



**TALLAHASSEE
BAR ASSOCIATION**

ENHANCING THE PROFESSION • PROMOTING FELLOWSHIP • SERVING THE COMMUNITY

TALLAHASSEE BAR
BULLETIN

SPRING 2022

INDEX

President’s Message3

Introducing the 2022-2023 Board of Directors.....4-5

Welcome to the Neighborhood – Kutak Rock Renovates
Historic College Ave Space for First Florida Office6-7

Proposed Changes to Rules of Civil Procedure8-11

Member Spotlight12-13

Low Bono Center Year in Review.....14

Chili Cook Off Recap.....15

TBA Gala Recap16

Member News17-18

Upcoming Events20



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I write as Tallahassee is blooming with spring, and for the first time as your new Tallahassee Bar Association president. As a Tallahassee native, serving as your president is one of the great honors of my life and career. I will work hard to continue the tremendous work of all the TBA presidents before me. My door is always open, so please call me if you have any ideas for the TBA moving into 2022.

This is going to be another great year for the Tallahassee Bar! In 2021, we experienced a great reemergence after the long and lonely months of COVID. We had some incredible and well-attended events. 2022 will be no different, with great events, excellent CLE luncheons, and the return of the Legal Community Conference. There will be lots to do, with outstanding content and fellowship as the continuing hallmarks of TBA's gatherings.

I have to tell you, however, that our membership numbers are down. In fact, we are at about half of where we were just four years ago. Clearly COVID has taken its toll. But now is the time to act on renewing the excitement about all the things TBA is: information, networking, and service.

Service comes in all varieties—such as serving on the TBA Board, working on a committee, presenting at a luncheon CLE or the LCC, competing in the Chili Cook-Off, staffing the Low Bono Center at the courthouse, or even checking folks in at an event. Opportunities abound, and I encourage you to “plug in.” The reward is knowing that you have helped our 100+ year old Tallahassee Bar stay vibrant and relevant to the legal community and to Tallahassee. Service also can be as simple as committing to attend our events. Just coming out and being a part of the TBA helps the legal community as a whole, in that we are all stronger together than apart.

My ask of you—my challenge to you—is simply to commit

to coming to as many meetings as you can. If you want to serve further, such as on a committee or speaking engagement—you are more than welcome! But having you with us at our events will be a great start, and with you we can see our membership numbers return to where they should be: everyone included and active.

I'd also like to share with you what I call my “Plus One” initiative. When you calendar a TBA event, find a “plus one”—an attorney who is not a TBA member (or who has been in the past)—and bring him or her with you. You will find that there are plenty of folks who would love to come and be involved, and all it takes is that simple invitation and reminder of all the great things TBA has to offer.

I thank you for your trust in electing me to serve as your TBA president. I look forward to seeing you at our events this year!

Joe Bodiford

TBA President



Joe Bodiford is the 2022 Tallahassee Bar President. Joe is a Florida Bar and National Board of Trial Advocacy Certified Criminal Trial Lawyer. He is an adjunct professor of Trial Advocacy at Stetson Law, and the author of books on cross examination and Florida criminal law.

“TALLAHASSEE BAR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER TO ENHANCE THE LEGAL PROFESSION, PROMOTE FELLOWSHIP AMONG THEIR COLLEAGUES AND SERVE THE COMMUNITY.”

INTRODUCING THE 2022-2023

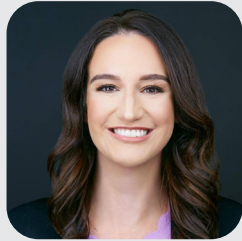
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS



President

Joe Bodiford
Bodiford Law, P.A.



President-Elect

Erin Tilton
Stearns Weaver Miller



Treasurer

Sid Bigham
Berger Singerman, LLP



Treasurer-Elect

Jami Coleman
Coleman Law, P.A.



Secretary

Michael Alao
Justice Administrative
Commission

DIRECTORS

Mutaqee Akbar

Akbar Law Firm, P.A.

Nick Bader

Bass Sox Mercer

Cayelan Cwirka

State Attorney's Office

Liz Ellis

Nabors, Giblin & Nickerson, P.A.

Max Factor

Max Factor Law

Lolia Fernandez

Office of the Public Defender

Craig Richards

Morgan & Morgan

Kyle Sill

First District Court of Appeal

Ryan Orbe

FL Department of Corrections

Kelly O'Keefe

Stearns Weaver Miller



Mutaqee Akbar



Nick Bader



Cayelan Cwirka



Liz Ellis



Max Factor



Lolia Fernandez



Craig Richards



Kyle Sill



Ryan Orbe
Young Lawyers
Section Rep



Kelly O'Keefe
Senior Director

EX-OFFICIO



Immediate Past President

Lo Bielby
Greenberg Traurig



The Florida Bar Board of Governor Representatives

Lary Sellers
Holland & Knight



Melissa VanSickle
Nelson Mullins Broad
and Cassel



The Legal Aid Foundation Rep

Christin Gonzalez
Novey Gonzalez Family Law

Stay Connected!

Stay in the know of all things TBA!
Be sure to follow our Facebook group!



@TallahasseeBar

Tallahassee Bar Association members work together to enhance the legal profession, promote fellowship among their colleagues and serve the community.



**TALLAHASSEE
BAR ASSOCIATION**



AVAILABLE
THROUGHOUT FLORIDA
Virtual | In-Person

FULLTIME MEDIATOR & ARBITRATOR **Kelly Overstreet Johnson**

Past President of The Florida Bar & Tallahassee Bar Association

- Florida Supreme Court Certified Circuit Civil Mediator •
- Binding & Non-Binding Arbitration •
- AAA Arbitrator (Employment, Commercial, Consumer) •

Schedule a mediation or arbitration online at
OVERSTREETJOHNSONMEDIATION.COM

☎ 850.900.3080

✉ kelly@overstreetjohnson.com

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

KUTAK ROCK RENOVATES HISTORIC COLLEGE AVE SPACE FOR FIRST FLORIDA OFFICE

Kutak Rock attorney Tucker Mackie was driving through downtown Tallahassee when she spotted the “For Lease” sign and broker’s familiar name in the window at 107 W College. Her new firm was on the hunt for a space that would accommodate the attorneys and professionals that made the move from Hopping Green & Sams to Kutak Rock in late 2021. The historic property at 107 W College was being revitalized, which meant she and her colleagues could be involved in the final build-out. Aside from ample space, the group wanted to remain downtown with other professionals who had chosen urban spaces over suburban

office park locations. They were also looking for a space that would accommodate future growth and the new hybrid work model the firm had settled into during the pandemic. Many of Kutak Rock’s 500+ attorneys have business interests in Florida, and the group wanted their colleagues to feel welcome, plug in and host clients while working in their Tallahassee office.

Once the ink was dry on their long-term lease, the group met with developers to begin building out a space that honored the building’s history and industrial features and



met the needs and objectives of its new inhabitants. With a current headcount of 14, the new space also offers six open offices to accommodate visiting attorneys and professional staff. The crown jewel of Kutak Rock’s newest office is its second-story “flex space,” that can be used as a conference room and event space for up to 20. The space boasts natural sunlight that pours in through original windows and a wall-length interior picture window that frames the view to open space below. Hospitality features were high on the wish list, and in addition to a modern kitchen complete with coffee bar on the first floor, the second floor features a wine bar for entertaining. Technology is built in to every corner of Kutak Rock’s newest office, including well-connected

workspaces and two conference rooms wired for in-person and virtual meetings. The largest conference space features a Zoom Neat Board, allowing for inclusive, hybrid meetings.

Attorneys moved into their new space in early February and note that the move has captured the attention of their neighbors and passersby. While downtown Tallahassee doesn’t have a lot of retail foot traffic, Kutak Rock captured the feeling of “welcome” by leaving spans of glass and incorporating the firm’s brand in custom tilework at the entry. The space is both functional and welcoming, a harbinger of what’s to come for the firm as they welcome attorneys and professionals back into office spaces to work,

meet and collaborate. Tucker notes, “this is a space that invites you in—that you want to work in—and I envision my colleagues and I using this space to be productive while enjoying the more social aspects of our relationships.” Kutak Rock is quick to praise the people that worked diligently to get them into their space on time, particularly during a time when global supply chain issues might have resulted in long delays. Tucker notes that their general contractor was extremely responsive and “phenomenal” with deadlines. “We couldn’t be happier,” she added. “We look forward to hosting our industry colleagues and local business friends as soon as the finishing touches are complete and we’ve stocked the wine fridge.”

Kutak Rock is a national law firm with more than 500 lawyers across 19 offices. The firm’s Tallahassee office – its first in Florida – specializes in special taxing districts, public finance, and real estate.

DEAN, MEAD & DUNBAR IS NOW OFFERING MEDIATION SERVICES

Attorneys William Hall and Daniel Russell are civil circuit certified mediators offering their services to the Tallahassee area.



William Hall
Certification #39609 R



Daniel Russell
Certification #39608 R

PROPOSED CHANGES TO RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

By Douglas M. Smith

Ostensibly inspired by the Mother of Invention, the Florida Supreme Court is currently considering amendments to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure that largely place control of the timing and development of litigation on circuit judges to better assure cases are timely processed and court backlogs are reduced. The proposed changes amount to a material shift from a system driven by the litigants to one driven by early court ordered case management, rigid commitment to established deadlines, and sanctions rules designed to ensure compliance. The proposed changes are sweeping and well-intended; unintended consequences for the courts and the legal profession deserve further consideration.

Pre-pandemic conditions merited significant changes to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure; post-pandemic caseloads make the need for change more acute. It's up to the public to evaluate whether the proposed changes—factoring in real world experience—are a solution in search of a problem, a solution that will effectively resolve pending issues, or a solution that will create more problems than it solves.

The “evil” being addressed by the proposed amendments is low case disposition rates in civil cases. In short, if considerably more cases are filed than are resolved over a fixed period, backlogs result. If cases are not resolved in a remotely timely fashion due to backlogs, litigants lose faith in the courts as a source for dispute resolution, and they resort to other, less transparent, avenues like mediation and arbitration. Attorneys can use procedural machinations to delay case resolution. Or parties simply overlook valid claims to avoid what they view as the rigmarole of civil litigation. While alternative dispute resolution is to be lauded, *forcing* disputants to accept arbitration or mediation as a pragmatically necessary substitute appears untenable and could defy the Florida Constitution's guarantee of access to courts.

The Florida Supreme Court is keenly aware of the problems stemming from low case disposition rates. Before the pandemic, in 2019, the Florida Supreme Court created the Judicial Management Council Workgroup on Improved Resolution of Civil Cases (The Workgroup). Comprised of six judges and four attorneys, the Workgroup is tasked with evaluating and ultimately recommending amendments to the Rules of Civil Procedure to better ensure the timely resolution of civil cases.¹ It recently released its Final Report on November 15, 2021, which includes recommendations for rule changes.² Those recommendations include major changes to the Rules of Civil Procedure. As detailed in its 330-page report, these changes significantly tighten the rules, call for tougher sanctions when rules are not followed, and arm circuit judges with tools and requirements to actively manage cases.³

The Workgroup's recommendations for change are broken down into four areas: (1) Court Case Management, (2) Case Management Maintenance Schedule, (3) Case Reporting and Judicial Accountability, and (4) Continuing Education. The crux of the amendments is to change the rules so litigants must plan ahead early on and set realistic trial dates with presumed pretrial deadlines; amend the rules to remove roadblocks for timely case preparation; make continuances rarer and more difficult; and use sanctions as a tool to assure deadline compliance. The changes are inspired by the anecdotal fact that hard trial dates resolve cases. The following paragraphs detail some, but not all, of the proposed amendments:

(1) Court Case Management.

- The temporary implementation of “track-assigned” cases in response to the pandemic would be permanently adopted under the new rules. See Proposed Rules 1.200 and 1.201. Cases would be assigned to “tracks” (complex, streamlined, or general) based on the amount of judicial attention the case may

require, with cases being assigned within 120 days of filing.

- Parties would be required to engage in early case management. Streamlined cases will receive court-issued case management orders early in the case. Litigants in general cases must meet and confer early on and work out deadlines in seven areas, including discovery and dispositive motions. The deadlines are included in a joint case management report and proposed order on same. The order essentially sets a “master timetable for the remainder of the case’s pretrial proceedings.” Final Report, *supra*, note 2, at 11, 67. Once set, the deadlines become difficult to modify. And “the court may consider compliance and noncompliance with the case management order and impose sanctions without a prefatory order to show case.” *Id.* at 69.
- Setting action for trial (rule 1.440) would be substantially amended to make the process jibe with the proposed case management amendments. The concept of having a case be “at issue” for trial setting is eliminated. This would effectively put an end to the practice of certain litigants preventing pleadings from being closed so that the court cannot issue a trial scheduling order (with comprehensive deadlines) early on. If the parties are not ready for trial by the projected trial period in the case management order, the court may fix a period. Parties can also have trial set before the projected date if they are ready for trial early.
- Creating new rule 1.275 relating to sanctions in general, making sanctions a primary tool for litigant and attorney compliance with court rules and orders.
- Creating new rule 2.546, Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration, which requires parties to notify the court of cases that should be considered inactive, e.g., if some external factor (e.g., a stay order) prevents the case from moving forward.

(2) Maintaining the Court Ordered Case Management Schedule.

The Workgroup proposed amended or new rules in

several areas to better assure cases stay on track for timely resolution: discovery (e.g., rules 1.279, 1.280, 1.310, 1.340, 1.350, and 1.380); most pretrial motions (rules 1.160 and 1.161); failure to prosecute (rule 1.420(e)); and continuances (rule 1.460). The changes to rule 1.160 appear intended to eliminate opportunities for parties to use motion practice to delay cases indefinitely; require parties to “meet and confer” on nearly every motion, except stipulated, *ex parte*, and expedited motions; and create a process for allowing certain motions to be resolved without hearing. Proposed rule 1.161 sets forth procedures for scheduling hearings, including timing on when hearings must be requested; it attempts to curtail many common practices that make it difficult to get a hearing (e.g., disagreements on length of hearing or unavailability of counsel), and eliminates the ability of counsel to file a motion and not set it for hearing (without repercussions). Not every contested motion would require a hearing.⁴

Proposed rule 1.275 sets the stage for the broader application of sanctions for non-compliance with the Rules of Civil Procedure or any court order, identifies the sanctions that can be imposed, delineates considerations the court must make before imposing the sanctions of dismissal with prejudice or default, and requires a lawyer to notify the client by providing a copy of the sanctions order to the client.

Proposed rule 1.279 sets standards of conduct for discovery, and attorneys are obligated to notify their clients of the standards (e.g., so clients are aware they may not weaponize discovery or use it for tactical advantage or delay, among other things).

Amendments to rule 1.280 introduce initial fact disclosure requirements (akin to federal court) and an automatic requirement for supplementing discovery responses and initial fact disclosures. The initial disclosures cover the same categories as Federal Rule 26 but, if there is a standard Supreme Court approved interrogatory form for the category of case, responses to those interrogatories must be included with the initial disclosures. The deadline for making the initial disclosures is forty-five days from service of the complaint.

Changes to rule 1.310 (depositions), 1.340 (interrogatories), and 1.350 (production of documents, etc.) appear intended to streamline the process and prevent objections to discovery from having non-objectionable discovery timely answered or produced. New rule 1.335 sets standards of conduct for depositions and is intended as “a reminder to practitioners that depositions ‘are court proceedings and attorneys are expected to conduct themselves as officers of the court.’” *Final Report, supra, note 2*, at 98. Rule 1.380 would be significantly modified to include sanctions for “discovery abuse and failure to provide or supplement discovery” and “sanctions for discovery violations interfering with adjudication of [the] case.” Under the rule as revised, attorneys are subject to sanctions “at all points at which an expense sanction is imposed.” *Id.* at 101.

Changes to the rule for failure to prosecute, rule 1.420(e), shorten the time-period for having no record activity from ten to six months. They also substantively limit the types of “record activity” that must occur during the sixty-day “recovery period” (following service of a notice of failure to prosecute) to avoid dismissal⁵ and what type of “record” activity is sufficient to prevent the six-month period from elapsing.

Finally, the proposed rules essentially rewrite the rule for continuances (1.460), setting rules for continuance of non-trial and trial events. Motions to continue specially set hearings must be signed by the client and explain the potential effect of a continuance on remaining case management deadlines. Motions to continue trial are expressly disfavored, and trial continuances will be generally unavailable in the absence of “extraordinary unforeseen circumstances involving the personal health of counsel or a party, court emergencies, or other dire circumstances that provide extraordinary cause.” Notably, withdrawal of counsel within sixty days of trial and trial conflicts are not bases for a trial continuance. A continuance would be limited to six months from the original trial date unless the action that justified the continuance cannot be completed in six months. Finally, orders granting or denying a continuance are clothed with a presumption of correctness and may only be reversed based on a showing of a “gross abuse of discretion.”

(3) Case Reporting and Judicial Accountability

Chief judges of each circuit would be required under a new addition to rule 2.250(b) to provide an annual report to the Chief Justice as well as the state courts administrator listing all active civil cases that are pending three years or more.

(4) Continuing Education

The Workgroup did not specify education curricula. However, it recommended that continuing education for judges incorporate presentations on the amended rules, especially case management (rules 1.200 and 1.201); and for lawyers, courses should focus on professionalism, case management timetable, discovery practice, and sanctions (rule 1.275).

Importantly, the Workgroup noted that its proposals will likely require a need for “additional personnel (such as case managers), technology, and other resources in the trial courts.” Comments on the rule amendments expressed concern about whether the state has sufficient judges and law clerks to make active case management a reality. The Workgroup footnoted, though, that “some judges on the Workgroup noted that they and some of their colleagues have worked out how to engage in active case management using existing technology and personnel”; but it did not elaborate further.

The changes proposed are significant. The Workgroup concluded dramatic change was necessary. Importantly, the Workgroup noted the lack of empirical data showing active case management moves cases through the court system more efficiently while assuring just resolutions. The Workgroup appeared compelled to do something in the face of significant court backlogs. It looked at various examples of active case management, including active case management in federal court, for anecdotal support. Resource disparities and caseload differences between state and federal trial courts may not make the federal case management system a good bellwether for how similar rules would work in Florida circuit court.⁶

In the face of sweeping change in uncharted waters, litigators will want to carefully review the proposed changes

to best assess whether a permanent switch to active case management (and amendments to rules that could otherwise impair active case management) will solve the problem identified and will best serve the ends of justice or cause more problems than it solves. The comment period on the rule amendments was scheduled to expire on March 31, 2022. But the deadline was recently extended to June 1, 2022. Comments filed with the Supreme Court can be accessed on the case docket. See *In Re: Report and Recommendations of the Workgroup on Improved Resolution of Civil Cases, No. SC22-122 (Fla. 2022)*.

Douglas M. Smith is Of Counsel with Messer Caperello, P.A., where he enjoys practicing real property, land use, commercial, and administrative litigation.

Endnotes

1 The Workgroup was guided by the Long-Range Strategic Plan for the Florida Judicial Branch 2016-21, with two principal focuses: to “[e]nsure the fair and timely resolution of all cases through effective case management”; and “[u]tilize caseload and other workload information to manage resources and promote accountability.” See *Final Report infra* note 2, at 5.

2 See Jud. Mgmt. Council, Workgroup on Improved Resolution of Civil Cases, *Final Report* (Nov. 15, 2021), https://efactssc-public.flcourts.org/casedocuments/2022/122/2022-122_petition_79499_e39.pdf [hereinafter, *Final Report*].

3 Out of perceived necessity, the Florida Supreme Court has already implemented some of Workgroup’s proposals to deal with the backlog of cases caused by COVID-19, particularly as it relates to early case management.

4 New Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215(f) titled “Duty to Rule Within a Reasonable Time” ensures judges rule on motions within sixty days, thereby addressing yet another point at which litigation can come to a screeching halt.

5 Post-notice record activity is limited to the filing and noticing for hearing of a motion for stay or a dispositive motion, the proper filing of a notice for trial, or the court’s issuance of an order that sets pretrial deadlines or a trial date.

6 The Honorable Thomas P. Barber, District Judge for the Federal District Court for the Middle District of Florida (Tampa Division) submitted comments to the rule amendments and specifically noted the significant disparity between the resources available to federal judges as compared to state judges. See Thomas P. Barber, *Re: In re: Report & Recommendations of the Workgroup on Improved Resolution of Civil Cases, Case No. SC22-122* (Mar. 25, 2022), https://efactssc-public.flcourts.org/casedocuments/2022/122/2022-122_response_57438_b11.pdf.



ELIZABETH DESLOGE ELLIS

Our Bulletin profile this month is on the 2022 Thomas M. Ervin, Jr. Distinguished Young Lawyer Award winner, Liz Ellis.

Liz is an attorney with Nabors Giblin & Nickerson where she represents local governments, focusing primarily on litigation and appellate law. Prior to joining her current firm, she practiced with Carr Allison and served as an Assistant State Attorney in the Second Judicial Circuit.

Liz is member of the TBA Board of Directors and currently serves as President of the Young Lawyers Section. She also serves as President of the Board of Directors for Refuge House of the Big Bend, serves on the Board of Directors of Tallahassee Women Lawyers and Goodwood Museum & Gardens, is a member of the Capital Tiger Bay Club, and a graduate of Leadership Tallahassee Class 37. She is a 2009 graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, a 2012 graduate of the Florida State University College of Law, and a 10th generation Tallahasseean.

What do you hope to accomplish during your term as President of the Young Lawyers Section?

One of my biggest goals for the upcoming year is to increase our visibility with our membership. We have a fantastic core group of young lawyers and law students who regularly attend our monthly docket calls, but there are many people out there who either have not heard of us or have not attended any meetings. As I'm sure many organizations did, we saw a dip in participation during the COVID-19 pandemic, but now that we are back to meeting in person, I'm hoping to capitalize on the momentum we have seen at recent meetings and bring in some new members.

Another priority I have for the year is to collaborate more with TBA. I'm in a unique position to facilitate that, given that I'm serving as both a member of the TBA Board and President of the YLS Board this year. The



two organizations have historically held one or two joint meetings per year, but I'm hoping we can increase the level of collaboration between the two organizations. There is a high demand in the legal job market for talented young attorneys right now, and collaboration between TBA and YLS could bridge the gap between older, more established attorneys and young attorneys who would not otherwise have an opportunity to connect.

Why do you find it important to stay involved with voluntary bar associations, like TBA?

As attorneys, we so often get stuck interacting only with other attorneys in our practice areas. It is easy to forget the breadth of knowledge and experience we have in our legal community. Staying engaged with voluntary bar associations like TBA enables me to interact with attorneys who practice in areas I am not familiar with and gives me valuable perspective I would

not otherwise experience. Another reason I stay involved is the relationships I have made with other attorneys in TBA. Some of my closest friends are people I have met through TBA, which makes it even more enjoyable to attend meetings and social functions related to TBA.

What motivates you?

I began my legal career in public service as an Assistant State Attorney. Once I transitioned into private practice, it was important that I find other outlets to serve our community. My family has lived in Tallahassee for many generations, and I have always been taught that the most important thing a person can do is leave a lasting impact on our community through public service. I am also motivated daily by the other members of our community who serve on boards and give back through volunteer work.

What do you do for fun?

My husband and I both love to cook and frequently have friends over to try out unique recipes. We enjoy traveling and try to make it to at least one new-to-us place every year. I spend copious amounts of time with my fluffy Labradoodle Peaches, who is the goodest girl. On weekends year-round, you'll find me at St. Teresa Beach, which has been my favorite beach since I was a child. It's where my husband and I were married, which makes it extra special. I'm also a die-hard Seminoles fan, which comes with its own unique challenges and heartbreak, especially in recent years!

PLAN FOR TOMORROW, LIVE FOR TODAY.



The Gantt Financial Group

850.513.3338

2450 Tim Gamble Pl Fl 1

Tallahassee, FL 32308

bengantt.com



07-1012 ©2021 Benjamin D Gantt uses the Gantt Financial Group as a marketing name for doing business as representatives of Northwestern Mutual. The Gantt Financial Group is not a registered investment advisor, broker-dealer, insurance agency or federal savings bank. The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company (NM), Milwaukee, WI (Northwestern Mutual)

LOW BONO CENTER

YEAR IN REVIEW

Leon County Clerk's Office and the Tallahassee Bar Celebrate the One Year Anniversary of the Honorable Nikki A. Clark Low Bono Center

The Leon County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, in collaboration with the Tallahassee Bar Association, is celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Clerk's Low Bono Center. Named in honor of the Honorable Nikki A. Clark, the first African American woman Judge in Florida's Second Judicial Circuit (Leon County) and the First District Court of Appeal, the Low Bono Center provides affordable legal assistance to citizens who either don't have an attorney or cannot afford one. Judge Clark worked for Legal Services of North Florida before beginning her career with the State of Florida and has received numerous awards for being an advocate for the administration of justice and access to courts.

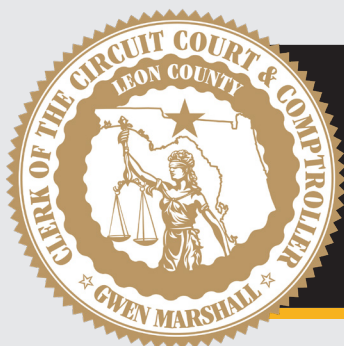
Since its inception in April 2021, the Leon County Clerk of the Circuit Court's Low Bono Center has assisted over 1,500 members of the community in making pro se filings with the court. The Center, as authorized by Florida law, provides assistance in civil cases that include Family Law, Small Claims (under \$8,000), and Landlord/Tenant issues. Attorneys provided by the Tallahassee Bar Association, using their professional expertise and experience, aid customers

in making proper legal filings and help them understand the framework of their cases. Other services include the purchase of forms, notary services, and Spanish language translation.

"Our Low Bono Center is an extension of our Self-Help Services and a key community resource," stated Clerk Gwen Marshall Knight. "This service is especially important to our community as we are engulfed by various legal issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic."

The service is available to anyone, regardless of their financial situation. The term "Low Bono" stems from the program's low-cost services, which are \$1 per minute for a minimum of 15 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes. Attorney consultations are available weekly, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., on Tuesday and Thursday. The Low Bono Center is located in the Leon County Courthouse, 301 South Monroe Street, Room 100-Q.

For more information, please visit www.leonclerk.com or call (850) 606-4091.



WE EXTEND OUR GRATITUDE

TO THE ATTORNEYS WHO HAVE COMMITTED THEIR TIME AND ENERGY TO HELP MAKE THE LOW BONO CENTER'S FIRST YEAR A HUGE SUCCESS!

Mutaqee Akbar
Michael Alao
Sid Bigham
Joe Bodiford
Gannon Coens
Jami Coleman
Mark Hanson
The Honorable Nikki A. Clark

Will Haselden
Jennifer LaVia
Lily McLaughlin
Greg Noonan
Tim Perry
Mario Theodore
Bib Willis

Join our Low Bono Center Attorney Panel to help ensure the future success of the LBC. Attorneys assist pro se litigants with court approved forms and provide procedural information for family law, landlord/tenant law, and small claims matters. Attorneys can sign up to work as few as six half-day shifts per year and are paid \$100 per half day shift or \$200 per full day shift. The Low Bono Center is open at the Leon County Courthouse on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00-4:00. For more information contact TBA Executive Director Christen Perry at Christen@tallahasseebar.org.



2022 CHILI COOKOFF RECAP

THANK YOU sponsors & teams!

2022 SPONSORS

Stearns Weaver Miller
 Caminez & Yeary
 Ausley McMullen
 Greenberg Taurig
 TBA Young Lawyers Section
 The Corry Law Firm
 Tri-Eagle Sales
 Dean Mead
 DRMP, Inc,
 Gardner Bist
 Hilland & Knight
 Kim O'Connor, Esq.
 Kutak Rock LLP
 LexisNexis
 Manausa, Shaw & Minacci
 McConnaughay, Coonrod, Weaver & Stern
 McGrew Law Firm
 Panza Maurer
 Phipps Reporting
 Williams Coleman

On February 23rd, 2022 the Tallahassee Bar Association hosted its 25th Annual Chili Cook Off at Goodwood Museum and Gardens. **More than \$13,000 was raised** to support the outstanding work of the Legal Aid Foundation of Tallahassee. Attendees sampled chili and margaritas provided by 16 competing teams.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE WINNER

Owen Title Company

CATEGORY WINNERS

ESP Media • Kutak Rock LLP • Legal Services of North Florida
 Pennington Law

TEAMS

Akbar Law Firm • Ausley McMullen • Berger Singerman • Division of Administrative Hearings • DRMP, Inc. • ESP Media • Florida Government Bar Association • IMS Business • Kutak Rock LLP
 Legal Services of North Florida • Liebenhaut | Hesser • Max Factor Law
 Owen Title Company • Pennington Law • Stearns Weaver Miller
 Tallahassee Women Lawyers



2022 GALA RECAP

The Tallahassee Bar Association (TBA) held its Annual Gala Tuesday, April 5 at The Governors Club in Tallahassee. Chief Justice Charles T. Canady welcomed the event and provided opening remarks, followed by the installation of the 2022 TBA Board of Directors and the 2022 TBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS) Board of Directors. Joe Bodiford will serve as the 2022 TBA president, and Elizabeth Desloge Ellis will lead the 2022 TBAYLS as president.



During the event, two TBA members were recognized for their achievements. Kelly O'Keefe received the Martha Barnett Women Lawyers of Achievement Award. This award was established to honor an outstanding woman lawyer from Florida's Second Judicial Circuit. O'Keefe has achieved professional excellence, served as a mentor, and advocated for the advancement of women in the legal profession.



Elizabeth Desloge Ellis received the Thomas M. Ervin, Jr. Distinguished Young Lawyer Award. Each year, this award is presented to a young lawyer who exemplifies the contributions that the late Tom Ervin made to the legal profession, The Florida Bar, and the TBA. Ellis has worked to encourage camaraderie between lawyers, exhibited high standards of professionalism, and has participated in activities that promote interaction and collegiality among TBA members.



Elizabeth Desloge Ellis



Martha Barnett and Kelly O'Keefe



TALLAHASSEE BAR ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GALA

Thank you!



ANNUAL SPONSORS



LEGACY SPONSORS



LEADERSHIP SPONSORS



Scope of Services



CONTENT CREATION



STRATEGIC MARKETING



CAMPAIGN CONSULTING



PUBLIC REALATIONS



MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH



CRISIS MANAGEMENT



- ESPMedia
- @espmedia_
- @esp_media

e: www.espmedia.net
 p: (850)-222-0361
 1028 E. Park Ave
 Tallahassee, FL 32301

MEMBER NEWS

SUBMIT YOUR TBA MEMBER NEWS

Changing firms? Made partner? Receiving an award? Celebrating a personal or professional milestone? We want to hear about it!

Send your news to tba@tallahasseebar.org



Elizabeth Ricci

Elizabeth Ricci, managing partner of **Rambana & Ricci**, PLLC Immigration Attorneys gave a TEDx in Miami about how immigrants change our communities through art, expression, and performance. Ricci was also recognized as a "Leading Lady" by Young Actors Theatre for her contributions to our community.



Steve Sellers

Steve Sellers has joined **O'Steen & O'Steen** as a full-time mediator and arbitrator, where he will use his extensive knowledge of construction matters and business disputes to help parties resolve cases in the most efficient and effective way possible. To learn more about Steve Sellers' qualifications and background visit www.OSteenOSteen.com/Steve-Sellers. Or contact Roxana at (850) 877-1028 or Roxana@OSteenOSteen.com to schedule Steve for your next mediation or arbitration.



Louise St. Laurent

Louise St. Laurent has joined the **Panza Maurer** firm as a partner beginning April 4, 2022, in the Tallahassee office. Prior to joining the firm, Louise was the General Counsel for the Department of Health and worked with the department for nine years, overseeing all legal matters for the department including litigation and rulemaking. She has extensive background in administrative and health law. Her experience also includes time as an assistant state attorney in Leon County.

MEMBER NEWS



Richard Greenberg

Richard A. Greenberg of **Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell's** Tallahassee office presented an Ethics Update at the Palm Beach County Bar Association's 2022 Annual Estate/Probate and Trust Seminar held on March 25, 2022, in West Palm Beach. In addition, Richard presented an Ethics Update at the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyer's 2022 Board Certification Review Seminar held on March 31, 2022, in Orlando.

Liz Ellis and Neil Rambana

Liz Ellis (**Nabors, Giblin & Nickerson, P.A.**) and **Neil Rambana (Rambana & Ricci, PLLC)** participated in the recent Readers Theater performance of Aladdin. Proceeds from the event benefitted the Literacy Volunteers of Leon County. Rambana read the role of Aladdin.



Lisa Foran | Retirement

Hinkle & Foran announces that after a distinguished career, Lisa Magill Foran is retiring. The firm name will change to Hinkle Law and will continue to specialize in catastrophic personal injury and wrongful death claims, including those involving medical malpractice and product liability.



Kelly Overstreet Johnson

Kelly Overstreet Johnson, a past president of The Florida Bar, the Tallahassee Bar Association, and the Tallahassee Women Lawyers, announces her full-time availability as a Florida Supreme Court certified circuit-civil mediator; Florida Supreme Court qualified arbitrator, and AAA arbitrator serving on the commercial, employment and consumer panels. Visit her website at overstreetjohnsonmediation.com or contact her at 850-566-1605.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2022

Mark your calendars!

JUNE 7 | 11:45am-1:00pm

CLE Luncheon at the Four Points Sheraton
Topic – 2022 A Look at the 2022 Florida Legislative Session | *Speakers* - David Cruz, Legislative Counsel, Florida League of Cities; Marco Paredes, Director of Government Affairs, Stearns Weaver Miller and Senator Lorraine Ausley, Florida Senate, District 3
Sponsor—Stearns Weaver Miller
Tickets: \$18 - TBA Members | \$28 - Non-Members
Price includes buffet lunch

JULY

Virtual Candidates Forum

AUGUST

End of Summer Social
Hosted by TBA & TBA YLS

SEPTEMBER 6 | 11:45am-1:00pm

CLE Luncheon at the Four Points Sheraton
Topic – TBD
Tickets: \$18 - TBA Members | \$28 - Non-Members
Price includes buffet lunch

OCTOBER

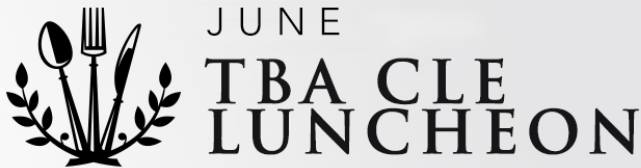
Legal Community Conference

NOVEMBER 1 | 11:45am-1:00pm

CLE Luncheon at the Four Points Sheraton
Topic – State of the Bar | *Speaker* – Gary Lesser, Florida Bar President
Tickets: \$18 - TBA Members | \$28 - Non-Members
Price includes buffet lunch

DECEMBER

Holiday Judicial Reception



TUESDAY, JUNE 7 | 11:45-1:00pm

FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON
316 West Tennessee Street



PROGRAM TOPIC
A Look Back at the 2022 Florida Legislative Session *presented by*



Senator Lorraine Ausley *Florida Senate*



David Cruz *Florida League of Cities*

Marco Paredes *Stearns Weaver Miller*

TICKETS

\$18 TBA Members | \$28 Non-Members
Price includes buffet lunch

To register for this event visit: tallahasseebar.org

THANK YOU
LUNCHEON SPONSOR

STEARNS WEAVER MILLER

ANNUAL SPONSORS



accurateserve™
WHERE PERFECTION IS THE PROCESS
"We Give Attorneys Peace of Mind"



Northwestern Mutual
Wealth Management Company®
THE GANTT FINANCIAL GROUP



**TALLAHASSEE
BAR ASSOCIATION**

accurateserve®

WHERE PERFECTION IS THE PROCESS

"We Give Attorneys Peace of Mind"

www accurateservetally.com

brennan.fogarty@accurateservetally.com



Service of Process



Skip Tracing for
Process Serving



Tallahassee
(850) 519-5494

Our Nationwide Offices Serve:

Tallahassee • Panama City • Lakeland
Tampa • St. Petersburg • New Port Richey
Jacksonville • Orlando • St. Augustine • Stuart
Orange Park • Kissimmee • Milton • Miami
Lake Mary • Ft. Myers • Naples • Plantation
Sarasota • Bradenton • Pensacola • Ocala
Spring Hill • Ft. Walton Beach • Titusville
West Palm Beach • Daytona Beach • Clermont
The Villages • Port Charlotte • Inverness
Port St. Lucie • Vero Beach • Okeechobee
LaBelle • Palm Coast • Key West • Gainesville
Mobile, AL • Denver, CO • Atlanta, GA •
Detroit, MI • Dallas, TX • Houston, TX

TALLAHASSEE BAR BULLETIN

Co-Editors

Erin Tilton
Christen Perry
Kyle Sill

Design and Editorial Team

ESPMedia Co.

The Bulletin is the official publication of the Tallahassee Bar Association. All articles printed herein are property of the Tallahassee Bar Association and may not be reprinted without permission. Opinions expressed in The Bulletin are those of the authors only and are not opinions of the TBA.

INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING?

Interested contributors may submit article ideas to the editors at TBA@tallahasseebar.org. The Bulletin is published quarterly.

LOOKING TO REACH MEMBERS OF THE TALLAHASSEE LEGAL COMMUNITY?

Contact us about advertising in The Bulletin at TBA@tallahasseebar.org or 850-702-5008.



**TALLAHASSEE
BAR ASSOCIATION**

Tallahassee Bar Association
PO Box 813, Tallahassee, FL 32302

850-702-5008

tallahasseebar.org

TBA@tallahasseebar.org