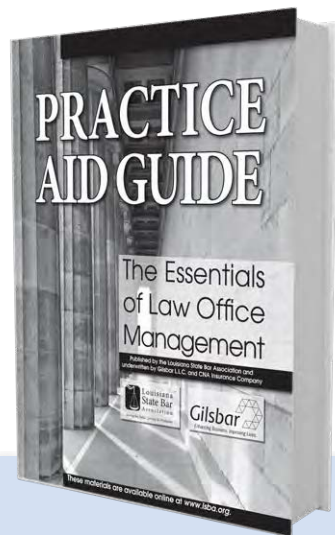
## Nomination Deadline April 3 for Kimball Award

The nomination deadline is Friday, April 3, for the Louisiana State Bar Association's 2026 Catherine D. Kimball Award for Advancement of the Administration of Justice.

The award, established to honor Catherine D. Kimball, the first woman to serve as chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, recognizes an individual who has performed exemplary work in advancing the administration of justice in Louisiana. The award is open to both attorneys and judges.

In addition to presenting a plaque to the individual, a larger plaque is displayed at the Louisiana Supreme Court to list new recipients of the award.

For more information on the award and to download a nomination form, go to: [www.lsba.org/goto/kimballaward](http://www.lsba.org/goto/kimballaward).



### ***Practice Aid Guide: The Essentials of Law Office Management***

Available for download or read for free online. Peruse the form depository for a variety of useful forms, letters and checklists to accompany this information at [www.lsba.org/PracticeAidGuide](http://www.lsba.org/PracticeAidGuide)

## Louisiana Supreme Court Amends Rules Governing Judicial Conduct, Campaign Contributions and Attorney Discipline

The Louisiana Supreme Court has amended several rules affecting attorney discipline, judicial appointments, judicial conduct and judicial campaign contributions, with the changes taking effect upon signing in February 2026.

The amendments clarify disciplinary procedures and safeguards surrounding temporary judicial appointments, expand restrictions related to judicial appointments of former court personnel and reinforce limits on judicial campaign fundraising.

### **Disciplinary Board Adjudicative Committee Authority Clarified**

The Court amended Louisiana Supreme Court Rule XIX, Section 2(G) (2), to clarify the powers and duties of the Attorney Disciplinary Board's adjudicative committee. The committee retains authority to review findings, conclusions and recommendations from hearing committees involving formal charges, reinstatement and readmission matters, and to submit its own findings and recommendations to the Court.

The Court amended Louisiana Supreme Court Rule XIX to clarify the authority of the Attorney Disciplinary Board's adjudicative committee. The

purpose of this order was to make it explicit that the adjudicative committee had the authority to rule on any motion by disciplinary counsel to dismiss formal charges.

### **Restrictions Updated for Temporary Judicial Appointees**

The Louisiana Supreme Court amended its General Administrative Rules to establish clearer ethical requirements for attorneys appointed to serve temporarily or on an ad hoc basis as judges.

### **Judicial Campaign Contribution Rules Clarified**

The Court also amended Canon 7 of the Code of Judicial Conduct to clarify timelines and limitations governing campaign contributions for judges and judicial candidates. The changes reinforce restrictions on campaign fundraising and prohibit contributions under certain circumstances.

Additional information and the full text of each order are available on the Louisiana Supreme Court's Rules and Orders page at: [www.lasc.org/Supreme\\_Court\\_Rules](http://www.lasc.org/Supreme_Court_Rules).

## LSBA Section Membership: Renew or Sign Up by April 30

The 2026-27 application for membership in the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) sections were mailed in mid-February. Members are encouraged to sign up for the sections by returning the application and payment by April 30, to: Section Membership, Louisiana State Bar Association, 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130-3404.

The Section application and brochure is available online at: [www.lsba.org/BarGovernance/Sections.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/BarGovernance/Sections.aspx).

Members needing an additional copy should follow the link to download and print the application or brochure. Note: Members should select the correct application based on the fiscal year in which they would like to join.

For more information, contact the Membership Department, (504)566-1600, (800)421-5722, or email [processing@LSBA.org](mailto:processing@LSBA.org).

# LBSL Application Deadlines for Board Certification

The LBSL accepted applications for board certification in seven (7) areas—appellate practice, employment law, estate planning and administration, family law, health law, labor law, and tax law from Nov. 1, 2025 through March 18, 2026. The deadline to submit applications was extended from Feb. 28, 2026 to March 18, 2026.

The next application period for board certification in these seven (7) areas will run from Nov. 1, 2026 to Feb. 28, 2027. If interested in applying for board certification during the 2027 application period, you may submit your name and area of specialization to be included in the list of prospective applicants.

The LBSL is currently accepting applications for business bankruptcy law and consumer bankruptcy law certification from Jan. 1, 2026 through Sept. 30, 2026.

In accordance with the Plan of Legal Specialization, a Louisiana State Bar Association member in good standing who has been engaged in the practice of law on a full-time basis for a minimum of five (5) years may apply for certification. Further requirements are that each year a minimum percentage of the attorney's practice must be devoted to the area of

certification sought, passing a written examination to demonstrate sufficient knowledge, skills and proficiency in the area for which certification is sought and five (5) favorable references. Peer review shall be used to determine that an applicant has achieved recognition as having a level of competence indicating proficient performance handling the usual matters in the specialty field. Please refer to the LBSL standards for the applicable specialty for a more detailed description of the requirements for application, viewable online at [www.lsba.org/documents/Specialization/LSBAPlanofLegalspecialization2017.pdf](http://www.lsba.org/documents/Specialization/LSBAPlanofLegalspecialization2017.pdf).

In addition to the above, applicants must meet a minimum CLE requirement for the year in which application is made and the examination is administered:

- ▶ Appellate Practice – 15 hours of appellate practice
- ▶ Employment Law – 15 hours of employment law
- ▶ Estate Planning and Administration — 18 hours of estate planning and administration
- ▶ Family Law — 15 hours of family law
- ▶ Health Law – 15 hours of health law
- ▶ Labor Law – 15 hours of labor law

- ▶ Tax Law — 18 hours of tax law
- ▶ Bankruptcy Law — CLE is regulated by the American Board of Certification, the testing agency.

Approved specialization CLE courses may be viewed on the LBSL Approved Course Calendar online at [www.lsba.org/MCLE/MCLECalendar.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/MCLE/MCLECalendar.aspx).

With regard to applications for business bankruptcy law and consumer bankruptcy law certification, although the written test(s) is administered by the American Board of Certification, attorneys should apply for approval of the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization simultaneously with the testing agency in order to avoid delay of board certification by the LBSL. Information concerning the American Board of Certification will be provided with the application form(s).

Anyone interested in applying for certification should contact LBSL Specialization Director, Mary Ann Wegmann, email [maryann.wegmann@lsba.org](mailto:maryann.wegmann@lsba.org), or call (504) 619-0128, for an application packet, or to be included in the list of prospective applicants. For more information, please go to the LBSL website, [www.lsba.org/Specialization/](http://www.lsba.org/Specialization/).



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## LBSL Seeks Applicants for Labor Law Advisory Commission

The Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization (LBSL) is seeking LSBA members interested in serving on the 2026-27 Labor Law Advisory Commission.

Interested applicants should submit a curriculum vitae no later than May 15, 2026. The term will begin July 1, 2026. Members serve terms set by the board of up to three years and may be eligible for reappointment to a second term.

The duties of Advisory Commission members are outlined in LBSL Rule 4. Additional information is available in an April 1, 2026, letter from LBSL Chair Robert G. Levy, which is posted the LBSL website at [www.lsba.org/Specialization](http://www.lsba.org/Specialization).

For more information, please contact Specialization Director Mary Ann Wegmann at (504)619-0128 or email [maryann.wegmann@lsba.org](mailto:maryann.wegmann@lsba.org).

# Attorneys are Recertified as Board Certified Specialists in 2026

In accordance with the requirements of the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization (LBLS) and the Plan of Legal Specialization, the following individuals have satisfactorily met the established criteria for recertification as LBLS board certified specialists in the following areas for a five (5) year period which began on January 1, 2026 and will end on December 31, 2030.

## Appellate Practice

Kelly Brechtel Becker.....New Orleans

## Consumer Bankruptcy Law

Robin Ronquillo De Leo.....Mandeville

## Estate Planning & Administration

Alison Cain Bondurant .....Covington  
James Kody Cannon .....Lake Charles  
Kevin Courtney Curry.....Baton Rouge  
David Gregory Koch.....Baton Rouge  
Erin Elizabeth Kriksciun....New Orleans  
Carl Joseph Servat III..... Metairie  
James Graves Theus, Jr. .... Alexandria  
Beth-Anne Perez Watson ..... Metairie

## Family Law

Layne M. Adams ..... Downsville  
Mandi Borne Bucher..... New Iberia  
Louis J. Cosenza ..... Gonzales  
Amanda Casey Desselles ..... Albany  
Shelley Ann Goff ..... Ruston  
Mark Joseph Mansfield.....Covington

Frank P. Tranchina, Jr.....Covington  
Kristyl R. Treadaway ..... Metairie  
Angela Cox Williams ..... Slidell  
Jeffrey S. Wittenbrink .....Baton Rouge

## Tax Law

Stanley B. Blackstone .....Lafayette  
Dorrell J. Brister..... Alexandria  
Daniel Hamilton Bruni..... Metairie  
Jacob S. Capraro .....Baton Rouge  
Kevin Courtney Curry.....Baton Rouge  
Michele Moore Echols .....Mandeville  
Jeffrey W. Koonce.....Baton Rouge  
Caroline Devereaux  
Lafourcade .....New Orleans  
Brett Salvador Lala ..... Covington  
Francis J. Lobrano..... Belle Chasse  
Ashley Kelton Longwell....New Orleans  
Matthew Paul Miller .....New Orleans  
Joseph Michael Placer, Jr. ....Lafayette  
Brianna Star Rome .....New Orleans  
Daniel Joseph Walter.....New Orleans

## Interested in Creating a New Legal Specialty Area?

Are you interested in creating a new legal specialty area in Louisiana? The Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization (LBLS) has adopted a written policy concerning how submissions must be made for LBLS to consider a new legal specialty area. While new legal specialties must be approved by the Louisiana State Bar Association House of Delegates (LSBA HOD), LBLS is charged with recommending new specialties to the LSBA HOD.

Ten (10) legal specialties have been approved so far: Tax Law, Family Law, Business Bankruptcy Law, Consumer Bankruptcy Law, Labor Law, Employment Law, Estate Planning and

Administration, Appellate Practice, Environmental Law, and Health Law.

LBLS oversees these legal specialty areas. Visit the LBLS website to find out more about board certified legal specialization: [www.lsba.org/documents/Specialization/LSBAPlanofLegalspecialization2017.pdf](http://www.lsba.org/documents/Specialization/LSBAPlanofLegalspecialization2017.pdf).

Approved specialization CLE courses may be viewed on the LBLS Approved Course Calendar online at [www.lsba.org/MCLE/MCLECalendar.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/MCLE/MCLECalendar.aspx).

For more information on creating a new legal specialty area in Louisiana, please contact Specialization Director Mary Ann Wegmann at (504)619-0128 or email [maryann.wegmann@lsba.org](mailto:maryann.wegmann@lsba.org).

# Attorneys Qualify as Board Certified Specialists in 2026

In accordance with the requirements of the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization (LBLS) and the Plan of Legal Specialization, the following individuals have satisfactorily met the established criteria and are qualified as LBLS board certified specialists in the following areas for a five (5) year period which began on January 1, 2026 and will end on December 31, 2030.

## Newly Qualified Board Certified Specialists:

### Appellate Practice

Kathryn Zainey Gonski.....New Orleans  
Bradley Christopher Guin..Baton Rouge  
Jane Catherine Hogan .....Hammond  
Kevin William Welsh .....Baton Rouge

### Estate Planning & Administration

Jacob Carter White..... Shreveport

### Family Law

Lindsey S. Olsen .....Mandeville

### Health Law

Heather McFadyen Arrington ..Lafayette  
David Dean Haynes, Jr.....New Orleans  
Carrie LeBlanc Jones .....Baton Rouge  
Berryl Thompson II-  
Broussard .....Lafayette

### Tax Law

Lucius Lampton Morris II..Baton Rouge  
Phyllis D. Sims.....Baton Rouge



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## THE ONLY PLACE A WITNESS CANNOT FAIL: WHAT NATHAN FIELDER'S *THE REHEARSAL* TEACHES US ABOUT JURY TRIAL TESTIMONY

**H**ave you ever tried explaining to someone who has never seen a courtroom what it is like to prepare for a jury trial? When it comes to prepping my main witness, season 1, episode 1 of the HBO television show *The Rehearsal* helps me convey my experience with the process.

We practitioners know that there are several daunting, seemingly impossible steps before the judge calls that first *voir dire* panel and you begin picking a jury. How to find time to write opposition memoranda for those last-minute motions *in limine*? Time-consuming telephone calls to witnesses and experts who now have excuse-filled, conflicting plans that interfere with them appearing in court next week. All this while you sit alone on a weekend in your office sifting through the mounds of paperwork (these days, thousands of pages of PDFs) to decide what exhibits to show the jury – in a presentation you pray won't have their eyes glazing over in boredom.

Not to mention running errands to make sure your shoes are shined and your suits are cleaned. Oh man, maybe it's time to even buy new ones.

But the most daunting task ahead of any jury trial, and the most crucial, is getting your star witness, whether that be the plaintiff or the defendant, in the right headspace to testify in front of a jury. Think about it. Your main witness—usually unequipped for any public speaking, let alone the scrutiny of a 12-person jury—has to sit in the spotlight on the witness stand and give testimony, seemingly unrehearsed, that is both impactful and genuine. First, they respond to your “who, what, when, where, why” direct examination. Then, after your “no further questions,” that same witness immediately has to be ready to survive,



with dignity intact, the blistering, leading questions of a cross-examination by a seasoned opposing counsel.

How is any witness expected to successfully make it through a jury trial?

How are you, the lawyer, to prepare them for this onslaught? Not only to survive, but to be compelling?

I don't know if there is any learning process better than the first-hand experience of trial (pun intended) and, yes, sometimes error. In other words, just going out there and doing it. I won't debate the politics of civil litigation practice, but as a practitioner, I feel younger attorneys lost out with the jury trial threshold dropping to \$10,000. The prior \$50,000 threshold created a safety net, allowing young lawyers to cut their teeth on smaller cases. However, I digress.

So, how does HBO's series *The Rehearsal* fit into a jury trial? Let me explain.

The premise of the show is this: The host Nathan Fielder wants to help a Brooklyn teacher, Kor Skeete, with an uncomfortable dilemma. Kor lives for trivia, and Kor's devoted trivia team believes he has a master's degree. He does not, and this uncomfortable lie has

gone unchecked for so long that Kor fears telling the truth will lose him the respect of his team and may even evoke a “violent” response from a team member named Tricia.

What help can Nathan offer Kor? Well, Nathan (for our purposes, a trial attorney) understands who Kor is and what's at stake. Nathan, realizing his own awkwardness, tries to compensate using humor. Nathan also knows the level of trust he is about to ask of Kor is unprecedented. As Nathan put it: “So far it was going well, and it had to, because I was about to ask this man to trust me with his life.” Our clients entrust their trial attorneys to walk them successfully through this upcoming trial by fire, and a gut-level of trust needs to be established long before they step onto the witness stand.

Significantly, Nathan understands the viewpoint of his main witness, Kor. Nathan knows that showing one's true self doesn't always have a fairytale ending, and some people may not like what they see. Nathan's solution is to playact with Kor every permutation so that Kor is prepared for all possibilities. The idea is that a successful outcome isn't just a matter of chance.

Wait, how do you plan for every variable with nothing left to chance? Well (**spoiler alert:** although if you have not seen the show yet and you're still holding out - what exactly are you holding out for?), you... *rehearse it*. Nathan explains his process to Kor after their first conversation. He reveals that, without detection, he researched Kor's personality and his apartment space, recreated Kor's apartment in a warehouse, hired an actor to play Kor, and repeatedly rehearsed different variations of how the first conversation with Kor may go.

Then, Nathan offers to apply this approach to Kor's dilemma. Kor immediately sees the "extremely appealing" benefit of knowing ahead of time exactly how someone else might react in a given situation. With this knowledge and foresight, Kor will know exactly how to respond to his volatile teammate in real time.

Fielder then gets to work, surreptitiously surveilling everything he can about the teammate Tricia, her personality, tics, viewpoints—in other words, the "discovery" phase. The plan is for Kor to come clean while playing trivia alone with Tricia in a Brooklyn bar called the Alligator Lounge. Astonishingly, Nathan replicates the entirety of the Brooklyn's Alligator Lounge in a warehouse and hires 30 actors to fill the space as patrons. At the replica, Kor and Nathan engage in a something of a mock trial, practicing 13 staged versions of the night to make this rehearsal space "the one place on earth [Kor] couldn't fail."

Nathan and Kor start with basic blocking, beginning with where to sit. Then, Nathan uses a flowchart software with decision trees guiding towards key points in the evening to help Kor avoid pitfalls. They plan for every way Tricia could react, charting the optimal path through the evening. Nathan even runs Kor through the worst imaginable outcome, helping Kor face his biggest fear of this encounter: Tricia (played by an actress) gets so angry at the 12-year-old deception that she leaves and declares she never wants to see him again. In response, other patrons at the bar jeer that Kor is a fraud who doesn't have a master's degree, to the point where the

trivia host announces to the crowd (all actors), "and the loser of tonight's trivia is... Kor Skeet."

This exposure therapy has a surprising benefit - after a few run-throughs, Kor starts to test new approaches and even recognizes his own blind spots.

Rehearsals are a fantastic way to get your main witness to places where they get comfortable with being genuine and compelling, even when they're on display before a jury of twelve. If you plan for the future outcome, or any permutation of it, your witness becomes empowered to respond authentically but in a controlled way - choosing exactly how best to present themselves on the stand.

Unfortunately for Kor, deep into the rehearsals he loses the script. Trivia is so important to Kor that he becomes unable to focus on rehearsing the confession, instead becoming singularly obsessed with the fact that he may lose trivia at the real Alligator Lounge. Nathan tries to bring Kor back to reality, back to the script. Who cares if he loses trivia if he can instead surmount his mountain of anxiety to talk truthfully with Tricia? Kor cannot get past this mountain: To Kor, even "[o]ne night of bar trivia is sacrosanct."

It's here that Nathan crosses an ethical line that we as lawyers cannot cross. Posing as a blogger, Nathan interviews the Alligator Lounge's trivia host to obtain the real night's trivia questions and answers. Then, Nathan plants the trivia answers in casual conversation with Kor so that Kor will know the answers without knowing Nathan cheated. Kor can therefore "feel" like he outright won

trivia with Tricia on the night of the real confession.

This, of course, is where the analogy ends for a trial attorney. Lawyers cannot steal questions from their opponent, cannot influence the judge, and cannot unofficially contact the jurors just to make the process easier for their witness. At some point, the witness will need to find the strength within themselves to face the unforeseen variable in every jury trial that no one can expect and for whom no one can plan. The best you can do is just to know that somewhere, the unexpected will happen - and to prepare your witness with the best poker face to roll with it.

While the jury trial is a somewhat unnatural process, it remains the best method our society has to resolve factual and legal disputes. Nathan's rehearsals show an effective method of how a trial attorney can bring a witness's best reality and truth, and stage-ready authenticity, to a jury.

*Note: all descriptions of "The Rehearsal" are for purposes of commentary and critique.*

Gregory Kent Moroux, Jr. is a trial attorney in Baton Rouge at Chris Corzo Injury Attorneys and a mediator with Perry Dampf Dispute Solutions. He earned his JD degree in 2007 from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center. He is a member of the Baton Rouge Bar Association. (kent@callcorzo.com; Baton Rouge, LA)



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# LAWYERS, LIKE ATHLETES, MUST BRING OUR “A” GAME

**A**s the final seconds counted down, she dribbled up the court, heart pounding, with every eye in the stadium on her. She glanced at the clock and released the shot as the buzzer sounded.

Similarly, an associate at their desk feels the pressure of the ticking as they submit their final answer or motion to the court just before the deadline. Lawyers, like athletes, face intense performance pressure. The mental strategies used in sports can meaningfully support success and well-being in the legal profession.

Sports metaphors are deeply embedded in legal and academic environments, reflecting the parallels between these fields. The following commonly used phrases illustrate how athletic language shapes our understanding and communication in the legal profession:

- “Knocked it out of the park,”
- “The ball is in their court,”
- “Slam dunk,”
- “Hail Mary,”
- “A win is a win,”
- “Curveball,”
- “Get the ball rolling,” and
- “Dropped the ball.”

Sports and law share more similarities than many realize. Both fields are inherently competitive and adversarial, requiring consistent high-level performance because even minor mistakes can have significant consequences. Athletes risk losing a match or a title from a single misstep, while lawyers may face unfavorable verdicts or bar complaints due to minor errors. In both fields, the primary objective is to secure a win: lawyers seek favorable outcomes in court or transactions, while athletes pursue records, medals, and championships.



Success in sports relies on physical ability, while success in law depends on mental performance. Athletes face physical demands and pressure, often leading to injuries and mental health challenges. For lawyers, the pressures are primarily psychological. Billable hours, heavy caseloads, client deadlines, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and external expectations increase stress, anxiety, and the risk of burnout. Law students also face pressures to maintain high grades, secure internships, and prepare for the bar exam. Continuous evaluation by professors, judges, clients, and peers can further intensify these challenges.

Empirical studies show that lawyers experience high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and burnout. Like athletes,

many lawyers view these struggles as invisible and hesitate to acknowledge them due to pressure to maintain a professional image. The expectation of perfection extends into the courtroom and personal life. Recently, attitudes toward lawyers' mental health have improved, as evidenced by the implementation of wellness initiatives in many courts, law firms, and law schools, and by the growing availability of confidential support programs, such as JLAP, within the profession.<sup>1</sup>

Athletes recognize that achieving peak performance requires both mental and physical strength.

Sports psychology shows that systematic mental training enhances performance. Experts define mental conditioning as repeated mental exercises that build focus, concentration, confidence, and

stress management skills. Skiers mentally rehearse courses and boxers visualize successful combinations. Studies show that guided imagery, a form of mental visualization, can improve skill execution and self-confidence. In legal practice, visualization techniques allow lawyers to mentally prepare for courtroom arguments or negotiations, including responses to challenging questions. This preparation promotes greater readiness and reduces performance anxiety. Evidence suggests that when lawyers adopt these strategies, we may see improved concentration, better stress management, and greater professional effectiveness.<sup>2</sup>

The ability to remain focused and calm under stress is essential for both lawyers and athletes. Emotional fitness, or the ability to understand and manage your own emotions and those of others, shapes actions, decision-making, and relationships. Lawyers often face high-stakes situations, tight deadlines, and unpredictable challenges. We rely on cognitive, social, and emotional skills, such as explaining key points clearly, making strong first impressions, and managing emotions before a judge or jury. Emotional fitness is a key factor in workplace performance and personal success.<sup>3</sup>

More sports teams are teaching mindfulness meditation. Being fully present and not reacting to distractions is important, whether scoring a penalty kick or delivering opening/closing arguments. Mindfulness means being in the moment without judging yourself or your performance. Law students and lawyers often engage in internal criticism, such as “I should’ve known that” or “Why didn’t I catch this earlier?” This judgmental thinking can clutter the mind and hinder decision-making. Lawyers who practice mindfulness can focus better during stressful moments and recover more quickly from setbacks. Setbacks are part of every athlete’s journey, including losses, injuries, and performance slumps.<sup>4</sup>

Athletes learn to focus on what they can control, such as training, preparation, attitude, sleep, and nutrition, while letting go of the uncontrollable, like an

opponent’s strategy or the weather. For lawyers, this means concentrating on case preparation, attitude, client communication, and responses to situations. It is important to separate the controllables—preparation, sleep, nutrition—and the uncontrollables—the judge, their mood, opposing counsel’s actions, case facts, or client decisions—to underscore practicality and maintain focus.

Recovery is an essential part of athletes’ training. Law students, lawyers, and judges often spend long hours staring at computer screens, but the mind needs time to recharge. Short breaks, such as stepping outside, stretching, or taking a quick walk, can restore focus and energy. Incorporating recovery into daily routines is vital, though often neglected. Skipping rest to finish tasks can be counterproductive. Embrace recovery as a productive part of your day through hobbies, social time, or exercise. Rest and recovery are essential for lasting success.

Just as sports psychology demonstrates the value of mental training for optimal performance, as a lawyer, our commitment to skill development, networking, and expertise should intentionally include a sustained focus on mental well-being. By systematically integrating mindfulness, visualization, and resilience-building into our daily routines, we can more effectively meet the psychological demands of a successful legal career.

As you strive to “bring your ‘A’ game” through adopting proven strategies from athletes, take the proactive step

of accessing available support resources to enhance your well-being. JLAP is in your corner. We are a safe haven of healing for all members of the legal profession.

To learn more about prioritizing mental health, contact JLAP at (985) 778-0571, email [JLAP@LouisianaJLAP.com](mailto:JLAP@LouisianaJLAP.com), or visit [www.LouisianaJLAP.com](http://www.LouisianaJLAP.com). JLAP services are available to all judges, lawyers, law students, bar applicants, legal professionals, and family members. All calls are confidential.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Heird, Emily. “Lawyer like an Athlete to Boost Performance and Optimize Well-being.” *Vantage View Coaching*. Sept. 6, 2025. <https://vantageviewcoaching.com/how-to-cultivate-more-awe-copy-2/>.


2. “Mental Reps: Why Lawyers Should Train Their Minds Like Athletes Train Their Bodies.” *The Mental Bar*. Feb. 28, 2025. <https://mentalbar.net/mental-reps/>.

3. Beyer, Joe. “How lawyers can optimize performance under pressure.” *American Bar Association*. Apr. 18, 2022. <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/journal/articles/2022/how-lawyers-can-optimize-performance-under-pressure/>.

4. “Mental Reps: Why Lawyers Should Train Their Minds Like Athletes Train Their Bodies.” *supra* note 2.

*Dr. Angela White-Bazile, Esq., is the executive director of the Louisiana Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (JLAP) and can be reached at (985)778-0571, toll-free (866)354-9334 or by email at [jlap@louisianajlap.com](mailto:jlap@louisianajlap.com).*





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## 2026 MIDYEAR MEETING

### Midyear Meeting CLE Seminar Held Jan. 22, 2026

The Louisiana State Bar Association hosted its Annual Midyear Meeting CLE Seminar on Jan. 22, 2026, at the Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel. The program brought attorneys together for a full day of continuing legal education, networking and professional development.



Candace W. Gregory, partner, Phelps, Flowood, Mississippi; Rebecca Sha, partner, Phelps, New Orleans; and Susan N. Eccles, partner in charge, Adams & Reese L.L.P., Baton Rouge, present during the LSBA Annual Midyear Meeting CLE Seminar on Jan. 22, 2026, at the Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel in Baton Rouge.



Hon. Guy P. Holdridge (Ret.), director, Louisiana State Law Institute, Baton Rouge, speaks during a session at the LSBA Annual Midyear Meeting CLE Seminar on Jan. 22, 2026, at the Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel in Baton Rouge.



Elizabeth L. Henslee, account executive, LexisNexis, Orlando, Florida, participates in the LSBA Annual Midyear Meeting CLE Seminar on Jan. 22, 2026, at the Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel in Baton Rouge.

### Leadership LSBA Class Recognized Jan. 24, 2026

The 2025-2026 Leadership LSBA Class was formally recognized on Jan. 24, 2026, during the Louisiana State Bar Association House of Delegates meeting, held in conjunction with the Midyear Meeting at the Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel.



Zachary D. Berryman, Liskow & Lewis, APLC, New Orleans; Lauren S. Bennett, Orleans Parish Civil District Court, New Orleans; Meghan E. Notariano, Parker Layrison Law Firm, Ponchatoula; Taquincia M. Jairles, Chehardy, Sherman, Williams, Recile & Hayes, L.L.P., Metairie; Christine E. Wells, Tanner and Justice, Baton Rouge; Shiena Marie N. Burke, Kean Miller LLP, Baton Rouge; Shana M. Robertson, Tina L. Suggs & Associates, Metairie; Sharita L. Spears, attorney at law, Zachary; Erin N. Alpandinar, Jones Walker, LLP, Baton Rouge; and Hannah K. Cobb, Long Law Firm, Baton Rouge, are recognized as members of the 2025-2026 Leadership LSBA Class during the House of Delegates meeting on Jan. 24, 2026, at the Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel in Baton Rouge.



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# THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

Professionalism is the human side of lawyering. It calls us to act with courtesy and civility when engaging with others, whether they're our clients, our colleagues, the court, or the community.

The first two sentences of the LSBA Code of Professional Conduct read:

▶ My word is my bond.

▶ I will conduct myself with honesty, dignity, civility, courtesy and fairness and will not engage in any demeaning or derogatory actions or commentary toward others.

Diligence, courage, competence and service to the public as well as the profession are also a part of our duty to the profession.

Few of us intentionally behave unprofessionally. However, aspects of our profession, our work environment and our human nature can make it a challenge some days to respond to what life brings our way with dignity, civility and courtesy.

The practice of law is a conflict-driven profession and conflict generates negative emotions. Negative emotions threaten our sense of safety, signaling to our brain the threat of danger and triggering our threat arousal system, also known as the Fight-or-Flight response.

Our nervous system was designed to protect us from physical danger, and it serves that purpose well. But it cannot distinguish between a life-threatening crisis and the overwhelm we feel from the demands of the practice of law.

High-performance expectations, demanding clients, impending deadlines, long hours, staying abreast of changes in the practice of law all put pressure on us that can put us in fight-or-flight mode just as if we had a saber-toothed tiger close on our heels.

Once we are in fight-or-flight mode, we may find dignity, civility and courtesy

taking a back seat to the more insistent demands of our survival instinct.

Over time, being too often in fight-or-flight mode impairs our attention, focus, learning, memory retrieval, willpower, and resilience. Unless we learn to turn off the threat response, its persistence will leave us frustrated, impatient and exhausted, leading to impaired judgment and unprofessional conduct.

The good news is that you can bring yourself out of a state of threat arousal with a simple activity: using the power of the pause.

When you begin to find yourself becoming anxious or overwhelmed, pause. Slow down, focus your attention on your body and the physical sensations you're experiencing—your heart rate, your breathing, the location of any tension or discomfort in your body.

Notice the physical environment around you. What can you see, smell, hear? The goal is to pull your attention away from the anxious thoughts and emotions that create a sense of overload and ground yourself in the present moment.

Take several deep breaths, breathing in slowly and breathing out even more slowly. A slow out breath sends an "all is well" signal to your brain. It relaxes your body, calms your emotions, and takes you out of the state of threat arousal.

As you breathe, focus solely on your breath. Gently brush aside any thoughts and emotions that arise and return your focus to your breathing. Just by pausing from what you're doing, allowing your breathing to slow and your body to relax, you can turn off the threat arousal response.

To avoid letting yourself reach the point of overwhelm, make it a daily practice to pause and regroup. Periodically throughout the day stop what you're doing and notice what's happening around you. For just a few minutes, put aside thoughts

of the last email, the next client or the demands and deadlines of your calendar.

Be still and take in the sounds, sights, smells of your surroundings. Do a quick check of your body, noting where there is any tension or discomfort. Stand, stretch, drink water.

Practicing the pause to take ourselves out of threat arousal mode with slow, relaxed breathing is a tool we can use when we are faced with difficult conversations. When we are not in threat arousal, we are able to put aside our own anxious thoughts and listen deeply and thoughtfully to what the other person is saying. We can listen to and connect with others with dignity, civility and courtesy.

That's an important first step in avoiding needless conflict or resolving it when it does arise. Conflict may be the nature of our profession, but it doesn't have to be the nature of our behavior.

Take a moment to read the Code of Professionalism in full; it's online at [www.lsba.org/Professionalism](http://www.lsba.org/Professionalism). It's a reminder of all the ways our conduct can impact our clients, our colleagues and the courts and shape the image of the legal profession in the eyes of the public.

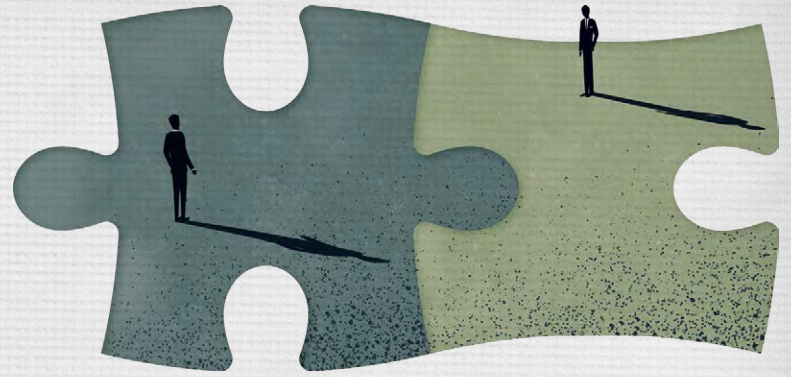
Put the power of the pause to work for you.

*Marsha M. Wade is a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Committee on the Profession and a volunteer for the LSBA's Law School Professionalism Orientation Program. She earned her JD degree from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center. After*

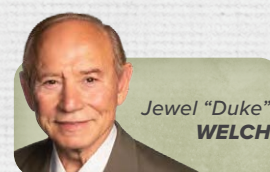


*a career in legislative and public policy work, including with the Louisiana Senate and Louisiana Association for Justice, she speaks and writes on professionalism from a wellness perspective. (mwade50@gmail.com; Baton Rouge)*

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## REPORTING DATES 2/2/26 & 2/4/26

### REPORT BY DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL

Public matters are reported to protect the public, inform the profession and deter misconduct. Reporting date Feb. 2, 2026.

#### Decisions

**Jules August Fontana III**, New Orleans (2025-B-01447), **suspended from the practice of law for one year and one day, fully deferred, subject to probation for a period to coincide with the term of Respondent's recovery agreement with the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program**, by order of the Louisiana Supreme Court dated Dec. 16, 2025. JUDGMENT FINAL and EFFECTIVE Dec. 16, 2025. *Gist:* Fontana was arrested for driving while intoxicated.

**Christopher Hummel Kane**, Metairie (2025-B-1293), **consented to a period of suspension of one year and one day, with all but ninety days deferred**, by order of the Louisiana State Supreme Court dated Nov. 19, 2025. JUDGMENT FINAL and EFFECTIVE Nov. 19, 2025. *Gist:* Respondent employed and supervised an individual who impersonated an attorney and engaged in the unauthorized practice of law for per-

sonal financial gain.

**Edward Alexander Laird**, Baton Rouge (2025-B-01532), transferred to **Interim Suspension for Threat of Harm** status, by order of the Louisiana Supreme Court on Dec. 10, 2025. JUDGMENT FINAL and EFFECTIVE Dec. 10, 2025.

**Latisha Lynette Nixon-Jones**, Baton Rouge (2025-B-01440), **suspended from the practice of law for one year, with all but ninety days deferred. Following the active portion of the suspension, Nixon-Jones shall be placed on probation for one year**, by order of the Louisiana Supreme Court dated Dec. 16, 2025. JUDGMENT FINAL and EFFECTIVE Dec. 16, 2025. *Gist:* Nixon-Jones, while ineligible to practice law due to non-compliance with her annual professional obligations, filed pleadings in district court, and also failed to cooperate with the ODC in its investigation.

**Michael B. Victorian**, Baton Rouge (2025-B-01368), **suspended from the**

**practice of law for one year and one day, fully deferred, subject to probation for a period to coincide with the term of Respondent's recovery agreement with the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program**, by order of the Louisiana Supreme Court dated Dec. 9, 2025. JUDGMENT FINAL and EFFECTIVE Dec. 9, 2025. *Gist:* Victorian was arrested for driving while intoxicated.

#### ADMONITIONS

No admonitions this time.

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## DISCIPLINARY REPORT: UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

The following is a verbatim report of the matters acted upon by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, pursuant to its Disciplinary Rules. This information is published at the request of that court, which is solely responsible for the accuracy of its content. This report is as of February 2026.

Respondent	Disposition	Date Filed	Docket No.
Clark, Sonceree Smith	Reciprocal Suspension	01/05/2026	25-2190
Haynes, Gary J.	Interim Suspension	12/02/2025	25-2230
Laird, Edward Alexander	Interim Suspension	01/27/2026	26-35
Malveau, Eric Edward	Reciprocal Suspension (partially deferred)	12/16/2025	25-1999

## DISCIPLINARY REPORT: UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

The following is a verbatim report of the matters acted upon by the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana, pursuant to its Disciplinary Rules. This information is published at the request of that court, which is solely responsible for the accuracy of its content. This report is as of February 4, 2026.

Respondent	Disposition	Date Filed	Docket No.
Stephen C. LeBlanc	Permanent Resignation (Reciprocal)	11/19/2025	25-mc-00132
Edward Alexander Laird	Suspended (Reciprocal)	01/02/2026	26-mc-00003

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## What is a Fastland? *Percle v. Lafourche Parish Government*

Under Louisiana's State and Local Coastal Resources Management Act, La. R.S. 49:214.21, *et seq.* (SLCRMA), potential users of land in the state's coastal zone must obtain coastal-use permits to undertake certain activities that threaten coastal waters. This requirement is not unique to Louisiana, but rather applies to all coastal states in one form or another pursuant to federally delegated authority under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451, *et seq.* Under Louisiana law, not all activities that occur within the coastal zone require SLCRMA review. Certain activities—those located in land classified as “fastlands”—are generally exempt from the need to obtain a state- or parish-issued coastal-use per-

mit (CUP).

Several cases in recent years challenging CUP issuances have, in part, turned on the meaning and classification of certain lands as fastlands. *See, e.g., Joseph v. Sec'y, La. Dep't of Nat. Res.*, 18-0414 (La. App. 5 Cir. 1/30/19), 265 So.3d 945; *Healthy Gulf v. Sec'y, La. Dep't of Nat. Res.*, 24-0286 (La. App. 4 Cir. 12/23/24), 407 So.3d 705. In each of these cases, allegations that fastlands within the coastal zone must obtain a CUP that ensures avoidance or mitigation of possible adverse effects of the permitted activity have failed. Generally, if the contemplated activity is above a certain elevation or is in fastlands, it is exempt from permitting and mitigation requirements. However, the recurrence of this term in CUP challenges suggests ambiguity regarding its meaning. La. R.S. 49:214.34. Indeed, the recent case of *Percle v. Lafourche Par. Gov't*, 24-1277 (La. App. 1 Cir. 8/8/25), 419 So.3d 390, in which the parish permitting entity classified lands on a small residential tract in Lafourche Parish as requiring a CUP (i.e., not fastlands) represents an example of the same potential ambiguity over the meaning of fastlands, albeit in an inverse manner to the prior cases (i.e., that the subject property *was* fastlands

and *did not* need a CUP as opposed to the earlier cases in which litigants asserted that certain lands *were not* fastlands and thus *did* require a CUP).

The question of whether an activity does or does not need a CUP can be critical to the siting of proposed development, as the CUP analysis by the permitting agency examines effects of proposals to coastal waters according to more than 90 environmental criteria ranging from water course changes to effects on cultural resources to wildlife impacts—a potentially expensive analysis (see La. Admin. Code 43:I.701, *et seq.*).

Fastlands are defined by statute (La. R.S. 49:214.23(6)) as:

lands, including areas that would otherwise be considered wetlands..., that are surrounded by validly existing levees, berms, flood protection structures, or natural formations, whether privately or publicly owned or maintained, ... which levees, berms, flood protection structures, or natural formations would normally prevent activities ... within the surrounded area from having a continuous surface connection to waters of the United States or direct and significant impacts on coastal waters.



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In *Percle*, a private landowner in Thibodaux cleared a 1.359-acre tract of her land to make way for residential development. The parish government informed Ms. Percle that she had improperly cleared an area subject to SLCRMA permitting jurisdiction and that she must apply for an after-the-fact CUP. This process would likely include undertaking any remediation or mitigation deemed necessary to offset identified impacts to coastal waters. Upon application, the parish determined that Percle's property, situated within a ring levee constructed by the parish, was covered by SLCRMA and that she had violated the law by clearing the land. Percle disagreed and sought judicial review in the 17th Judicial District. The district court, sitting in an appellate capacity under the Administrative Procedure Act, agreed with Percle that her land was properly classified as fastlands (surrounded by a ring levee) and that the parish's decision was incorrect. The parish appealed to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal. Agreeing with the district court, the 1st

Circuit affirmed and provided some additional insight into the nature of the term "fastlands."

In this case, the ring levee constructed by the parish was itself done without state or federal authority. 419 So.3d at 395-396. Based on the definition of fastlands requiring that such constructions be "validly existing," the parish (supported by the state) found that, though Percle's lands would be fastlands under normal circumstances and would thus be exempt from needing a CUP, the fact that the parish constructed the levee at issue without state or federal authority (i.e., that the parish obtained its own CUP) meant that the levee was not "validly existing." *Id.* The 1st Circuit observed that the parish had created the invalidity that it now sought to enforce against Percle when it noted that the parish "changed the character of Ms. Percle's land without proper authority to do so." *Id.* at 396. When it ultimately upheld the district court's decision, the 1st Circuit stated that "under these circumstances the substantial rights of Ms.

Percle were prejudiced [and] the administrative findings of [the parish] were an abuse of discretion ...." *Id.* Specifically, the court observed that the parish could not require someone to obtain a CUP "due to the changed nature of her land after [the parish's] actions, which were taken without proper authority" were the proximate cause of any potential need for a CUP in the first place. *Id.*

Reading the statutory law along with the interpretations in *Joseph*, *Healthy Gulf* and *Percle* demonstrates that the term "fastlands," despite its increasing use in litigation, is fairly clear. Nonetheless, the addition of *Percle* to the fastlands jurisprudence in Louisiana should assist in further elucidating the proper application of that term.

— **Ryan M. Seidemann, Ph.D.**  
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## Divorce

*Guillot v. Guillot*, 25-0149 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/16/25), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2025 WL 3640604.

Cecile Guillot appealed the trial court’s judgment granting Jules Guillot’s rule for an article 102 divorce and rendering her rule for an article 103(2) divorce moot. She argued that the trial court erred in refusing to hear her rule when it was the first rule properly set before the district court, as opposed to Mr. Guillot’s rule, which was initially set before the domestic commissioner and then reset before the district court.

The 5th Circuit affirmed, holding that there was no statutory or jurisprudential requirement that a trial court must hear competing divorce rules and decide which one to grant. It noted that any prejudice Ms. Guillot may have suffered was at least partly attributable to her own delay in filing her rule over one year after filing her petition.

Judge Windhorst dissented, finding that the trial court’s decision not to hear

Ms. Guillot’s rule deprived her of procedural due process by denying her the opportunity to be heard. The deprivation was significant because it divested her of the presumption of entitlement to final spousal support under Louisiana Civil Code article 112, which a post-deprivation declaration of fault could not remedy.

## Custody – Ex Parte Orders

*Baker v. Lowe*, 25-1258 (La. App. 1 Cir. 12/09/25), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2025 WL 3527326 (unpublished).

Krystle Lowe sought supervisory review of the Family Court’s ex parte orders granting and extending temporary custody of her son to Jeremy Baker. Mr. Baker sought ex parte relief through a combined ex parte motion for custody and request for non-parent sole custody under Louisiana Civil Code article 133. At the time the ex parte order was issued, the parties were involved in a pending custody proceeding in East Feliciana Parish, where the district court had determined that Mr. Baker lacked a right of action for custody because the acknowledgment of paternity affidavit on which he relied was absolutely null for lack of authentic form, as well as lack of biological paternity. In support

of ex parte relief, Mr. Baker nevertheless alleged that the child would suffer immediate and irreparable injury by being “ripped from his father’s house” and likewise suffer substantial harm by being “bastardized.”

The 1st Circuit granted the writ application in part and vacated the ex parte order and the portion of the order extending it, holding that the allegation of irreparable injury advanced in support of ex parte relief was insufficient under Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure article 3945(B)(1).

## Contempt

*Ragland v. Ragland*, 25-0032 (La. App. 1 Cir. 01/14/26), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2026 WL 120486.

Katherine Diamond Ragland appealed the Family Court’s Feb. 20, 2024, judgment finding her noncompliant with a contempt judgment and ordering her to serve jail time, complete additional community service and pay monetary sanctions. The challenged judgment arose from a compliance review of a Dec. 6, 2023, contempt judgment that contained purge clauses allowing Ms. Ragland to avoid incarceration through compliance.

The 1st Circuit affirmed, holding that the Family Court did not abuse its discretion in finding Ms. Ragland non-



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compliant with the Dec. 6, 2023, contempt judgment, where she failed to make the required payments and did not complete all the ordered community service. The court rejected her arguments that the compliance review constituted criminal contempt or violated due process, emphasizing that the contempt remained civil in nature because the underlying judgment included purge clauses and that notice to counsel constituted notice to the client. The court also affirmed sanctions imposed under Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure article 863 against Ms. Ragland and her former counsel for filing a frivolous motion barred by res judicata, and awarded attorney fees to Mr. Ragland for defending the appeal.

## Community Property – Partition

*Finta-Volpati v. Volpati*, 24-0624 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/10/25), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2025 WL 3534976.

Lori Finta-Volpati appealed a judgment that modified the Nov. 11, 2021, consent judgment partitioning the community property between her and Walter Volpati. The consent judgment included detailed provisions governing the family residence, including responsibility for mortgage payments, elevation expenses and distribution of net sale proceeds. It also waived reimbursement claims except as expressly provided. After the elevation project was delayed, Mr. Volpati sought reimbursement for mortgage payments and other expenses, arguing that changed circumstances and principles of co-ownership entitled him to relief. The trial court granted reimbursement in part and reallocated certain obligations.

The 5th Circuit reversed in part, holding that a consent judgment partitioning community property is not subject to modification based on changed circumstances and is governed by principles of contract interpretation and res judicata. The court concluded that the consent judgment’s allocation of “net proceeds”

necessarily contemplated satisfaction of the mortgage from the sale price and foreclosed later reimbursement claims absent a showing of nullity or a vice of consent. Finding no evidence that Mr. Volpati’s consent was vitiated by error, the court rejected his attempt to recast the dispute as one arising under co-ownership principles. The judgment was affirmed only as to a discrete expense that the record showed Ms. Finta-Volpati had expressly approved under the consent judgment’s terms.

*Kyles v. Kyles*, 25-CA-0526 (La. App. 1 Cir. 01/09/26), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2026 WL 123278.

Rashanda Kyles and Derrick Kyles both appealed the Family Court’s judgments partitioning their community property, including a Sept. 20, 2023, “Final Community Property Judgment” and a March 8, 2024, judgment awarding Ms. Kyles an equalizing payment. The parties’ disputes centered on the Family Court’s treatment of the family residence built on Mr. Kyles’ separate



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property, reimbursement and offset issues tied to the community mortgage, and the valuation of vehicles and associated liabilities.

The 1st Circuit vacated in part, reversed in part, amended in part and remanded. The court held that the Family Court legally erred in:

- (1) Awarding Ms. Kyles reimbursement for one-half of the increased value of the family residence, rather than for one-half of the value of the community property at the time it was used;
- (2) Not offsetting that reimbursement claim by the amount of her share of the mortgage;
- (3) Not including the mortgage in its calculation of the net value of the property allocated to each spouse;
- (4) Valuing two vehicles based on evidence not admitted into evidence.

However, the court held that the Family Court did not err in:

- (1) Valuing the liabilities associated with vehicles based on Ms. Kyles' testimony;
- (2) Denying Mr. Kyles' reimbursement claim for the community's use of his separate property during the marriage; and
- (3) Denying Ms. Kyles' reimbursement claim for Mr. Kyles' exclusive use and occupancy of the family residence under La. R.S. 9:374(A).

## Grandparent Visitation

*Ives v. Ives*, 25-0413 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/15/25), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2025 WL 3625918.

Nicholas Ives appealed a judgment denying his exception of no cause of action and granting his mother, Pamela Quigley, grandparent visitation with his two children. He argued that the trial court erred in finding that Quigley met her burden of proof and that it did not properly consider the factors under

Louisiana Civil Code article 136(D), e.g., his fundamental right to make decisions concerning the care, custody and control of his children.

The 5th Circuit affirmed. The court held that the trial court did not err in denying Ives' exception of no cause of action because Quigley's pleading sufficiently stated a cause of action by alleging that she is the paternal grandmother, that it is in the children's best interests that she have visitation privileges, that the children lived with her for an extended period of time and that she has a close bond with them.

Further, the court held that the trial court did not err in granting Quigley grandparent visitation. The record showed that there was ample evidence to support a finding that Quigley met her burden of proof, and the trial court's reasons for judgment showed that it had considered each of the factors under article 136(D). The court concluded that the limited visitation schedule, two Saturdays per month, with an alternate option for an overnight visit once every three months, was reasonable and that the children's best interests justified the intrusion on Ives' parental decision-making.

## Mandamus

*Raymond v. Raymond*, 25-0616 (La. App. 5 Cir. 01/06/26), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2026 WL 60079 (unpublished).

Diamond Raymond sought supervisory review of a judgment denying her petition for writ of mandamus by

which she sought to compel the clerk of court to assign her petition for divorce a separate case number and random allotment under Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure article 253.1. Ms. Raymond argued that the clerk had a ministerial duty to randomly assign her petition as a new suit, rather than assigning it the same case number and division as a previously filed divorce petition involving the same parties. The trial court denied mandamus relief and ordered the termination of a new case number that had briefly been assigned.

The 5th Circuit denied the writ. The court held that the allotment and reallocation of cases by clerks of court generally involves discretionary, not ministerial, functions, rendering mandamus relief unavailable. The court emphasized that while article 253.1 mandates random assignment of cases, clerks retain discretion in case assignment where no specific local court rules prescribe a mandatory procedure. Because the 40th Judicial District Court lacks local rules governing the allotment of multiple divorce petitions filed between the same parties, the clerk could not be compelled by mandamus to assign a separate case number or reallocate the matter.

—Elizabeth K. Fox

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## EEOC Rescinds Workplace Guidance on Harassment

On Jan. 22, 2026, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) voted to rescind its enforcement guidance addressing workplace harassment. The withdrawn guidance, issued during the prior administration, outlined the agency’s interpretation of employer obligations under federal anti-discrimination laws, including expectations related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

## Background on Prior Guidance

The rescinded guidance stemmed from the EEOC’s earlier effort to align its enforcement position with the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2020 decision in *Bostock v. Clayton Cnty.*, 590 U.S. 644 (2020). In *Bostock*, the Court held that Title VII’s prohibition on discrimination “because of...sex” includes discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Court concluded that firing an employee for being gay or transgender necessarily involves sex-based considerations. At the same time, the Court noted that it was not resolving questions beyond the specific issue of termination, leaving open how Title VII applies to related workplace conduct and policies.

Relying on *Bostock*, the EEOC’s prior guidance interpreted Title VII to require certain accommodations for transgender

and gender-nonconforming employees. It also identified forms of conduct that could constitute unlawful harassment, including “outing” an employee, repeatedly using a name or pronoun inconsistent with an employee’s gender identity and denying access to bathrooms or other sex-segregated facilities aligned with an individual’s gender identity.

## Judicial Developments Leading to the Rescission

In May 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas vacated portions of the EEOC’s guidance. *Texas v. EEOC*, 785 F. Supp. 3d 170 (N.D. Tex. 2025). The court concluded that *Bostock* did not redefine “sex” under Title VII but instead clarified how sex-based classifications apply in the context of termination decisions. According to the district court, the Supreme Court’s ruling reaffirmed that “sex” refers to biological distinctions between male and female. On that basis, the court held that the EEOC exceeded its statutory authority by expanding the definition of sex “beyond the biological binary” and by requiring employers to adopt bathroom, dress and pronoun accommodations not expressly grounded in the statute.

## The Commission’s January 2026 Action

The EEOC’s decision to rescind the guidance aligns with the district court’s ruling and with the current administration’s stated intention to remove gender-identity-related interpretations from agency materials. During the public meeting in which the vote occurred, EEOC Chair Andrea Lucas emphasized the limits of the agency’s authority, stating that the Commission “cannot make affirmative statements of policy interpreting Title VII” and may only issue procedural rules that implement congressional directives. With the rescission, the EEOC’s prior interpretation of what constitutes illegal harass-



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ment based on sexual orientation and gender identity is no longer in effect as agency guidance.

## Practical Impact on Employers

Despite the withdrawal of the guidance, the core legal landscape remains unchanged. Title VII continues to prohibit discrimination based on sex, which—under *Bostock*—includes sexual orientation and gender identity. Chair Lucas underscored this point, noting that federal laws prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and retaliation “remain firmly in place,” as does Supreme Court precedent interpreting those laws.

For employers, the rescission may reduce reliance on the EEOC’s prior examples and explanations, but it does not alter the underlying statutory obligations. Most day-to-day compliance practices are expected to remain the

same, and employers must continue to evaluate workplace conduct and policies in light of existing federal anti-discrimination requirements.

– **Kate C. Brownlee**

Member, LSBA Labor Relations & Employment Law Section  
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## 5th Circuit Denies NLRB Ability to Award Full Compensatory Relief

*Hiran Management, Inc. v. NLRB*, 157 F.4th 719 (5th Cir. 2025).

In this unfair-labor-practices action, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit addressed whether the National Labor Relations Board was within its authority to award “full compensatory

damages” as a “make whole” monetary remedy. There is a split among the circuits as to the NLRB’s ability to expand monetary remedies against employers in unfair-labor-practices cases.

Hiran Management is a restaurant operator that ran a Texas-based karaoke restaurant, employing 20 nonunion employees. A dispute arose when eight of the twenty employees went on strike after their complaints about performing extra duties without receiving additional promised compensation weren’t addressed. Subsequent to the strike, Hiran discharged the employees.

The NLRB filed an administrative complaint alleging that Hiran violated Section 8(a)(1) of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) by discharging the striking employees. The NLRA prohibits employers from interfering with an employee’s right to engage in concerted protected activity such as a strike, regardless of whether the employees are unionized.

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The Administrative Law Judge ruled for the NLRB. Pursuant to the traditional remedies under Section 10(c) of the NLRA, the NLRB ordered relief of reinstatement and back pay, in addition to “full compensatory damages” for “all direct or foreseeable pecuniary harm” suffered by the affected employees. The NLRB’s order was supported by its 2022 opinion in *Thryv, Inc.*, which allowed compensation beyond back pay, as a means to “make whole” the employees “for any loss of earning and other benefits, and for any other direct or foreseeable pecuniary harms suffered as a result.”

On appeal, Hiran contended that the NLRB lacked statutory authority to order damages for “all direct and foreseeable” harms stemming from an employee’s termination. In its Oct. 31 opinion, the 5th Circuit rejected the NLRB’s expansive remedies under *Thryv*. The 5th Circuit held that the NLRA allows the Board to award for equitable remedies, such as reinstatement and back pay, but does not permit the Board to award compensation for consequential damages for “all direct or foreseeable pecuniary harm.”

The 5th Circuit further reasoned that under the standard set in *Thryv*, the NLRB would effectively have no boundaries on its remedial authority.

Only Congress can authorize the Board to award full compensatory damages, and there is no congressional directive supporting this authority.

The issuance of this decision is significant for employers in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi, as they are now protected from the NLRB’s broad remedial orders that seek damages beyond reinstatement and back pay. This reduces the risk that employers face against unfair-labor-practice charges.

The 5th Circuit’s ruling of the Board’s remedial powers coincides with the 3rd Circuit’s restrictive interpretation but directly conflicts with the 9th Circuit’s expansive interpretation. As the gap increases between the circuits, it calls into question whether the U.S. Supreme Court will address the issue.

– **Sophie Raines**

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## Appellate Court Reverses Act 312 Summary Judgment and Determines Rights and Obligations under Assignment

*WMH Farms, LLC v. Apache Corp.*, 25-0305 (La. App. 3 Cir. 1/28/26), \_\_\_ So.3d \_\_\_, 2026 WL 217156, presented two main issues to the Louisiana 3rd Circuit Court of Appeal: (1) whether summary judgment was properly granted, finding “contamination” of property under Act 312, despite countervailing expert testimony; and (2) whether summary judgment was properly granted dismissing third-party claims against a former lessee. The 3rd Circuit held genuine issues of material fact precluded summary judgment in favor of the landowner under Act 312, and the 3rd Circuit affirmed the dismissal of claims against the former lessee.

In 2017, JP Oil Company, LLC acquired and began operating a well on property owned by WMH Farms, LLC,

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pursuant to an assignment from Walter Oil and Gas Corporation. In May 2020, WMH filed an Act 312 claim against JP Oil and former mineral lessees (including Walter, which later settled with WMH), seeking remediation of its property and damages pursuant to La. R.S. 30:29. JP Oil filed a third-party demand against Walter, seeking recovery of any amounts it might be ordered to pay. A few months later, the Louisiana Department of Conservation and Energy (LDCE) notified JP Oil and former operators that “there appears to be soil and groundwater parameters with analytical results in excess of regulatory allowances ... which may be indicative of potential impacts from historic oil and gas exploration and production activities.”

WMH sought summary judgment declaring JP Oil legally responsible for environmental damage and referring the matter to the LDCE for a remediation plan. Walter sought summary judgment to dismiss JP Oil’s claims and declare it waived any warranties owed by Walter. The district court granted both motions, and JP Oil appealed.

### Existence of “Contamination” under Act 312

After rejecting WMH’s prematurity argument, the 3rd Circuit discussed the propriety of summary judgment, holding JP Oil legally responsible for “environmental damage” under Act 312 based on soil and groundwater sampling and analyses by ICON Environmental Services, showing exceedances.

The prior version of Act 312 at issue defined “environmental damage” as “any actual or potential impact, damage, or injury to environmental media caused by contamination resulting from activities associated with oilfield sites or exploration and production sites.” “Contamination” is defined as “the introduction or presence of substances or contaminants into a usable groundwater aquifer, an underground source of drinking water (USDW) or soil in such quantities as to render them unsuitable for their reasonably intended purposes.”

The 3rd Circuit found

- (1) the ICON data was not properly authenticated;
- (2) no record evidence estab-

lished contamination—that substances entered a usable groundwater aquifer, an USDW, or soil in such quantities as to render them unsuitable for their reasonably intended purposes; and

(3) JP Oil’s expert opined concentrations met regulatory standards per the property’s use or were within natural tolerances, creating genuine issues of material fact. The Third Circuit also found JP Oil did not admit liability by following LDCE’s request for written notice of its efforts to assess and address soil and groundwater conditions.

### Rights and Obligations under Assignment

The 3rd Circuit found JP Oil “agreed to assume” “obligations to properly plug and abandon the Wells...and to restore the surface thereunder to as near its original condition as possible” and obligations “incident to the ownership and operation of the Assets” or related to “the environmental status or condition of the Assets ... .” The Assignment defined “Assets” as certain oil and gas well (“Wells”) and “all lease and surface equipment ... or other equipment of any kind, appurtenant thereto used or held for use in connection with the operation or production of the Assets ... and all personal property, fixtures, plants, improvements, joint accounts, easements, rights-of-way, surface leases and appurtenances used or related to the Wells or Leases.”

JP Oil argued that it detrimentally relied on Walter’s failure to advise it of liability for a closed pit under Louisiana Civil Code article 1967. Walter argued any warranties were waived because the Assignment conveyed the Assets “as is,

where is” and “with all faults.” JP Oil argued the waiver was inapplicable and the closed pit on the property was never assigned because the closed pit was not designated; it had no value; and it was not an “appurtenance.” The 3rd Circuit, with limited explanation, found that “[t]he pit is a portion of the property that was assigned” and thus “the two are indivisible.” JP Oil also argued it detrimentally relied on a 2007 certificate by Laboratory and Analytical Business Services, Inc. stating the pit was closed per Statewide Order 29-B when executing the Assignment. The 3rd Circuit rejected that claim because the representation came from a third party, as opposed to the contracting parties.

Finally, the 3rd Circuit affirmed dismissal of JP Oil’s contribution claim against Walter. For any environmental damages owed to WMH, the 3rd Circuit held Walter’s settlement constituted a remission of a debt under Louisiana Civil Code article 1803, reducing WMH’s recovery “by the amount of the released obligor’s portion of fault,” eliminating JP Oil’s contribution claim. For any obligations owed to the State under Act 312, the 3rd Circuit stated the right to contribution is a matter of contract. The court apparently accepted Walter’s argument that JP Oil contractually assumed those obligations.

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## Allocation of Fault

*Driver v. Willis Knighton Pierremont Health Ctr.*, 25-1057 (La. 11/19/25), 422 So.3d 769.

In an earlier opinion, the Louisiana Supreme Court reversed an appellate court’s finding that it was not necessary to allocate fault between the two defendants found liable at trial. *Driver v. Willis Knighton Pierremont Health Ctr.*, 25-0391 (La. 6/25/25), 412 So. 3d 215. The Court remanded the case to the appellate court to perform a comparative-fault analysis. It noted that when multiple tortfeasors negligently injure a patient, “the liability between them will be a joint and divisible obligation; they

will not be solidarily liable, and each tortfeasor will be liable only for their portion of fault.” *Id.* at 216. The Court further held that “comparative fault must be allocated prior to imposition of the Louisiana Medical Malpractice Act’s damages cap.”

On remand, the court of appeal awarded the plaintiffs \$500,000 in damages plus \$130,995.41 in medical expenses, and it apportioned 75% fault to the defendant/physician and 25% fault to the hospital.

The Louisiana Supreme Court granted a supervisory writ and ruled that the appellate court erred in awarding such damages without applying the statutory damages cap of \$100,000 as to each defendant, with the PCF bearing the responsibility for amounts over \$200,000 (subject to the \$500,000 cap, plus medical expenses incurred prior to trial).

## How Many Health Care Providers on a Panel

*In re: Med. Rev. Panel Proceeding of Walker*, 25-0431 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/10/25), 2025 WL 3539126 (unpublished).

The Louisiana 5th Circuit Court of Appeal considered whether a district court possessed the authority to expand the statutory composition of a medical-review panel under the Louisiana Medical Malpractice Act (LMMA).

Plaintiffs filed a request for a medical-review panel with the Division of Administration. They alleged that Ochsner Health System and several physicians failed to timely diagnose and treat Walker for a stroke. The original request for review included claims against an internal medicine physician and an emergency medicine physician. Plaintiffs supplemented their request for review to include a psychiatrist. In March 2022, a medical-review panel was duly constituted in accordance with

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the LMMA's procedural requirements.

More than two years later, on Oct. 9, 2024, plaintiffs filed a second supplemental request for review, adding a radiologist as an additional defendant. In response, the defendant health-care providers moved to appoint a four-member medical review panel. They argued that the existing panel composed of physicians specializing in internal medicine, emergency medicine and psychiatry lacked the specialized expertise necessary to evaluate the radiological standard of care applicable to the newly added defendant. Citing La. R.S. 40:1231.8(G), which requires the panel to render an expert opinion on whether the defendants complied with the appropriate standards of care and whether any deviation caused the alleged damages, defendants contended that the absence of a radiologist would frustrate the panel's statutory function. Although acknowledging that La. R.S. 40:1231.8(C) provides that a panel "shall consist of three health care providers," they urged the court to interpret the statute flexibly to avoid what they characterized as an absurd or impractical outcome. The trial court accepted this reasoning, and on Aug. 20, 2025, granted the defendants' motion.

Plaintiffs sought supervisory review, asserting that the trial court exceeded its authority by altering the panel's composition in contravention of the statute's explicit terms.

The 5th Circuit reversed the trial court and remanded for further proceedings. The court reiterated that legislation is the "solemn expression of legislative

will" under Louisiana Civil Code article 2 and that courts must apply clear and unambiguous statutory language as written, without resort to equitable considerations or policy preferences. *See* La. C.C. art. 9; La. R.S. 1:4. Applying these principles, the court found La. R.S. 40:1231.8(C) to be unequivocal. The statute mandates that a medical review panel "shall consist of three health care providers" and one attorney chairman. The use of the term "shall" denotes a mandatory directive, leaving no discretion for courts to increase the number of healthcare-provider members. The court further observed that the legislature expressly addressed the composition of panels in cases involving multiple parties. Under La. R.S. 40:1231.8(C)(3)(h), when there are multiple plaintiffs or defendants, each side collectively selects only one health-care-provider panelist. This provision demonstrates legislative awareness of complex, multi-defendant litigation while maintaining a fixed panel size.

The court also examined La. R.S. 40:1231.8(C)(3)(j), which provides guidance regarding the professional specialties from which panelists may be selected when multiple types of health-care providers are involved. That provision permits, but does not require, the selection of panelists from the same class or specialty as the defendants. Relying on prior jurisprudence, the court emphasized that the statute affords some flexibility in panelist selection but does not entitle each defendant to a panelist from his or her precise specialty. The statutory scheme reflects a legisla-

tive balance between ensuring relevant medical expertise and preserving administrative efficiency and uniformity in the panel process.

Although courts possess authority to address issues such as panelist disqualification for conflicts of interest, the 5th Circuit noted the absence of any statutory or jurisprudential support for enlarging the number of health-care-provider panelists beyond three. The defendants' policy arguments regarding the desirability of radiological expertise could not supersede the legislature's explicit directive.

Concluding that the trial court's ruling contravened the mandatory language of the LMMA, the 5th Circuit held that the lower court committed legal error. The court granted the writ application, reversed the trial court's Aug. 20, 2025, judgment authorizing a four-member panel and remanded the matter for proceedings consistent with the statutory requirement that a medical-review panel be composed of only three health-care provider members.

— **Robert J. David**

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And

— **Michael J. Ecuyer**

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# Final Message: A Year of Gratitude

*By Collin R. Melancon, 2025–26 Chair*

**A**s I write this final message as Chair of the Young Lawyers Division of the Louisiana State Bar Association, I do so with a heart full of gratitude, optimism, and reflection.

When I began this journey, I stepped into this role carrying more than the usual hopes and expectations that come with leadership. I carried a heavy heart. I was grieving the loss of my mother, a loss that changed me in ways I am still learning to understand. At the same time, I was preparing to welcome new life into the world, with the birth of my daughter in December 2024, which was only three-days after my mom's passing. It was a season of heartbreak and hope existing side by side. A season of mourning and joy. A season that left me wondering whether I was truly ready to take on the responsibility of serving as Chair of this incredible Division and serving thousands of young lawyers across Louisiana.

I was not sure I had enough of myself left to pour into this role. I was not sure I had the emotional strength, the time, or the energy to lead in the way this position deserved. And yet, looking back now, I can say with complete certainty that this role came into my life at exactly the right moment.

It was not a distraction from grief. It was not something that pulled me away from what mattered most. Instead, it became a source of purpose during a time when purpose was something I deeply needed. It gave me the opportunity to do good. It reminded me that even in life's hardest seasons, we can still serve, still build, still contribute, and still find light in community. It gave me a chance to give back to a profession that has already given so much to me. And in more ways than I can fully express, it helped reinvigorate my spirit.

It has reminded me of the extraordinary power of this profession when we are at our best. Lawyers are often defined by deadlines, demands, conflict, and pressure. But this year, I had the privilege of seeing something deeper and more enduring. I saw what happens when lawyers come together with a shared sense of mission, generosity, and service. I saw what is possible when people choose not just to practice law, but to use the law as a tool for good.

I saw young lawyers eager to learn, to grow, and to serve with excellence. I saw seasoned lawyers step forward to mentor,

encourage, and invest in the next generation. I saw our members give their time, their talent, and their hearts to causes that matter. And through it all, I was reminded that the legal profession, for all of its challenges, remains one of the greatest vehicles we have to strengthen our communities and change lives.

During the 25-26 Bar Year, our Division has equipped young lawyers with practical skills and meaningful educational opportunities to help them become stronger, more confident advocates. We have served over a hundred first responders and their families through our Wills for Heroes program, ensuring that those who protect all of us have the legal protections they deserve. We successfully hosted the State High School Mock Trial Competition in Shreveport and had the privilege of seeing firsthand a new generation of future advocates—young people with talent, passion, intelligence, and courage already beginning to find their voices. We expanded the reach of our Division through social media, podcasting, radio, and other platforms, telling the story of who we are and making sure that lawyers across Louisiana know that the YLD is strong, active, relevant, and growing.

These accomplishments matter. But what has stayed with me most is not just what we did. It is what those efforts represented.

They represented the kind of legal community I know Louisiana is capable of being—one that shows up, one that lifts others up, one that sees the practice of law not simply as a career but as a calling. A calling to mentor. A calling to protect. A calling to educate. A calling to serve.

This year reminded me that when we come together in that spirit, there is very little we cannot accomplish.

It also reminded me, on a deeply personal level, that leadership is not about having everything figured out. Sometimes leadership means showing up while still carrying your own burdens. Sometimes it means serving while still healing. Sometimes it means trusting that even when you feel uncertain, you still have something meaningful to offer. That may be the greatest lesson this year gave me.

As I prepare to leave this role in June, I do so with tremendous pride in what we have built together and with real excitement

Continued next page

## CHAIR'S MESSAGE & YLD SPOTLIGHT

### YOUNG LAWYERS SPOTLIGHT

**Alexandra Giavotella**  
**New Orleans, LA**

Alexandra Giavotella is an Assistant United States Attorney in the Eastern District of Louisiana, where she focuses on asset forfeiture in connection with complex federal criminal investigations, including narcotics trafficking, fraud, and financial crimes. She serves as the district's primary forfeiture attorney, working closely with federal agents and prosecutors to identify, restrain, and forfeit criminal proceeds, disrupt illegal enterprises, and restore

funds to victims whenever possible.

Giavotella began her forfeiture career as an Assistant District Attorney in Orleans Parish, where she handled the office's forfeiture docket and developed a strong foundation in asset tracing and litigation. Her experience at both the state and federal levels has given her a comprehensive perspective on how forfeiture can be used as a powerful



tool to disrupt criminal activity and promote accountability.

Originally from Miami, Florida, Giavotella graduated from Tulane University Law School and is proud to serve the Eastern District of Louisiana. She is passionate about public service and finds fulfillment in working on cases that have a meaningful impact on her community.

Outside of the office, Alexandra enjoys spending time with her husband, Johnny, and their three children, who keep her busy and grounded.

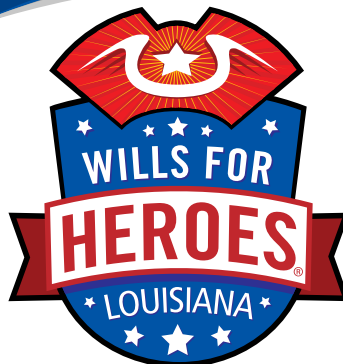
### *YLD Chair's Message, Continued from page 418*

for what lies ahead. This Division is in good hands with our incoming Council. We have built momentum. We have built visibility. We have built programs that matter. We have built a culture of service and engagement that I believe will continue to grow in the years ahead.

I am excited to watch this next chapter unfold. I am excited to see the ways this Division will continue to lead, innovate, and make a difference across our State. And I am confident that the foundation we have built together will support even greater things in the future.

Serving as Chair of the Young Lawyers Division has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life. Thank you for trusting me with this role. Thank you for serving alongside me. Thank you for believing in the mission of this Division. And thank you for reminding me, especially in a year when I needed the reminder most, that there is still so much good this profession can do.

## Protecting Those Who Protect Us



For more information about the Louisiana Wills for Heroes program, to view upcoming program event dates, or to register as a volunteer, visit the website at



[www.lsba.org/YLD/willsforheroes.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/YLD/willsforheroes.aspx)

## RETIRED JUDGES, APPOINTMENTS, DEATHS

### Retired Judges

Louisiana Supreme Court Justice William J. Crain retired, effective Dec. 22, 2025. He earned his bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University in 1983 and his JD from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center in 1986. He practiced law for 22 years and frequently lectured on trial practice and professionalism. He was elected to the 22nd Judicial District Court in 2009 and served until his election to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal in 2013. In 2019, he was elected to serve on the Louisiana Supreme Court, First District. Justice Crain was a member of the inaugural 2011 Louisiana Judicial Leadership Institute, served as Committee Chair for the Louisiana Judicial Council's Court Cost Committee, and is a former president of the Louisiana Judicial College Board of Governors. In 2025, he received a lifetime appointment filling the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Eldon E. Fallon as a judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

Fourth Judicial District Court Judge Alvin R. Sharp retired effective Feb. 24, 2026. He earned his bachelor's degree from Southern University and A&M College in 1986 and his JD from Southern University Law Center in 1989. He later earned his LL.M from Emory University School of Law in 1990. From 1988 to 1989, he was editor-in-chief of the Southern University *Law Review*. From 1991 to 1992, he worked as a public defender, and from 1990 to 1991, he served as a judicial law clerk for Judge Donald E. Walter of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana. From 1994 to 1996, Judge Sharp worked as a Monroe City School Board attorney and as a Monroe City prosecutor. He was elected to the Fourth Judicial District Court in 1996 and served until his retirement.

24th Judicial District Court Commissioner Ruben J. Bailey retired, effective Jan. 4, 2026. He earned his bachelor's degree from Southern University and A&M College in 1974 and his JD from Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law in 1981. Prior to serving on the bench, he worked as a managing attorney at the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation (NOLAC) and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS).

### Appointments

Mr. Pride Doran was appointed, by order of the Louisiana Judicial Campaign Oversight Committee, for a term of office, which commenced on Feb. 1, 2026, and will conclude on Jan. 31, 2030.

### Deaths

Retired Second Circuit Court of Appeal Judge Robert W. (Bob) Kostelka, died Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026. He earned his bachelor's degree from Centenary College and Louisiana State University and his JD from Louisiana State University Law School in 1951. Judge Kostelka served as assistant district attorney and later as district attorney for the 4th Judicial District from 1964 to 1971. He was first elected judge to serve an unexpired term of Judge Fred Fudickar, Jr., and was subsequently reelected without

opposition in 1984 and again in 1990. In 1998, he was elected to the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeal where he served until his retirement in 2003.

Retired 1st Circuit Court of Appeal Judge Walter I. Lanier, Jr, died Monday, Feb. 2, 2026. He earned his bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University in 1957 and his JD from Louisiana State University Law School in 1961. After graduating, he worked as a clerk for Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Frank W. Summers. From 1962 to 1964, he served in the United States Army as a member of the Judge Advocate General's Corps, attaining the rank of Captain. He returned to Thibodaux, where he worked at the law firm Lanier & Pugh and served as an assistant district attorney for the 17th Judicial District Court from 1967 to 1972. In 1973, Lanier was a delegate to the Louisiana Constitutional Convention, serving on the Local Government Committee. In 1974, he was elected as a City Court judge, and in 1976, he was elected to the 17th Judicial District Court bench. In 1982, Judge Lanier was elected to the First Circuit Court of Appeal, where he served until his retirement in 1992. After retiring, he continued to work as an ad hoc and pro tempore judge on the Louisiana Supreme Court, the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal, the 17th Judicial District Court, and the City Court of Thibodaux.

### LSBA Encourages Notification about Deceased Members

As a means to keep the membership database accurate and up-to-date, the Louisiana State Bar Association is encouraging members to notify staff about deceased members (either from colleagues or the families of the deceased members). Members who become aware of a deceased colleague who may still be listed in the membership rolls as eligible are encouraged to email the LSBA Membership Department at [processing@lsba.org](mailto:processing@lsba.org).

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## LAWYERS ON THE MOVE, NEWSMAKERS, PUBLICATIONS

### LAWYERS ON THE MOVE

**Blake R. David**, senior partner at Broussard, David & Moroux, has finished his term as the Chair of the Lafayette Economic Development Authority (LEDA).

**Richard J. Arsenault** will moderate a Judicial Panel regarding the latest issues in mass torts at a Mass Torts Conference in Las Vegas where 2,000 lawyers are in attendance.

Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP is pleased to announce that **Lauren N. Baudot** has joined the firm's Insurance Services practice as a partner in the New Orleans office. She is part of a 16-attorney group that recently joined the firm across seven offices nationwide from McGlinchey Stafford PLLC.

Spencer Fane LLP welcomes Christopher K. Ralston as a partner in the firm's Litigation and Dispute Resolution Practice Group, where he will lead Spencer Fane's effort to establish a presence in New Orleans. Over a 25-year career, Ralston has represented

businesses in a broad range of commercial litigation matters, with experience in antitrust law, business torts, contract disputes, tax litigation, securities litigation and arbitration, direct selling, intellectual property litigation and appeals.

Kanner & Whiteley, L.L.C. is pleased to announce **Chad Eric Molnar** has joined its New Orleans office as an Associate, where he focuses on Environmental Litigation. Chad, a former political chief of staff, earned his JD from Tulane University Law School and holds a BA from the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, L.L.P. (BSW) announces that **Alexa N. Candelora** was named partner effective Jan. 1, 2026. Candelora handles a range of civil litigation matters, including medical malpractice, insurance defense and general liability, and represents clients in state and federal courts. She earned her JD and diploma in comparative law, cum laude, from the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at Louisiana State University in 2020 and a Bachelor of Science in management, cum laude, from Tulane

University in 2017.

Brooks Gelpi Haase announces that **Leo D. Congeni** has joined the firm as a partner. With more than 25 years of experience, Congeni focuses on bankruptcy law and business litigation and also serves as a Subchapter V trustee under the Small Business Reorganization Act. He earned his BA from the University of Pennsylvania and his JD, cum laude, from Case Western Reserve University School of Law, where he received the Bankruptcy Medal of Excellence, and is board-certified as a business bankruptcy specialist by the American Board of Certification and the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization.

Gordon Arata announces that **Kathleen A. (Kathy) Harrison** has joined the firm as a member in its New Orleans office. Harrison has nearly two decades of experience in private practice and in-house roles, advising clients on regulatory, compliance and litigation matters across a variety of industries, including energy. She earned her JD, cum laude, from Tulane University Law School.



Zachary J. Ardoin



Richard J. Arsenault



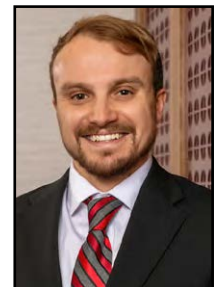
Grace E. Babin



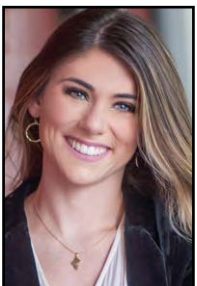
Lauren N. Baudot



Magdalen B. Bickford



Aaron M. Broussard



Alexa N. Candelora



Leo D. Congeni



Susanne V. Cooper



Blake R. David



Anna M. Dedeaux



Alex J. Domingue

Gordon Arata announces that **Magdalen B. Bickford** and **Susanne V. Cooper** have joined the firm as members in its New Orleans office, expanding the firm's labor and employment capabilities. Bickford and Cooper bring a combined 60 years of experience advising clients on labor and employment matters, including litigation, workforce issues and compliance. Both have experience in private practice and as in-house counsel.

Chaffe McCall is pleased to announce the addition of two accomplished attorneys, Lisa Fitzpatrick and Joan Sheridan, to the New Orleans office.

Jones Walker is pleased to announce the following effective Jan. 1, 2026:

- ▶ Richard F. Cortizas, partner in Jones Walker's New Orleans office and the firm's chief culture and inclusion officer, was reelected to the firm's board of directors.

- ▶ F. Rivers Lelong, Jr., a partner in the firm's New Orleans office, also was reelected to the board of directors.

- ▶ T. Gregory Schafer, of the firm's New Orleans office, was elevated to partner.

- ▶ Giles Detwiler (Det) Beal IV, in the New Orleans office, was promoted to partner.

- ▶ Shawn J. Daray, also in the New

Orleans office, was elevated to partner.

- ▶ Sara B. Kuebel, of the New Orleans office, was named partner.

- ▶ Zachary T. Montgomery, in the New Orleans office, was elevated to partner.

- ▶ Samantha A. Oppenheim, of the New Orleans office, was promoted to partner.

- ▶ In the Baton Rouge office, Tiffany Dupree was elevated to partner.

- ▶ Katherine Herbert, also in Baton Rouge, was promoted to partner.

- ▶ Lauren V. Tarver-Tatman, of the Baton Rouge office, was named partner.

- ▶ In the Lafayette office, Robert A. Mahtook III was elevated to partner.

Fishman Haygood, LLP in New Orleans is pleased to announce that John Bel Edwards has been elected to partnership.

Fishman Haygood, LLP in New Orleans is pleased to welcome Partners Dana M. Shelton, Noel J. Darce, and Justin A. Swaim, as well as Special Counsel Madeline R. Flores, to the firm's Litigation Section.

Fishman Haygood, LLP in New Orleans is pleased to welcome Ian L. Atkinson as a partner in the firm's Litigation Section.

Fishman Haygood, LLP in New Orleans is pleased to welcome Gabriel

J. Winsberg as special counsel in the firm's Litigation Section.

## NEWSMAKERS

Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett in New Orleans, is pleased to announce that 12 attorneys have joined the firm as associates. **Zachary J. Ardoin**, **Aaron M. Broussard**, **Meagan K. Downes\***, **Sara K. Dramis**, **Craig W. Gardiner**, **Maheen Husain\***, **Dylan M. Madere**, **Hannah R. Perret**, and **Stephanie D. Veech** have joined the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, Defense Base Act, and War Hazards Compensation Act practice. Ms. Dramis and Ms. Veech will also handle the defense of claims arising under the Louisiana Workers' Compensation Act. **Grace E. Babin's** practice focuses on admiralty, maritime litigation, and general casualty and insurance defense. **Anna M. Dedeaux's** practice focuses on transportation litigation. **Shelby J. Knight's** practice focuses on transportation, trucking and insurance defense.

Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett in New Orleans, is pleased to announce **Alex J. Domingue** was selected as a recipient of The ProBono Project's Distinguished Service Award.

Hammonds, Sills, Adkins, Guice, Noah & Perkins, LLP is pleased to an-



Meagan K. Downes\*



Sara K. Dramis



Lillian E. Eyrich



Ashley U. Johnson  
Firven



J. Patrick Gaffney



Craig W. Gardiner



Kathleen A. (Kathy)  
Harrison



Thomas M. Hayes IV



Maheen Husain\*



Shelby J. Knight



Steven J. Lane



Conor T. Lutkewit

\*Not licensed in Louisiana.

announce the election of three new partners: **Ashley U. Johnson Firven** and **Timothy J. Riveria** of our Baton Rouge office, and **Thomas M. Hayes IV** of our Monroe office. Each brings outstanding professional experience, deep legal knowledge, and a commitment to excellence.

**Steven J. Lane**, Of Counsel to the law firm of Bey and Associates, LLC, has been included in *New Orleans Magazine's* 2025 List of Top Lawyers; *Super Lawyers* for the 20th consecutive year; and *Best Lawyers in America* for the 21st consecutive year in 2026, all in the field of family law.

Carver, Darden, Koretzky, Tessier, Finn, Blossman & Areaux LLC is pleased to announce that **Conor T. Lutkewitte**, **Stephen P. Scullin** and **J. Patrick Gaffney** were promoted as Members effective Jan. 1, 2026.

Managing Partner **Robert M. Steeg**, Partner **Charles L. Stern, Jr.** and Senior Associate **Lillian E. Eyrich** of the Steeg Law Firm in New Orleans, were included in 2026 *Louisiana Super Lawyers*, Mr. Steeg and Ms. Eyrich for Real Estate and Mr. Stern for Business Litigation.

Baker Donelson has added Lesli D. Harris as special counsel in its New Orleans office. Harris, a prominent intellectual property and entertainment attorney, joins the firm's Commercial

Litigation Group, bringing extensive experience in complex commercial litigation and branding and trademark enforcement. In addition to her legal practice, Harris serves as the District B representative on the New Orleans City Council and is active in numerous civic and cultural organizations across the city.

Blue Williams, LLC has merged with Houston-based firm Heard & Medack, effective Jan. 1, 2026, expanding the firm's Houston office and strengthening its Texas trial practice. As part of the merger, Heard & Medack attorneys Joe Heard and David Medack join Blue Williams' Houston office, working alongside Managing Partner Steve Reilley and the firm's existing litigation team.

Chaffe McCall, L.L.P. has announced the addition of Lisa Fitzpatrick as a partner in the firm's Insurance Practice Group in its New Orleans office, where she advises insurers and businesses on insurance coverage and risk-related matters, and Joan Sheridan as of counsel in the firm's Labor & Employment and Litigation practices, also based in New Orleans, bringing extensive experience in workplace discrimination, harassment, and complex commercial litigation.

Baker Donelson will relocate its New Orleans office to One Canal Place in fall 2026, where it will occupy approximately 40,000 square feet on the top two floors of the building. The firm is relocating from Place St. Charles, where it has operated since establishing its New Orleans presence in 2004. Baker Donelson's New Orleans office includes nearly 60 attorneys and more than 100 total employees.

Fishman Haygood, LLP in New Orleans is pleased to share that Partner Scott Willis has been appointed Secretary of the American College of Real Estate Lawyers (ACREL) 2026 Board of Governors.

Fishman Haygood, LLP in New Orleans is pleased to share that Special Counsel Ryan D. McNamara has been selected for GNO Inc.'s NextGen Council.

## PUBLICATIONS

2026 *Lawdragon* 500 *Leading Lawyers in America*

Fishman Haygood, LLP (New Orleans): Brent B. Barriere, Lori G. Mince, and James R. Swanson

2026 *Lawdragon* 500 *Leading Environmental Lawyers* – The Green 500

Fishman Haygood, LLP (New Orleans): E. Blair Schilling



Dylan M. Madere



Chad Eric Molnar



Hannah R. Perret



Timothy J. Riveria



Stephen P. Scullin



Robert M. Steeg



Charles L. Stern, Jr.



Stephanie D. Veech

## Are you a Lawyer on the Move? Do you have news to share?

Announcements are published free of charge for LSBA members. Submit People announcements, news and job or firm updates to [publications@lsba.org](mailto:publications@lsba.org) to be featured in an upcoming issue. Headshots may be included for a fee.

*All submissions subject to editorial review/editing.*

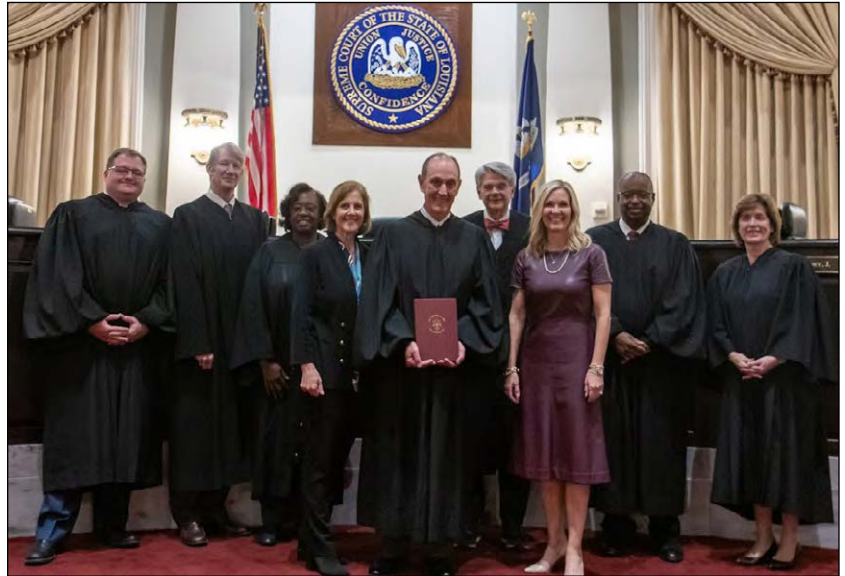
## Loyola University New Orleans College of Law Donates Special Issue of *Law Review* to the Louisiana Supreme Court

In a ceremony held on Jan. 21, 2026, Dean Madeleine Landrieu of the Loyola New Orleans College of Law presented to the Louisiana Supreme Court a deluxe leather-bound volume of the *Loyola Law Review* commemorating the Bicentennial of the 1825 Louisiana Civil Code.

The “special issue,” edited by student members of the law review led by Megan King and Hannah C. Daniel, with faculty advice from Professors Monica Hof Wallace and James Étienne Viator, contains all the speeches and articles written and delivered to audiences around the state by a diverse group of legal scholars, jurists, historians, and attorneys as part of the Supreme Court of Louisiana Historical Society’s Bicentennial commemoration.

In her remarks, Dean Landrieu recognized the invaluable contributions of Alan G. Brackett and John T. Olivier, Co-Chairs of the Historical Society’s Steering Committee in charge of the commemoration; E. Phelps Gay, Board Chair of the Society; Chief Justice John L. Weimer and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, all of whom supported the project and worked tirelessly over a period of eighteen months to produce a volume which will be of significant interest to Civil Law scholars in the future.

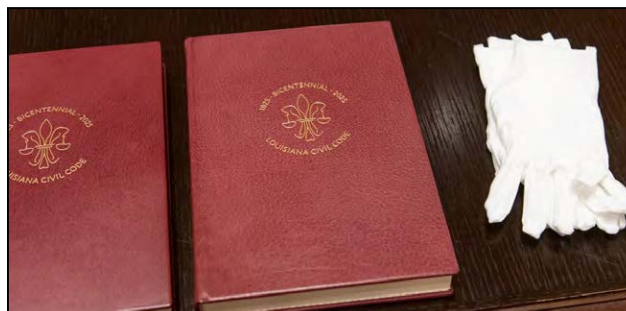
Scholars from all four Louisiana law schools participated in the commemoration, including Professors Olivier Moréteau of LSU, Shawn D. Vance of Southern, Ronald J. Scalise, Jr. of Tulane, and Markus G. Puder of Loyola. The special edition also includes lectures delivered by international scholars Aniceto Masferrer of the University of Valencia, Spain, and Agustin Parise of Maastricht University, The Netherlands. Fittingly, during the ceremony Dean Landrieu also presented leather-bound volumes of the issue to the Deans of Tulane Law School and the LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center, and the Chancellor of Southern University Law Center, noting the impressive collaboration among the law schools on this important project.



Justice Cade R. Cole, Justice Jefferson D. Hughes, Justice Piper D. Griffin, Dean Madeleine Landrieu, Chief Justice John L. Weimer, Justice Jay B. McCallum, Prof. Monica Hof Wallace, Justice John Michael Guidry, and Justice Pro Tempore Allison H. Penzato during the ceremony at the Louisiana Supreme Court. *Photo by David Rigamer.*



Prof. Monica Hof Wallace, John Olivier, Alan Brackett, E. Phelps Gay, and Megan King (student editor) during the ceremony at the Louisiana Supreme Court. *Photo by David Rigamer.*



The deluxe leather-bound volume of the *Loyola Law Review* commemorating the Bicentennial of the 1825 Louisiana Civil Code. *Photo by David Rigamer.*



Hon. Jay B. McCallum, associate justice, Louisiana Supreme Court, at the Memorial & Recognition Ceremony in Shreveport.

## Shreveport Bar Association Hosts Memorial & Recognition Ceremony

The Shreveport Bar Association held its Memorial & Recognition Ceremony on Nov. 6, 2025, at the First District Court in Shreveport. The annual ceremony honors members of the legal community and provides an opportunity for the bench and bar to gather in reflection and recognition.



Elizabeth M. Carmody, president, Shreveport Bar Association, at the Memorial & Recognition Ceremony in Shreveport.

### Got news to share?

Send local bar announcements, news and updates to [publications@lsba.org](mailto:publications@lsba.org) to be featured in an upcoming issue.



Hon. Thomas R. (Tommy) Duplantier, 15th Judicial District Court, Division I, joins Thomas R. (Trey) Hightower III, president, Lafayette Bar Association, at the installation ceremony in Lafayette.

## Lafayette Bar Association Installs 2026 Officers

The Lafayette Bar Association installed its 2026 officers on Nov. 6, 2025, at The Warehouse in Lafayette, marking the transition of leadership for the organization. Thomas R. (Trey) Hightower III was inducted as president.

The event brought together members of the Lafayette legal community, including judges, attorneys and bar leaders, to recognize the incoming officers and the continued work of the association in supporting the local bench and bar. The ceremony also recognized the service of outgoing leadership.



Stuart R. Breaux, immediate past president, Lafayette Bar Association, and Thomas R. (Trey) Hightower III, president, Lafayette Bar Association, at the installation ceremony in Lafayette.



Thomas R. (Trey) Hightower III, president, Lafayette Bar Association, is joined by Thomas R. Hightower, Jr., past president, Lafayette Bar Association, at the installation ceremony in Lafayette.

## Jefferson Bar Association Holds Annual Election Meeting

The Jefferson Bar Association held its annual election meeting on Nov. 14, 2025. The meeting provided an opportunity for members to participate in leadership elections and marked the transition of officers for the coming year.

Members of the Jefferson legal community, including judges and attorneys, attended the event to recognize incoming leadership and the continued work of the association.

Officers of the Jefferson Bar Association gather at the election meeting in Jefferson Parish: Hon. Shayna B. Morvant, past president; Davidson S. Ehle III, immediate past president; Jason R. Anders, president; Albert J. Derbes IV, vice president; Renee L. Swanson, secretary; John F. Lee, treasurer; Rachel I. Silvers, representative-at-large; and Betty A. Maury, representative-at-large.



# LBF Honors Distinguished Award Recipients

The Louisiana Bar Foundation celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala on April 17, recognizing 2025 Distinguished Jurist Hon. Dana M. Douglas, Distinguished Attorney Michael A. Patterson, Distinguished Professor Monica Hof Wallace, and Calogero Justice Award recipient Hon. Freddie Pitcher, Jr. (Ret.)

## Distinguished Jurist Hon. Dana M. Douglas

Judge Dana M. Douglas currently serves as United States Circuit Court Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit. She received her BA from Miami University (Ohio) and her JD from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. Douglas served as a law clerk in the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana to Judge Ivan L.R. Lemelle. Prior to taking the bench, Judge Douglas practiced in the areas of energy, products liability, and intellectual property litigation as a shareholder at Liskow and Lewis, APLC.



Douglas was sworn in as a magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana in 2019. In 2022, she was nominated by President Joe Biden and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the 5th Circuit.

She has held leadership roles with the New Orleans Bar Association, the Louis A. Martinet Society and the Louisiana Bar Foundation, and continues to be active in professional and civic organizations. Her honors include the LSBA President's Award, recognition as a New Orleans CityBusiness "Woman of the Year," and the Federal Bar Association's Camille F. Gravel, Jr. Award.

## Distinguished Attorney Michael A. Patterson

Michael A. Patterson is a founding partner of Long Law Firm and a founding and managing member of Patterson Resolution Group, providing mediation and arbitration services throughout Louisiana. He earned his BA and JD from Louisiana State University and an LLM in dispute resolu-

tion from Pepperdine Caruso School of Law.

Patterson has served as president of both the Baton Rouge Bar Association and the Louisiana State Bar Association and as a judge pro tempore on the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal. He has also served for many years on the Louisiana Supreme Court Committee on Bar Admissions, including as chair of Character and Fitness. His leadership and service have made a lasting impact on the profession in Louisiana. He received the LSBA President's Award in 1999.

In addition to his practice, Patterson is an adjunct professor at LSU Law, where he has taught trial advocacy and evidence for decades. He is a frequent CLE presenter on evidence, professionalism and mediation and has contributed to legal scholarship, including authorship in Louisiana Trial Procedure. His work reflects a commitment to mentoring lawyers and strengthening the practice of law.



## Distinguished Professor Monica Hof Wallace

Monica Hof Wallace is the Dean Marcel Garsaud, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Law at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. She earned her BS from LSU and her JD from Loyola, where she graduated first in her class. Wallace clerked for the Hon. Jacques L. Wiener, Jr. on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit and the Hon. Barry Ted Moskowitz of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California before entering private practice in New Orleans.

After joining the Loyola faculty in 2002, Wallace developed the Loyola Advocacy Center, where she served as founding director. She has authored multiple treatises and scholarly works, including texts on successions, donations and family law, and is widely recognized for her expertise in these areas. In the class-



room, she teaches family law, successions and related subjects, and has developed innovative coursework, including a leadership-focused class for law students.

Wallace is active in professional service, including the Louisiana State Bar Association, the Louisiana Bar Foundation and the Louisiana Law Institute. Her work reflects a strong commitment to legal education, scholarship and service to the profession.

## Calogero Justice Award recipient Hon. Freddie Pitcher, Jr. (Ret.)

Hon. Freddie Pitcher, Jr. (Ret.) is a retired judge and chancellor emeritus of Southern University Law Center. His career is marked by a series of historic firsts, including becoming the first African American elected to judgeships at three levels of the Louisiana court system: Baton Rouge City Court, the 19th Judicial District Court and the Louisiana 1st Circuit Court of Appeal.

Pitcher also served as associate justice ad hoc on the Louisiana Supreme Court, making him one of the few jurists to serve at every level of the state judiciary. Before taking the bench, he was a founding partner in the firm of Pitcher, Tyson, Avery & Cunningham and served as special counsel in the Criminal Division of the Louisiana Attorney General's Office and as an assistant district attorney for East Baton Rouge Parish.

Following his judicial service, Pitcher joined Phelps Dunbar LLP and later served as chancellor of Southern University Law Center from 2002 to 2015. In that role, he played a key part in shaping legal education and expanding opportunities for future lawyers. He was named chancellor emeritus in 2016.

Pitcher has received numerous honors, including induction into the National Bar Association Hall of Fame, the Louis A. Martinet Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award and Trailblazer Awards from both the Louisiana State Bar Association and the Louisiana NAACP. He is the author of *Breaking Barriers: A View from the Bench* (LSU Press, 2022).



# Passing the Baton: Louisiana Bar Foundation's Commitment to the Profession

*By Edmund J. Giering IV, 2025–26 LBF President*

Some roles remind you why institutions matter. Serving as President of the Louisiana Bar Foundation has been one of those experiences for me. It has been both an honor and a privilege to serve this remarkable organization and the mission that binds us together: ensuring meaningful access to justice for all Louisianans.

While we celebrate the Foundation's 40th Anniversary this year, we reflect not only on our history but also on the people who have built and sustained this work. For four decades, the Louisiana Bar Foundation has quietly transformed generosity into justice, turning the commitment of the legal community into life-changing support for people across our state. Our Fellows, grantees, donors, board members, and partners are the heartbeat of the Foundation. Because of their commitment, families facing eviction have found stability, survivors of domestic violence have secured protection, veterans have accessed the benefits they earned, and children and seniors have received the legal advocacy they deserve.

Serving as President has given me a front-row seat to the extraordinary impact of our work. I have witnessed firsthand how strategic funding strengthens legal aid organizations across Louisiana and transforms individual lives in profound and meaningful ways. Every grant we award is more than a check; it represents hope restored, dignity protected and opportunity renewed.

During the 2025–26 year, the Foundation granted \$14.4 million to support law-related education, domestic violence services, children's legal advocacy,

and direct legal aid. These programs go to the very heart of the health, safety, and security of citizens across our state. We are committed to maintaining this level of funding for the 2026–27 fiscal year.

We are also investing in the future of our profession through collaborations with Louisiana law schools. These partnerships help educate the next generation of lawyers and create a vital pipeline for public interest attorneys. We have provided funding to Loyola University College of Law to establish the Loyola Child Welfare & Domestic Violence Clinic, led by Professor Tim McEvoy, and Southern University Law Center to strengthen its Clinical Education Program and expand services to the surrounding community. We are soon to finalize our support to LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center to establish the Public Interest Law Initiative under the Pugh Institute for Justice, and we look forward to partnering with Tulane University School of Law in the coming year.

These initiatives reflect an important truth about leadership and service: none of us accomplishes everything we hope to during our time in a role like this. Institutions like the Louisiana Bar Foundation move forward through the dedication of many people over many years. Leadership is like a relay race—each of us carrying the baton for a time before passing it to the next steward. For forty years, the Foundation's growth has progressed exactly this way, with generations of lawyers and leaders advancing the mission step by step, year by year.

What remains most meaningful are the people and partnerships built along the way. I am deeply grateful to our Board



of Directors for their dedication and leadership, to our Fellows for their steadfast investment in justice, to the Louisiana Supreme Court and the State of Louisiana for their enduring and steadfast support, and to our grantee partners who do the challenging and often unheralded work on the front lines every day.

The Foundation's impact continues to be recognized across our community. Last fall, the Loyola Gillis Long Poverty Law Center honored the LBF with its 2025 Social Justice Champion Award, the New Orleans Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals recognized the Foundation as Outstanding Foundation at its Philanthropy Awards luncheon, and in December, LBF was inducted into the Loyola 1912 Society. These honors belong to the entire Fellows community.

As my term as President draws to a close, my belief in the future of this organization has never been stronger. The need for civil legal aid continues to grow, but so does the determination of those who support this mission.

Serving as President has been one of the great privileges of my professional life. While the title now passes to the next steward, the work continues—and so does The Foundation's commitment to the mission we share. The Louisiana Bar Foundation's story has always been written by lawyers who believe access to justice matters and who step up to carry the mission forward. I am proud to have carried the baton for a time, and even prouder to know that many others will continue the race. Because when a community invests in justice, the impact endures far beyond any single term of service.

## CLASSIFIED NOTICES

Standard classified advertising in our regular typeface and format may now be placed in the *Louisiana Bar Journal* and on the LSBA Web site, [LSBA.org/classifieds](http://LSBA.org/classifieds). All requests for classified notices must be submitted in writing and are subject to approval. Copy must be typewritten and payment must accompany request. Our low rates for placement in both are as follows:

## RATES

### CLASSIFIED ADS

Contact **Krystal L. Bellanger Rodriguez** at (504)619-0131 or (800)421-LSBA, ext. 131.

#### Non-members of LSBA

\$85 per insertion of 50 words or less  
\$1 per each additional word  
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#### Screens: \$25

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### BOXED ADS

Boxed ads must be submitted camera ready by the advertiser. The ads should be boxed and 2¼" by 2" high. The boxed ads are \$70 per insertion and must be paid at the time of placement. No discounts apply.

### DEADLINE

For the June/July issue of the Journal, all classified notices must be received with payment by June 10, 2026. Check and ad copy should be sent to:

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To respond to a box number, please address your envelope to:

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## POSITIONS OFFERED

**Acadiana Legal Service Corporation** seeks licensed, full-time staff attorneys to represent low-income and elderly clients with civil legal matters for offices in Shreveport, Monroe, Natchitoches, Alexandria, and Lafayette. Excellent salary and fringe benefits are available. A writing sample and cover letter are required. Visit [www.la-law.org/careers](http://www.la-law.org/careers) or email [careers@la-law.org](mailto:careers@la-law.org) to apply.

**Mayer, Smith & Roberts, LLP**, a Shreveport, Louisiana law firm, with an emphasis in litigation and insurance defense is seeking experienced attorneys for associate or partnership positions. Please send all resumes to Colly Roberts, [colly@msrlaw.com](mailto:colly@msrlaw.com).

**The Louisiana State Bar Association** is seeking a meticulous and detail-oriented Communications Coordinator to join our team. This role is essential for ensuring the accuracy, clarity, and timeliness of key Bar publications, including the Louisiana Bar Journal, "Bar Briefs" and "Inside the LSBA-Headlines". The ideal candidate will be responsible for proofreading, editing, and coordinating content across various platforms while managing submission deadlines and collaborating with contributors. This position also involves writing various items, writing press releases, editing web content, and other tasks as needed to support Bar events and special projects. Graphic design and layout experience a plus.

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The Communications Coordinator will report to the LSBA Communications Director and work closely with team members to deliver high-quality publications. This position is not available for remote work. Join us in ensuring the high standards of our publications and contributing to the success of the LSBA. Submit your resume and a cover letter detailing your relevant experience to: Kelly Ponder, Communications Director, 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130-3404 or by email to [publications@lsba.org](mailto:publications@lsba.org).

## SERVICES

### Briefs/Legal Research/Analysis of Unusual or Problem Cases

**JD with honors**, federal judicial clerk, graduate of top 10 law school, 25 years' experience federal and state litigation, creative legal thinker. Available for briefs, research, court appearances, analysis of unusual or problem cases. References on request. Catherine Leary, (504)436-9648, statewide services, registered office Jefferson Parish. Email [CatherineLeary2021@gmail.com](mailto:CatherineLeary2021@gmail.com).

**Texas attorney**, LSU Law 1985. Admitted in Louisiana and Texas. I am available to attend hearings, conduct depositions, act as local counsel and accept referrals for general civil litigation in the Houston area. Contact Manfred Sternberg, Jr. at (713)622-4300; email [manfred@manfredlaw.com](mailto:manfred@manfredlaw.com).

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**Brief writing/legal research.** Columbia Law School graduate; former U.S. 5th Circuit staff attorney; former U.S. District Court, Western District of Louisiana, law clerk; more than 20 years of legal experience; available for brief writing and legal research; references and résumé available on request. Appellate Practice specialist, certified by the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization. Douglas Lee Harville, [lee.harville@theharvillelawfirm.com](mailto:lee.harville@theharvillelawfirm.com), (318)470-9582 (Shreveport).

## NOTICE

**This is formal notice of full transfer of ownership of Moody Law Firm from the Estate of Christopher Moody to Albert D. Giraud.** The proposed date of same is May 7, 2026. Any person entitled to do so may object to the proposed full transfer of ownership or take possession of a client file at 1250 S.W. Railroad Ave., Ste. 170, Hammond, LA, (985)542-1351.

**Michael Blake Hale** intends to file a petition seeking reinstatement of his license to practice law in Louisiana. Any person(s) concurring with or opposing this petition must file such within 30 days with the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board, Ste. 310, 2800 Veterans Memorial Blvd., Metairie, LA 70002.

**Notice is hereby given** that Wren'nel Gibson intends on petitioning for reinstatement/readmission to the practice of law. Any person(s) concurring with or opposing this petition must file notice of same within 30 days with the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board, Ste. 310, 2800 Veterans Memorial Blvd., Metairie, LA 70002.

**William Christopher Beary** intends to file a petition seeking reinstatement of his license to practice law in Louisiana. Any person(s) concurring with or opposing this petition must file such within 30 days with the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board, Ste 310, 2800 Veterans Memorial Blvd., Metairie, LA 70002.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Bound Louisiana Bar Journal Volumes – Free to Good Home**  
The Louisiana State Bar Association has surplus bound volumes of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* available at no cost. Available volumes include:

- One copy each of Volumes 56 (2008-2009), Vol. 57 (2009-10) and Vol. 58 (2010-11).
- Two copies each of Volumes 51 (2003-04) and Vol. 69–70 (2021-23).
- Five copies each of Volumes 49 (2001-02), Vol. 63 (2015-16) and Vol. 64 (2016-17).
- Seven copies each of Volumes 65 (2017-18), Vol. 66 (2018-19), Vol. 67–68 (2019-21) and Vol. 71–72 (2023-25). Volumes are available first come, first served basis for local pickup at the Louisiana Bar Center in New Orleans. Shipping can be arranged at the recipient's expense. To request a volume or for additional information, please email [publications@lsba.org](mailto:publications@lsba.org).

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# My Friend, Ed

## What I've Learned...



By Lewis Unglesby

Ed Walters, President of the Louisiana State Bar Association, has been a leader, teacher, and a great example for all of us. He has maintained exemplary professionalism no matter how contentious the case. Allies and opponents have benefited from the experience.

Ed created the Trial Advocacy course at LSU Law School. It fills up within an hour and has a waiting list each semester. The students say it is a great learning experience and an eye-opening reality check about the rigors and responsibilities of trial work.

For 55 years, his wife, Norma, has guided Ed's career while raising their two sons, Ed III and John Lucas. He opened his own personal injury practice with Chick Moore shortly after graduation, which became Moore, Walters, Shoenfelt, Thompson, Papillion, Thomas, and Cullens from 1976–2009, eventually becoming Walters, Thomas, and Cullens when Darrel Papillion, one of Ed's protégés, was appointed to the federal bench for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

Ed has long been active in bar publications and has served on the LSBA's Editorial Board since the early days. For many years he wrote and edited the Baton Rouge Bar Association's magazine, where he created the "What I've Learned" column, which he used to interview judges, lawyers, and dignitaries. Ed wrote the book, *Ipse Dixit: Ruminations on a Career at Law*, which included some of these interviews.

Personally, Ed is the most pleasant companion, with the most colorful and interesting personality to cross a lawyer's path. He also claims, with no corroboration, to be a pretty good fisherman.

### What I've Learned...

**The fun part of being the President of the Louisiana State Bar Association** is the opportunity to meet all of the young lawyers who are excited to be in our profession and have many new ideas. Plus, with all of the traveling throughout the state, I get to meet a lot of lawyers I had never met, and I get to see a lot of lawyers that I know but haven't seen in many years.

**I especially enjoy working with** our Executive Director, Loretta Larsen, and the excellent people who work with her. They do their best to make the President look good. (See also page 366.)

**The most challenging part** was changing the size of our House of Delegates from 266 to 130 members. Due to the decision in the *Boudreaux* case, our bar is restricted to only engaging in activities that are "germane to the regulation of lawyers and improving the quality of legal services." The House of Delegates is the policy-making body of the organization, and the range of their possible policies is now extremely limited, thus the reduction in size, which was controversial, as you would expect.

**You were the President of the Louisiana State Bar Association; what was your vision for the law?** Well, we are all now living in a world where the "Rule of Law" becomes more important every day. My vision for the law is that the law, and we lawyers, must remain a bulwark protecting our world and its values from forces that try to destroy it.

**What do you see as our opportunities and obligations?** We are in a unique position to help people. The need for our efforts is great. In 2022, 19% of Louisiana residents lived below the poverty line, and an additional 32% could not afford basic living expenses. Sixteen percent of our population lives with a disability, and nearly 27% of adults struggle with illiteracy. I believe we can make a difference in the lives of our citizens, and we have an obligation to try to make their lives better.

**The best advice I ever gave was,** "Always do the right thing for the right reason."

**The best lessons I ever learned were** that you never know unless you try, and if you think you can't, you're right.

**I was always taught** to try to look at things from the other person's point of view.

**Being a lawyer allowed me to** provide a great life and great educational opportunities for my family.

**If you really want to get me angry,** treat people like you are better than them, especially the court staff. And waiters.

**I think more people should** think before they speak and consider the other person's feelings.

**My best advisor is** my wife, Norma, who always keeps me from doing something really stupid. Most times.

**What I really enjoy** is trying cases, especially cross-examining my opponent's expert, and teaching at LSU Law School.

**The best judges were** the people who treated the litigants and lawyers with care and dignity. They made even a very new lawyer look good in front of the client. They made you look like you knew what you were doing, even if you didn't.

**I would like to have dinner with** J.D. Salinger, who wrote my favorite book, *The Catcher in the Rye*, President Barack Obama, for obvious reasons, and my dad, who died when I was eleven years old.

**The older I get,** the more tolerant I am of others.

**I wish** Frank Maraist and Cheney Joseph were still here.

**If I were in charge,** I would do whatever I could to change the image of lawyers. We do so many good things for our clients and for society as a whole, but we are not as well respected because of a few lawyers who commit crimes or disregard the rule of law. I also wish we could do something about the proliferation and nature of lawyer advertising.



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