

## Chair's Message



FRANCINE M. FFKOKES

It is hard to believe that this year is coming to a close and I will be passing the gavel to chair-elect Steven Klinger! For my Chair's Message I've provided the Section's annual report to The

Florida Bar. See you at the Annual Convention in Orlando on June 14!

### “BACK TO BASICS”

The Government Lawyer Section's theme for this year was “Back to Basics.” Across the various Florida Bar Sections, surveys showed that members want the same basic deliverables for their dues money: Discounted CLE programs, Networking Opportunities, and Applicable Practice Information (DNA). The Section leaders committed to DNA and I want to thank them for this year's accomplishments. They are Chair-elect, Steven Klinger; Treasurer and CLE Committee Chair, Anthony Miller; and Secretary and Technology Chair, Jacek Stramski.

To accomplish DNA this year, the Section conducted two signature live CLE programs. The 2018 Federal Seminar took place in Washington, D.C., on April 23-24, 2018. It had been a few years since the Section conducted a seminar in the nation's capital. CLE Committee Chair Anthony

Miller led his committee consisting of Robert Shillinger, Jr., Michelle Buckalew, Michael Schmid, Francine Ffolkes, and John Maceluch, Jr., in a deliberate and consistent planning process. As a result, the Federal Seminar attendees were able to watch oral arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court, listen to speakers on various hot button federal and state government topics, and end with a tour of the U.S. Capitol. Later in the year, the Section co-sponsored the Practicing Before the Supreme Court CLE program on June 7, 2018. Program co-chair, Russell Kent worked hard to ensure the success of this signature live CLE seminar. Participants were able to not only watch oral arguments before the Florida Supreme Court, but interact with the justices afterwards. Live CLE programs and the in-person Executive Council and Sec-

tion Member meetings at The Florida Bar Winter Meeting in January and the Annual Convention in June 2018 presented excellent networking opportunities for Section members.

Government lawyer news, articles of interest, and substantive practice information have always been hallmarks of the Section's newsletter. This year, after a short hiatus, the Section published Winter, Spring, and Summer issues of *The Voice*, currently available at the Section's website [www.flgovlawyer.org](http://www.flgovlawyer.org). All thanks to the Publications Committee for reviving *The Voice!* Co-editors, Alvan Balent, Jr., and Bill Gwaltney along with Trey Nazzaro, conducted interviews, wrote articles, and pursued those who promised to provide content.

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## Chair's Message, from page 1

It's been 28 years since the Government Lawyer Section was launched under the leadership of then Attorney General Bob Butterworth. This Section remains unique among Florida Bar Sections because instead of a substantive area of law, we are the voice for a demographic within the legal profession who practice at all levels of government - federal, state, and local. Thus, both The Florida Bar and the Section, continue to recognize the commitment to public service of government lawyers with the recognition of the 2018 Claude Pepper

Outstanding Government Lawyer. With the selection committee led by Past Chair, Keith Rizzardi, the Section will also recognize government lawyer contributions with this year's Distinguished Public Service Award. The Claude Pepper Outstanding Government Lawyer and the recipient of the Distinguished Public Service Award will be honored at the Section Awards Reception on June 14, 2018, during the Annual Convention. Please join us!

*Hon. Francine M. Ffolkes*  
2017-2018 Chair



**If you would like to have an article  
considered for publication in the next  
edition of *The Voice*, please send it to  
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# Guess Who's Coming Came To Dinner!

By: Alvan Balent Jr.



Now, if you guessed Florida Bar President-Elect Michelle Suskauer, congratulations, you are the winner, but sorry, there is no prize.

Dinner with the incoming president of The Florida Bar is one of GLS' oldest and noblest traditions. This year, GLS chair Francine Ffolkes, chair-elect Steven Klinger, and yours truly met with Suskauer on February 21 to brainstorm ways The Florida Bar and GLS can better represent government lawyers. The first topic of discussion was the common roadblocks government lawyers face when trying to be involved with the Bar. Here, Suskauer expressed willingness to accompany GLS members to meetings with government agency directors to emphasize the importance of Bar service. In these meetings, the issue of utilizing administrative leave for Bar function attendance would also be raised. Making employees use their personal leave, after all, essentially punishes them for participating in the Bar. Suskauer further pledged to try and reduce the costs of attending Bar meetings for government lawyers by having the Bar

negotiate rates with hotels near those hosting its fall, winter, and annual conventions.

Second, we addressed ways GLS can better communicate with its members and the Bar itself. Some of Suskauer's suggestions were: 1) greater utilization of social media platforms; 2) sending GLS event flyers and photos to The Florida Bar News; and 3) conducting regular surveys to discern membership wants/needs. Relatedly, Suskauer encouraged GLS to develop stronger relationships with other sections, the young lawyers and law school divisions, the various voluntary bar associations, and Bar entities like the Leadership Academy. These partnerships may help GLS increase and retain its members as well as create member benefit programs. For instance, GLS could provide internships to its law student members at the various agencies where our members work.

Finally, we asked Suskauer the following questions to get a better sense of who she is.

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## Guess Who's Coming To Dinner!, *from page 3*

### **What made you want to be president of the Florida Bar? Was it always a career goal or was/were their specific incident(s) that inspired you to run for the position?**

- Being a government lawyer was my first experience in legal practice. I spent three years as a public defender in the 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit where I quickly learned not only the importance of public service, but also service to our profession. Through my voluntary bar work including opportunities to lead both the Palm Beach County Bar Association and the Palm Beach Chapter of FAWL, I met judges and lawyers from every area of the practice who were working to improve the practice of law. While serving as president of my local bar, an opening on the Board of Governors became available. When I met the incredible lawyers on the Board of Governors and learned more about The Florida Bar, I knew I had a passion to lead it. I also thought it was overdue to have a former public defender lead our bar and to have another woman lead our Bar who could also bring the perspective of a small firm practitioner and criminal defense lawyer.

### **How do you plan to balance your practice, the demands of the Bar presidency, and your other personal/social commitments?**

- As a working mother, it has always been a challenge to try to “do it all.” I feel that I have truly balanced home and work when I don’t completely collapse at the end of the day! But, I know the importance of reaching out for help from family, friends and my community. While it is paramount to me to do the best I can in every situation or effort, I also know I need to rely the Board of Governors, other Bar leaders including section and committee chairs, and the Florida Bar staff to help me meet the demands of the Bar presidency. I have one daughter in college and one who has graduated from college and both are as supportive of me as I am of them. My husband Scott also continues to be a mentor to me and his encouragement and counsel are daily reminders that I can be a great Florida Bar president.

### **What in your background lends itself to addressing issues important to government lawyers?**

- I am the first former public defender to lead the Bar, so I am intimately aware of the issues that government lawyers face. I also am now experiencing the challenges my husband faces as a judge. While campaigning for Bar President, I have met with many elected state attorneys and public defenders to learn about the challenges government lawyers in those offices experience today, and I also met with court and government agency lawyers to learn about their needs. Many of the challenges faced by Bar members, like stress management/work-life balance, are issues that impact government lawyers as well, but I will always

be open to hearing about other needs that The Florida Bar may be able to assist with.

### **What top policies/changes do you plan to implement as Florida Bar President? Would any of these proposals impact government lawyers?**

- I will convene a Criminal Justice Summit Oct. 16-17 in Tampa that will bring together a diverse group of leaders in the field at the policy and grassroots levels for in-depth discussion and collaboration on important issues. I hope that this work will help drive legislation forward during the next legislative session that will result in changing a system based on punishment, as opposed to rehabilitation, to reduce crime and recidivism. I will also focus on health and wellness, as it affects every lawyer from the managing partner or solo practitioner, to the government lawyer anywhere in the state. Health and wellness is something we can all relate to and that we all struggle with.

**No government lawyers currently serve on the Bar's Board of Governors, yet at least 15% of Florida attorneys serve as government lawyers. How can we fix this when a) BOG service is a major time commitment and involves costs such as travel; b) government salaries are low and the employing agency do not pay section dues let alone travel for bar meetings; and c) potential ethical issues prevent the Government Lawyer Section from obtaining private sponsors? In other words, is there anything the Bar can do to increase the involvement of government lawyers? First-year lawyers, for instance, can join a section for free. Could a similar deal be reached for individuals in government service?**

- The Bar is fortunate to have a Government Lawyer Liaison to the Board of Governors who weighs in on issues affecting government attorneys and who always provides input and perspective on matters before the Board. I am pleased that Dave Aronberg, State Attorney for the 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, will be the government lawyer's representative on the board for a third year in 2018-19. In addition, the Bar offers discounts for government lawyers for Annual Convention, which includes 20 CLE opportunities, and is increasing its free online 24/7 CLE offerings constantly. Again, this year during the legislative session, the Bar successfully advocated for the state to pay Florida Bar fees and continuing legal education for government lawyers. Scholarships are also available for government lawyers for the Leadership Academy.

### **What are your thoughts on the Constitution Revision Commission and its final proposals?**

*continued, page 5*



**Guess Who's Coming Came To Dinner!, from page 4**

• We very much appreciated the work of the commissioners in this important every-20-years process. The Bar had a very robust public education effort, *Protect Florida Democracy: Our Constitution, Our rights, Our Courts*, and was able to help millions of Floridians learn about the CRC process and more about the Florida Constitution and our state government. The Bar does not have official positions on the final amendments.

**Tell us a random/fun fact about yourself.**  
• I love to bake, and I've taken homemade muffins, cookies, and coffecake for meetings with The Florida Bar Board of Governors to virtually every meeting I've attended for the past eight years.

We thank Mrs. Suskauer for her time and look forward to working with her during the 2018-19 Bar year.



**Ethics Questions?**

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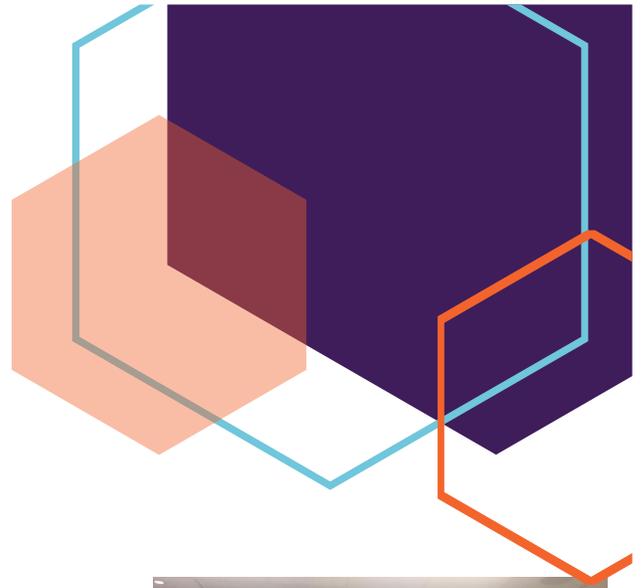


# 2018 Federal Seminar

The Florida Bar ∞ Government Lawyer Section

**April 23-24, 2018**

**Washington, DC**



The Government Lawyer Section recently held its 2018 Federal Seminar in Washington, DC. This two-day seminar took place in the heart of downtown Washington, DC, within walking distance of the U.S. Capitol and the United State Supreme Court buildings. The seminar comprised a

diverse group of participants from the public and private sector. The seminar speakers presented on a number of relevant topics, including Supreme Court and federal courts, federal and state higher education regulation, national flood insurance, FEMA flood mapping issues



and the U.S. Capitol Police. On the first day of the seminar, several of the participants attended oral arguments before the Supreme Court, hearing cases on federal administrative law and federal immigration.

On the final day of the seminar, attendees

participated in a guided tour the U.S. Capitol Building, affording them the opportunity to experience the Capitol Building's unique history and charm.





# 2018 Claude Pepper Outstanding Government Lawyer

## JULIE WALDMAN



The Florida Bar and the Government Lawyer Section are proud to announce the selection of Ms. Julie Waldman as the winner of the 2018 Claude Pepper Outstanding Government Lawyer Award.

Ms. Julie Waldman has spent a career serving the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, helping the most vulnerable citizens among us: children, the elderly and the developmentally disabled. During her career as a lawyer for the agency, including several years as the Deputy General Counsel, she demonstrated a mastery of the law, in nearly every type of litigation forum. She has handled criminal and civil cases, and guardianship and mental health matters. She has tried cases in every type of administrative forum, from employment matters to licensing to discrimination and whistleblower cases. She has appeared in the trial courts for every circuit in this state, and has handled more than 50 cases before Florida's District Courts of Appeal. Her experience and exposure to such a wide range of matters has bestowed a unique wisdom that she is eager to share with others. Today, she continues to serve the agency, and the community, as a Deputy Center Administrator for a development disabilities center in Gainesville, Florida.

Ms. Waldman's commitment to public service extends beyond her legal career. She gives back to her community through volunteer work and mentoring; inspiring others to be their best through the Rotary Club of Gainesville, the Justice Teaching Initiative, and the Alachua County Teen Court Program. Ms. Waldman also serves as an officer on the Board of Directors of the Reichert House, an after school program designed for young men who are in need of assistance in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Throughout all of her work, Ms. Waldman has been known for an exemplary degree of compassion and empathy, treating each case and each individual with fairness, consideration, and due diligence. She appreciates the humanity behind the cases. Legal issues aren't always just legal. People want to feel they've been treated fairly, even when they don't agree with the outcome. Ms. Waldman possesses a unique ability to combine an intrinsic understanding of the law with a distinctive awareness of the challenges facing the mentally challenged population. Overall, Ms. Waldman exhibits the highest ideals we expect from a member of the Bar - commitment, diligence, and integrity - and always working toward the greater good.

The 2018 Claude Pepper Outstanding Government Lawyer Award will be presented to Ms. Waldman by The Florida Bar's President on June 15, 2018, at The Florida Bar's Annual Convention in Orlando.



## ***Your Government Lawyer Section Website***

Remember to visit the Government Lawyer Section's website. The website contains lots of information about the Section. Look for dates and times of future meetings and minutes of past meetings. Find new CLE courses or CDs and materials on recent CLEs. Get involved with the Florida Bar by contacting members of your executive council through the website.

***[www.flgovlawyer.org](http://www.flgovlawyer.org)***

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**



### **Executive Council Meeting**

October 2018  
Teleconference

### **The Florida Bar Winter Meeting**

January 16-19, 2019

### **The Florida Bar Annual Convention**

June 26-29, 2019  
Boca Raton

