Elder Law Committee

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

MICHAEL J. POLK

Mike's practice centers around probate administration and litigation, estate planning for individuals, creditor's rights in bankruptcy court and state court, and general civil litigation. In short, Mike assists individuals and businesses with any legal issue they encounter. Mike spends a great deal of his time assisting individuals and businesses with planning, preparation, and review of legal documents, including wills, living wills, powers of attorney, estate planning documents, probate forms, contracts, and corporate documents. Prior planning can often avoid legal difficulties and large legal bills later. Mike has helped individuals and businesses protect their rights through litigation, and has appeared at virtually every level of court in South Carolina, from the South Carolina Supreme Court to magistrate's court.

As with all of the attorneys at Belser & Belser, Mike strives to let his clients know what is happening in their files, and his goal is for his clients to be as comfortable with the legal process as possible while providing cost effective, timely, and successful results for his clients.

Mike joined Belser & Belser, P.A. as an Associate Attorney in 1995. Born in San Angelo, Texas in 1965, Mike spent parts of his childhood in Edison, New Jersey; Highstown, New Jersey; Macon, Georgia; and Burke, Virginia. A 1983 graduate of Lake Braddock High School in Northern Virginia, Mike attended Virginia Tech on a Navy ROTC scholarship, where he was a member of the Corps of Cadets.

After graduating from Virginia Tech with a degree in management in 1987, Mike attended the Surface Warfare Officer School and Communications Officer School in Newport, Rhode Island. He was then stationed in Charleston, South Carolina aboard the USS Jesse L. Brown, FF-1089, where he served as First Lieutenant and Communications Officer/CMS Custodian.

Mike entered the University of South Carolina School of Law after being honorably discharged in 1991. While in Law School, Mike was a Member of the *Real Property, Probate, and Trust Journal,* winning the Service Award as a third year law student. After passing the Bar Exam in 1994, he practiced law for one year with Kenneth G. Goode and Associates in Winnsboro, South Carolina, and has been at Belser & Belser, ever since.

Mike was formerly an Associate Editor of the South Carolina Bankruptcy Law Association newsletter, the *Disclosure Statement,* and has spoken at seminars on bankruptcy, wills, trusts, and estate planning. Mike is the secretary of the Columbia Kiwanis Club and he is also a member of the Columbia Inferno Booster Club.

Mike's wife Betsy is also an attorney in Columbia. Mike enjoys practicing aikido, where he has earned his blue belt. He volunteers with Palmetto Health Hospice. However, he spends most of his leisure time trying in vain to keep up with their 6 year old daughter Jane.

DANA FITZSIMONS, JR.

Dana G. Fitzsimons Jr**.** is a Senior Vice President and Associate Fiduciary Counsel with Bessemer Trust in Atlanta, Georgia, where he works with the f firm's clients in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee, Prior to joining Bessemer Trust in 2012, Mr. Fitzsimons was a partner with McGuireWoods LLP where he practiced in the areas of fiduciary

litigation, estate and trust planning administration, fiduciary risk management, and guardianship litigation.

Mr. Fitzsimons is a fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel. He is a member of the American Bar Association where he has served on the CPR/SOC Joint Committee on Ethics and Professionalism Task Force on Patenting Legal Strategies, is co-chair of the Real Property, Trust and Estate Law Section Ethics and Malpractice Committee, and is the RPTE Section representative on the Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility. He also is a member of the Virginia Bar Association and serves on its Trusts and Estates Legislative Committee and formerly on its Trusts and Estates Executive Council.

Mr. Fitzsimons has contributed articles to numerous publications including the ACTEC Journal, Probate and Property, Estate Planning, Trusts & Investments, and the Leimberg Services Newsletters. He is a frequent lecturer across the country on fiduciary topics, including presentations to the Heckerling Institute on Estate Planning, the Midwest/Midsouth Estate Planning Institute, the ALI-ABA Advanced Estate Planning seminar, the University of Texas Tax Institute, the American Bankers Association Wealth Management and Trust Conference, and the Catholic Charities of Chicago Seminar, Mr. Fitzsimons has been quoted in publications such as the *New York Times,* the *Wall Street Journal,* and *Forbes.*

HON. DEIRDRE W. EDMONDS

HORRY COUNTY JUDGE OF PROBATE

Deirdre W. Edmonds was born in Aiken County, South Carolina. She attended the University of South Carolina and received her BA in 1984 and JD in 1987. She was licensed to practice law in South Carolina in November 1987.

Judge Edmonds began her legal career at the law firm of Bellamy, Rutenberg, Copeland, Epps, Gravely, & Bowers, P.A. in Myrtle Beach, SC. During her ten (10) year tenure with the Bellamy Law Firm, she focused primarily on estate planning, probate, corporate, tax, business, and elder law. Judge Edmonds practiced with the law firm of Kathryn Cook DeAngelo from 1997 until 2001, where she continued to concentrate in the areas of estate and disability planning, elder law and probate. Judge Edmonds was elected Probate Judge for Horry County in November 2002, was re-elected in November 2006 and November 2010.

Judge Edmonds is a member of the South Carolina Bar, section on Probate, Estate Planning and Trust, the Horry County Bar Association, the National College of Probate Judges, and the S.C. Association of Probate Judges. Judge Edmonds is a member of the Grand Strand Area Estate Planning Council, the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA), the Carolinas Chapter of NAELA and the South Carolina Women Lawyers Association. Judge Edmonds recently served as President of the S.C. Association of Probate Judges and currently serves on the Probate Judges Advisory Committee to the Chief Justice. Judge Edmonds also currently serves on the S.C. Bar Estate Planning, Probate and Trust Council's "Probate Code Overhaul Committee" and serves on the Guardianship and Conservatorship Overhaul Subcommittee.

Judge Edmonds is married and has three (3) daughters, twins, Jessie and Katherine, and her youngest, Aubrey.

B. MICHAEL BRACKETT

Mike Bracket was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in 1977. He's admitted as well to the U.S. District Court, District of South Carolina, and the U.S. Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit. He earned a B.A. from

Clemson University (1974) and J.D, from the University of South Carolina (1977). Mike served as a captain, U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAGC), from 1978 to 1981. He co-authored "Probate Litigation Chapter," South Carolina Practice Manual-Civil Law, published by the Legal Education Division, South Carolina Bar. His practice areas include Appeals, Commercial Litigation, Probate Litigation (including representing estate and trust beneficiaries and fiduciaries), and Eminent Domain and Condemnation Law. Mike has earned the AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rating from Martindale-Hubbell.

R. DAVID MASSEY

Education – Wofford College (B.A. 1968); University of South Carolina (J.D. 1971); Emory University (L.L.M. in Taxation 1985); Notes Editor, South Carolina Law Review (1971); Recipient, American Jurisprudence Award in Torts (1969).

Professional - Member of Brown, Massey, Evans, McLeod & Haynsworth, LLC, Attorneys at Law, Greenville, SC, focusing in Estate Planning and Probate, and Estate, Trust and Fiduciary Litigation; Certified Specialist in Estate Planning and Probate Law (1985); Fellow, American College of Trust & Estate Counsel; Listed in Trusts and Estates Section, *The Best Lawyers in America,* Woodward/White; Listed as Lawyer of the Year 2012 – Litigation – Trust & Estates, Greenville, *The Best Lawyers in America,* Woodward/White; Listed for Trust and Estate Litigation, *Super Lawyers – South Carolina*, Law & Politics; South Carolina Bar (Member & Chairman of Probate, Estate Planning and Trusts Section, 1983-1984); Greenville County Bar (Member & Chairman of Tax Section, 1980-1981); Admitted to the Bar 1971, South Carolina, United States District Court, District of South Carolina, United States Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit, U. S. Court of Claims

Reported Cases - In Re Campbell, 666 S.E.2d 908 (S.C. 2008); In Re Campbell, 625 S.E.2d 233 (S.C. App. 2005); Kinard v. Kinard, 83 A.F.T.R.2d 99-2964 (D.S.C. 1999); First Union National Bank v. Soden, 511 S.E.2d 374 (S.C. App.1998); Macaulay v. Wachovia Bank, N.A., 508 S.E.2d 46 (S.C. App. 1998); Hanahan v. Simpson, 485 S.E.2d 903 (S.C. 1997); Hairston v. Moon, 427 S.E.2d 694 (S.C. App 1993); Howard v. Mutz, 434 S.E.2d 254 (S.C. 1993); Kale v. SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, 391 S.E.2d 573 (S.C. 1990); Pate v. Ford, 376 S.E.2d 775 (S.C. 1989); Allen v. Columbia Financial Management, Ltd, 377 S.E.2d 352 (S.C. App 1988); Pate v. Ford, 360 S.E.2d 145 (S.C. App. 1987); Ora v. Vinson, 596 F.Supp 1546 (Dist. Ct. - SC 1984).

Community Involvement - Chair of Community Foundation of Greater Greenville - 2001-2002; Vice Chair of Community Foundation of Greater Greenville – 2000; Board Member - Community Foundation of Greater Greenville - 1995-2004; Board Member - Greenville Hospital System Foundation - 2002-2003; Westminster Presbyterian - four terms on session - and service on various committees including Endowment, Finance, Education, Long-Range Planning, Personnel, and Week-Day School, Sunday school teacher; First Union, Wachovia & Wells Fargo Local Advisory Boards - 1999 – 2012; Greenville Hospital System Legacy Advisory Board – 2011.