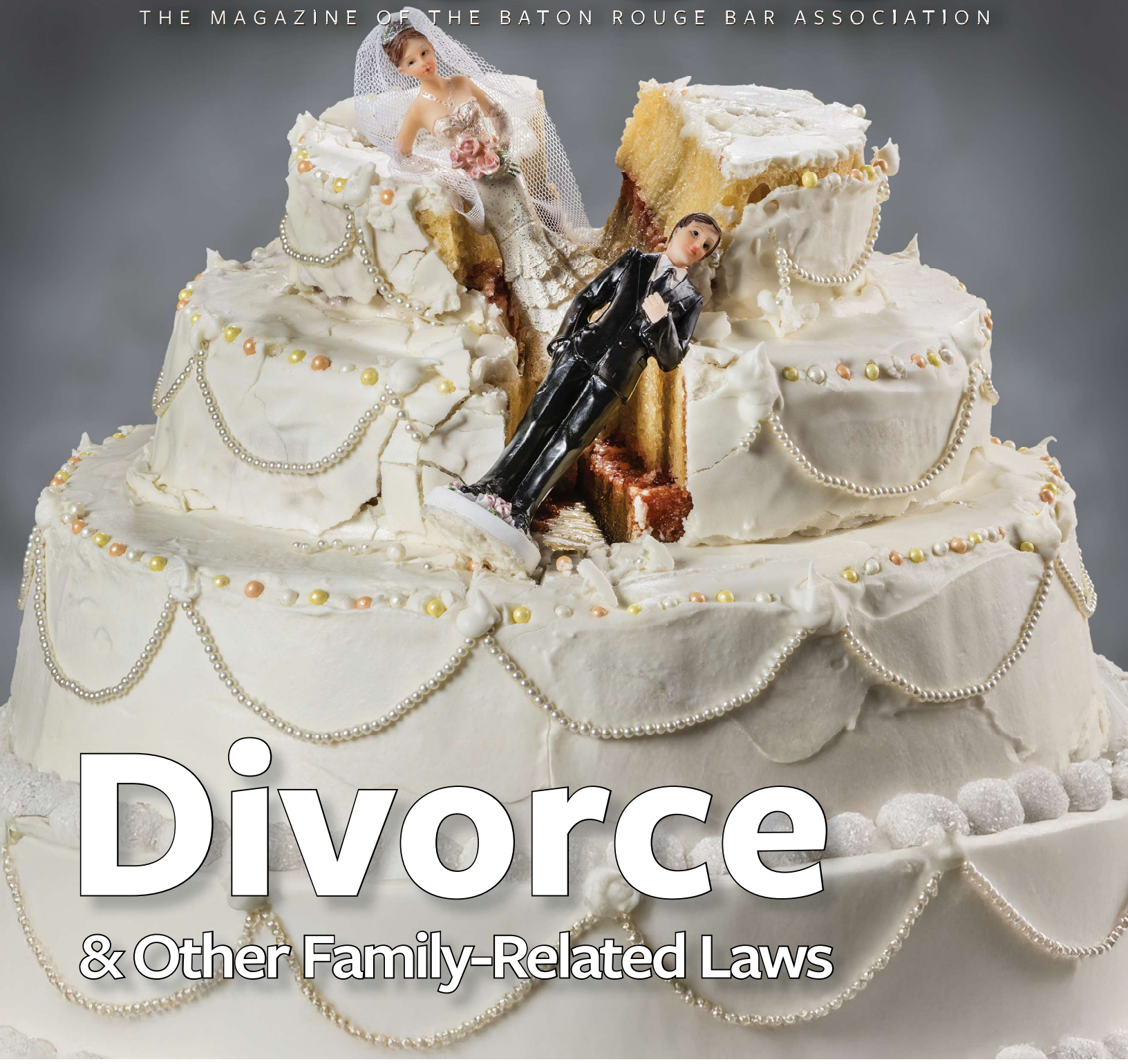


VOL. 8, ISSUE 3 | May/June 2025

# THE BATON ROUGE LAWYER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BATON ROUGE BAR ASSOCIATION



# Divorce

& Other Family-Related Laws

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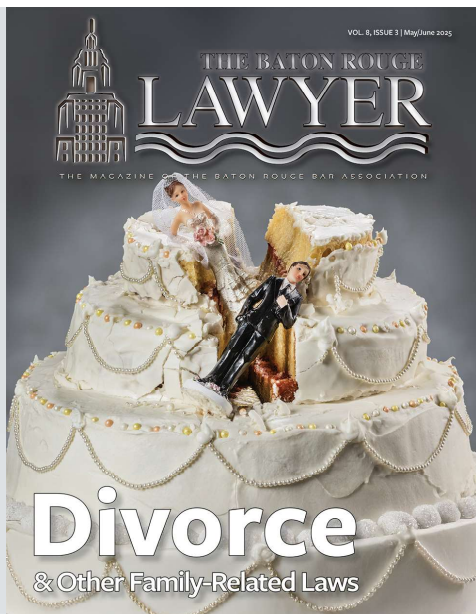
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### On the Cover

The May/June 2025 cover of The Baton Rouge Lawyer depicts an image of a crushed wedding cake with plummeting cake toppers to represent the potential devastation of divorce. The theme of the issue focuses on divorce while featuring other family-related laws ranging from community property to custody.

Cover designed by Pamela Labbe.

The Baton Rouge Lawyer supports participation of the membership in its production. We encourage the submission of articles and letters to the editor. Single-spaced, typed articles in Word should be fewer than 1,800 words including endnotes. Please email article submissions to: [pam@brba.org](mailto:pam@brba.org).

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**THE CONSTITUTION'S PROMISE:**  
**OUT OF MANY,**  
  
**LAW DAY 2025**

The BRBF Law Day Activities will take place Friday, May 2, 2025, at the Raising Cane's River Center Theatre beginning at 9 a.m.

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May/June 2025

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# YLS Sidebar Luncheon with the 19th Judicial District Court

**Seminar Description:** *This CLE seminar provides opportunities for young lawyers to engage with 19th JDC judges, commissioners and civil duty staff representatives who will discuss what young lawyers should expect when practicing in the 19th JDC. The panelists will provide insights into how the 19th JDC's civil, criminal, commissioners and civil duty courts operate. The panelists will discuss courtroom operations and expectations of attorney conduct in the courtroom, in a prodecural conference and in conversations with judicial support staff. Registrants will also get the panelists' perspectives on the do's and don'ts of legal practice, work-life balance and stress management.*

## Schedule:

11:45 a.m. — Registration Begins

12 -1 p.m. — A Panel Discussion featuring:

- **Judge Ron Johnson** and **Chief Judge Don Johnson**, *Civil*
- **Judge D. Carson Marcantel**, *Criminal*
- **Commissioner Nicole Robinson** and **Commissioner Jermaine Guillory**
- **Lauryn Stelly**, *staff attorney for Judicial Administration and Civil Duty*



## Cost Options:

- ☐ \$30 for BRBA Young Lawyers Section members
- ☐ \$45 for non-section BRBA members
- ☐ \$60 for non-BRBA members

**Lunch:** A box lunch will be provided and is included in the price.

**Cancellation Policy:** Registration deadline and deadline to cancel without penalty is 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 27, 2025. **"No shows" will be billed.** Fax completed form to: 225-344-4805. Make checks payable to: BRBA. Hand deliver or mail to: 544 Main Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70801.

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**To register for this CLE seminar online and pay by credit card, go to [www.BRBA.org](http://www.BRBA.org), select the EVENTS tab, then click on EVENT LIST and choose the appropriate event.**

## Young Lawyers Section CLE

11:45 AM - 1 PM

**Thursday,  
May 29, 2025**

This seminar qualifies for  
1.0 hour of CLE credit.

Deadline to register:  
Tuesday, May 27, 2025.

## Location:

### 19th Judicial District Court Training Room

Third Floor, Room 3801  
300 North Blvd.,  
Baton Rouge, La. 70801

## Questions?

Contact Susan Saye  
for more information:  
[susan@brba.org](mailto:susan@brba.org)  
or 225-344-4803.

# We Our Members

## BRBA Member **Appreciation** Month

Our members are the backbone of our association. To show our thanks, we have set aside the month of May to show our appreciation.

### **Be Informed** (learn the law)

**May 15 (Thursday)** : Family Law Section Meeting & CLE Seminar @ 11:45 a.m.

**May 16 (Friday): FREE CLE** — “Social Media & Legal Marketing,” Middleton Bar Center @ noon

**May 29 (Thursday):** YLS Sidebar Luncheon at the 19th JDC

**May 30 (Friday):** Curatorship CLE at the BRBA, Middleton Bar Center @ noon

### **Be Social** (enjoy life)

**May 11 (Sunday):** Mother’s Day Photos on the BRBA Facebook page

**May 13 (Tuesday):** Cocktails with the Court, City Club of Baton Rouge @ 5 - 7 p.m.

**May 16 (Friday):** Fido Friday (Post a photo of you and your dog in Facebook or Instagram.

Use the hashtag #FidoFridayBRBA)

**May 29 (Thursday):** Trivia Night at the Colonel’s Club, 2857 Perkins Rd. @ 5 p.m.

### **Be Involved** (community outreach)

**MAY 2 (Friday):** Law Day 2025

**Every Tuesday and Thursday:** Volunteer to assist the **Self-Help Resource Center** at the 19th JDC, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Contact Robin Kay to volunteer: 225-214-5561 or robin@brba.org.

### **Be Well** (care for your mental health)

**MAY 5 - 9: Well-Being Week in Law.** WWIL is organized annually by the Institute for Well-Being in Law (IWIL) during Mental Health Awareness Month. It aims to raise awareness about mental health and encourage action and innovation across the profession year-round to improve well-being.

Need more information? See: <https://lawyerwellbeing.net/well-being-week-in-law/about/>

### **Questions?**

**Contact the BRBA:**

**225-344-4803**

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*Like us back on Facebook:*

@batonrougebar



# Letter from the President

by Monica M. Vela-Vick

## Thinking Ahead and Of Others

She said she received a phone notification regarding an incident on the interstate. I listened and nodded, wondering how this related to the bar or next steps from my end.

Was someone we know in an accident? What sort of follow up is needed? Who should I contact? I stood for a second of silence waiting, and then she answered my puzzled look with, “I thought you’d want to know, so you could take an alternate route.”

That’s Ann Gregorie—always thinking ahead and thinking of others. Ann has been a constant for the BRBA. She is a leader and a confidante. She hides in the shadows while elevating the rest of us. She pays attention to those minute details many would otherwise forget. She deals with the most obstinate of people—lawyers—with poise and grace. She engages our program beneficiaries and stakeholders. She is the glue that holds the team together.

After decades of exceptional service, our executive director, Ann Gregorie, will be retiring this summer.

During her remarkable career, Ann has guided our association through transformative legal changes spanning over three decades—from the digital revolution that fundamentally altered the legal practice and how we access and exchange information, to the evolution of alternative dispute resolution, significant shifts in corporate governance following financial crises, the emergence of specialized practice areas, and most recently, the pandemic’s acceleration of remote proceedings and virtual practice.

Ann led this community following disasters like Hurricane Katrina and the 2016 flood. Through each change, Ann ensured our bar provided members with the resources, education and community needed to navigate these changes successfully. Her



Monica M. Vela-Vick

institutional knowledge, strategic insight and genuine care for our members have been instrumental in creating the supportive community we all value today.

Ann has touched the lives of countless legal professionals throughout her tenure. Many of you celebrated her retirement on April 10 on the bustling second floor of the City Club. Joy and laughter filled the space as black and white images rolled overhead in the decade-by-decade tribute to her legacy. The presentation transitioned to color, while members shared bright memories of yesteryear and the outstanding band performed familiar tunes.

Thank you to each of you for sharing in this celebration and to Past Presidents Melanie Newcome Jones and Trent Oubre, who planned the perfect celebration! While we will certainly miss her daily presence, Ann’s legacy will continue to guide our association for years to come.

As we celebrate Member Appreciation Month in May, I want to express my sincere gratitude to each of you for your continued commitment to our bar association. Your dedication to professional excellence and the legal community makes our organization stronger every day. The BRBA wants to be an ally, offering resources and community to support your journey. Your membership is not just a professional affiliation—it’s an investment in your career and our shared legal community.

For those who have already renewed your membership for 2025, thank you for your prompt response. Your early commitment allows us to better plan our initiatives and programs for the year ahead.

If you haven’t yet renewed, I encourage you to do so today. Our strength lies in our numbers and collective expertise. Your continued participation ensures we maintain a vibrant, diverse, supportive community dedicated to advancing the legal profession. Renewing is simple—visit our website or contact Susan Saye directly.

As we navigate this transition and move forward together, I remain deeply grateful for your trust and participation. Our bar association thrives because of members like you who recognize the value of professional community and collective advancement.



Photographed at Ann K. Gregorie’s retirement party are the lawyer-musicians who played cool jazz tunes. Standing (L to R) are Jim Standley, Bill Jarman, BRBA Executive Director Ann K. Gregorie and Glen Petersen.

# Bar News

## Inaugural BR BARDi Gras Held in BRBA Parking Lot

A new, sponsored event—the BR BARDi Gras—took place Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, ahead of the Krewe of Mystique de la Capitale in Downtown Baton Rouge in the BRBA parking lot. The BRBA building is situated along the parade route. BRBA members and their families and friends gathered to tailgate before the big parade. Special thanks to all who sponsored the event.



Michael Scallan, Beverly Perkins and YLS Chair Kolby P. Marchand enjoy BR BARDi Gras 2025.

YLS Council member Beverly Perkins, BRBA Board member Marcus Plaisance and BRBA President Monica M. Vela-Vick spearheaded BR BARDi Gras 2025. Ann K. Gregorie served as the staff liaison to the planning committee.

## Region III High School Mock Trial Competition Held March 21-22

A total of 12 teams from eight schools competed in the 2025 Region III High School Mock Trial Competition, held Friday, March 21, and Saturday, March 22, 2025, at the 19th Judicial District Court.

Rebecca Moreno chaired the Mock Trial Committee with assistance from Allena McCain. Special thanks to all BRBA members and law students who volunteered to be competition judges and timekeepers for this year's event.

The winning teams from Zachary High School and Episcopal School of Baton Rouge placed first and second, respectively, in the Region III competition, and both competed in the state-level of competition held March 29, 2025, in Lafayette.

The top two placing teams in the Region III competition were later honored during the April 2, 2025, Women's History Luncheon & CLE, where the students enjoyed lunch with attending lawyers and received certificates. Zachary High, winner of the Region III competition, was presented the traveling trophy.



In the photo above (L to R), David Shea Vela-Vick, BRBA President Monica M. Vela-Vick and Allena McCain review the mock trial competition judging sheets.



Wendy Edwards (on the bench) volunteered to preside over one of the rounds of the 2025 Region III mock trial competition.



Zachary High School's mock trial team, which placed first in the Region III competition, was honored during the April 2, 2025, Women's History Luncheon & CLE. The team is photographed (above) immediately after the competition at the 19th JDC holding the mock trial traveling trophy. Also in the photo is Chief Judge Don Johnson (third from right).



Episcopal School of Baton Rouge's mock trial team (photographed above) placed second in the Region III competition. Photographed above is the team after being honored during the Women's History Luncheon & CLE, held at Ruffino's Catering at De La Ronde Hall.



The speaker panel at the Women's History Luncheon & CLE was composed of (L to R) Supervisory Federal Public Defender Marci Blaize, U.S. District Court Chief Judge Shelly D. Dick, First Circuit Court of Appeal Chief Judge Page McClendon and Acting U.S. Attorney April M. Leon. The April 2, 2025, event took place at Ruffino's Catering at De La Ronde Hall.



Photographed above are (L to R) FBA President Tara Johnston, BRBA President Monica M. Vela-Vick and Greater Baton Rouge Chapter of the Louis A. Martinet Society President Harry Landry III. Johnston and Vela-Vick served as moderators for the professionalism CLE seminar that took place during the jointly held Women's History Luncheon. Also partnering with the aforementioned organizations was the Baton Rouge Association of Women Attorneys, whose president, Jan Reeves, was unable to attend.

## Reserve Your Hotel Room for the 2025 Bench Bar on July 17-20

The 2025 BRBA Bench Bar Conference will take place in Gulf Shores, Alabama, beginning Thursday, July 17, with a welcome reception at The Lodge at Gulf State Park, a Hilton Hotel. Something novel about this year's event is that the CLE seminars start Friday, July 18, and continue through Sunday, July 20.

As in prior years, the BRBA is offering a block of rooms available July 17-20 with special conference rates available both online and by calling the Hilton Central Reservations Dept. at (800) 618-4350 and mentioning the BRBA group code: 90E. To make your reservation online, go to: <https://group.hilton.com/72wgkp>.

The conference offers 12.5 CLE credit hours, including ethics and professionalism. Registration fees include registrant's CLE seminar materials, coffee breaks and evening social events. Please complete the conference registration form on page 25 or register online at [www.brba.org](http://www.brba.org). For more information, contact the BRBA: 225-344-4803.

## Save the Date for the Next Bar Luncheon: Friday, Aug. 1

The next scheduled BRBA bar luncheon will take place Friday, Aug. 1, at Ruffino's Catering at De La Ronde Hall. Chief Disciplinary Counsel Anderson Dotson III of the Office of Disciplinary Counsel is the guest speaker. This event is being organized by the Young Lawyers Section of the BRBA.

Typically, this luncheon is well-attended by summer law clerks who are introduced by their law firm partners. Please save the date and plan to dine with us.



Louisiana Supreme Court Associate Justice John Michael Guidry served as the guest speaker at the Black History CLE seminar (professionalism) held Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2025, at McKinley Alumni Center. Photographed are (L to R) Tara Johnston, BRBA Executive Director Ann K. Gregorie, Justice Guidry, Monica M. Vela-Vick and Harry Landry III.



## Ball Maul Golf Tournament Held Monday, March 31, after a Two-Hour Rain Delay

The 2025 BRBF Ball Maul Golf Tournament was held Monday, March 31, 2025, at University Club, immediately after a massive storm system moved through the capital city. The tournament start time was pushed back to noon, which provided much needed time for any standing water to drain and for the sun to peek through the clouds and shine on the beautiful greens.

Closest-to-the-Hole, Men's Longest Drive, Women's Longest Drive and the Putting Green competition were held during the tournament. Closest-to-the-Hole winners were Vinny Venturella (hole #5), Taylor Carroll (holes #8, 15) and Chase Trichell (hole #16).

Lindsay Watts Sanchez won the Women's Longest Drive Competition. Chase Trichell won the Men's Longest Drive Competition and the Putting Green Competition.

The team placing first-place gross included Jeff Watson, Chase Trichell and Tom Rathmann. The team placing second-place gross included Chris Jones, Chris Hester and Judge Guy Holdridge. Greg Rozas, Bobby Lormand and Paul Tanner won third-place gross.

Placing first-place net was the team of Devin Jones, Vinny Venturella and Caleb Steech; second-place net was the team of Scott Emonet, Taylor Carroll and David Wascou; and third-place net was the team of Michael Durtz, Paul Truett and Justin Delaune.

Kelley Dick Jr. chaired the Ball Maul Committee and Ann K. Gregorie and Pamela Labbe served as the staff liaisons. Also on the Ball Maul Committee were Hayden Bigby, Scott Brady, Chris Caswell, Jeff Watson and Luke Williamson.

Thanks to the 2025 Ball Maul Sponsors, including The Spine Center of Louisiana—Dr. Kevin P. McCarthy; Louisiana Health & Injury Centers—Dr. Michael J. Goff; JLL&W Insurance Consulting Firm; Amerson White Court Reporting; Geaux Chiro Chiropractic & Health; HMR Servicing LLC; Taylor Porter.

The six hole sponsors were Alinity Wealth Management; Anchor Point Consulting; Hancock Whitney; Louisiana Medical Clinic; Rathmann Chiropractic Clinics; Touns & Company Legal Consulting and Contracting.

Tee Box Sponsors were Bohrer Brady LLC; C.F. Biggs Company Inc.; Gordon McKernan Injury Lawyers; Lucas Investigations; Mansfield, Melancon, Cranmer & Dick; Omerta; Plaisance Law LLC; Tomeny Best Injury Lawyers; Total Care Injury & Pain Centers; Walters Thomas Cullens; Williamson, Campbell & Whittington LLC.



Lindsay Watts Sanchez (pictured above) won the Women's Longest Drive Competition at the Ball Maul 2025 golf tournament held March 31 at University Club.



Jeff Watson, Chase Trichell and Ball Maul Committee chair Kelley Dick Jr. are photographed above. The three-player team of Watson, Trichell and Tom Rathmann (not pictured) won the competition at the first-place gross level. Trichell also won several of the men's competitions. Dr. Rathmann's company—Rathmann Chiropractic Clinics—was one of six hole sponsors during the tournament.



Participating in Ball Maul 2025 are (L to R) First Circuit Court Judge Kelly Balfour, Greg Rozas of Rozas Injury LLC and Anchor Point Consulting and First Circuit Judge Wilson E. Fields.



## Many Judges Installed Since Start of the New Year

Many Baton Rouge courthouses have experienced changes in both judicial roster and court leadership.

### *Louisiana Supreme Court*

Associate Justice John Michael Guidry, formerly chief judge of the Louisiana Court of Appeal, First Circuit, was installed Jan. 19, 2025.

### *Louisiana Court of Appeal, First Circuit*

The departure of then-Chief Judge John Michael Guidry opened up the position of chief judge, which was filled by Judge Page McClendon. She was installed March 25, 2025, as chief judge.

New to the First Circuit is Judge Blair Edwards, who was sworn in Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025. Edwards is a life-long resident of Tangipahoa Parish.

Also new to the First Circuit are Judge Kelly Balfour and Judge Wilson E. Fields, both of whom moved from the 19th JDC. Balfour's investiture was held Feb. 13, 2025; Fields' investiture was held March 19, 2025.

### *19th Judicial District Court*

Chief Judge Donald R. Johnson assumed his leadership role as chief judge in district court when Chief Judge Wilson Fields departed from the 19th Judicial District Court to begin his role as First Circuit judge.



First Circuit Court Judge Kelly E. Balfour and his family are pictured (above) during his Feb. 13, 2025, Investiture Ceremony, which was held at the Louisiana Court of Appeal, First Circuit.



Judge Blair Downing Edwards' investiture was held Jan. 5, 2025. Photographed above are (L to R) Judge Edwards, her husband Daniel H. Edwards, a former Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff and attorney, and Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer. (Photo provided by Judge Blair Downing Edwards.)

Chief Judge Page McClendon of the Louisiana Court of Appeal, First Circuit



First Circuit Court Judge Wilson E. Fields is photographed (above) during his March 19, 2025, Investiture Ceremony at the Louisiana Court of Appeal, First Circuit. His reception was held at The 121 following the formal ceremony.



Photographed Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025, during the investiture of Judge Brittany Bryant Jorden (third from left) at Baton Rouge City Court is (L to R) Judge Kelli Terrell Temple, Judge Judy Moore Vendetto, Judge Jorden, Associate Justice John Michael Guidry, Judge Yvette Alexander and Judge D. Carson Marcantel. Justice Guidry presided over Judge Jorden's investiture ceremony. (Photo provided by Judge Brittany Bryant Jorden.)

Formerly with Baton Rouge City Court, one of the newest members of the 19th Judicial District Court Criminal Division is Judge D. Carson Marcantel, whose investiture was Wednesday, April 30, 2025, at the 19th JDC.

### *Baton Rouge City Court*

A new judge on the bench at Baton Rouge City Court is Judge Brittany Bryant Jorden, who is married to Judge Will Jorden of the 19th JDC bench. Her investiture was held Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025.

### *East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court*

Named as chief judge of the East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court on Jan. 1, 2025, is Judge Erika L. Green, Division B. She was elected to the court in November 2021, and previously was a solo practitioner at the Law Office of Erika Green LLC.



A portrait of Judge Kyle Russ, a man with a grey beard and mustache, smiling. He is wearing a black judicial robe over a white shirt and a blue and white striped tie. The background is a bookshelf filled with green and blue books.

## VITAL STATISTICS

**Age:** 42

**Position:** Judge for  
The Family Court (Div. D)

**Born:** Fitchburg,  
Massachusetts

**High School:**  
Episcopal School  
of Baton Rouge

**College:** LSU and  
University of Alabama,  
Birmingham

**Law School:** LSU, 2009

**Parents:** John  
& Bonnie Russ

**Parents' Occupations:**  
Chemical company  
executive; homemaker

**Married to:** Lindsay Russ

**Children:**  
Harrison and Emma

**Hobbies:** Fishing  
and attending LSU  
sports events

# Judge Kyle Russ



# *Judicial Interview: Judge Kyle Russ,* The Family Court of East Baton Rouge Parish *by Jennifer Maybery*

**TBRL:** *What influenced you to become a lawyer?*

KR: I've wanted to be a lawyer ever since I was a child. I like to argue, and when I was growing up, I loved watching movies with lawyers. Those were some of my favorite movies, and that's pretty much what did it. I don't really have many attorneys in my family. I have a great uncle who was an attorney in Pennsylvania, but otherwise, there were none. In fifth grade, we wrote a note to ourselves and put it in a time capsule. Even then my time capsule note said, "You better be going to law school."

**TBRL:** *But did you always aspire to be a judge, or was that aspiration a newer development?*

KR: I can tell you exactly when it was. It all began right out of law school, when I clerked in Family Court.

**TBRL:** *For which judges did you clerk?*

KR: I worked under two highly qualified judges, Annette Lassalle and Hunter Greene.

**TBRL:** *Who had the most influence on you as a law student and a young lawyer?*

KR: Judge Lassalle and Judge Greene. I worked for Judge Lassalle for four years. Then I went into private practice for a year and came back and worked for her again. Then Judge Greene was elected, and I worked for him for somewhere between six months and one year before going to the District Attorney's office, and I was there for nine years.

Hillar Moore was another significant role model from my time at the D.A.'s office.

**TBRL:** *What other career choices did you consider?*

KR: The only other one I considered, because I minored in psychology, was to become a psychologist because I really enjoyed psychology and found it extremely interesting.

**TBRL:** *If you were not on the bench, where would you be?*

KR: Careerwise, I'd probably still be at the D.A.'s office because I really enjoyed doing that job before I became a judge.

**TBRL:** *What do you enjoy most about being a judge?*

KR: My favorite thing is helping people who are in conflict. I enjoy that family court is never boring. Every case is different, and there's always something new to think about and decide. That's probably my favorite part.

**TBRL:** *Do you have a least favorite part about being a judge?*

KR: My least favorite part is those cases that are extremely high in conflict, especially those involving children. Sometimes you think you're trying to do everything you can, but it just doesn't seem to be working. There's part of me that feels like I'm failing the children when I'm not resolving the conflict between their parents.

**TBRL:** *What is your advice to lawyers who appear before you?*

KR: Be polite. Be prepared. Listen to the judge. If the judge tells you to do something, you need to do it. Do not talk over each other. Be professional; that's probably my main thing, especially to whomever is on the other side of you. I dislike it greatly when attorneys act unprofessionally toward one another.

**TBRL:** *Are there things that lawyers do that make you crazy?*

KR: Being late and not notifying me. I'm pretty lenient as that goes, but you need to let me know. It drives me crazy when other attorneys are sitting up here charging their clients and they're just waiting, and we don't know where you are.

**TBRL:** *What most surprised you about the job of judge?*

KR: I wasn't super surprised about much just because I had worked at the court for so long, I had a pretty good idea of how things worked, and I knew the inner workings of things. When I took the bench, there had been ad hocs in this division for a long time, so there was a huge buildup of cases that were waiting. So when I got here, we were inundated with trials. It's calmed down a little bit now. But for that first year, we were just nonstop. That didn't surprise me, but it was a little overwhelming at first. Once I got my legs under me, it was ok.

**TBRL:** *What is the most rewarding part of your job?*

KR: When we have litigants, especially unrepresented litigants, and I can talk to them in an in-court status conference and get them to come to some kind of agreement. It's rewarding when I can tell they really want to work together, and I have a good feeling about it by the time they leave court. I like to think that we did something good for them.

**TBRL:** *What is the best part of your day?*

KR: My favorite part of the day is interacting with my staff because we are all very close. I have a wonderful staff.

**TBRL:** *What is your favorite music?*

KR: Probably early '90s rock and grunge music. That's what I grew up on.

**TBRL:** *In a movie about you, who would play your part?*

KR: Just by looking at me, probably Zach Galifianakis because we look alike.

**TBRL:** *What is your favorite vacation?*

KR: The best vacation I've ever been on was with a buddy of mine. After we graduated college, we backpacked around Europe for five weeks.

**TBRL:** *What will you do when you retire?*

KR: I plan to go on many trips with my wife—maybe get a lakehouse somewhere.

# Eye on Evidence:

## The Relaxed Evidentiary Standard of Child Custody Proceedings

by Mary E. Roper

**A**lthough emotions are heightened in child custody proceedings, the rules of evidence are relaxed in recognition that the “best interest of the child” should prevail over the rigid application of the rules of evidence. In recognition of this principle, the Louisiana Legislature codified the relaxed standard for child custody cases in the Louisiana Code of Evidence.<sup>1</sup> Louisiana Code of Evidence article 1101 sets forth the applicability of the rules of evidence, which provides, in pertinent part, that:

**B. Limited applicability.** Except as otherwise provided by Article 1101(A)(2) and other legislation, in the following proceedings, the principles underlying this Code **shall serve as guides to the admissibility of evidence.** The specific exclusionary rules and other provisions, however, shall be applied only to the extent that they tend to promote the purposes of the proceeding. [emphasis added]<sup>2</sup>

\*\*\*

### (2) Child custody cases.

The best interest of the child is the purpose to be promoted in child custody proceedings.<sup>3</sup> In child custody determinations, “[t]he trial judge sits as a sort of fiduciary on behalf of the child, and must pursue actively that course of conduct which will be of the greatest benefit to the child.”<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, in ruling on the admission or exclusion of evidence, the judge’s duty to act in accordance with the child’s best interest must be prioritized.

In *Folse v. Folse*, a child custody case involving an allegation of sexual abuse, the trial court allowed various family members to testify as to their conversations with the four-year-old child about the suspected abuse. Although the child had been expected to testify and was ready to do so, the trial court deemed the child “unavailable” as a witness after the child’s doctor opined that it would be traumatic for her. Based on the testimony of the child’s family members, the father was found to have sexually abused his daughter, and sole custody was awarded to the mother. On appeal, the First Circuit Court of Appeal reversed the trial court, holding that the testimony should not have been allowed, as the child was capable of testifying and was not physically unavailable, making the other testimony inadmissible hearsay.<sup>5</sup>

The court of appeal reasoned that it was improper for a finding of sexual abuse to be based entirely upon hearsay testimony since La. R.S. 9:361 *et seq.*, the Post-Separation Family Violence Relief Act (PSFVRA), required the evidence of abuse to be “clear and convincing.”<sup>6</sup> The Louisiana Supreme Court

disagreed and found that the trial court’s ruling as to the admissibility of the testimony was proper as it comported with the legislature’s conclusion “that the best interests of children are not served by strict application of the rules of evidence.” The Supreme Court held that the trial court’s determination as to the admission of evidence did not require the same heightened burden of proof as was required to show that the abuse had occurred. The Louisiana Supreme Court clarified that although this case required clear and convincing evidence to substantiate abuse under the PSFVRA, the relaxed rules for the admissibility of evidence in child custody cases still applied.

In 2021, the question of whether the relaxed evidentiary standard of La. C.E. art. 1101B(2) applied in a hearing on a Petition for Protection from Abuse based on La. R.S. 46:2131 was raised as a *res nova* issue in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal.<sup>7</sup> In that case, a petition for protection had been filed by the father seeking protection of the children from their mother. The trial court determined that the relaxed standard did apply since the issue of custody was clearly the primary issue, although the mother argued that it was ancillary to the abuse allegations against her.

In a 2022 custody modification trial, where the issue was whether there had been a material change in circumstances since the entry of the prior judgment, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal held that the trial court did not abuse its discretion in allowing evidence of domestic abuse that **preceded** the prior judgment.<sup>8</sup> The court of appeal held that:

While we agree that the evidence of strangulation, prior to the consent judgments, would generally be inadmissible under the doctrine of *res judicata*, we find that it is certainly relevant in this specific case. The abusive behavior did not cease after the consent judgments and thus, it was necessary for the trial court to hear the evidence of abuse perpetrated by Mr. Pierre against Ms. Pierre prior to the consent judgments, because it related to the history and high parental conflict between them. **An understanding of the history was necessary for the trial court to determine the best interests of the children.** [emphasis added].<sup>9</sup>

In *Carr v. Gibbens*, a father assigned as error the family court’s refusal to grant him a new trial after he mistakenly missed a scheduled custody hearing while he was unrepresented. He argued that since he was unrepresented at the time, and “procedural rules were supposed to be relaxed in family court,” the trial court abused its discretion in “harshly upholding procedural rules to [his] detriment.”<sup>10</sup> The First Circuit found this argument to be without merit, holding that “while the rules



of *evidence* are more relaxed in custody proceedings, LSA-C.E. art. 1101(B)(2), there is no statutory authority for his assertion that the rules of *procedure* are relaxed in these proceedings.”<sup>11</sup> The Court of Appeal further expounded on this point as follows:

At the outset, we note that even though the best interests of the child is the overriding consideration of the family court in all child custody matters, LSA-C.C. art. 131, there is no separate statutory standard for the granting of a new trial that specifically requires the application of the best interests of the child standard, in addition to the established statutory standards for the granting of a new trial, to the family court’s determination of whether to grant or deny a motion for new trial.<sup>12</sup>

In summary, even though the standards are generally relaxed, attorneys in child custody proceedings are still expected to follow the rules of evidence. The difference is that the trial court judge has more discretion in determining whether certain evidence should be allowed or excluded, using the best interest of the child as the ultimate concern. In turn, on appeal, a practitioner is less likely to convince a higher court that the trial court committed legal error if the judge admitted or excluded evidence, if admitting or excluding the evidence served the best interest of the child.

<sup>1</sup> The Louisiana Legislature adopted the Code of Evidence per recommendation of the Louisiana State Law Institute - Act. No. 515 of the 1988 Regular Session, effective Jan. 1, 1989. Prior to that time, Louisiana had no unified body of evidence law. See official comments to article 101 of the Louisiana Code of Evidence.

<sup>2</sup> Despite the generally relaxed nature of the rules of evidence in custody proceedings, La. C.E. art. 1101(A)(2) indicates that the privilege rules of the Code of Evidence apply to all contradictory proceedings, *including* child custody proceedings.

<sup>3</sup> Folse v. Folse, 98-1976 (La. 6/29/99), 738 So.2d 1040.

<sup>4</sup> C.M.J. v. L.M.C., 14-1119 (La. 10/15/14), 156 So.3d 16, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Folse v. Folse, 97-0952 (La. App. 1 Cir. 5/15/98), 714 So.2d 224.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 227.

<sup>7</sup> Gonzales v. Gonzales, 21-0172 (La. App. 5 Cir. 7/2/21) (unpublished), 2021 WL 2766900, *writ denied*, 21-1211 (La. 11/10/21), 326 So. 3d 1251.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre v. Pierre, 23-0470 (La. App. 5 Cir. 2/21/24), 383 So.3d 1028, 1038-39, *writ denied*, 24-0366 (La. 4/30/24), 383 So. 3d 931.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 1038.

<sup>10</sup> 15-0701 (La. App. 1 Cir. 9/18/15) (unpublished), 2015 WL 5515906, at \*\*4-5.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at \*5.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*



# Four Types of Divorce

by Brienne Griffin



In Louisiana, there are four main types of divorce. Colloquially, the four types are known as 102, 103 fault-based, 103 no-fault and divorces in covenant marriage. All actions for divorce may be brought in the parish where either party is domiciled or the parish of last matrimonial domicile.<sup>1</sup> The “no-fault” divorce is based entirely on a requirement that the spouses live physically separate and apart (in separate households) for a requisite period of time. Spouses without minor children must live physically separate and apart for 180 days,<sup>2</sup> and spouses with minor children must live physically separate and apart for 365 days.<sup>3</sup>

## *Filing First, Separation Later: Article 102 Divorces*

The most common type of divorce is an action filed in accordance with Louisiana Civil Code article 102 (102 divorce). A 102 divorce allows a party to file suit either before or immediately after physical separation from the other spouse, but the parties must live physically separate and apart for the requisite separation period before a judgment of divorce can be rendered. Actual physical separation of the parties is not a requirement to file suit.<sup>4</sup> The requisite separation period is counted from the date of service of the *Petition for Divorce* on the other party.<sup>5</sup> If the parties are not yet living separate and apart at the time of service, the time period is counted from the day the parties actually begin living separate and apart.

A judgment of divorce under article 102 is confirmed by summary proceeding.<sup>6</sup> Once the parties have lived separate and apart for the requisite time period, either party can file a rule to show cause as to why a divorce should not be granted.<sup>7</sup> The court will set the matter for hearing, and the other party must be served with a *Rule Nisi*. After the other party is served, the confirming party must execute an *Affidavit of Living Separate and Apart*.<sup>8</sup> At the hearing, counsel for the confirming party must submit the *Affidavit of Living Separate and Apart*, the article 102 divorce checklist (Form G for East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court) and a proposed judgment of divorce. A 102 divorce must be confirmed within two years of service of the initial petition. If the 102 divorce is not confirmed within that two-year period, the action is considered abandoned.<sup>9</sup> Generally, in East Baton Rouge Parish, only the presence of the counsel confirming the divorce is required at the hearing unless the other party intends to argue that the parties have reconciled and have not lived separate and apart continuously for the requisite period of time. If you intend to file a divorce for a client under Civil Code article 102, be sure that you also review Code of Civil Procedure articles 3941 through 3958.

## *At Fault or Default: 103 Divorces*

The causes of action under an article 103 divorce (103 divorce) are a mixed bag of fault-based grounds and one non-fault-based ground. The causes of action for a 103 divorce are as follows: (1) the parties have lived separate and apart for the requisite period of time **before** filing the petition for divorce;<sup>10</sup> (2) the other spouse has committed adultery;<sup>11</sup> (3) the other spouse committed a felony and was sentenced to death or imprisonment at hard labor;<sup>12</sup> (4) the other spouse perpetrated physical or sexual abuse on the filing spouse or the child(ren) of either spouse;<sup>13</sup> regardless of whether there was prosecution for the act of abuse; or (5) after a contradictory hearing or consent decree, a protective order or injunction was issued



during the marriage against the defendant spouse, protecting the filing spouse or either spouse's child(ren) from abuse by the other spouse.<sup>14</sup>

Parties filing under article 103 can get divorced immediately (or at least as quickly as the court's docket and procedural delays will allow). Unlike a 102 divorce, confirmation of a 103 divorce is done strictly by ordinary proceeding.<sup>15</sup> After filing the *Petition*, the filing spouse must serve the other spouse with the Petition and then wait 21 days<sup>16</sup> to see whether the other spouse files an Answer. If no Answer is filed, a 103(1) or 103(5) divorce can be confirmed by default.<sup>17</sup> If an Answer has been filed or the cause of action of divorce is under articles 103(2), 103(3), or 103(4), a Motion to Set Trial must be filed and served on the other spouse as witness testimony and evidence are required to confirm those types of divorces.

### ***Blessing or Burden: Covenant Marriage Divorces***

A covenant marriage is a unique and distinct type of marriage that requires premarital counseling and has stricter requirements for divorce. La. R.S. 9:272 states that a covenant marriage is entered into by prospective spouses who:

understand and agree that the marriage between them is a lifelong relationship. Parties to a covenant marriage have received counseling emphasizing the nature and purposes of marriage and the responsibilities thereto. Only when there has been a complete and total breach of the marital covenant commitment may the non-breaching party seek a declaration that the marriage is no longer legally recognized.

Divorce in a covenant marriage requires commission of fault or a longer separation period than a 102 or 103 divorce. The fault-based grounds for covenant marriage are enumerated in La. R.S. 9:307(A). These fault-based grounds are the same as those enumerated in Civil Code article 103 (adultery,<sup>18</sup> commission of a felony<sup>19</sup> and sexual or physical abuse of the filing spouse or a child of one of the spouses<sup>20</sup>) as well as one additional fault-based ground of abandonment of one year with constant refusal to return.<sup>21</sup> If a spouse to a covenant marriage chooses not to file under a fault-based ground, the spouses must live physically separate and apart for at least two years.<sup>22</sup> Most importantly, the spouses **must** obtain counseling until the final judgment of divorce is rendered.<sup>23</sup> Confusion abounds with respect to finalizing a covenant-marriage divorce, but, ultimately, it is an ordinary proceeding and should be treated similarly to that of finalizing a 103 divorce. This is a somewhat overly simplistic summary of covenant marriage, as this article does not discuss separation from bed and board (not necessarily required in a covenant-marriage divorce proceeding). Practitioners who do not regularly practice family law should exercise caution when determining whether to represent a client seeking divorce from a covenant marriage.

<sup>1</sup> La. C.C.P. art. 3941.

<sup>2</sup> La. C.C. art. 103.1(1).

<sup>3</sup> La. C.C. art. 103.1(2).

<sup>4</sup> See La. C.C. art. 102, Comment (a).

<sup>5</sup> La. C.C. art. 102.

“ Having written the covenant marriage legislation for then-Rep. Tony Perkins, I believe divorce legislation has gone too far. In the year (1997) that covenant marriage legislation passed, Judith Wallerstein presented her findings as to the legacy of California no-fault divorce. I flew out to hear her and take notes. Her findings of having followed the children of divorce for 25 years were devastating for the children and often wives, many of whom didn't have full-time employment (study began in early 1970s). I still am seeing the results. Most women now work, and they do so to protect themselves and their children.”

“ I continue to believe that divorce, absent domestic abuse or similar destructive behavior, hurts children. The response to the fragility of marriage these days is to live together in a ‘trial’ arrangement that can NEVER duplicate a committed relationship.”

— **Katherine Spaht**, *Retired Professor of Law,*  
*Paul M. Hebert Law Center.*

Editor's Note: Professor Spaht provided the above comment in April 2025 in response to a request from TBRL.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> La. C.C.P. art. 3952.

<sup>8</sup> La. C.C.P. art. 3956.

<sup>9</sup> La. C.C.P. art. 3954.

<sup>10</sup> La. C.C. art. 103(1).

<sup>11</sup> La. C.C. art. 103(2).

<sup>12</sup> La. C.C. art. 103(3).

<sup>13</sup> La. C.C. art. 103(4).

<sup>14</sup> La. C.C. art. 103(5).

<sup>15</sup> See *Boudreaux v. Boudreaux*, 21-1050 (La. App. 1 Cir. 6/3/22) (unpublished), 2022 WL 1830833.

<sup>16</sup> La. C.C.P. art. 1001.

<sup>17</sup> La. C.C.P. art. 1702(F)(1).

<sup>18</sup> La. R.S. 9:307(A)(1).

<sup>19</sup> La. R.S. 9:307(A)(2).

<sup>20</sup> La. R.S. 9:307(4).

<sup>21</sup> La. R.S. 9:307(3).

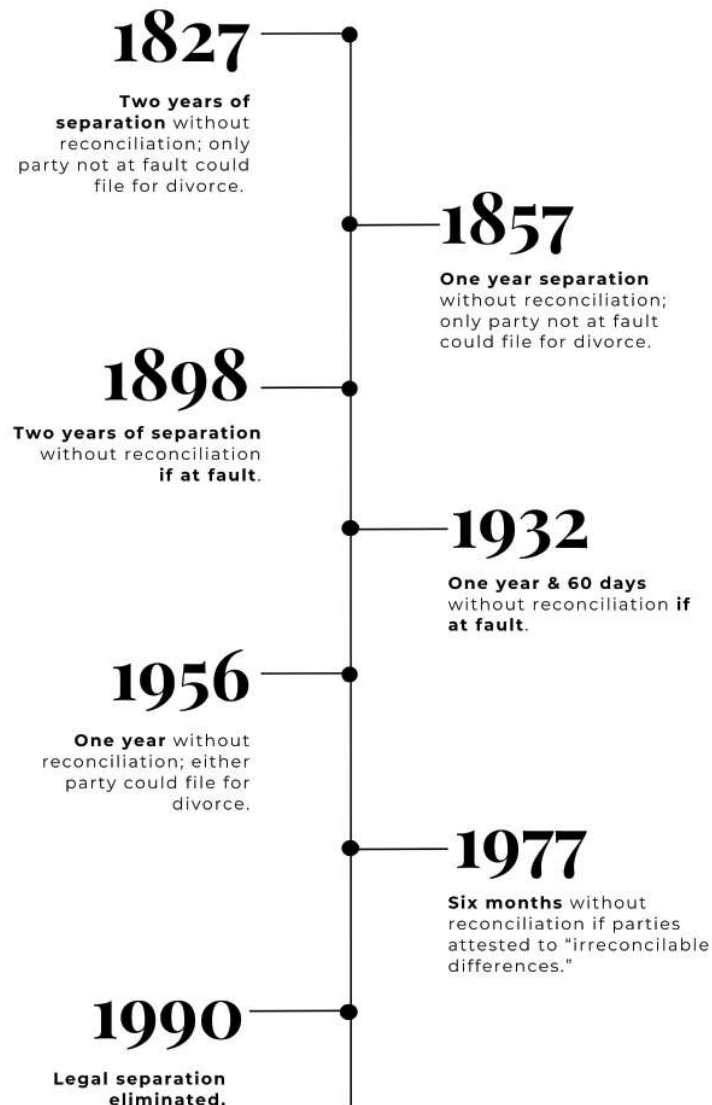
<sup>22</sup> La. R.S. 9:305(A)(5).

<sup>23</sup> La. R.S. 9:307(A).

## DIVORCE AFTER JUDGMENT OF SEPARATION

1803-1826—No divorce in Louisiana law; divorce allowed only through specific legislative acts.

Time Required After Judgment of Separation to File for Divorce



# Louisiana Divorce Timelines<sup>1</sup>

Information compiled by Gail S. Stephenson  
with the assistance of Ellis Salahuddin

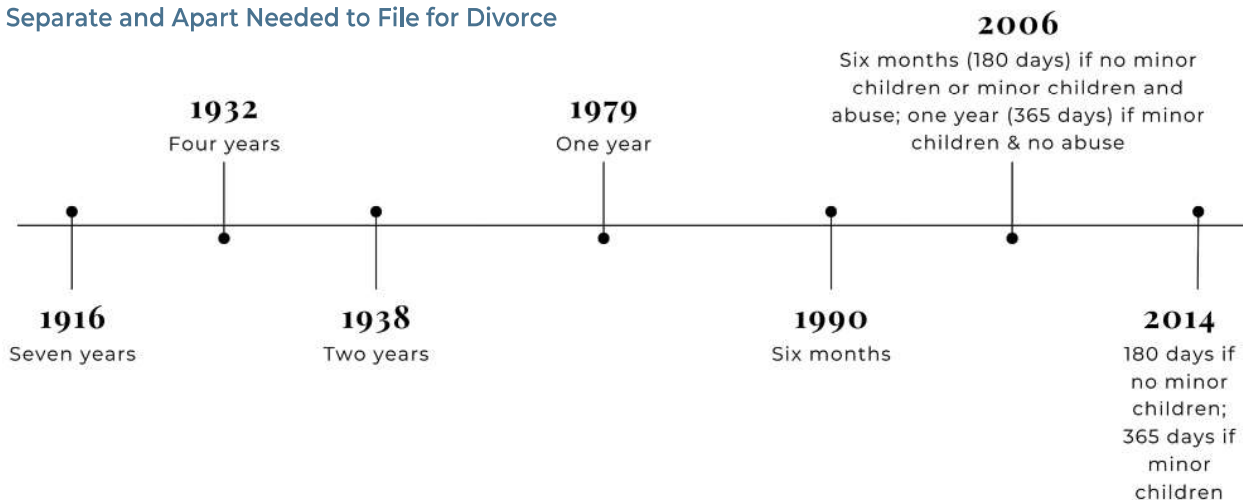
Graphics created by Jalaysia Sanders



<sup>1</sup> These timelines are meant simply to illustrate how the length of time to obtain a divorce has changed over the years. For a complete discussion of the various changes in divorce law, definitions of fault and the finer details of the options for divorce, see Monica Hof Wallace, *A Primer on Divorce in Louisiana*, 64 LOYOLA L. REV. 617, 619-22 (2018).

## NO FAULT DIVORCE WITHOUT JUDGMENT OF SEPARATION—Introduced in La. in 1916.

Time Living Separate and Apart Needed to File for Divorce







# Community Property *by Wendy Edwards*

**L**ike most of my colleagues, I typically detest when an educational article begins with a caveat, but there is simply no way to avoid it.

A rudimentary overview of our community property laws must be prefaced with an understanding that there exists a myriad of provisos that complicate any allegedly basic community property partition case. Nevertheless, at the outset, the parties must have been married<sup>1</sup> and must have lived in Louisiana before the community property regime attaches.<sup>2</sup> Any property owned by a spouse before the marriage or gifted to that person individually is that spouse's separate property.<sup>3</sup> But, during marriage, spouses acquire assets and incur debts that are classified as community property, in which assets and debts are subject to partition after divorce proceedings are initiated.<sup>4</sup>

In the initial petition for a divorce, especially if the parties have not yet lived physically separate and apart for the requisite time period or have no other claim for an immediate divorce, it is good practice to state that the parties have acquired community property and reserve the spouse's right to partition that property. If the parties have lived physically separate and apart for more than 30 days before filing the divorce petition, the spouse may request that the court issue an order granting a judgment of separation of property, terminating the parties' community property regime retroactive to the date the initial petition for divorce was filed.<sup>5</sup> A spouse may also seek this relief after the parties have lived physically separate and apart for more than 30 days following the divorce petition's filing date.<sup>6</sup> If this termination of community property is not accomplished prior to the divorce decree, the community property regime is deemed terminated when the judgment of divorce is rendered, retroactive to the filing date of the divorce petition from which the judgment was granted.<sup>7</sup>

As an incidental claim to the divorce proceedings,<sup>8</sup> attorneys should seek a temporary restraining order and a preliminary

injunction prohibiting the spouses from alienating, moving, transferring, encumbering or disposing of any community assets so that the community property's value is not diminished.<sup>9</sup> This typically includes an order preventing the spouses from changing the beneficiaries of any of their insurance and retirement accounts. Additionally, if one spouse is an owner or managing member of a business, ensure that the language of the order allows that spouse to continue to operate the business in the manner that the business operated during the parties' marriage.<sup>10</sup>

Some attorneys also obtain an order freezing the parties' joint accounts. However, consider first whether this action would negatively impact joint ventures or community enterprises. Unless a client has already established a "war chest," will freezing any accounts actually be beneficial or will it hinder the client's access to funds? Unfortunately, it is often difficult to get banks to remove the hold on funds when money is needed, especially in time-sensitive situations.

Attorneys should advise their clients that, to the extent possible, all health and property casualty insurance coverages should be maintained equal to that occurring during the marriage. Often, in the case of life insurance policies, the parties may overlook who the owner of cash-value policies may be. Commonly, the insured is the policy owner, but someone needs to continue to pay the premiums to avoid a lapse in coverage.

Additionally, an attorney should obtain the most recent statements for all banking, investment, retirement, life insurance or any other accounts of any nature from their client or from opposing counsel if a client lacks access. It is also good practice to obtain insurance policies, tax returns, cash sales of immovable property, credit card and other mortgage or loan statements and any community business operating agreements and profit-and-loss statements.

At this point, attorneys should evaluate whether the nature of the community assets necessitates retaining a forensic CPA. Sometimes a company's operating agreement may include language regarding the method of valuing a spouse's interest in the company in the event the spouse gets divorced. It is always good practice for family law practitioners to have a working relationship with experts who can help guide them in valuations and any potential tax consequences resulting from the partition of assets and debts.

Consider, too, whether it would be appropriate to retain a financial planner to discuss how best to use assets the client may receive to plan for the future or to help craft a settlement offer. In cases involving wealthier clients, a client's high net worth and business interests may require a business valuation that may be difficult and time consuming. In such cases, it may be beneficial for one spouse to receive an advance of community funds to help defray attorney and expert fees. Typically, this depends on the liquidity of the parties' various accounts.<sup>11</sup>

Once the attorney has a fairly good understanding of the parties' financial picture—and the fair market value of community assets and the balances of community debts—the attorney should file a petition to partition the community property, if not requested in the initial divorce petition.<sup>12</sup> In East Baton Rouge Parish, a petition to partition community property should be filed in the existing divorce suit in The Family Court in and for the Parish of East Baton Rouge.<sup>13</sup> In other parishes, a petition to partition may be filed in district court and does not necessarily have to be filed in the divorce suit.

Both parties are required to submit detailed descriptive lists (DDL) itemizing the community's assets and debts, stating the value of those assets and debts and indicating who has possession or control of the property. The DDL will also indicate a spouse's reimbursement claims and whether that spouse claims other assets or debts to be separate property of one spouse solely. Once both parties have exchanged their individual lists, a joint detailed descriptive list must be filed evidencing claims with which the parties concur (agree to) and the assets, debts or reimbursements claims the parties traverse (disagree with), while stating the rationale behind the disagreement.<sup>14</sup>

A trial on those items remaining in dispute will be tried summarily, at which time the court will determine the classification of the assets and liabilities, whether they are community or separate, and their value. Valuation is determined as of the trial date. The court should take into consideration the nature of the asset or debt, the source from which it came, the current and future economic conditions of each spouse and any other factor it deems relevant, which should also include the tax implications of any possible partition and an asset's liquidity.<sup>15</sup>

The court will then allocate to each spouse certain property, thereby partitioning the community and granting ownership of each asset and debt to one or the other spouse. When allocating the assets and liabilities, the court may grant full ownership to one spouse or apportion the asset or debt between the parties.<sup>16</sup>

After considering the merits of the various reimbursement claims, the court will determine whether the division of property is financially equal in nature. If not, the court will order one spouse to pay the other an equalization payment.<sup>17</sup>

Once a judgment partitioning the parties' former community property is signed, it should be recorded in either or both the parish's mortgage and conveyance records as well as in any parish or county in which former community immovable property exists. This is the only way to put creditors and debtors on notice that one spouse has sole ownership of an asset or is solely liable for any debts. However, unless a debt is refinanced into the name of the spouse to whom the debt was allocated in the partition judgment, creditors still may sue both spouses. This creates a legal right for the spouse who was not allocated the debt to sue the other spouse for any resulting damages.<sup>18</sup>

Afterward, it is incumbent on the attorneys to ensure that the assets and debts are actually divided by having the spouses execute any and all required forms or documentation necessary to effectuate the account's transfer or division. This includes executing motor-vehicle titles; closing bank accounts, if needed; withdrawing property from safety-deposit boxes; transferring physical movables; executing forms for the transfer or roll over of investment and retirement accounts; or preparing and executing qualified-domestic-relations orders, among other actual practical steps that may be necessary to give effect to the partition judgment. I would suggest keeping copies of all documentation, as lending institutions are now requesting a copy of documents showing proper transfer of assets and, if applicable, satisfaction of equalization payments one spouse was ordered to pay to the other. Trying to find a copy of a check from 15 years ago is not something one wants to do on a random Wednesday, especially when a client's closing on the sale of the former matrimonial domicile is Friday.

Hence, caveats aside, if an attorney decides to attempt a community property partition for a client, the attorney should ensure that a colleague, friend or mentor is able to help navigate the quagmire of likely issues not mentioned herein.

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<sup>1</sup> La. C.C. art. 2325.

<sup>2</sup> La. C.C. art. 2334.

<sup>3</sup> La. C.C. art. 2341.

<sup>4</sup> La. C.C. art. 2338.

<sup>5</sup> La. C.C. art. 2374(c), 2375.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> La. C.C. art. 2365.

<sup>8</sup> La. C.C. art. 105.

<sup>9</sup> La. R.S. 9:371.

<sup>10</sup> La. C.C. art. 2352.

<sup>11</sup> La. R.S. 9:374(F).

<sup>12</sup> See La. R.S. 9:2801.

<sup>13</sup> Partitions filed in The Family Court in and for the Parish of East Baton Rouge are addressed by Rules 31 and 32, Local Rules of The Family Court.

<sup>14</sup> La. R.S. 9:2801.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> See La. C.C. art. 2357.



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# Attorney Spotlight: Priscila Ebony Ray

by Gracie L. Thomas

**TBRL:** Describe your involvement with the BRBA.

PER: I have been a member of the BRBA for four years, and I am currently serving as chair of the BRBA Family Law Section.

**TBRL:** What is your favorite BRBA activity or event?

PER: I have two favorite activities of the BRBA—one is the Galentine's Day event. It feels really empowering engaging with such a dynamic and diverse group of female lawyers as we share our experiences in the practice of law. The second favorite event is being a judge for the high school mock trial competition. Involvement in these mock trials not only aids in the personal development of students, but it can also enrich your professional life, reinforcing the values of mentorship and community engagement.

**TBRL:** Where do you practice law?

PER: I have the honor and privilege of currently being the director of legal services for the IRIS Domestic Violence Center. I have been with the agency since 2012. In this role, I assist in providing free legal representation and advocacy, particularly in protective order matters, to residents across several parishes, including West and East Baton Rouge, West and East Feliciana, Iberville, Pointe Coupee and Livingston.

**TBRL:** Why did you choose to practice family law?

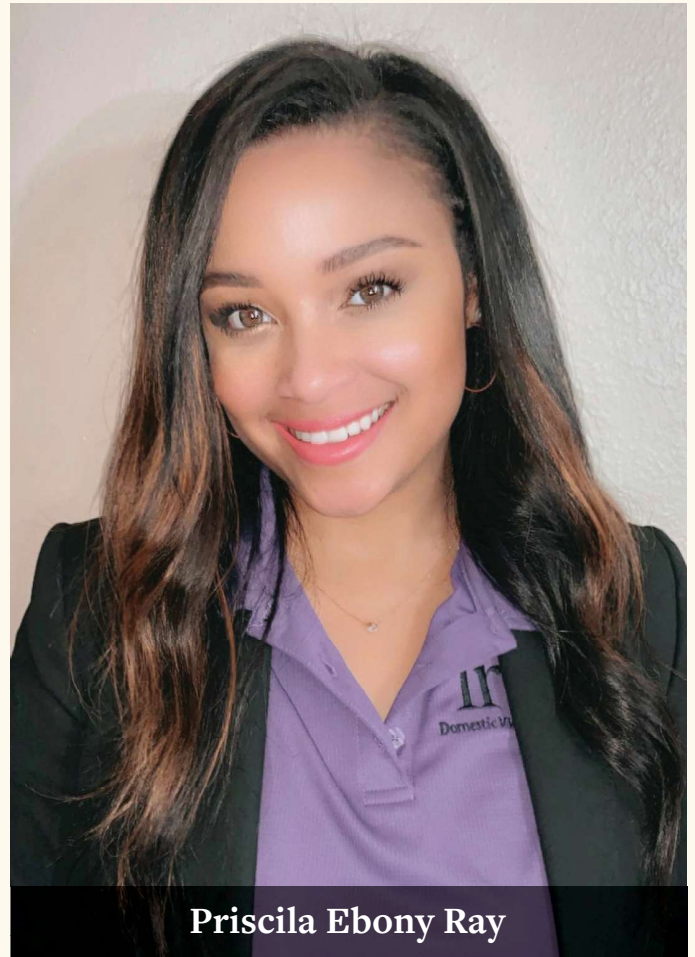
PER: Family law is more than just legal disputes; it's about relationships, emotions and the future well-being of families. Whether it's guiding a client through a divorce, restraining order proceedings, advocating for a child's best interests or ensuring that financial support arrangements are fair, my work is about helping people find stability and closure.

**TBRL:** What is a common misconception about family law practice?

PER: A misconception about family law is that it primarily involves contentious court battles, with attorneys exacerbating conflicts between parties. In reality, attorneys strive to resolve disputes amicably, often through mediation or collaborative law approaches, aiming to minimize animosity and foster cooperation between parties.

**TBRL:** Why should BRBA members practicing family law join the Family Law Section?

PER: Joining the Family Law Section of the BRBA offers numerous benefits for family law practitioners, such as monthly luncheons that include CLEs, pro bono opportunities and professional networking. We also facilitate communication between the Family Court and the Bar, ensuring members



**Priscila Ebony Ray**

stay informed about procedural updates and court practices. Engaging with the Family Law Section not only enhances your professional development, but it also contributes to the betterment of family law practice within the Baton Rouge community.

**TBRL:** What events or activities does the FLS have planned for the remainder of this year (May and beyond)?

PER: In May, we will host our annual professionalism CLE, which will highlight mental health issues within the practice of family law. Our June CLE will discuss the future of custody evaluations and the AFCC's new direction. In August, we will host our Annual Legislative Update CLE, which highlights new changes within the code and their effects on family court matters. In October, we will have our four-hour CLE to include various topics, such as Domestic Violence and safety in the courtroom. Our last CLE in November will include a Q&A with the Juvenile Court judges. Our section also hosts our annual holiday party for the Family Law Section in December.

**TBRL:** Tell us about your education.

PER: I graduated from Larkin High School. I graduated from LSU-Shreveport and attended law school at Southern University Law Center.

**TBRL:** Where are you from?

PER: I was raised in Elgin, Illinois.



**TBRL:** Tell us something interesting about yourself.

PER: I am of Puerto Rican and African American descent and the first member of my family to obtain a juris doctorate.

**TBRL:** What are your leisure activities?

PER: Some of my favorite leisure activities include spending time with my family, especially with my nephew, Griffin. I truly cherish cooking while dancing to salsa music, something I've done with my mother very often growing up, going on walks with my dog Ares, watching movies and crafting.

**TBRL:** Why did you want to become an attorney?

PER: Law, in its many forms, has the power to change lives, but family law in particular allows me to make a direct and meaningful impact on individuals and families during some of the most challenging times of their lives, which is one of my favorite parts about practicing family law and the reason I became an attorney. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of those around me.

**TBRL:** If you were not practicing law, what would be your alternate profession?

PER: This is a difficult question, as I have always seen myself becoming an attorney, but if I were not practicing law, I believe I would have become a teacher. My passion is social work and helping vulnerable people and communities work through challenges they face in everyday life.

**TBRL:** What is the one thing you wish you had known before you went to law school?

PER: I wish I had known how important getting involved and networking was before I went to law school. These two things are pivotal for both personal and professional development for multiple reasons, such as career advancement, building a professional reputation, skill development, personal growth and well-being.

**TBRL:** If you could change one thing about the practice of law, what would you change?

PER: One thing I would change about the practice of law is to shorten the gap between technology and law office practice. Encouraging a mindset that embraces technological advancements is vital. By promoting openness to change and continuous improvement, firms can better adapt to evolving tools and methodologies that they can use in their practice.

**TBRL:** Who was your greatest mentor as a young lawyer?

PER: My greatest mentor as a young lawyer has been and still is Ebony Cavalier. As a successful female attorney in Baton Rouge, Ms. Cavalier serves as a beacon of inspiration. Her achievements demonstrate that gender is not a barrier to excellence in the legal field. Observing her navigate complex legal challenges with confidence and grace has reinforced my belief in my own potential. She embodies the qualities I aspire to instill within myself, such as resilience, competence and

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leadership. Under Ms. Cavalier's mentorship, I have developed a deeper understanding of legal strategies and courtroom etiquette. She provided constructive feedback on my case preparations and encouraged me to take on challenging assignments, fostering my growth as a competent attorney. In essence, Ms. Cavalier's mentorship has been instrumental in shaping me into the lawyer I am today, and I am profoundly grateful for her guidance and example.

**TBRL:** *What is the best piece of advice you have received?*

PER: As cliché as it might sound, never giving up has been one of the best pieces of advice I have received. Being able to persevere is essential in life. It can also teach you the importance of recognizing that there are times when reassessing your approach or goal can be beneficial. Thinking in this mindset helped me tremendously through the difficult times I faced while attending law school and working to pass the bar exam.

**TBRL:** *What would you consider your greatest achievement?*

PER: Embarking on the journey to obtain my law degree was a path filled with many challenges, but achieving it stands as one of my greatest accomplishments. My experience aligns with that of many first-generation law students who face unique hurdles, including a lack of social, cultural and financial capital. These challenges are often amplified in the high-pressure environment of law school. The sense of pride in earning my juris doctor degree is unparalleled, marking a significant milestone in one's personal and familial history.

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# BRBA BENCH BAR CONFERENCE 2025

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# Bench Bar Conference 2025

The Lodge at Gulf State Park | 21196 E. Beach Blvd., Gulf Shores, Alabama | July 17-20, 2025

**Hotel Reservation Information:** A block of rooms at the conference is reserved at The Lodge at Gulf State Park, a Hilton Hotel. To make your reservation, go to: <https://group.hilton.com/72wgkp> or call the Hilton Central Reservations Dept. at (800) 618-4350, and mention the BRBA group code: 90E. Room block is available July 17-20. **Complete and mail this registration form to:** BRBA, P. O. Box 2241, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. *Extended dates are based on availability and are not available via the booking link.* **Conference Registration:** The conference offers 12.5 CLE credit hours, including ethics and professionalism. Registration fees include registrant's CLE seminar materials, coffee breaks and evening social events. Fax completed form to: 225-344-4805.

Bar Roll Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of admission to LSBA: \_\_\_\_\_ Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Firm: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please check the appropriate size(s) for conference registrant: **ADULT:** \_\_\_ S | \_\_\_ M | \_\_\_ L | \_\_\_ XL | \_\_\_ 2XL

\_\_\_ GUEST/SPOUSE: Please register my guest/spouse for the Bench Bar Conference at no additional fee. Guest/spouse must be registered to receive event tickets to the Thursday night cocktail reception and Friday dance. **\*This does not apply for social-only registrants.\***

Name of guest/spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration Options:** The listed rates listed below apply to attendees staying at The Lodge at Gulf State Park.

\_\_\_ **First-Timer Registration for BRBA members** (Limited to the first 20 BRBA members who have never attended the conference and who register by June 15, 2025) ..... \$475 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Regular Registration** (Begins April 16, 2025) ..... \$750 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Late Registration** (Begins June 20, 2025) ..... \$825 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Judicial Registration** (for all judges). ..... \$625 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Special Rates for Section Members** (BRBA Young Lawyers & Government Lawyers) ..... \$550 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Non-member Registration** (Applies to lawyers who are not members of the BRBA) ..... \$925 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Offsite Accommodations** (Please add an additional fee of \$300 to your registration if you are staying in accommodations other than The Lodge. This fee is refundable if we meet our room block. We negotiated a block of rooms at The Lodge at Gulf State Park at special conference rates, and we are financially committed to filling the room block.) ..... \$300 \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Guest Registration:** Each guest receives one ticket to the Thursday and Friday night social events.

Children's Name(s): (Include first and last names): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Children age 4 and under** \_\_\_\_\_ # persons @ \$0 ..... \$0 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Children age 5 - 17** \_\_\_\_\_ # persons @ \$80 ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Children's registration fees include nametags and one ticket to the Thursday and Friday night social events.)

\_\_\_ **Guests age 18 and over** (Include first and last names): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ # persons @ \$150 ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL # of persons \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Official Conference T-Shirts for Guest Registrants:** T-Shirt must be pre-ordered and will not be available for purchase at the conference. Order deadline is June 20, 2025. (Note: you will receive one T-Shirt with your conference registration.)

Please check the appropriate size(s): **ADULT:** \_\_\_ S | \_\_\_ M | \_\_\_ L | \_\_\_ XL | \_\_\_ 2XL; **CHILD:** \_\_\_ S | \_\_\_ M | \_\_\_ L

\_\_\_\_\_ # quantity of shirts needed @ \$20 each = Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use Only: Check No. \_\_\_\_\_

Grand Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL: Grand total enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Include all ticket fees with grand total.)

Return checks to: Baton Rouge Bar Association, P.O. Box 2241, Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Scan the QR  
code to register  
and pay online



May/June 2025 25

# Staff Focus: The Pro Bono Project

Robin Kay and R. Lynn Smith Haynes *by Gracie L. Thomas*

## Robin Kay, Pro Bono Coordinator

*College:* Louisiana State University, B.A. in psychology  
*Law School:* Southern University Law Center, J.D.

**TBRL:** *Where are you from?*

RK: I always say I'm from Louisiana. I grew up in Baton Rouge, but I was born in Los Angeles while my dad was in the Army. He and my mom moved back here when I was 3.

**TBRL:** *Tell us about your education.*

RK: I graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology at LSU; I received my J.D. from Southern University Law Center about 20 years later. I am also a commissioned notary.

**TBRL:** *Tell us something interesting about yourself.*

RK: Well, I don't think about myself often, but I have a very dry, quick wit. My colleague, Lynn, says I'm good at thinking outside the box.

**TBRL:** *What types of resources does the Pro Bono Project provide?*

RK: We receive cases from Southeast Louisiana Legal Services for clients who need assistance in the areas of family law, consumer issues, bankruptcy, and wills and estates – a wide variety of cases. We then refer them to a pro bono volunteer attorney who will represent them in these matters. We also offer some outreach programs, like our Ask-A-Lawyer advice clinic, Wills for Heroes and the Self-Help Resource Center. Wills for Heroes provides wills for first responders, police officers, firefighters and the like. We offer our Self-Help Resource Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Family Court in East Baton Rouge Parish to assist self-represented litigants with completing forms, so they can represent themselves in their divorce or custody cases. I think that's a really great program.

**TBRL:** *Tell us about the programs you are tasked with.*

RK: Our caseload is managed by Lynn and myself, but the Self-Help Resource Center and Wills for Heroes outreach programs are my two babies.

**TBRL:** *How is the Pro Bono Project funded?*

RK: Our funding comes through grants. Our primary source is IOLTA funding, which is the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts through the Louisiana Bar Foundation. They issue grants from monies that come from interest earned on these trust accounts. This makes up a big portion of our funding. The other part is from a subgrant of federal funds through



Robin Kay

Southeast Louisiana Legal Services that comes from the Legal Services Corporation.

**TBRL:** *What type of involvement do legal interns have in the Pro Bono Project?*

RK: Our law student interns are primarily involved with the cases, helping us interview clients and getting additional information we need to place those cases. They monitor the cases with the volunteer attorneys by following up with clients and checking to see how their case is going. They also help us with the outreach programs at the Self-Help Resource Center and Ask-A-Lawyer doing intake for people coming in to get advice. Our interns also help us with a lot of things around the office, especially with most of the back-end administrative tasks.

**TBRL:** *Tell us about the involvement the Pro Bono Project has with grants and grant writing.*

RK: I write the majority of the grants that I mentioned previously. Our executive director will supplement with the budget aspects, but I serve as the primary grant writer for the program.

**TBRL:** *What impacts have you seen the Pro Bono Project make in the Baton Rouge community?*



RK: We see the impact the Pro Bono Project has on the community in a few different ways. With the cases, we get to see someone be able to reach a resolution to a problem, particularly something they thought they would never get resolved. They didn't have the funds to hire an attorney to help them, so they felt they were in an almost hopeless place. We get to see them get the help they need. It's the same with the Self-Help Resource Center. We get to fill in gaps in access to the services that are out there. People who earn too much to qualify for legal aid and come through a pro-bono project for representation, but not enough to hire an attorney, fall through the cracks. The Self-Help Resource Center fills in that gap by helping them represent themselves.

**TBRL: Why is it important for attorneys to accept pro bono cases?**

RK: First and foremost, they have a duty to do so. It's not required, but there's an aspirational goal set through the Louisiana State Bar imposed by the Louisiana Supreme Court that they fulfill a certain number of pro bono hours. On top of that, to be able to provide your services to help somebody who has no other way of reaching a resolution or getting help is just a good, human-nature kind of thing to do. They can often learn a lot by taking on pro bono cases. We have attorneys who can serve as mentors, so it's a great resource for them to build their practice and clientele, especially when they're new. We try to make sure that we do volunteer recognition to "give them their flowers" so to speak, and we want to encourage other people to say, "Well, if that person is doing it, maybe I can help out a little bit."

**TBRL: What drew you to your position at the BRBF Pro Bono Project?**

RK: Where I worked previously, I was still in the legal field processing legal judgments, orders and documents that came through us. I was in law school at the time, and I was looking to do something different and more sustainable. I was presented with the opportunity to work in the position I'm in now, and I knew it would be a great fit not only because of the exposure to the legal world, but also because I was interested in the work.

**TBRL: How has your perspective changed since day one?**

RK: When I started, I had a hard time separating myself from the stories our clients would tell. I was professional on the outside, but I felt everything they felt. Over time after hearing and seeing so much, I have grown and learned how to manage that. My interviewing skills have improved dramatically, especially in my ability to be concise and efficient. My time management skills have definitely seen the same effect.

**TBRL: What is the most rewarding part of your work?**

RK: I think that knowing you helped someone deal with something that was very difficult for them is so rewarding. Whether or not they reach the resolution they hoped for, I find peace in knowing that they were able to see some light at the end of the tunnel rather than feel alone and scared in their situation. Being able to help people when they need it is a good feeling.

**TBRL: If the Pro Bono Project had infinite resources, what would be the first thing you used them for?**

RK: If I had infinite resources, my wish would be to have additional staff and resources to expand the program and make sure that all areas of people who need help can be reached. Frequently, people come to us with such great ideas, and I think additional services and staff would be the most beneficial in helping those great ideas come to life.

**TBRL: Is there anything you wish people knew more about regarding the Pro Bono Project?**

RK: Above all else, I want people to know that we are a resource, and we are willing to help as much as we can. We are not miracle workers. It takes time for us to do our absolute best, but if you are willing to work with us, then we will go above and beyond to do everything we can.

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## Lynn Haynes, Pro Bono Coordinator

*College:* University of Arizona, B.A. in political science  
*Law School:* Southern University Law Center, J.D.

**TBRL: Where are you from?**

LH: I am a native of Monroe, Louisiana, but I lived in Arizona for about three years. At the time, integration was just beginning, and my parents were looking for a graduate program that worked for them better than the university they originally intended to attend. They decided on UCLA, but on our way, we stopped to see University of Arizona and never made it to UCLA. We moved back to Monroe, and that's where I grew up.

**TBRL: Tell us about your education.**

LH: I went to West Monroe High School, and I loved it there. I was a cheerleader there, and I am still very close with my friends from the cheer team. In spite of the times, nothing



**R. Lynn Smith Haynes**

came between us. I got my bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in history from the University of Arizona, where I, very unexpectedly, met my husband. My goal since I was 7 years old was to go to law school. So, I moved to Baton Rouge and got my J.D. from Southern University Law Center.

**TBRL:** *Tell us something interesting about yourself.*

LH: I love old movies. Turner Classics is my favorite channel. My husband used to say he did not know why we had a color television as everything I like is in black and white. I also love trivia.

**TBRL:** *What resources does the Pro Bono Project provide?*

LH: We have great outreach programs, like our Self-Help Resource Center and Ask-A-Lawyer. Ask-A-Lawyer is my baby, and I have been doing it for 27 years now at different libraries. We extend these services at libraries in neighboring parishes: Livingston, Ascension and West Baton Rouge parishes to name a few. We go to elder centers and provide services there. Right now, we are working with Appleseed and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services to do wills and successions on site. These are all in-person programs that we get to sit down and actually help people. We have a hotline where people can go to our website, fill out the form and submit it, and they will get a call from a volunteer attorney to give them counsel.

**TBRL:** *What type of involvement do legal interns have in the Pro Bono Project?*

LH: I love it when they come to Ask-A-Lawyer because they get to sit in with the attorneys while they give counsel, with the attorneys' and clients' permission, and actually get a hands-on learning experience. They also do intake from the cases we receive, calling and conducting the interviews with clients. They return calls and answer questions. All of this is to help them hone what is to ultimately be their choice of job. They always love it, and the volunteers love that they are sitting there and can assist and ask questions.

**TBRL:** *What impacts have you seen the Pro Bono Project make in the Baton Rouge community?*

LH: People from across the state call us or come to Ask-A-Lawyer. People are able to get the help they otherwise would not be able to access. Sometimes, they do not qualify by an -nth of a percent as far as income, but they cannot afford to hire an attorney. We have situations, especially with our elders, where they are being taken advantage of. These are people who would not otherwise be able to seek and get the help they need, were it not for the Pro Bono Project. Let's face it—nobody wants to have a legal issue. It is not something that you wake up in the morning and say, "I want to see an attorney

for something." It is not something anyone wants to do, but when it happens, you really need that help. A lot of times when people come, having someone listen can really help them. I think that our community depends on us. We see so many repeat visitors with a different problem, or they'll bring a neighbor or tell their family. That is what you see, and you know that you are doing a service that is truly helping.

**TBRL:** *Why is it important for attorneys to accept pro bono cases?*

LH: One of the things you learn in law school is that it is a *must* to give back. Why would you not? I tell people all the time, you never know who you are going to meet when you are doing Ask-A-Lawyer or any of our hands-on services. The person you meet someday might change your life. In just a few minutes of talking to them and helping them, it almost helps you more than it helps them to give them that assistance. I just cannot see it being any other way. I remember a man told a friend of mine while she was conducting an interview as a volunteer attorney, "You know what, y'all ain't gonna make a dime!" We said, "Probably not!" That's because we felt so strongly about what this program, or any program like it, does and how it helps people.

**TBRL:** *What drew you to your position at the Pro Bono Project?*

LH: When I first came to work for the BRBF, this was the position that was open initially, but I have worked in just about every position under the Bar Foundation umbrella. I made it full circle after 27 years. Honestly, I just love it. I love them all, but it has been such a blessing to work on the Pro Bono Project and truly help people.

**TBRL:** *What do you think is the most challenging part of your work?*

LH: Sometimes, not having enough time or enough volunteers can make this work very challenging.

**TBRL:** *What do you find to be the most rewarding part of your work?*

LH: Being able to help. When someone says, "Thank you so much for helping," that is, I find, the goal you want to get to. Whether they say thank you or not, you know that you've helped someone, and they are so much better for it.

**TBRL:** *Is there anything you wish people knew more about regarding the Pro Bono Project?*

LH: Spend a day with us. See the work that is done and the challenges we meet every day. You'll learn so much.

Let's face it—nobody wants to have a legal issue. It is not something that you wake up in the morning and say, "I want to see an attorney for something." ... but when it happens, you really need that help.



# BRBF Pro Bono Project's Self-Help Resource Center

by Amy Poindexter

The Self-Help Resource Center (SHRC) is available to assist self-represented litigants every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the fourth floor (the Family Court of East Baton Rouge Parish) of the Nineteenth Judicial District Courthouse, located at 300 North Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Assistance is provided by appointment, but walk-ins may be accommodated if time permits.

Staffed by volunteer attorneys and law students, the SHRC provides a variety of services to those representing themselves in legal matters. These services include assistance with court forms, access to case information and general guidance on navigating the legal system. While SHRC volunteers can offer valuable support, they are unable to provide legal advice or represent individuals in court. Volunteers are available to assist both parties in a case, and all services are provided in an open setting with others present. As such, there is no expectation of confidentiality regarding any discussions held in the SHRC. Volunteer attorneys also offer notarization.

The SHRC offers form packets for specific legal issues relevant to cases in the Family Court. Each packet includes detailed

instructions, and these documents are also available online on the Family Court's website ([www.familycourt.org](http://www.familycourt.org)) under the "Self-Help Resources" tab. Legal issues covered include Louisiana Civil Code article 103(1) no-fault divorce, La. Civ. Code art. 103(5) domestic-violence divorce, establishing and modifying custody, modifying child support and contempt. Additional forms and instructions provided by the SHRC include documents to reset a matter for court, long-arm service affidavits, *in forma pauperis* applications and forms to appoint attorneys for absent defendants.

The SHRC is eager to welcome new volunteer attorneys and is open to attorneys from all areas of practice. Volunteers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the form packets provided by the SHRC and the procedures in each division of the Family Court, as practices may vary. Powered by the Baton Rouge Bar Foundation Pro Bono Project, SHRC volunteer attorneys can earn CLE credit under Rule 3.21 of the Louisiana Supreme Court Rules of Continuing Legal Education.

If you are interested in volunteering with the SHRC, please visit the BRBA website at [www.brba.org](http://www.brba.org) or contact Robin Kay at 225-214-5561 or [robin@brba.org](mailto:robin@brba.org).

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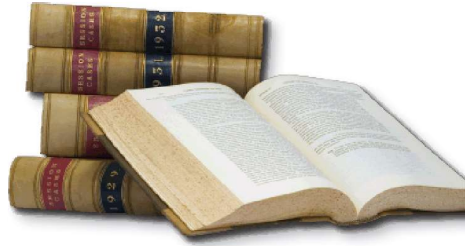
CONTACT THE BRBA TO REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT:  
225-344-4803 OR [SUSAN@BRBA.ORG](mailto:SUSAN@BRBA.ORG)

# Foundation Footnotes

Pro Bono Reports — January and February 2025

## Teen Court Volunteers:

In January and February, Teen Court volunteers were **Monica M. Vela-Vick**, *Dugan Law Firm*; **Candace B. Ford**, *U.S. Attorney's Office*; **Rebecca Moreno**, *Southern University Law Center*; **Theresa Dorcelus**, *City Prosecutor's Office*.



## Mock Trial Competition Volunteers:

Final round judges for the Region III High School Mock Trial Competition held March 21-22, 2025, were 19th JDC Chief Judge **Donald R. Johnson**, **John Fenner** and **Connell L. Archey**. Serving at the chair of the 2025 Mock Trial Competition was **Rebecca Moreno**, *Southern University Law Center*. **Alena W. McCain**, *Butler Snow*, served as vice chair.

*Competition judges were the following:* **Amy Baker**, **Mitchell Conner**, **Caroline Cordell**, **Angelle Crochet**, **Wendy Edwards**, **Loren Shanklin**, **Fleshman**, **Farah Gheith**, **Carol Fowler-Guidry**, Judge **Erika Green**, **Cornelius Troy Hall**, **Emily LaCerte**, **Tanaya McClary**, **William Meanes**, **Lauren Nero**, **Lori Palmintier**, **Glen Petersen**, **Jennifer Prescott**, **Priscila Ray**, Judge **Kyle Russ**, **Sherlyn Shumpert**, **Sharita Spears**, **Lauren Tarver**, **Jared Tregre**, **Trey Tumminello** and **Mike Walsh**.

*Volunteers serving as timekeepers were the following:* **Austin Arceneaux**, **Ebony Freeman**, **Jaren Cage**, **Connor Hebert**,

**Dennis Joiner**, **Zyon Khalifa**, **Stephanie Rabalais LaCroix**, **Micah Mims**, **LisaMarie Nevels**, **Aaron Nurse**, **Ryanne Police**, **Mary Thomas**, **Leslie Triche**, **Hannah Wilder**, **Olivia Williams**, **Meshonda Donaldson Womble** and **Erin Zagainova**.

*Other volunteers were:* **Stephanie Alexander**, **Natalie Bitz**, **Tiana Block**, **Tianna Bowens**, **Jamie Flowers**, **Lynn S. Haynes**, **Robin Kay**, **Mary LaVigne**, **Sarai Lewis**, **Kireyonne Mannor**, **Connor McCain** and **Brittany Theriot**.

## Accepted Pro Bono Cases in January and February:

**Dele Adebamiji**, *attorney at law*; **Denise Akers**, *attorney at law*; **Marlon Battley**, *attorney at law*; **Carlesia Carmena Bibbins**, *attorney at law*; **Erah Harper**, *attorney at law*; **Natalie Robertson**, *attorney at law*; and **Sharita Spears**, *attorney at law*.

## Law Student Interns:

**DeMya Bryan** and **Charlette Smith-Jackson**, *Southern University Law Center*; **Eric J. Roshak**, *LSU Law*.

*Teen Court is made possible in part by grants from the Louisiana Bar Foundation. The Pro Bono Project is financially assisted by the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account (IOLTA) Program of the Louisiana Bar Foundation; Southeast Louisiana Legal Services; Family, District and City Court Fees; and the Baton Rouge Bar Foundation.*

## GAIL'S GRAMMAR

Which sentence is grammatically correct?

- ☐ The money was shared **among** the litigants.
- ☐ The money was shared **amongst** the litigants.

Assuming there are more than two litigants (if there were only two, the correct word would be **between**), either **among** or **amongst** is acceptable. **Among**, however, is preferred in American English for its simplicity; the more formal (stuffer) **amongst** is preferred in British English.

*Send suggestions for future Gail's Grammar columns to Gail Stephenson at [GStephenson@sulc.edu](mailto:GStephenson@sulc.edu) or call Gail at (225) 926-1399.*



MAY 2025						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3 *
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 *	12	13 *	14 *	15 *	16 *	17
18	19	20 *	21 *	22	23	24
25	26 *	27	28	29 *	30 *	31

JUNE 2025						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3 *	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 *	12 *	13	14 *
15	16	17	18	19 *	20	21 *
22	23	24	25	26 *	27 *	28
29	30					

## IMPORTANT DATES

### May [May is Member Appreciation Month]

2 Law Day, River Center and 19th JDC

11 Mother's Day

13 Belly Up meeting via Zoom, noon;

Workers' Compensation Section meeting & CLE seminar, Middleton Bar Center, noon;

YLS Cocktails with the Court, City Club of Baton Rouge, 5 - 7 p.m.

14 Finance Committee via Zoom, 1 p.m.

15 Executive Committee via Zoom, 8:15 a.m.; Family Law Section meeting & CLE seminar, Rouj Creole, 11:45 a.m.

16 FREE CLE: Social Media & Legal Marketing, Middleton Bar Center, noon

20 LSBA Pro Bono Publico and Children's Law Awards Ceremony, 5 p.m., La. Supreme Court in New Orleans

21 Board of Directors meeting, 6 p.m.

26 BRBA Closed—Memorial Day

29 YLS Sidebar Luncheon at the 19th JDC; Trivia Night @ Colonel's Club, 5 p.m.

30 Curatorship CLE at the BRBA, noon

### June

3 Belly Up Committee meeting in-person, noon, Middleton Bar Center (with zoom option)

11 Finance Committee meeting via Zoom, 1 p.m.

12 Executive Board meeting via Zoom, 8 a.m.

14 Ask-A-Lawyer, Central Branch Library, 9 a.m.

19 BRBA Closed—Juneteenth

21 Ask-A-Lawyer, Fairwood Branch Library, 9 a.m.

26 Family Law Section meeting & CLE, TBA

27 Young Lawyers Section Summer Sizzlin' CLE, TBA

## DUTY SCHEDULE

19th JDC Civil	
4/21 - 5/02	Judge Higginbotham
5/05 - 5/16	Judge Smith
5/19 - 5/30	Judge Moore
6/02 - 6/13	Judge Foxworth-Roberts
6/16 - 6/27	Pro Tem Judge
6/30 - 7/11	Judge R. Johnson

### 19th JDC Criminal/Commissioner Rotation\*\*\*

	JUDGE	COMMISSIONER
4/25 - 5/02	Judge Smith	Kimble
5/02 - 5/09	Judge Jorden	Guillory
5/09 - 5/16	Judge Hines	Tauzin
5/16 - 5/23	Judge Greggs	Robinson
5/23 - 5/30	Judge Crifasi	Kimble
5/30 - 6/06	Judge Ray	Guillory
6/06 - 6/13	Judge Myers	Tauzin
6/13 - 6/20	Judge Johnson Rose	Robinson
6/20 - 6/27	Judge Smith	Kimble
6/27 - 7/04	Judge Jorden	Guillory

Baton Rouge City Court*	
4/28 - 5/04	Judge Pro Tempore
5/05 - 05/11	Judge Temple
5/12 - 5/18	Judge Jorden
5/19 - 5/25	Judge Alexander
5/26 - 6/01	Judge Vendetto
6/02 - 6/08	Judge Marcantel
6/09 - 6/15	Judge Temple
6/16 - 6/22	Judge Jorden
6/23 - 6/29	Judge Alexander
6/30 - 7/06	Judge Vendetto

Juvenile Court	
May	Judge Grover
June	Judge Haney

Family Court**	
5/01	Judge Day (Div. C)
5/02	Judge Russ (Div. D)
5/05	Judge E. Green (Div. B)
5/06	Judge Baker (Div. A)
5/07	Judge Russ (Div. D)
5/08	Judge Day (Div. C)
5/09	Judge Baker (Div. A)
5/12	Judge E. Green (Div. B)
5/13	Judge Baker (Div. A)
5/14	Judge Russ (Div. D)
5/15	Judge Day (Div. C)
5/16, 5/19	Judge E. Green (Div. B)
5/20	Judge Baker (Div. A)
5/21	Judge Russ (Div. D)
5/22, 5/23	Judge Day (Div. C)
5/26	HOLIDAY
5/27	Judge Baker (Div. A)
5/28	Judge Russ (Div. D)
5/29	Judge Day (Div. C)
5/30	Judge Russ (Div. D)
6/02	Judge Baker (Div. A)
6/03	Judge Day (Div. C)
6/04	Judge E. Green (Div. B)
6/05	Judge Russ (Div. D)
6/06	Judge Baker (Div. A)
6/09	Judge E. Green (Div. B)

Family Court (Continued)	
6/10	Judge Baker (Div. A)
6/11	Judge Russ (Div. D)
6/12	Judge Day (Div. C)
6/13	Judge Baker (Div. A)
6/16	Judge E. Green (Div. B)
6/17	Judge Baker (Div. A)
6/18	Judge Russ (Div. D)
6/19	HOLIDAY
6/20, 6/23	Judge E. Green (Div. B)
6/24	Judge Baker (Div. A)
6/25	Judge Russ (Div. D)
6/26, 6/27	Judge Day (Div. C)
6/30	Judge E. Green (Div. B)

Court Holidays	
Monday, May 26	Memorial Day
Thursday, June 19	Juneteenth

NOTE: Duty Court changes at 5 p.m. each Friday unless otherwise specified. \*City Court's Duty Court judge is on duty from 8 a.m. on the Monday beginning his/her week of duty until 8 a.m. the Monday ending his/her week of duty. \*\*Family Court's Duty Court schedule is completely different each day, rotating on Fridays. \*\*\*19th JDC Criminal Court changes each Friday at noon. \*Sunday callout due to Monday holiday.

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*Attorney David Abboud Thomas is responsible for this ad.*