

News & Events

Seven CBA Members Appointed to the Connecticut Superior Court Bench

Nearly half of the 15 new Connecticut Superior Court judges, nominated by Governor Ned Lamont, are current CBA members. Past President Ndidi N. Moses joins CBA members Linda Allard, John A. Cirello, Gladys Idelis Nieves, Edward O'Hanlan, Carletha S. Texidor, and Carla Nascimento Zahner in this honor.

Linda Allard was a staff attorney at Greater Hartford Legal Aid and practiced in the area of family law, representing domestic violence victims. She is a member of the CBA's Family Law Section.

John A. Cirello was a founding partner of Cirello & Vessicchio LLC and practiced in the areas of criminal defense, civil litigation, business law, housing law, and probate matters. He is a member of the CBA's Labor & Employment Law and Litigation Sections.

Ndidi N. Moses was an assistant United States attorney for the District of Connecticut and the office's civil rights coordinator. She was a past president of the CBA and currently serves on many of its committees and task forces, including the Cyber Security and Technology Committee, Policing Task Force, and State of the Legal Profession Task Force.

Gladys Idelis Nieves was a family support magistrate at the Connecticut Judicial Branch and previously represented parents and children involved in child abuse and neglect proceedings as a sole practitioner.



Image credit: fivitty/E+

Edward V. O'Hanlan was a partner at Robinson+Cole and practiced in the areas of land use zoning and litigation. He is a member of the CBA's Litigation, Planning & Zoning, Real Property, and Veterans and Military Affairs Sections.

Carletha S. Texidor was an assistant attorney general in the Employment Rights Department of the Connecticut Attorney General's Office.

Carla Nascimento Zahner was a partner at Loudon Katz and McGrath LLC and practiced in the area of family law. She is a member of the CBA's Family Law Section.

Governor Lamont also nominated Robert W. Clark to the Connecticut Appellate Court and Attorneys William F. Clark, Michael J. Gustafson, H. Gordan Hall, Kimberly P. Massicotte, Maximino Medina, Jr., Angelica N. Papastavros, Chris A. Pelosi, and Jessica Torres Shlatz to the superior court bench. These nominations, made on February 17, are the first made in three years, and Governor Lamont's first, to fill the bench's 50 vacancies. The legislature approved the governor's superior court nominations on April 26 and the appellate court nomination on March 23.

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CBA Celebrates Law Day 2021

The CBA Civics Education Committee, together with the Greater Danbury, Hartford County, Litchfield County, New Haven County, and Windham County Bar Associations held its annual Law Day celebration virtually over Zoom on May 7, with more than 65 attendees. Law Day is a national celebration held annually to focus on the role of law in our society and to help encourage a deeper understanding of the legal profession. This year's Law Day theme was "Advancing the Rule of Law, Now."

Committee Chair Jonathan Weiner hosted the hour-long event, providing an introduction and welcome to those attending. Students Julianna Farquharson, Claire Flynn, and Grace Piccioli from Sedgewick Middle School in West Hartford as well as Anna Hansard and Amalia Morizio from North Haven Middle School presented inspirational readings on the importance of law quoted from prominent figures, including Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Aristotle, and Chief Justice John Roberts. CBA President Amy Lin Meyerson spoke about the history and importance of Law Day celebrations. The event's keynote speaker, retired Connecticut Appellate Court Judge Michael R. Sheldon, presented a speech focused on the defining elements of the United States' legal system, his own experience introducing Russian authorities to US legal concepts after the fall of the Soviet Union, and the national



Retired Connecticut Appellate Court Judge Michael R. Sheldon presented the keynote speech for Law Day.

challenges that face the United States' judiciary system today.

To conclude the event, the 2021 Liberty Bell Awards were presented by the local bar associations to individuals who demonstrate civic responsibility and promote understanding of the rule of law in the community. Hartford County Bar (HCBA) President-Elect Jennifer E. Wheelock presented the HBCA's Liberty Bell Award to UConn School of Law's Assistant Dean for Finance, Administration, and Enrollment Karen DeMeola for teaching diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and critical identity theory. Litchfield District Superior Court Senior Judge Paul Matasavage presented a Litchfield County Bar Association (LCBA) Liberty Bell Award to court interpreter, Margarita Charleton. LCBA President Ryan M. Henry presented a second Liberty Bell Award to Litchfield District Superior Court Judge Trial Referee John W. Pickard. Thank you to everyone involved who helped to celebrate Law Day 2021.

YLS HOSTS VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

The CBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS) held its annual legislative breakfast virtually over Zoom on April 22. Section members met with State Representative Matthew Blumenthal, who was the guest speaker for the event.

Representative Matthew Blumenthal is a practicing attorney, a member of the YLS, and currently serving his first term as state representative for Connecticut's 147th district and as house vice chair of the Judiciary Committee. He spoke about his personal experience joining the law firm Koskoff Koskoff & Bieder PC and being elected to the state legislature. While he admitted that there are significant challenges in balancing the responsibilities that he has to his firm and to his constituents as an elected official, Representative Blumenthal asserted that having experience in the legal field is crucial to developing effective and



Representative Matthew Blumenthal

practical bills in his role on the Judiciary Committee. He expressed cautious optimism for current bills being sent to the legislature involving issues of criminal justice reform, prison reform, and cannabis legalization.

Representative Blumenthal encouraged all members of the YLS in attendance to pursue political engagement within their communities as they continue their legal careers.

Upcoming Education Calendar

OCTOBER

- 14 4th Annual Connecticut Bankruptcy Conference***
- 20 The Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Summit: The Collaborative Blueprint***
- 28 Federal Tax Institute of New England**

NOVEMBER

- 5 More Effective Writing Makes More Effective Lawyers**
- 16 Joint Meeting: Probate Court and CBA**
- 19 Practice, Procedure, and Protocol in the Connecticut Courts**

**Ethics credit available*

IN MEMORIAM

The Honorable Jonathan J. Kaplan passed away on April 23 at age 75. He graduated from Bryant College and UConn Law School with honors. Judge Kaplan started practicing law in 1971 at the Law Offices of Edwin M. Lavitt and later became a partner in the firm Lavitt Hutchinson and Kaplan. In 1985, he was appointed to the Connecticut Superior Court bench by then Governor William O'Neill, where he served until his retirement. He served as administrative judge of the Tolland Judicial District for 10 years. Judge Kaplan was president of the Tolland Bar Association and an Advisory Board member to the Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers Association of Tolland County.

Kevin E. Booth passed away on February 27 at age 78. Attorney Booth is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross, and went on the Columbus School of Law at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. He later did postdoctoral work in tax law at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. Following law school, Attorney Booth entered the US Air Force as a judge advocate; he was a certified military judge attaining the rank of

captain at the time of his discharge. The next part of his career brought him to the law firm of Conway Londregan Leuba & McNamara and he later went on to open the Law Office of Booth and Mattern in Niantic.

Mary Veronica DiCrescenzo passed away on February 24 at age 65. She received her bachelor's degree from Marymount College (Summa Cum Laude) and her JD from Georgetown Law School. After graduating law school, she was offered a position with the National Association of Home Builders in Washington, DC, where she spent 25 years as a land use and regulatory attorney. Throughout her career, she was a dedicated legal advocate and friend and mentor to her peers. At retirement, Attorney DiCrescenzo held the title of senior vice president.

Edwin L. Doernberger passed away on May 21. He joined Saxe Doernberger & Vita PC, a national law firm specializing in representing insurance policy holders in coverage disputes, in 2001 and served as its Managing Partner until 2016. He remained on its Executive Committee and was actively involved in firm administration to the very end. During his tenure at the firm, he served as a dedicated guide and mentor to young attorneys.

Edward Barrie "Ted" Potter passed away on April 2 at age 62. He is a graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Columbia Law School, and practiced in New York City, New Haven, and Hartford before he eventually started his own law practice, Kitchings & Potter, which focused on estate and tax planning, wills and trusts, charitable gifts, probate law, and estate administration. The firm recently merged with Shipman & Goodwin LLP.

William R. Davis passed away on February 9 at age 90. He is a graduate of Providence College and the UConn School of Law. Attorney Davis served on the adjunct faculty for over 20 years at the UConn School of Law, where they honored him by naming its Moot Courtroom "The William R. Davis Courtroom." He joined Leon RisCassi in 1955 to create the firm of RisCassi & Davis PC. Throughout his career, he taught young lawyers what it meant to be a trial lawyer, and served as a mentor through his courtroom skills, professionalism, collegiality, and civility. Attorney Davis was the 2004 recipient of the Connecticut Bar Association's Edward F. Hennessey Professionalism Award.

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CBA Hosts Virtual Pro Bono Clinics

The CBA Pro Bono Committee, Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Connecticut Veterans Legal Center held a series of Pro Bono Clinics virtually on April 27 through 29, where 35 attorney volunteers met with a total of 50 clients over Zoom meetings.

Prior to the clinic, 30 volunteer law students completed client intake forms and asked follow-up questions to help the attorneys prepare for the meetings. On the days of the clinic, the volunteer attorneys provided free legal guidance to the clients in the areas of family law, landlord/tenant law, immigration law, tax law, consumer law, bankruptcy, employee rights/unemployment, and pardons. Four law students were able to sit in on the meetings to learn more about the process of providing pro bono services.



"Connecticut's access to justice gap continues to grow, particularly aggravated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The enthusiastic participation of our attorney and law student volunteers during our Virtual Spring Pro Bono Clinics represents the Connecticut Bar Association at its best," said CBA President-elect and Pro Bono Committee Chair Cecil J. Thomas. "Our volunteers worked together, supported by the CBA's dedicated staff, to provide much-needed legal advice and reassurance to clinic participants facing the uncertainty and stress of serious legal issues."

Additional virtual legal clinics are planned for late October 2021. Other opportunities for participating in pro bono work through the CBA include CBA Pro Bono Connect, CT Free Legal Answers, and Lawyers in the Libraries. Learn more at ctbar.org/probono.

THREE CBA ATTORNEYS RECOGNIZED WITH 2021 CLABBY AWARDS

Attorneys Richard M. Coan, Taruna Garg, and Suzanne B. Sutton received **CLABBY** awards from the Connecticut Bar Association Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section on May 5. The CLABBY awards, established in 2016, are presented by the section each year to honor the professional achievements of section members.

Richard M. Coan received the 2021 Career Achievement Award for his professionalism and exemplary practice of commercial and bankruptcy law for more than 35 years. He is a partner and founding member of Coan Lewendon Gulliver and Miltenberger LLC in New Haven.

Taruna Garg received the 2021 Rising Star Award for her consistent and meaningful participation in section activities and meetings, and implementation of section initiatives. She is a partner at Murtha Cullina LLP in Stamford.

Suzanne B. Sutton received the 2021 Service to the Profession Award for her section leadership, development of educational programs, and delivery of pro bono services. She is an adjunct legal ethics professor at the University of Hartford and is of counsel at Cohen and Wolf PC in Bridgeport.



Richard M. Coan



Taruna Garg



Suzanne B. Sutton

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attorneys at law

is pleased to announce that

Robert N. Saraco, Jr.

and

Andrew I. Schaffer

have joined the firm



Robert N. Saraco, Jr.



Andrew I. Schaffer

Attorney Robert Saraco has practiced law in Fairfield & New Haven counties for over 14 years. He will continue to focus his practice on family law matters and criminal cases in all courts throughout the state. Attorney Saraco represents clients before the probate court, including termination of parental rights, adoption, custody and contested hearings. Attorney Saraco resides in Monroe with his family and is very active within the community, having served on the Monroe Conservation Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Attorney Andrew I. Schaffer has been practicing law in New Haven county for over 25 years. He will continue to concentrate his practice in domestic relations – divorce, custody, visitation, alimony, child support, pre-nuptial agreements, post judgment enforcement of court orders and modifications. He also represents clients in Juvenile Court and Probate Court. In addition to representing individuals in traditional family law matters, he conducts both traditional and collaborative divorce mediations. Attorney Schaffer was raised in Woodbridge and continues to reside there with his wife and children.

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The CBA Hosts Lawyer Well-Being Week 2021



The CBA Lawyer Well-Being Committee developed the 2021 Connecticut Bar Association Well-Being Pledge to highlight and promote important aspects of lawyer well-being and healthy work environments. The pledge asks for a firm or organization commitment to well-being initiatives and provides space for writing out three objectives for enhanced well-being. The intention is to have the Pledge Commitment completed on an annual basis (April to April cycle), accompanied by an evaluation of progress toward goals in each subsequent year. To learn more about the CBA Lawyer Well-Being Pledge and other resources, visit ctbar.org/LawyerWellBeingResources.

During the week of May 3, the CBA Lawyer Well-Being Committee hosted a series of free events for CBA members to celebrate Lawyer Well-Being Week. Prior to the official start of the week's events, a preliminary hike at Sleeping Giant State Park was hosted by the CBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS) on May 1. Seven members of the YLS gathered on that Saturday morning to hike the park's Hezekiah Knob and Chestnut Grove

Trail, enjoying some exercise and views of nature.

On Monday, May 3, the first of five weekday presentations were held. Lawyer Well-Being Committee Co-Chair Dr. Traci Cipriano spoke about the multidimensional aspects of well-being and their significance regarding physical and psychological health and healthy work environments. YLS Chair Cindy M. Cieslak addressed the emotional

and relational risks of working in the field of law as well as the importance of self-care in maintaining a practice and the ability to provide competent legal representation.

On Tuesday, yoga instructor Siena Loprinzi led participants through an hour-long introductory yoga class. For Wednesday's presentation, registered dietitian and New York University professor, Sara Soyeju, spoke about the impact that mindset has on the nutritional choices we make and provided guidance on how to initiate healthy behavioral changes towards better nutrition and self-care. Thursday's event was hosted by psychotherapist and mindfulness teacher, Anne Dutton, who led participants through an experiential mindfulness practice, which was followed by an explanation of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and its benefits.

Lawyer Well-Being Week concluded on Friday, May 7 with a presentation on why mindset matters, hosted by Lawyer Well-Being Committee Co-Chair Tanyee Cheung and Attorney Sara K. Bonaiuto. They discussed the scientific evidence supporting the concept that shifting one's mindset can lead to a healthier lifestyle and how to avoid thinking traps that can sabotage mental health and productivity.

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Visit ctbar.org/golf for complete program guidelines. Participants must book tee times through the CBA's Member Service Center at (844)469-2221.

CBA members interested in experiencing full membership privileges and unlimited access to TPC River Highlands have the option of purchasing an individual membership at a discounted rate. Full membership will require an initiation fee and monthly dues discounted 25%. Call (860)398-6795 for more details.



PEERS AND CHEERS

Attorney News

The Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity (LCD) presented the 2021 Edwin Archer Randolph Diversity Award to **Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson**, Connecticut Supreme Court, and **Cecil J. Thomas**, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc. This award is named for Edwin Archer Randolph, who was the first lawyer of color admitted to the Connecticut Bar in 1880; in tribute to his legacy, this award honors an individual who promotes inclusion and advancement of lawyers of color and other professionals. LCD's 2021 Carolyn Golden Hebsgaard Award was presented to **Cherie Phoenix-Sharpe**, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and **Dan A. Brody**, Robinson & Cole LLP. This award is named in honor of the founding executive director of LCD, who spearheaded initiatives designed to identify, recruit, advance, and retain young attorneys of color in the Connecticut legal profession.

Kahan Kerensky Capossela LLP has hired **Anne E. Blanchard** as an associate. Attorney Blanchard's practice will be focused on commercial and residential real estate transactions and advising businesses on a variety of matters.

Day Pitney LLP is pleased to announce **Michael Schoenberger**, an associate in the firm's Stamford office, as a recipient of the firm's 2021 Coleman Awards, which recognize recipients for their dedication to pro bono service.

Robinson+Cole has elected **Rhonda J. Tobin** as its next managing partner. She will be the first woman to lead the firm. Attorney Tobin is a trial lawyer who has spent her entire 30-year law career at Robinson+Cole; her practice focuses on the litigation, arbitration, and mediation of complex disputes involving insurance and reinsurance coverage.

Murtha Cullina LLP is pleased to announce **Nicholas W. Vitti, Jr.** as a partner in the firm's Business and Finance Department and Real Estate Practice Group. Attorney Vitti's practice includes commercial real estate transactions, real estate development, land use and zoning, and real estate tax appeals and valuation.

Firm News

Baillie & Hershman PC Law Offices is pleased to announce that Tamara L. Peterson has joined the firm, based in the Fairfield office; her practice will focus on residential real estate law. Additionally, Christina M. Lopes has a new role within the firm. Based out of the Cheshire office, her practice will focus on real estate law and estate planning.

Cummings & Lockwood LLC is pleased to announce new associates to its Private Clients Group, including Elizabeth Falkoff, who is based in the Stamford office and has eight years of trusts and estates legal experience, and Steven J. Georgiades, who is based in the Greenwich office and has eight years of experience in trusts and estates law.

The law firm **Czepiga Daly Pope & Perri** is pleased to announce that **Paul J. Knierim** has been selected by the Connecticut Probate Assembly as the 2021 recipient of the Daniel F. Caruso Public Service Award, which is given in recognition of exceptional leadership and support of the mission of the probate courts.

Attorneys Debra C. Ruel, James M. Ruel, and Robert J. T. Britt are pleased to announce that **Attorney Meghan M. (Sweeney) Burns** has been named a partner. Effective April 1, 2021, the matrimonial and criminal defense firm will be known as Ruel Ruel Burns & Britt, LLC. ■

PEERS and CHEERS SUBMISSIONS

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