

TALLAHASSEE WOMEN LAWYERS

NEWSLETTER

*A local chapter of the Florida
Association of Women Lawyers*



President's Message

Written by Carly Schrader

I am so honored to be serving as President of Tallahassee Women Lawyers, an organization supporting the status of women in the legal community for just over 44 years. I am joined by twenty-seven other dedicated lawyers, who are willing to give their time and energy to serve on TWL's Board. It is the effort of these women and other volunteer members that make it possible for TWL to provide networking events and interesting continuing legal education programs, foster mentoring relationships, and support community organizations such as PACE Center for Girls. One of our most beloved events, Judicial Reception, turned 40 last year, and will return on October 29, 2024, 6 p.m., at Goodwood Museum and Gardens. We look forward to again providing a venue for honoring all of those who serve our community as members of the judiciary.

For me personally, this organization has played a vital and important role for maintaining supportive connections to others in the local legal community. Such connection is essential in providing support to women lawyers in all areas of practice,

and at all levels of experience. As a chapter of Florida Association for Women Lawyers, TWL is also a point of connection to an established state-wide community whose mission is to actively promote gender equality and provide leadership opportunities for its members.

A supportive network and community can help navigate challenges over the course of a career, as well as celebrate and honor milestones and successes. I hope that each of you continues to find value in the opportunities afforded by TWL, including the respectful exchange of ideas, opportunity for growth through leadership roles and mentoring, and building your own supportive network and friendships. If you have been looking for an opportunity to become more engaged in this community, I challenge you to attend an event, sign up as a mentor, or give of your time and your talents to a committee. You may be surprised at how easy it is to get involved, and how much you get back in return. I look forward to seeing you at future TWL events, including our upcoming Judicial Reception.



Carly Schrader, TWL President 2024-2025, is Assistant General Counsel at the Florida Board of Bar Examiners. Carly joined TWL in 2007.

EMAIL CARLY AT
PRESIDENT@MYTWL.ORG

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2023-2024 Year in Review

Written by Megan Kachur, 2023-2024 TWL President

I would like to express my immense gratitude to the members of the 2023-2024 Board of Directors, the dedicated sponsors, and to the TWL membership for making the year a success. Thanks to you, TWL strengthened its partnerships, broadened its impact and social footprint in the community, and created a lasting resource by establishing a Bar Study Scholarship Program. This has been the most rewarding year of my career, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve this organization in the Tallahassee community.

The year included CLE Lunch n Learns, little free library and food pantry donations, 40th Judicial Reception celebrations at the Tallahassee Garden Club, YLD events in the dark (only one); and joining forces with other voluntary bar organizations for a festive holiday party. TWL also gave back to local organizations such as Brehon Family Services, PACE Center for Girls, Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office, Legal Services of North Florida, and Legal Aid Foundation by getting involved with programming and sponsoring events. Additionally, TWL sponsored local youth programs, which aim to help students develop professionalism and leadership skills, such as Ladies Learning to Lead, through its 13th Annual L3 Leadership Conference, and the R. Frank Nims Middle School, through its Pre-Law Program under the Nims Academy of Legal Studies.

TWL's Inaugural Bar Study Scholarship was awarded to Carly Simone Dick, who graduated from FSU College of Law this year. I'm excited to share that she passed the July 2024 Florida Bar Exam and is practicing as an associate attorney at Wicker Smith in Tampa. Carly's career goals include becoming a formidable defense attorney and she remains dedicated to community service, volunteerism, and empowering law students and women in the legal profession. *[Photograph on page 15]*.

I wanted to end this Year in Review by revealing one last resource, from which everyone can benefit. TWL has three annual awards under its Awards Program - the first two awards were created in 2017, and the third award was created in 2019. These awards were established by TWL to acknowledge and honor individuals and entities deserving such accolades and recognition. I cannot tell you how many times I tried to figure out who won, which award, and during which year. Therefore, I created a space on TWL's website to display all TWL award winners since each award's inception. The page demonstrates an impressive list of award recipients and is a collective representation of the impact TWL has had on women in the legal community and community at large throughout the decades. See it for yourself by clicking the link here: [TWL Awards](#).

Lastly, it was an honor to receive FAWL's 2023-2024 Outstanding Chapter of the Year Award. FAWL's Blue and Gold Gala was a beautiful night, described by FAWL's current President as a ballroom "full of women supporting women into leadership," and it was a great memory to have to end my term. Thank you!

TWL 2023-2024 Board Accepts FAWL's Outstanding Chapter Award

(From left to right) 2023-2024 Tallahassee Women Lawyers Member and Florida Association of Women Lawyers ("FAWL") Membership Director Jackie Moody, LSN Liason Magie Ozarowski, Immediate Past President Winifred Acosta, FAWL President Thomasina Moore, President Megan Kachur, Website Chair Saray Ravelo, and FAWL Representative Stephanie Morse attended FAWL's Blue and Gold Gala to accept the 2023-2024 Outstanding Chapter Award!



Judge Nina Ashenafi Richardson Swears in 2024-2025 Board



Written by Christie Petruzzelli

On July 25, 2024, the 2024-2025 Board of Directors for TWL was installed by special guest, the Honorable Judge Nina Ashenafi Richardson ("Judge Nina"). Judge Nina is not only a friend to, but also a legacy of, TWL. She served as TWL President 1998-1999 prior to becoming a Leon County Judge in 2008. Among her many accolades, Judge Nina became the first Ethiopian-American judge in the United States of America. TWL was honored and privileged to have Judge Nina administer the oath and for her words of encouragement and inspiration to lead us into the new year.

The event was hosted in the Florida State University College of Law's Rotunda and featured a lovely dinner with special remarks from Immediate Past President, Megan Kachur, President, Carly Schrader, and Judge Nina.

MEET THE 2024-2025 BOARD

CARLY SCHRADER

President, Carly Schrader, joined TWL in 2007, and has served as Judicial Reception Director, CLE Director, Awards Co-Chair, and Programs Director. Carly currently works at the Florida Board of Bar Examiners as Assistant General Counsel. Carly loves TWL because it is a great place to forge lasting connections and to support women lawyers doing important work in our local community. In her free time, Carly enjoys hiking, kayaking, and running.



FELICIA KITZMILLER

President-Elect, Felicia Kitzmiller, joined TWL in 2018 and has served as Meetings Co-Coordinator, Public Relations Officer, Judicial Reception Director, and Secretary. Felicia practices in Land Development at Stearns Weaver Miller. Fun fact: Felicia asked for and received a miniature donkey for her 16th birthday. "Mocha Latte" still lives on her mother's farm in Pennsylvania.



ELIZABETH STINSON

Secretary, Elizabeth Stinson, previously served as Judicial Reception Director and the Newsletter Director. Liz works at the Florida Office of the Attorney General.



LAURA DENNIS

Treasurer, Laura Dennis, joined TWL years ago and was previously involved with the Mentoring Committee. Laura is a Legal Writing faculty member at the Florida State University College of Law. Her advice to young lawyers is "seek mentorship: find mentors who can offer guidance, share their experiences, and help you navigate your career." A fun fact about Laura: her family owns a professional fireworks company!



LINDSEY LAWTON

Public Relations Officer, Lindsey Lawton, originally joined TWL in 2009 to make friends in the legal community. Lindsey previously served as Secretary, Awards Chair, FAWL Representative, and on the Mentoring Committee. Lindsey practices in appellate law as a solo practitioner for Lawton Law, PLLC, and Of Counsel to The Brownlee Law Firm, P.A. Lindsey encourages new lawyers to get involved with TWL and attend events!



STEPHANIE MORSE

FAWL Representative, Stephanie Morse, has been in TWL for over 10 years. She previously served as Meetings Coordinator and Employment Chair. Stephanie works in Complex Litigation at the Florida Office of the Attorney General. Stephanie enjoys the fellowship and learning opportunities TWL provides. Stephanie's advice for new lawyers is to get involved and learn as much as you can from your colleagues!



CHLOE SCHULTE

Judicial Reception Director, Chloe Schulte, joined TWL because she wanted to continue the mission of connecting and uplifting women in the legal community and to learn from others' experience as she begins her legal career. Chloe works as a judicial law clerk at the First District Court of Appeal. Chloe in one word: passionate!



TIFFANY CREWS

Mentoring Director, Tiffany Cruz, joined TWL in 2013 to learn from the amazing women lawyers that came before her. Now, she enjoys giving back to future women lawyers. Tiffany previously served as Sunshine Director and Development Director. Tiffany owns Cruz Law Firm, where she primarily represents employees in Employment Law matters. Tiffany looks forward to celebrating the hardworking judiciary every year at the Judicial Reception!



CHRISTIE PETRUZZELLI

Newsletter Director, Christie Petruzzelli, joined TWL in 2022 to connect with other women lawyers while serving the community. This is her second year as Newsletter Director. Christie is an Associate at Sniffen & Spellman, P.A., where she represents entities and individuals in Civil Rights, Employment, and Education Law matters. Outside of work, Christie enjoys volunteering with Junior League Tallahassee. Christie in one word: energetic!



JASMINE MATTEAR

CLE Director, Jasmine Mattear, joined TWL this year! Jasmine is excited to be back in her hometown working as an Assistant State Attorney at the State Attorney's Office. Jasmine enjoys meeting new people and prioritizes being around strong women and being that person in the lives of others. Jasmine believes in speaking up for the things that affect us and those after us. Jasmine's advice for new lawyers is "figure out your work balance and then get as involved as you can!"



COLLEEN MULLEN YORIO

Development Director, Colleen Mullen Yorio, joined TWL around 10 years ago. She previously served as Mentoring Director Co-Chair. Colleen was featured in the *Pro Bono* Spotlight of the TWL Fall 2023 Newsletter (and so was her precious pup, Alfredo). Colleen works at Guilday Law. Fun fact about Colleen: she enjoys obstacle course races!



KANDACE RUDD

Programs Director, Kandace Rudd, joined TWL in 2017. Kandace previously served as Awards Chair and Co-Chair, Formerly the 19th Amendment Celebration Committee, and Meeting Coordinator Chair. Outside of practicing Elder Law at Waldoch & McConnaughay, P.A., Kandace likes to rewatch "I Love Lucy." This past year, Kandace received the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division, 36 Under 36 Professionalism Award.



MEGAN KACHUR

Immediate Past President, Megan Kachur, joined TWL in 2016 and previously served as Young Lawyers Chair, and Treasurer. Megan works as Deputy Director under the Division of Professions at the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. TWL events feeling comfortable and welcoming is what made her want to get more involved. Her advice to new lawyers: join an organization and get involved. It's good for the soul and you'll meet inspiring people. Fun fact about Megan: she just got her first tattoo this year!



SARAH NAF BIEHL

Technology Chair, Sarah Naf Biehl, joined TWL in 2022 and previously served on the Judicial Reception Committee. Sarah is the Deputy Staff Director in the Committee on Ethics and Elections in the Florida Senate. Sarah loves the supportive sense of community TWL provides and that it offers a unique combination of benefits, including professional community, social activities, and service opportunities. Sarah's advice for new lawyers: don't be afraid to try a new path!



MICHELLE COVIN

Website Chair, Michelle Covin, joined TWL in 2023 to meet more people in the legal community. They served as Meetings Co-Coordinator Chair last year. Michelle works at F&I Sentinel in Compliance. They enjoyed participating in Tallahassee Bar Association's Chili Cookoff last year with TWL with the theme of Barbie/Oppenheimer.



BRENNA HATCHER

Awards Co-Chair, Brenna Hatcher, is an Associate at Ausley McMullen, practicing in estate planning, probate administration, and trust administration. Brenna is also involved with The Florida Bar Real Property, Probate, and Trust Law Section and the Tallahassee Bar Association.



JENNIFER PERKINS

Awards Co-Chair, Jennifer Perkins, recently joined TWL to get more involved in the legal community. She works as the Managing Attorney for the Healthcare Unit at the Florida Department of Management Services. Jennifer's advice for new lawyers is to cultivate a good work life balance. Fun fact about Jennifer: she was born in Alaska!



ELIZABETH ELLIS

JNC Monitoring Chair, Elizabeth "Liz" Ellis, joined TWL in 2016 to develop a network of strong, dynamic women. Liz looks forward to the Judicial Reception every year. Her piece of advice for new lawyers is to join a voluntary bar association to meet new people and grow your network. A 10th generation Tallahasseean, Liz works at Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson, P.A. in civil litigation, with an emphasis on Land Development.



MAGIE OZAROWSKI

LSNF Liason, Magie Ozarowski, previously served in this role as well as Technology Chair, Public Relations Director, Secretary, and President in 2019-2020. TWL's mission, especially, promoting women attorneys, is a cause dear to Magie's heart. Magie is Of Counsel at Ausley McMullen in general litigation. Her fun fact is that she lived in 5 countries before she was 21 years old!



LASHAWN RIGGANS

PACE Mock Trial Chair, LaShawn Riggans, is Of Counsel at Nabors, Giblin, and Nickerson, P.A. and works in general governmental, employment, and litigation practice areas. LaShawn is greatly involved in the legal community and her broader community. In 2023, LaShawn received the 2023 Rose Deeb Kitchen Award, which recognizes women in the Second Judicial Circuit who have overcome obstacles and hardship to become attorneys.



SARAY RAVELO

Young Lawyers Co-Chair, Saray Ravelo, joined TWL last year and served as Website Chair. Saray works as a senior trial attorney at MagMutual's PolicyOwners (MMPO) Defense. Saray is passionate about making the practice of law better for women, helping women reach their goals, and serving the community. Her fun fact is that she has a Bachelor's degree in Nursing!



KELSEY CARLTON

Young Lawyers Co-Chair, Kelsey Carlton, joined TWL last year because of the impact it had on her as a member of the Florida State University College of Law Women's Law Symposium. Kelsey is an Associate at Meenan P.A. working in insurance regulation. She believes women should join TWL for a community of local attorneys who are seeking a greater impact than they are able to make in the workplace alone. Kelsey in one word: imaginative!



JANAYE PIECZYNSKI

Meetings Coordinator Co-Chair, Janaye Pieczynski, is a government attorney working at the Fifth District Court of Appeals.



LILY MCLAUCHLIN

Meetings Coordinator, Co-Chair, Lily McLauchlin, is an Associate at Trudy Innes Richardson, PLLC, practicing in family law, business formation, and other areas of civil litigation. Lily is part of the Family Law section of the Florida Bar.



JACKIE MOODY

Employment Chair, Jackie Moody, is an attorney in the Florida Senate. Jackie is involved with the Florida Association of Women Lawyers (FAWL) and served as the Membership Director last year.



JESSICA POARCH

Sunshine Chair, Jessica Poarch, joined TWL in 2016, specifically, to participate in the mentoring program, one of her favorite things about TWL. Since then, Jessica has served as Public Relations Officer, Secretary, CLE Director, Community Service and Special Events Chair and, Mentoring Chair. Jessica is a law clerk at the First District Court of Appeal. In her free time, Jessica likes to garden.



KRISTEN BOND DOBSEN

Kristen Bond Dobsen joined TWL over 5 years ago. This is her second year serving as Community Services and Special Events Chair. She previously served as Book Club Chair and Young Lawyers Chair. When not working in Healthcare Compliance and Reimbursement and Administrative Litigation at Parker Hudson, Kristen enjoys reading and taking trips with her husband on their small sailboat on the Forgotten Coast. Her piece of advice for new lawyers: take time for mental health.



GIGI ROLLINI

WE Network Chair, Gigi Rollini, joined TWL in 2004. She has served as Membership Chair, FAWL Representative, Program Director, Awards Chair, and President in 2009-2010. Gigi served as FAWL President 2010-2011. She has been involved with the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) since 2011 and will become NAWL President in January 2025. Gigi is the Managing Partner of Florida Government Law Partners, PLLC. She has been married to her husband (also an attorney) for 22 years. They met in FSU Student Government nearly 30 years ago. They have two sons, one of which was born during her term as FAWL President and the other went to college this year!



You are Cordially Invited to TWL's

41st Annual Judicial Reception

29 OCTOBER, 2024 6:00 PM
GOODWOOD MUSEUM & GARDENS
CARRIAGE HOUSE

We are excited to announce that our 41st Annual Judicial Reception will be held on Tuesday, October 29, at the Goodwood Carriage House, starting at 6pm. The event will feature heavy hors d'oeuvres and refreshments for guests. As a reminder, members of the judiciary are cordially invited as guests of TWL and do not need to purchase a ticket but should RSVP to judicialreception@mytwl.org.

TWL could not be more grateful for the continued support from the Tallahassee legal community. We would also like to give a special thank you to our generous sponsors who make the reception possible each year! Please purchase your reception tickets [HERE](#)!

Thank you to Our Sponsors

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*If you are interested in sponsoring this event, please contact the Judicial Reception Director, Chloe Schulte, at judicialreception@mytwl.org, or Development Director, Colleen Mullen, at development@mytwl.org, and feel free to scroll through TWL's website on its *Sponsors* page to access the sponsorship form, located [HERE](#).*

Parking for this event will be available on the Goodwood grounds. Should you need accessible parking, please let us know at judicialreception@mytwl.org.

A Look Into TWL's Mentorship Program With FSU College of Law's Women's Law Symposium



Written by Christie Petruzzelli

Being a good neighbor for TWL means taking advantage of the opportunity to mentor law students right in our community. Each year, TWL partners with the Florida State University College of Law's Women's Law Symposium ("WLS") to provide them with mentors from TWL. TWL Mentors are then paired with WLS students.

"Mentoring is about guiding others to see the potential within themselves, empowering them to grow and succeed one conversation at a time."

-Tiffany Cruz

Tiffany Cruz, TWL Mentoring Director, is the owner of Cruz Law Firm, P.A., a law firm which specializes in all areas of Employment Law. Tiffany represents employees in federal and state court and before administrative tribunals. Outside of her practice, she is involved with the Labor and Employment Section of the Florida Bar, the Florida Chapter of the National Employment Lawyers Association, and the William H. Stafford Inn of Court. Tiffany joined TWL in 2013 and previously served as Sunshine Director and Development Director.

If you're looking to get more involved with TWL's Mentoring Committee, reach out to Tiffany at mentoring@mytwl.org.

The TWL Mentoring Committee matches mentors with mentees based on factors such as the area of law the individual practices in or wants to practice in, hobbies, backgrounds, and more. Mentor/mentee pairings are encouraged to connect on their own time, however, the Committee hosts numerous events throughout the year as well. This year, the pairings are encouraged to attend TWL's Annual Judicial Reception (October 29, 2024 at the Goodwood Museum) together, as well as the Committee's Trivia Mixer, Coffee Talk, Table for 8, and a Networking Mixer.

Missed the deadline to sign up for a mentee? No worries! All are welcome and encouraged to attend these events. Don't miss the Committee's first event, Trivia Mixer, taking place at Proof Brewing Co. on November 6th at 6:30pm!

If you found connection through the TWL x WLS Mentorship program, we want to hear about it! Email newsletter@mytwl.org!

What's On Our Reading List?

Kristen Bond Dobson, Community Service and Special Events Chair, leads TWL's Book Club each month at Ology in Midtown. Recent selections include *Sandwich* by Catherine Newman, *We are Not Like Them* by Christine Pride and Jo Piazza, and *Headshot* by Rita Bullwinkel. Join TWL's Book Club next month in discussing *Stealing* by Margaret Verble! For any questions, reach out to Kristen at communityservice@mytwl.org!



Cassandra Jackson Receives Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Award at June Meeting

Written by Christie Petruzzelli

Created in 2017, the Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Award seeks to recognize individuals, businesses, government entities, and professional associations who display leadership in fostering diversity in the workplace, or within the community, and to highlight contributions that advance the cause of justice and equality. Former recipients include the Bridge to Law School Program at Stearns Weaver Miller, Leon County, the Soul of Southside Festival, and Florida State University.

Attorney Cassandra Jackson received the 2024 Award. The award was presented at TWL's June meeting. Cassandra Jackson has devoted the majority of her career to serving the public sector since her admission to the bar following study at Stetson and its College of Law. She retired from the position of City Attorney of Tallahassee last year - a position she held for approximately five years after rising through the ranks as human resources manager, assistant city attorney, senior assistant city attorney, and deputy city attorney. Cassandra made history as the first black female City Attorney of Tallahassee.

A champion for diversity and inclusion, Cassandra stated:

“In a word, diversity and inclusion mean “opportunity”. It is opportunity regardless of outward appearance, background or social standing. It is the opportunity to be present, heard and understood whether in the context of resolving a legal issue, organizing an event or applying for a legal position. I held several legal management positions during my career and I found that the best results were the product of adherence to a policy of diversity and inclusion by providing the opportunity.”

-Cassandra Jackson



Prior to her time at the City of Tallahassee, Cassandra worked for the City Lakeland, the Florida Department of Management Services, the Public Employees Relations Commission, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners, and the St. Petersburg City Attorney's Office. Cassandra is part of the 1% of attorneys in Florida certified in City, County, and Local Government Law.

Cassandra's excellence and character have earned her the recognition as a true leader. To Cassandra, the true mark of leadership is integrity. "There is no substitute for it if one wants to have a positive, enduring impact on others."

When asked what advice she would give to young women lawyers, she stated it would be the same advice that she gives her daughters: know your worth and never hesitate when seeking new opportunities to do your research and respectfully request value commensurate with what you bring to the table.

Liz Ellis Named Finalist for the Leadership Tallahassee Pacesetter Award



Founded in 1983, Leadership Tallahassee is a year-long educational program for adults designed to cultivate a diverse network of experienced leaders committed to improving the community. Leadership Tallahassee's Distinguished Leadership Awards recognize those who show exceptional leadership in the business, professional, or community setting. TWL JNC Monitoring Chair and Shareholder of TWL's Platinum Sponsor, Stearns Weaver Miller, Elizabeth "Liz" Desloge Ellis has been named a finalist for this year's Leadership Tallahassee Pacesetter Award. Liz was in Leadership Tallahassee Class 37. Her leadership experience ranges from being an active leader of TWL and the Tallahassee Bar Association, to being President of Refuge House of the Big Bend, and involvement in numerous Florida Bar sections and committees and other local organizations.

“

I am honored to be named a finalist for the Leadership Tallahassee Pacesetter Distinguished Leadership Award. Participating in Leadership Tallahassee has been one of my most rewarding experiences in this community. I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside inspiring leaders dedicated to making a positive impact in our community. Together, we can continue to drive meaningful change and foster a vibrant future for Tallahassee.

”

-Liz Ellis

FSU Law Graduate, Carly Dick, Receives Inaugural Florida Bar Scholarship

This year, TWL created its Inaugural Bar Study Scholarship! The goal of the \$1,000 scholarship is to promote the TWL mission and help the recipient while studying for the Florida Bar Exam. It is made possible through the generous donations of TWL members, friends, and TWL Sponsors. TWL would like to thank the 2023-2024 featured sponsors, Stearns Weaver Miller and Ti Adoro Studios for their generous contributions!

FSU Law graduate, Carly Dick, was the first ever recipient of the Award. The Award was presented at TWL's June meeting. Following Carly's study, she was admitted to the Florida Bar in September of 2024. Carly works as an Associate at Wicker Smith in Tampa, FL. Congratulations, Carly!





Hannah Murphy is an Attorney in Stearns Weaver Miller's Tallahassee office.

Hannah is a litigator who focuses her practice on trusts and estates, election law, and consumer protection. She is a Certified Information Privacy Professional (CIPP/US). Hannah also has leadership roles with Tallahassee Women Lawyers and the Tallahassee Bar Association.

Keeping the Faith: Why Florida Voters Should Have Confidence in Their Local Election Officials

Written by Hannah Murphy

Trust in elections across the United States is in sharp decline. With the rise of misinformation, particularly in the last decade, many Americans have become increasingly skeptical of the integrity of election results. According to a Pew survey from 2022, voters expressed lower levels of trust in the accuracy of national election results compared to their own local elections. Local election officials, often the most visible face of the electoral process, play a critical role in restoring and maintaining voter confidence at the grassroots level.

In Florida, where elections have a storied history, the state and local authorities have implemented a structured and transparent election system to ensure voters' voices are heard. This article takes a look at Florida's election processes, focusing on the safeguards in place to protect election integrity.

Poll Workers and Polling Stations

The cornerstone of Florida's election integrity lies with the dedicated poll workers who manage the voting process. These are the people who check you in to vote, hand you your ballot, and make sure everything runs smoothly in the precinct. Governed by Florida Statutes, Section 102.012, poll workers, also known as election inspectors and clerks, are responsible for overseeing the election at the precinct level. Poll workers are county employees hired by the Supervisor of Elections who must be registered electors of the county and take an oath to uphold the law, ensuring no fraud or abuse occurs in the election process. Fla. Stat. § 102.012 (2024).

Poll workers undergo rigorous training before Election Day. The Florida Department of State creates a uniform polling place procedures manual, which addresses common occurrences

at polling stations, from technical issues with voting machines to how to handle irate voters. The manual also includes specific procedures for handling provisional ballots, spoiled ballots, and emergency situations. This level of training ensures that poll workers are prepared to tackle the unexpected challenges that may arise on Election Day. Fla. Stat. § 102.014 (2024).

Poll workers are required to make decisions collectively. If a question arises during voting, the team resolves the issue by majority vote, following the guidance in their training manual. Fla. Stat. § 102.012(1)(a). This collaborative approach, combined with their oath of performance, fosters confidence in their ability to run elections transparently.

Maintaining Political Neutrality

To further protect the integrity of elections, Florida law prohibits any form of political activity within 150 feet of a polling station. Campaigning, solicitation, and the display of campaign materials are strictly forbidden in this zone, ensuring voters are free from undue influence when casting their ballots. Even acts as seemingly innocent as distributing food or water to voters are restricted within this perimeter, as outlined in Fla. Stat. § 102.031.

In addition, poll watchers—people who volunteer on behalf of campaigns or political parties to monitor the voting process—are subject to strict rules. They must register with the local elections office 14 days before voting begins and wear an official badge identifying themselves as poll *watchers*, so that voters do not confuse them with poll *workers*. Poll watchers are prohibited from interacting with voters or election staff in any way that could potentially influence the outcome, ensuring that they remain neutral observers. Fla. Stat. §101.131 (2024).

The Tabulation Process

Florida provides multiple ways for citizens to cast their vote: early voting, in-person voting on Election Day, and voting by mail. While many voters prefer to vote in person, voting by mail has become an increasingly popular option, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one common misconception is that all votes will be counted and results announced by election night. This expectation overlooks the complexities of reconciling various voting modes across multiple counties, which can extend the tabulation process beyond election night. The tabulation process is broken down below:

1. Early Votes and Vote-By-Mail Ballots: By law, the Supervisor of Elections must report all early voting and vote-by-mail ballots that have been confirmed and counted by the end of the early voting period by 7 p.m., the day before Election Day. Fla. Stat. § 102.141(4)(a) (2024). Then, beginning at 7 p.m. on Election Day, vote-by-mail ballots are reported by the Supervisor once each hour, including a posting of the number of vote-by-mail ballots received and the remaining amount uncounted until all are counted, ensuring transparency in the process. Fla. Stat. § 102.072 (2024). These hourly updates provide voters with a clear picture of how the count is progressing, helping to build confidence in the accuracy of the final result.

2. Precinct-Level Reporting: After the close of the polls on Election Day, each precinct tallies the votes cast and submits a certificate, signed by the election inspectors and clerk, to the Supervisor of Elections, along with all ballot materials. Fla. Stat. § 102.071 (2024).

3. County Canvassing: Then, the county canvassing board, consisting of the Supervisor of Elections, a county judge, and the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners, meets to publicly canvass the ballots. Canvassing the ballots means the votes are scrutinized to ensure their validity, and the board also reviews provisional ballots for legitimacy. The canvassing board must report all early-voting and vote-by-mail results to the Department of State no later than thirty minutes after the polls close. The board then must update precinct election results to the Department of State at least every 45 minutes until all results are completely reported. Fla. Stat. § 102.141 (2024).

4. State Certification: Once the county canvassing board has finalized its count, the results are sent to the Elections Canvassing Commission, which includes the Governor and

two cabinet members. The Commission certifies the returns 14 days after the election, as provided by Fla. Stat. 102.111. This final step ensures that the results of the election are accurate and complete. While many voters expect results on election night, it is essential to understand that the counting process extends beyond that. Early votes, in-person votes, and vote-by-mail ballots, and provisional ballots all follow different timelines, and reconciling them takes time.

Recounts: A Necessary Safeguard

In some cases, the outcome of an election may be so close that it triggers a recount. Florida law mandates that a recount occurs if the margin between candidates is within one-half of one percent. Fla. Stat. § 102.141(7) (2024). If the second set of returns indicates that a candidate for any office was defeated or eliminated by one-quarter of a percent or less of the votes cast for that office, a manual recount may be ordered. Fla. Stat. § 102.166 (2024). While recounts may evoke memories of the infamous 2000 election between Bush and Gore, Florida has learned a lot since then. Though recounts can delay the final result, they are an essential safeguard that ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of election outcomes.

Restoring and Preserving Voter Confidence

As the foundation of democracy, elections rely on the trust of the electorate. In Florida, election officials at the local level have taken comprehensive steps to ensure the accuracy, transparency, and fairness of the process. From the detailed training and responsibilities of poll workers to the strict laws governing campaign activity and vote-by-mail protocols, Florida's election system provides multiple layers of oversight designed to prevent fraud and abuse. Voters in Florida can take comfort in the knowledge that their local officials are working hard to protect the integrity of their vote. By understanding the processes in place and the safeguards that protect them, voters can regain and maintain their faith in the electoral process.

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(First row): Patricia A. Conners, Susan L. Stephens, Bridget Smitha, Past TWL President Kelly O'Keefe, Denay Brown, and Melanie Leitman.

(Second row): Fatou Calixte, Adrienne C. Love, TWL President-Elect Felicia Kitzmiller, TWL JNC Monitoring Chair Liz Desloge Ellis, Hannah Murphy, Amelia Savage, and Erin Tilton.

ALL of the Tallahassee Office women lawyers at Stearns Weaver Miller are recognized as valued members of TWL and are an integral part of our organization.

For more information about Stearns Weaver, visit stearnsweaver.com.

TWL Participates in Tallahassee Bar Association's 27th Annual Chili Cookoff



TWL members joined the Tallahassee Bar Association in their 27th Annual Chili Cook-Off on October 23rd, benefitting the Legal Aid Foundation of Tallahassee! The event includes competitions for best chili and/or margaritas! Our theme this year was Paris "Ooh La La." The team consisted of: Kristen Dobson, Saray Ravelo, Felicia Kitzmiller, Jennifer Perkins, Carly Schrader, Magie Ozarowski, Jasmine Mattear, and Janaye Pieczynski. TWL won the prize for "most unusual" chili. Merci to Jessica Poarch and Kandace Rudd for the recipe!

August Meeting: Florida Bar Second Judicial Circuit Update



Written by Christie Petruzzelli and Saray Ravelo

On August 14, 2024, TWL held its first Membership Meeting of the Year. The event featured Florida Bar Governors for the Second Circuit, Melissa Vansickle and David Grimes.

Melissa Vansickle is a Florida Bar Board Certified Real Estate Lawyer who is a Partner at Neslon Mullins. Melissa is a part of the Administrative Law, Environmental & Land Use Law, and Real Property, Probate & Trust sections of the Florida Bar. Melissa has also served on numerous committees of the Florida Bar and was a fellow of Class 1 of the Florida Bar Leadership Academy Fellows.

David Grimes is a Staff Director for the Florida House of Representative. David is part of the Government Lawyer section of the Florida Bar and serves on numerous committees of the Florida Bar.

Both Melissa and David returned to their alma mater, the Florida State University College of Law, to host the event. They gave an informative presentation as to the Florida Bar and ways that members can get involved.

Looking for a change? Did you know you can list or review local employment opportunities with TWL? Click [here](#) to check out all of TWL's Employment Listings!

There are currently numerous openings at various state agencies, the Florida Bar, the Florida Legislature, the Judicial Administrative Commission, and local private firms.

Right now, you can apply to be a Senior Attorney with the Public Service Commission, or a Domestic Violence Attorney, or Senior Trial Staff Attorney just to name a few.



Gigi Rollini, TWL WE Network Chair, is the Managing Partner of Florida Government Law Partners, PLLC, a firm that specializes in government and administrative law. Gigi works in litigation, appeals, and in all aspects of Florida administrative law. Her experience includes representation of a wide array of clients: from the world's largest companies to non-profits, start ups, and individuals. Gigi has represented officials at the highest levels of state and federal government, including a sitting President of the United States in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. She has earned Martindale's highest AV-Preeminent Peer Rating in appellate, administrative, and civil litigation and is frequently recognized as a "Super Lawyer" and part of the "Legal Elite." A triple FSU Seminole (and the first in her immediate family to earn a college degree), Gigi's professional experience is matched by an equally impressive background of community involvement. Gigi will be installed as president of the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) on January 1, 2025. She previously served as a past president of both the Florida Association for Women Lawyers (FAWL) and Tallahassee Women Lawyers (TWL).

"TWL is not just a networking organization. It is an organization of people who believe in, support, cheerlead, and encourage one another to stretch, grow, accomplish, and give back. I cannot imagine my career without TWL as a part of it."

-Gigi Rollini

WE Network Chair, Gigi Rollini, Helping Women Grow Their Professional Network

Written by Christie Petruzzelli

Gigi Rollini founded the TWL Professional Women's Exchange ("WE") Network in 2009 through a grant from The Florida Bar Foundation. The WE Network's purpose is simple: To build a broad network of professionals and community leaders to facilitate business and leadership development for local women professionals. The WE Network is comprised of lawyers who are members of TWL and by invitation only to local women business owners, professionals, and community leaders committed to promoting the status and advancement of women.

The WE Network offers members a one-stop-shop directory for finding like-minded professionals, whether to utilize their services, refer business, support other WE Network members, or develop leadership, networking, and mentoring opportunities.

The WE Network also hosts fun and empowering social events at women-owned local businesses to allow members to connect in person and get to know one another! The first event of the season will be a Mixer between the members of TWL and Club 25, the service organization of Tallahassee's "25 Women You Need to Know" (details below). We can't wait to see you there!

TWL WE Network & Club 25 Networking Mixer

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

JoEllen's in Kleman Plaza

215 W. College Ave., Unit 101, Tallahassee, FL 32301

~Free to TWL & Club 25 Members~

Light Nibbles and Drink Tickets Included

Please RSVP by December 13, 2024 (RSVP will be on TWL website)

If you are interested in joining the WE Network, reach out to Gigi Rollini at gigi.rollini@flagov.law.

September Meeting: Initiative Amendments to the Florida Constitution

Written by Christie Petruzzelli

TWL's September Member Meeting, held September 11, 2024, in the Florida State University College of Law's Rotunda, featured a panel discussion on the citizen initiative amendments to the Florida Constitution.



The distinguished panelists were the Honorable Judge Clay Roberts from the First District Court of Appeal, Mark Earley, Leon County Supervisor of Elections, Courtney Brewer, Legal Writing Professor at the Florida State University College of Law, and Trish Neely, President of Florida League of Women Voters. CLE credit was provided. FAWL President, Jessica Thomas, was also in attendance and discussed the benefits of FAWL membership.

Magie Ozarowski Featured on “Never Contemplated” Podcast and Hosting New Podcast “On Civility”



Magie Ozarowski, TWL LSNF Liason, is Of Counsel at Ausley McMullen. Magie previously served as Assistant Attorney General at the Office of the Attorney General, Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, Chief Attorney for the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco, and Deputy General Counsel for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Magie serves on numerous Florida Bar committees, was a Florida Bar Leadership Academy Fellow, and is involved in various community and legal organizations.

Magie Ozarowski was featured in a recent episode of the Florida Bar's Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism Podcast, “Never Contemplated.” The podcast is hosted by Administrative Law Judge Hetal Deasai. Each episode of the podcast features a unique discussion with female judges or professionals, covering topics such as gender bias and professionalism. On September 5, 2024, the Podcast released an episode titled, “The Practice of Law May be Different Than You Imagined,” featuring guest speaker, Magie Ozarowski. Judge Deasai and Magie covered topics such as civility and leadership. Magie spoke about her childhood, what brought her to the practice of law, and her experiences as a government attorney.

Magie will be hosting a new podcast with the Center for Professionalism called “On Civility.”

Kathy Maus Receives DRI Louis B. Potter Award

2000-2001 TWL President, Kathy Maus, received the Defense Research Institute (DRI)'s Louis B. Potter Lifetime Professional Service Award. The award honors individuals who exemplify the highest professionalism and service to the legal profession. The award was presented at DRI's Annual Meeting on October 18, 2024.

Kathy Maus is a Partner at Butler Weihmuller Katz Craig LLP. She is the Partner-in-Charge of the Tallahassee office. She practices in bad faith, first and third-party liability defense, and insurance coverage practices, including the areas of construction, employment, bodily injury, and catastrophic injury. Kathy is Board Certified in Civil Trial Law. Her involvement includes previously serving in leadership of DRI, the International Association of Defense Counsel, the Tallahassee Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates, the Tallahassee Bar Association, and Tallahassee Women Lawyers.



Tally Trivia

1. What does "Tallahassee" mean?
2. Approximately how old is the Lichgate Oak estimated to be?
3. How many parks does Tallahassee have?
4. When did Tallahassee become the capital of Florida?
5. What is the Apalachee Parkway named after?
6. What year was the David Walker Library built?
7. What television shows mention Tallahassee?
8. What is the largest lake in Tallahassee?
9. Where can you find a replica of the first Florida Capitol?
10. How many canopy roads are in Tallahassee?

- ANSWER BANK
1. "Old fields" or "old town" drawn from Indian words "talwa" (town) and "hasi" (old)
 2. Over 300 years
 3. 97
 4. 1824
 5. The Apalachee Indians who first occupied Tallahassee
 6. 1903 (lending the name of the cocktail bar now in the old library building, "Bar 1903")
 7. The Office and West Wing
 8. Lake Talquin
 9. Cascades Park
 10. 9

Member News

Lindsey Lawton, TWL Public Relations Officer, became Board Certified in Appellate Practice

Adrienne Love became Board Certified in Intellectual Property Law

Kandace Rudd, TWL Programs Director, became Board Certified in Elder Law

Carly Schrader, TWL President, joined the Florida Board of Bar Examiners as Assistant General Counsel

Know of someone who has exciting news or is making moves? Email TWL's Newsletter Director, Christie Petruzzelli, at Newsletter@mytwl.org with the details!

Upcoming Events



Judicial Reception

Goodwood Museum & Gardens Carriage House
October 29, 2024 at 6:00pm

Trivia Night

Hosted by TWL and FSU Law WLS
Proof Brewing Company
November 6, 2024 at 6:30pm

Maternal and Perinatal Health Disparities in Leon County

FSU College of Law Rotunda
November 13, 2024 at 12:00pm

Morning Grounds: Coffee & Conversation on Professionalism

Florida Supreme Court
Co-hosted with the Young Lawyer Sections of the Florida Government Bar and Tallahassee Bar Association
November 15, 2024 at 7:30-9:00am

Book Club: *Stealing* by Margaret Verble

Ology Midtown
November 21, 2024 at 6:00pm

WE Network & Club 25 Networking Mixer

JoEllen's in Kleman Plaza
December 17, 2024 at 5:00pm

Bench & Bar Holiday Party

Co-hosted with Tallahassee Bar Association, Florida Government Bar Association, and William H. Stafford American Inn of Court
TBA

STEARNS
WEAVER
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A graphic consisting of a horizontal blue bar, a small dark blue square, and a small green square.

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