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12 LSBA Members Receive Awards at Annual Meeting

NEW ORLEANS—Several Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) members received awards during the Association's 2015 Annual Meeting in Destin, Fla., June 7-12.

• President's Awards

Five LSBA members received 2015 President's Awards. Recipients were chosen by 2014-15 LSBA President Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr. and were recognized for services to the Association. Recognized were **Craig L. Caesar**, New Orleans; **Luis A. Leitzelar**, Baton Rouge; **Hon. C. Wendell Manning**, Monroe; **Marta-Ann Schnabel**, New Orleans; and **Jack K. Whitehead, Jr.**, Baton Rouge.

Craig L. Caesar, a shareholder in the New Orleans office of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., was recognized for his exemplary assistance to the Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (LAP). He has served as chair of the LSBA's Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and as Executive Committee chair of LAP. He continues to work with LAP in carrying out its mission of assisting impaired lawyers.

An attorney for 37 years, he represents regional and national clients in the health care, marine product manufacturing, telecommunications and financial services industries, advising them on commercial, corporate governance, and antitrust and trade regulation matters, and advocating for them in state and federal litigation, administrative proceedings and arbitrations.

Caesar graduated from Northwestern University (BA, 1974; MA, 1976; Juris Doctor, 1978) and is an active participant in the Northwestern University and Law School Alumni Associations. He is a member of the American Bar Association, the Illinois Bar Association, the State Bar of Texas, the New Orleans Bar Association and the Dallas Bar Association. He has been recognized by *The Best Lawyers in America* and *Louisiana Super Lawyers* (including Top 50 New Orleans Lawyers in 2015) and is a Fellow in the Litigation Counsel of America.

Luis A. Leitzelar, a partner in the Baton Rouge office of Jones Walker LLP, was recognized for his exemplary assistance to the LSBA's Diversity Committee. He has served on the Diversity Committee for several years, currently as co-chair both of the full committee and of the Conclave on Diversity in the Legal Profession Subcommittee. He previously served as chair and in other leadership positions for the LSBA's

more

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Minority Involvement Section, which sponsors minority career job fairs and mentorship programs for minority law students.

He received his bachelor's degree in 1987 from Louisiana State University and his Juris Doctor degree in 1991 from Tulane University Law School. He practices in his firm's Business & Commercial Litigation, Environmental and Energy Practice groups and serves on the firm's Diversity Committee. He focuses his practice in complex commercial litigation, including class actions, product liability claims and mass torts.

In 2012, Leitzelar received a Multicultural Leadership Award from the National Diversity Council and was recognized in the November 2013 "Defense Research Institute Leader Spotlight" for his role in writing and editing the *DRI Diversity and Inclusion Manual*, published in 2013. He is a Fellow of the Louisiana Bar Foundation and of the Litigation Counsel of America.

Hon. C. Wendell Manning, a judge on the 4th Judicial District Court, Division F, was recognized for his leadership as president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation, as a member of the Louisiana Supreme Court Attorney Intern Program (LaSCAIP) Board and for his assistance in establishing the 4th Judicial District Court's Online Self-Help Center website for Ouachita and Morehouse parishes.

He received a BA degree and an MBA degree in finance from Louisiana Tech University and his Juris Doctor degree in 1988 from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center. Prior to being elected judge, he was a partner in the law firm of Theus, Grisham, Davis & Leigh in Monroe.

Judge Manning is currently serving as the immediate past president (and permanent ex-officio Board member) of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. He is a former president of the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education (LCLCE) and, during his term, coordinated a cooperative endeavor between the LSBA, the Louisiana District Judges Association and the LCLCE to promote "Lawyers and Judges in the Classroom," which places lawyers and judges in schools to educate students on law-related topics.

He was honored with the LSBA's Crystal Gavel Award for his work with the American Red Cross and for making the court system more hospitable for crime victims. He has served as a board member of the Northeast Louisiana Chapter of the American Red Cross since 1993. He also served on the board of directors of Northeast Louisiana CASA.

Marta-Ann Schnabel, managing director of the New Orleans law firm of O'Bryon & Schnabel, P.L.C., was recognized for her exemplary assistance to the LSBA, particularly for the Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. and access to justice issues.

Schnabel served as the LSBA's first woman president in 2006-07. She also served as the LSBA's secretary and *Louisiana Bar Journal* editor from 2001-03. She chairs the LSBA's Access to Justice Committee and the Access to Justice Policy Committee and heads the board of the non-profit Louisiana Civil Justice Center. She received the LSBA President's Award on three previous occasions.

She is currently the president of the Louisiana Association of Defense Counsel and chair of the Louisiana Supreme Court's Judicial Campaign Oversight Committee. She is a Fellow of the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) and was recognized as the 2014 LBF's Calogero Justice Award recipient. She also is a previous recipient of the LBF's Hornblower Award. She has served in the American Bar Association's (ABA) House of Delegates and as a member of the ABA Standing Committee on Bar Activities and Services.

A *cum laude* graduate of Loyola University College of Law, she is a previous recipient of the Gillis Long Poverty Law Center's Public Service Award and the David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award for her work as an advocate for access to justice. She also is a past president of the New Orleans Bar Association.

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Jack K. Whitehead, Jr., founder and shareholder of the Whitehead Law Firm in Baton Rouge, was recognized for his exemplary assistance to the Louisiana Client Assistance Foundation.

He received a BS degree in accounting in 1977 from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and his Juris Doctor degree in 1986 from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center. He also is a certified public accountant.

Whitehead served as the LSBA's treasurer and on the Executive Committee from 2008-10. He is currently serving in the House of Delegates for the 19th Judicial District and was a member of the House of Delegates Liaison Committee to the Board of Governors in 2007-08. He is a member of the *Louisiana Bar Journal's* Editorial Board. He also served on the LSBA's Budget Committee and was an assistant bar examiner. He served as an American Bar Association delegate in 2012-14.

He has been a member of the Baton Rouge Bar Association since 1986. He is a master in the Wex S. Malone Inn of Court and served as president in 2007-08. He also is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Society of Louisiana Certified Public Accountants and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. He has an AV rating from Martindale-Hubbell.

• **Catherine D. Kimball Award for Advancement of the Administration of Justice**

Hon. James R. McClelland of Franklin was honored (posthumously) with the 2015 Catherine D. Kimball Award for Advancement of the Administration of Justice. He was recognized for his exemplary service to the legal profession and the public throughout his distinguished career: as a district judge, as an attorney, as an assistant district attorney and as a public defender.

He started his career in 1975 with Aycock, Horne & Coleman in Franklin, becoming a partner in 1978. He was the founder of the local Public Defender Board and served as a public defender from 1975-81. He was an assistant district attorney in the 16th Judicial District Court from 1981-2008.

He began serving as judge for the 16th JDC on Jan. 1, 2009. He also presided over the St. Mary Parish Adult Drug Treatment Court, the DWI Court and the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court.

Active in the LSBA, he served as secretary and *Louisiana Bar Journal* editor from 2003-05. He was a member of the Executive Committee, the Board of Governors, the House of Delegates and the Budget Committee. He chaired the Criminal Law Section and co-chaired the Section Council.

He was president of the St. Mary Bar Association in 1978-79. He was a charter member of the Inn on the Teche American Inn of Court, serving as president in 2010-11. He also served on the Louisiana Bar Foundation's Board of Directors.

He received a BS degree in chemical engineering in 1969 and an MBA degree in 1971, both from Louisiana State University. After active duty in the U.S. Army, he received his Juris Doctor degree, with honors, in 1975 from LSU Law School (member of the Order of the Coif and *Louisiana Law Review*).

Judge McClelland retired from the 16th JDC bench on March 1, 2015. He died on March 15, 2015, at the age of 68, after a three-year battle with ALS.

• **Stephen T. Victory Memorial Award**

Scott L. Sternberg, an associate in the New Orleans law firm of Baldwin Haspel Burke & Mayer, L.L.C., received the 2015 Stephen T. Victory Memorial Award, recognizing outstanding contributions to the *Louisiana Bar Journal*, the LSBA's bimonthly magazine. His article, "Contrasting Professional Conduct Rule

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4.2 with the First Amendment Right to Petition,” was published in the August-September 2014 issue.

Sternberg received a bachelor’s degree in journalism in 2006 from Louisiana State University and his Juris Doctor degree and diploma in civil law in 2010 from LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center, where he was a member of the *Louisiana Law Review*.

He is the newly-seated District 1 representative on the LSBA’s Young Lawyers Division Council. He was a member of the 2012-13 Leadership LSBA Class and is a former member of the LSBA’s Crystal Gavel Award Committee and the Publications Subcommittee of the Rules of Professional Conduct Committee.

He is an adjunct media law professor for Loyola University’s School of Mass Communication. He serves on the board of directors of the Federal Bar Association New Orleans Chapter’s Younger Lawyers Division and is a member of the LSU Law Chancellor’s Young Alumni Leadership Council.

• Human Rights Award

Elia Diaz-Yaeger, a shareholder in the New Orleans office of Lugenbuhl, Wheaton, Peck, Rankin & Hubbard, received the 2015 Human Rights Award.

She practices primarily in the areas of industrial employment/long-latency lung disease litigation, insurance defense and coverage, environmental law and commercial litigation.

Diaz-Yaeger works to encourage and empower diversity in the legal profession through her participation and leadership roles in several organizations, including the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Louisiana (HLAL), the LSBA, the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) and the Defense Research Institute (DRI).

Locally, as president of the HLAL, she played an integral role in its MetLife Networking and Mentorship Program, which pairs HNBA lawyer members and affiliate bar organizations with Hispanic law students nationwide. She has been a member of the LSBA’s Diversity Conclave Subcommittee since 2011 and is a certified LSBA diversity facilitator. She serves on the board of the ASI Federal Credit Union, whose mission is to strengthen the financial health of underserved communities through financial services and education.

Nationally, Diaz-Yaeger has served on the HNBA’s Board of Governors since 2011. As former co-chair of its Annual Corporate Counsel Conference and Moot Court Competition, she was instrumental in recruiting attorneys and Hispanic judges nationwide to participate. She has served on DRI’s Diversity for Success Planning Committee since 2011.

• Trailblazer Award

J. Dalton Courson, a member of the law firm Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann, L.L.C., in New Orleans, received the 2015 Trailblazer Award.

He maintains a litigation and trial practice, with an emphasis in commercial litigation and insurance coverage disputes.

Courson has dedicated significant time to promoting diversity in the legal profession. From 2010-14, he served as co-chair for the LGBT Litigator Committee of the American Bar Association’s (ABA) Section of Litigation. He has written or spoken on various diversity-related topics, including the client-development advantages to law firms for promoting diversity and the unique challenges that gay and lesbian attorneys may experience in their practices. He also has spoken on the legal issues raised by school bullying. In 2014, he served as counsel for the Forum for Equality Louisiana and four married same-sex couples who brought a challenge to Louisiana’s refusal to give legal effect to their valid out-of-state marriages. The case is on appeal to the 5th Circuit.

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He is a former co-chair for the board of directors of AIDS Law of Louisiana, Inc., a Louisiana nonprofit dedicated to assisting the legal needs of low-income Louisianians living with HIV. Since 2014, he has co-chaired the ABA Section of Litigation's Civil Rights Litigation Committee.

He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University and his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia School of Law.

• Leah Hipple McKay Memorial Award for Outstanding Volunteerism

Hon. Dee D. Drell of Alexandria, chief judge for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana, received the 2015 Leah Hipple McKay Memorial Award for Outstanding Volunteerism.

He earned both his undergraduate degree and his law degree from Tulane University.

Judge Drell has devoted time on a pro bono basis to helping individuals suffering from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). He served as volunteer counsel for AIDS Law of Louisiana and Central Louisiana AIDS Support Services. He is also a past faculty member and presenter for the Delta Region AIDS Education and Training Center. In 1997, he received the Pro Bono Publico Award for his work with AIDS Law of Louisiana.

He served on the LSBA's Committee on the Profession from 2003-08 and on the Louisiana Bar Foundation's board of directors from 2010-13. He is a former member of the LSBA's Board of Governors, the LSBA's House of Delegates and the Alexandria Bar Association's Executive Committee. He is a former probation monitor for the Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board. He was a board member of the Family Mediation Council of Louisiana from 1986-92. He also was a board member of the Rapides Parish Indigent Defender Board from 1987-94 and served on a state task force on racial and ethnic fairness in the courts.

Judge Drell is a past president of the Kiwanis Club of Central Louisiana and currently serves as a certified master instructor. He served as a board member for both the YMCA of Central Louisiana and Kent House, the oldest standing structure in central Louisiana.

• John Ashby Hernandez III Memorial Award for Francophone Leadership

Edwin R. Fleischmann, Jr., a solo practitioner in Metairie, received the 2015 John Ashby Hernandez III Memorial Award for Francophone Leadership.

He has been a practicing trial attorney continuously since being admitted to the Louisiana Bar in 1973. He received a BA degree in foreign language education in 1964 from the University of New Orleans and his Juris Doctor degree in 1973 from Loyola University College of Law. He also is admitted to practice in the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. District Courts for the Eastern, Middle and Western Districts of Louisiana.

Fleischmann has been one of the most active members of the LSBA's Francophone Section. Over the past three years, he has promoted French and the civilian traditions in Canada, France and all parts of Louisiana. He teaches a pro bono French course in New Orleans and has been the president of Les Amis du CODOFIL West Bank, Inc. for more than four years. He has participated in every seminar and symposium sponsored by the Francophone Section during the past five years.

He is a member of the New Orleans Bar Association, the Jefferson Bar Association, the Louisiana Association for Justice and Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity. He has served for several years on the board and as treasurer of Les Causeries du Lundi, a 100-year-old Francophone Society.

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Fluent in French and Spanish, he taught high school French at Ecole Classique from 1970-74 and Spanish at Wright Junior High and Ecole Classique from 1968-74.

• **Curtis R. Boisfontaine Trial Advocacy Award**

Eugene J. Sues, a shareholder in the Alexandria law firm of Gold, Weems, Bruser, Sues & Rundell, received the 2015 Curtis R. Boisfontaine Trial Advocacy Award, presented by the Louisiana Bar Foundation.

A civil litigation defense attorney, he has practiced with the firm since 1974 and has more than 40 years of trial experience in the areas of medical malpractice defense, products liability, general tort and governmental liability. He leads the firm's medical malpractice defense section. Since 1984, he has focused in defense of physicians and hospitals in medical malpractice cases. He has successfully litigated as lead counsel jury and bench trials in his practice areas and has successfully argued many cases before Louisiana appellate courts and the Louisiana Supreme Court. Throughout his career, he has helped train young lawyers in his firm in ethics and the art of advocacy in the courtroom.

He was a captain in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps from 1970-74, serving as a criminal prosecutor and head of military affairs.

A Fellow of the Louisiana Bar Foundation, Sues was elected as a Fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers in 2009. He is a master of the bench for the Crossroads American Inn of Court of Alexandria-Pineville, was named an associate in the American Board of Trial Advocates and was elected to the International Association of Defense Counsel. He has served on the LSBA's Medical-Legal Interprofessional Committee.

He has been listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* since 2012 and was listed in several editions of *Louisiana Super Lawyers* for medical malpractice defense.

Photos of award recipients are available online at:

<http://www.lsba.org/NewsAndPublications/PressPhotos.aspx?PRPA=45>

The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 22,000 members in the practice of law. The statewide association, as part of its multi-faceted mission, promotes and maintains access to justice initiatives for the state's residents, assists the Louisiana Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law, upholds the honor of the courts and the profession, and supports programs that increase public understanding of and respect for the law.