

Family Law Section Seminar

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

by order of presentation

Mary Frances Quindlen

Quindlen Law Firm, P.A.

Beaufort, SC

(Course Planner)

Mary Fran Quindlen holds two bachelor's degrees in History and English from Rutgers University. She received her law degree from the University of South Carolina in 1998, where she was a member of Women in Law and the Phi Alpha Delta Fraternity. Following her admission to the South Carolina Bar, Mary Fran practiced as a Marine Corps Judge Advocate serving as a Legal Assistance Attorney and Defense Counsel. She continued to serve in the United States Marine Corps Reserve until May of 2006 when she resigned her commission as a Major. After her release from active duty in 2002, Mary Fran became an Associate at Harvey & Battey, P.A. in Beaufort, South Carolina. She worked as their family law practitioner until 2005 when she opened her own practice in Beaufort. Mary Fran's practice is concentrated in the areas of Military and Family Law, to include custody, visitation and divorce. Mary Fran is a Fellow in the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, the International Academy of Family Lawyers, a Member of the South Carolina Family Law Council, served on the South Carolina Bar Board of Governors, and serves on the South Carolina Bar's Fee Dispute Resolution Board. Mary Fran has been qualified as an expert in South Carolina Family Courts and the United States Bankruptcy Court District of South Carolina regarding military matters related to divorce and she teaches military family law CLE's around the country.

The Honorable C. Vance Stricklin, Jr.

S.C. Family Court

Columbia, SC

C. Vance Stricklin, Jr., was elected to fill the unexpired term of the Honorable Dorothy Mobley Jones in February 2020 and sworn in on March 24, 2020. He is a former partner in the Moore Taylor Law Firm, P.A. and served two years as the managing partner. His practice focused primarily on family law, including domestic litigation. Prior to private practice, he was an Assistant Public Defender, primarily representing juveniles in Family Court. He has been practicing in the Family Courts for over 25 years.

A Dreher High School graduate, Judge Stricklin graduated from Winthrop College with a double major in Political Science and Philosophy/Religion, and in 1994, graduated from the University of South Carolina School of Law.

He has served as the Past President of the Lexington County Bar, and Past Chair of the South Carolina Bar Family Law Section Counsel. He was a member of the South Carolina Bar Family Law Section Council, South Carolina Supreme Court Docket Task Force, and was the co-chair for the South Carolina Bar Family Law Section Council's Subcommittee on Alimony. Judge Stricklin

also served for several years as a member of the Lexington County Public Defender Board, and was a long-time member of the South Carolina Association of Justice.

Over the years, he was named several times as one of the Midlands Legal Elite by the Columbia Business Monthly magazine and has been selected by his peers as one of the Super Lawyers by Super Lawyer magazine for multiple years. Judge Stricklin is a frequent speaker at Continuing Legal Education seminars on the topic of family law.

The Honorable Holly H. Wall

*S.C. Family Court
Florence, SC*

Judge Holly H. Wall was born in Florence, South Carolina in 1973. Her parents are Edwin and Linda Huggins. She is married to Allan Wall and they have two children.

Judge Wall graduated from Johnsonville High School in 1991. She received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Journalism and Mass Communications from the University of South Carolina in 1995. She received her Juris Doctor degree from the University of South Carolina in 1999.

Judge Wall practiced family court in private practice from 2000 until her election to the Family Court Bench on February 2, 2022.

She is a member of Johnsonville First Baptist Church.

Patricia S. Ravenhorst

*SC Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault
Greenville, SC*

Patricia S. Ravenhorst is the General Counsel and Director of Systems Advocacy for the SC Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (SCCADVASA) where she provides legal support for the organization; legal technical assistance and education to SCCADVASA's 22 member organizations and other professional partners and management of SCCADVASA's contract and pro bono attorney program. Ms. Ravenhorst has been training attorneys, criminal justice professionals and the community on the unique legal needs of survivors of crime; immigration and human trafficking for over 18 years. Prior to joining SCCADVASA, Tricia served as the Director and Attorney of the SC Victim Assistance Network's (SCVAN) Immigrant Victim Program, where she established the organization's specialized legal and supportive services to immigrant survivors of crime and the SC Immigrant Victim Coalition, which brings together professionals throughout the state working with immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and human trafficking. Prior to joining SCVAN, Ms. Ravenhorst practiced employment and immigration law at the Wyche Law Firm in Greenville, South Carolina. Her prior work experience also includes internships with the South African Secretariat for Safety and Security in Pretoria, South Africa. Tricia earned her Juris Doctor and Master of Arts in Political Science/Certification in Latin American Studies from Duke University and her Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs from Florida State University. Ms. Ravenhorst is licensed to practice before both federal and state courts in South Carolina and is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and the National Association for Victim's Rights Attorneys.

The Honorable Melissa Buckhannon

*S.C. Family Court
Charleston, SC*

Judge Melissa J. Buckhannon is a Family Court Judge of South Carolina for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit having been elected to the bench by the South Carolina General Assembly in February 2014.

Judge Buckhannon received her Bachelor of Science degree from Francis Marion University in 1991. She received her Juris Doctor degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1994. Upon graduation from the law school, she served as a law clerk to the Honorable James E. Lockemy. Thereafter, she moved to Horry County to practice law. She practiced in Horry County from 1995 until her election to the Family Court Bench.

Judge Buckhannon served on the Board of Trustees for Francis Marion University from 1998 until 2013. She received the Francis Marion University Alumni Association Professional Industry Achievement Award in 2017 for Public Service and Law. She received an Honorary Doctorate Degree from Francis Marion University in December 2017.

Judge Buckhannon is a member of the Chief Justice's Commission on the Profession. She is the President of the South Carolina Family Law American Inn of Court. Judge Buckhannon serves as the Chair for the Family Court New Judge's Training Team. Judge Buckhannon also serves as a mentor to the Coastal Region's Attorney General's Sex Trafficking Task Force.

Judge Buckhannon is a member of the Horry County Bar Association as well as the South Carolina Bar Association. She was a member of the South Carolina Bar Association's Family Law Council from 2003 until her election to the bench, serving as Chair of the Council in 2010. She has served as a member of the South Carolina Attorney Fee Dispute Board as well as the South Carolina Council for Conflict Resolution. She served as a member of the Horry County Family Court Executive Committee and well as the Chair for the annual Horry County Family Court Seminar.

The Honorable Michèle Patrão Forsythe

*S.C. Family Court
Charleston, SC*

Judge Michèle Patrão Forsythe is a first-generation American, fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, and also studied French. She graduated from the University of Maryland Baltimore County with a B.A. in Political Science, minoring in International Affairs. She attended the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Judge Forsythe worked at The White House and The United States Senate. She worked for the Department of Defense, assigned to Fort Meade. She graduated from University of South Carolina School of Law.

Judge Forsythe was associate attorney at Query Sautter Gliserman & Price, LLC. She tried numerous cases in the Family Court, the Court of Common Pleas, the Court of General Sessions, the United States District Court, and argued before the Fourth Circuit of the United States Court of Appeals. After 10 years, Judge Forsythe left the law firm of Query Sautter Forsythe, LLC, upon her election to the South Carolina Family Court.

Among other associations, Judge Forsythe is a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; the South Carolina Family Court Bench Bar Committee; the South Carolina Interstate Commission for Juveniles; and the James L. Petigru Inn of Court. Judge Forsythe is a South Carolina Liberty Fellow.

Dennis Gmerek
S.C. Department of Social Services
Columbia, SC

No bio submitted

Khristina Siletskaya
Columbia, SC

Attorney Khristina Siletskaya runs a boutique law practice in Bluffton, SC that is limited exclusively to the U.S. Immigration and SC Family Law.

Khristina's Immigration Law practice is focused mainly on humanitarian forms of relief. She is one of very few attorneys in SC who is skilled at and handles large caseload of human trafficking cases, cases for victims of domestic violence, victims of crimes, political asylums, and Special Immigrant Juveniles.

Her Family Law practice mainly focuses on obtaining custody orders that form basis for seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status in front of the USCIS for immigrant children who already suffered great hardship as a result of being abandoned, neglected, and/or abused by at least one of their parents, and then experienced a difficult journey, sometimes alone on their way to the United States.

Attorney Siletskaya is married and is a mother of 4 minor children. As a mother, she sees it as her mission to save immigrant children from deportation to countries where their lives and health is likely to be endangered. Khristina also handles a limited number of divorces, mainly for her current immigration clients.

Attorney Khristina Siletskaya graduated with honors from Georgetown Law Center (LLM), George Mason Law School (JD), and George Mason University (BA) and is a member of the following Bar Associations: South Carolina (active), Maryland (active) and the District of Columbia (inactive). Khristina is also a member of American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).

Attorney Siletskaya was born in Ukraine, lived 10 years of her live in Vienna, Austria and in addition to English she is fluent in the following languages: Ukrainian, Russian and German and has a working knowledge of Spanish.

Olivia Jones
Olivia Jones Law, LLC
Columbia, SC

Olivia Stafford Jones is a native of Columbia, South Carolina. She graduated from the South Carolina Honors College in 2001 with a B.A. in Spanish. After graduation, Olivia lived in Chile for a year on a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, where she obtained an Associate's Degree in Public Administration and became fluent in Spanish. Olivia graduated from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 2007. Olivia has previously worked as a staff attorney at the S.C. Administrative Law Court, a staff attorney at S.C. Legal Services (where she was named a Nelson Mullins Fellow), and an associate at a non-profit immigration law firm. From 2015-2023, Olivia ran a solo practice, where she handled family law, family-based immigration, and probate work. In September 2023, Olivia began serving as the Executive Director of the SC Bar Foundation.

Olivia is a member of the Richland County Bar Association, the Lexington County Bar Association, the S.C. Women Lawyer's Association, and the American Immigration Attorneys Association. Olivia is the chair of the Richland County Bar's Public Service Committee (and has served on that committee since 2008), a member of the S.C. Access to Justice Commission, a member of the USC School of Law Pro Bono Program Advisory Council, and the 2022-2023 president of the Rotary Club of Five Points (having been a member since 2009). Olivia volunteers at the Homeless Legal Clinic (H.E.L.P.) and the Divorce Help Desk in Richland County, and also teaches self-help divorce classes to the public. In 2020, Olivia was honored to be named the S.C. Bar's Pro Bono Attorney of the Year.

Rep. Bruce Bannister

*Bannister, Wyatt & Stalvey, LLC
Greenville, SC*

Bruce Wyche Bannister is a partner of Bannister, Wyatt, & Stalvey, LLC and a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Mr. Bannister graduated from Davidson College in 1995 and went on to earn his law degree from the University of South Carolina in 1998.

Mr. Bannister focuses on Family Law, Eminent Domain, and Real Estate Law. He has tried cases involving Personal Injury, Premises Liability, Eminent Domain, Education Law, Residential Real Estate, Commercial Real Estate, Government, Zoning, Planning, and Land Use.

Admitted to the practice of law in South Carolina in 1998, Mr. Bannister was elected as the SC House District 24 Representative in 2005. He currently serves on the Ways and Means Committee, where he is Chairman of the Constitutional Agency subcommittee. Mr. Bannister was elected by his peers to serve as the Majority leader for the SC House Republican Caucus from 2008-2012 and served as the House Majority Leader from 2012-2016. He also served as the Chairman of the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Legislator task force.

Mr. Bannister is a lifelong resident of Greenville. He is a LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review Rated lawyer and has also taught as an adjunct professor at Greenville Technical College. He also holds previous experience as a law clerk to the Honorable Larry R. Patterson, Circuit Court Judge.

As an active member within the community, Mr. Bannister is a graduate of Leadership Greenville Class XXVI and a member of Liberty Fellowship's Class of 2014. He currently serves as a board member for A Child's Haven and on the Governor's school for science and math. Mr. Bannister previously served on the board for the Children's Museum of the Upstate, the St. Andrews Society of Greenville, and the Greenville Peace Center. In 2011, Mr. Bannister received the Children's Hospital Legislative Advocacy Award for his efforts on behalf of the SC Institute for Child Success.

Bruce W. Bannister focuses his experience on Family Law, Eminent Domain, and Real Estate Law. As a practicing family law and real estate lawyer, Mr. Bannister tries cases involving premises liability, personal injury, education law, zoning, planning, and land use.