

MINUTES

ALABAMA STATE BAR

2016 GRANDE CONVOCATION AND ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Baytowne Wharf Conference Center
Magnolia A-C
Destin, Florida

Saturday, June 25, 2016

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

President Lee Copeland called to order the 139th Grande Convocation and Annual Business Meeting of the Alabama State Bar.

2. **STATE OF THE JUDICIARY**

President Copeland welcomed Senior Associate Justice and Acting Chief Justice Lyn Stuart for her remarks on the state of the judiciary. Justice Stuart discussed the high points of the judicial system and the importance of staffing, adequate funding as well as relationships. She noted that the judicial system includes circuit and district courts as well as the personnel in the clerks' offices across the state. She explained that there are 318 officials (judges and clerks) and 1284 other employees who are responsible for operating the judicial system. Justice Stuart stated that this number was down considerably and has required the remaining personnel to assume additional responsibilities as a result of the decreased staffing. Justice Stuart also reported that 14 district and circuit judges retired in 2015 and six had retired so far in 2016. She said that because of the level of turnover, additional training is necessary to get the new judges and staff acclimated to their responsibilities.

Justice Stuart next discussed the appointment of court committees and stated that she was in the process of filling these positions with the assistance of Justice Tommy Bryan. She encouraged anyone wishing to serve on a judicial committee to let her know his or her interest. She then discussed the importance of the volunteer lawyers programs and the good work they have done in helping judges across the state deal with the amount of *pro se* litigation. Justice Stuart also reported that the number of filings at all levels of the court system are down significantly over the past five years including: civil down 18 percent; district down 20 percent; and small claims down 17 percent. Justice Stuart said that she was unsure of the reasons for filings being down so much but that court costs being higher and the economy could be factors. She also noted that traffic cases were down 47 percent in five years which results in a significant loss of revenue to the state.

With respect to court funding, Justice Stuart stated that with the state bar's help, funding for the judicial system has been level for the last two years instead of being cut. She remarked that although funding has been level and other state departments have been cut, the judicial system continues to operate with less funds over time. She expressed the need for additional funding over and above level funding and encouraged lawyers to contact their legislators to let them know the importance of the judicial system and the need for properly funding the court system. She said that plans are underway for the 2018 budget and that the question will be what constitutes "adequate and reasonable funding" which the constitution mandates that the judiciary shall receive from the legislature. Justice Stuart stated that it is an education process when explaining to the legislature the needs of the court system, but she is confident that the relationships between the judiciary and the members of the legislature have been strengthened thanks to efforts of bar members, judges and other interested parties. She acknowledged that it takes a grass roots approach to be successful. Justice Stuart reported that in 2015, Alabama courts collected \$483,823,196 with those funds being disbursed to counties, municipalities as well as through the general fund. In contrast, the court's budget was only \$180,604,243. Although she was reluctant to refer to the courts as an economic engine, Justice Stuart stated that by doing its job, the court system supplies funding to many areas of state government and that without adequate and reasonable funding, the court is unable to accomplish this goal.

Justice Stuart concluded by discussing the display of Magna Carta that would be held at the Heflin-Torbert Judicial Building in September. She stated that private donations made the exhibition possible and that the display celebrates the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta and is sponsored by the American Bar Association and The Library of Congress.

President Copeland thanked Justice Stuart for her remarks and stated that the bar is willing to assist her with the court in every way possible.

3. LAWYERS HALL OF FAME 2016 CLASS

President Copeland recognized Wendy Crew, a member of the Alabama Lawyers Hall of Fame Selection Committee to make a report. Ms. Crew announced that the inductees for 2016 would include William Bankhead, Lister Hill, Tom King, J. Russell McElroy and George Washington Stone.

4. RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP FORUM GRADUATES

President Copeland asked the graduates of the Leadership Forum to stand and be recognized as a group.

5. **FIFTY YEAR CERTIFICATES**

Vice President Cooper Shattuck came to the podium and read the names of those individuals who were in attendance to receive their 50 year certificate which was presented along with their 50 year pin by President Copeland. Those present to receive their certificate and pin were:

David Bryson Byrne, Jr.
 James Marshall Campbell
 Nicholas Joseph Cervera
 David Wolley Crosland III
 Michael Leon Edwards
 Fredrick Terrell Enslen, Jr.
 Frederick Alexander Erben
 Eugene Mark Ezell
 Bill T. Kominos
 Barry Leavell
 Robert Lee McCurley, Jr.
 Philip Ben McLaughlin, Jr.
 Craig Miller
 Harvey B. Morris
 James Middleton Sizemore, Jr.
 William Wayne Smith, Sr.
 Malcolm Wayne Wheeler

6. **RECOGNITION OF PAST PRESIDENTS AS WELL AS RETIRED AND CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF BAR COMMISSIONERS**

President Copeland asked all past presidents of the Alabama State Bar to stand and be recognized. He then recognized current members of the Board of Bar Commissioners and the commissioners who would be concluding their terms as commissioners.

He announced retiring members of the Board of Bar Commissioners. They were:

Christina D. Crow	3rd Judicial Circuit
Augusta S. Dowd	10th Judicial Circuit, Place 5
Clay A. Lanham	13th Judicial Circuit, Place 3
Juan Ortega	13th Judicial Circuit, Place 4
James R. Beaird	14th Judicial Circuit
Allan R. Chason	28th Judicial Circuit, Place 1
Jason P. Knight	32nd Judicial Circuit
Roger W. Pierce	37th Judicial Circuit
Alicia F. Bennett	At-Large, Place 5

7. **MEMORIAL RESOLUTIONS**

President Copeland recognized past president Sam Crosby who read a resolution in memory of former president Truman Hobbs. Former president Tom Methvin was recognized to read a resolution in memory of former president Rod Nachman. Former president Douglas McElvy read a resolution in memory of past president Bill Hairston.

8. **PRESIDENT'S CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Immediate Past President Rich Raleigh was recognized. Mr. Raleigh presented a certificate of appreciation to the president's assistant, Michelle Moseley. He then presented President Copeland with the past president's plaque, ribbon and pin. President Copeland made his concluding remarks recognizing his wife, Jessica and two sons, Hall and Albert, in particular. He also thanked Michelle Moseley for keeping him on track as well as his law firm and the Alabama State Bar staff.

9. **RECOGNITION OF AUGUSTA DOWD AS PRESIDENT-ELECT**

President Copeland asked Ms. Augusta Dowd to come to the podium. President Copeland congratulated Ms. Dowd on her election as president-elect and presented her with the president-elect ribbon. Ms. Dowd made brief remarks and concluded by stating that she looked forward to serving.

10. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECOGNITION**

President Copeland recognized Executive Director Keith Norman who will be retiring after 29 years with the Alabama State Bar in June 2017. A video presentation was shown and Mr. Norman made brief remarks following the presentation thanking current and past commissioners, past executive directors, current and former bar presidents and officers as well as staff members and his family.

11. **INSTALLATION OF J. COLE PORTIS AS 141ST PRESIDENT OF THE ALABAMA STATE BAR**

President Copeland introduced Cole Portis as the 141st president of the Alabama State Bar and presented him with the presidential gavel, pin and ribbon. President Portis' remarks focused on loving our fellow lawyers. He discussed his plans for the upcoming year focusing on a health and wellness initiative; a lawyer university covering technology and business practices and emerging areas of law; developing a new strategic plan; continuing a strong relationship with the in-state law schools; increasing member benefits; increasing minority participation and improving access to justice.

He encouraged lawyers to be engaged as public servants and to become involved in the legislative process including running for local and state offices. He then thanked his firm for their support and recognized his assistant, Sloan Downes and took a moment to recognize his wife, Joy, his nine children and his mother. He concluded by saying “let us all work together.”

12. GOLF AND TENNIS TOURNAMENT WINNERS

President Portis recognized Mr. Chip McCallum who announced the results of the golf tournament and called on Mr. Mark Moody who announced the winner of the tennis tournament.

13. GRAND PRIZE DRAWING

Laura Calloway was recognized as was Bill Bass and members of the Insurance Specialists (ISI) staff for the drawing of the grand prize. The winner was LaBella Alvis. Ms. Calloway also announced legal expo winners and thanked all of the expo sponsors for their participation in this year’s annual meeting.

14. CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURNMENT

President Portis closed the meeting by reminding all in attendance that the 2017 annual meeting would be held July 12-15 at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear. He reminded commissioners of their brief meeting in Magnolia D immediately following the annual business meeting. He then declared the 2016 Grande Convocation and Annual Business Meeting of the Alabama State Bar adjourned.

Lee H. Copeland, President
2015-2016
Alabama State Bar

J. Cole Portis, President
2016-2017
Alabama State Bar

ATTEST:

Keith B. Norman, Secretary
Alabama State Bar

Note: The awards made during the 2016 state bar meeting are listed in the pamphlet from the Bench and Bar Awards Luncheon held on June 23. This is included as Appendix A to these minutes.