

Government Law Seminar

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

by order of presentation

John H. Harris

Spartanburg County Attorney's Office

Spartanburg, SC

(Course Planner)

John H. Harris is the County Attorney for Spartanburg County. Mr. Harris' representation of Spartanburg includes advising the County Departments in all stages of the taxation process from the assessment of property through the sale of delinquent property. Mr. Harris also advises departments on legal issues related to the Planning, Building Codes and property maintenance matters, in addition to sitting with the Planning Commission and the Land Management Board of Appeals. Prior to joining the Spartanburg County Attorney's Office, Mr. Harris served as an Assistant County Attorney for another jurisdiction for seven years and was in private practice for a few years before beginning his public sector career.

He graduated from Clemson University with a Bachelor of Science in Financial Management and a Minor in Accounting. Mr. Harris received his J.D. from Cumberland School of Law, in Birmingham, Alabama. Mr. Harris is a council member of the Government Law Section of the SC Bar, a member of the Animal Law Committee of the SC Bar, the South Carolina Association of County Attorneys. When not practicing law, he enjoys waterskiing and camping with his family. He also is a member of the Boy Scouts of America, where he currently serves as a Scoutmaster.

Ginny L. Merck-Dupont

Lancaster County

Lancaster, SC

(Course Planner)

Ginny's current role is the County Attorney for Lancaster County. In her current role she is an active participant in all Lancaster County Council Meetings and assists Council and County Administration with various requests for research, legal advice, and legislation. She also handles all Freedom of Information requests received by the County, provides Legal Counsel and other Boards and Committees with advice relative to rules of procedure and handles legislation that impacts the County at the State level. She is licensed to practice in both South Carolina and Louisiana and is additionally licensed in the Federal District Court for the District of South Carolina and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Ginny has previously served as County Attorney for Spartanburg County, Town Attorney for the Towns of Blythewood and Surfside Beach, City Attorney for the City of Laurens, General Counsel for the Landrum Fire and Rescue District, the Spartanburg County Coroner, the Hilltop Fire District, the Belmont Fire District, the Gowensville Fire District, and the Anderson County Fire Commission, Assistant Solicitor for the Seventh Judicial Circuit (Spartanburg and Cherokee Counties), Associate Judge for the City of Greer, South Carolina, Associate Attorney at Allen, Kopet and Associates and as an Associate Attorney for Molaison and LeBlanc in Gretna, Louisiana where she additionally filled the role of an Assistant City Attorney for various municipalities. She graduated from the University of South Carolina in Columbia with a Major in Political Science and a Minor in Criminal Justice. Following her time at USC, she received

her Paralegal Certificate and later attended law school at Loyola University College of Law in New Orleans, Louisiana where she was a member of the Moot Court Staff. She is currently a member of the South Carolina Bar, the Louisiana Bar, the Lancaster County Bar, the South Carolina Association of County Attorneys, where she has held the title of Vice-President, President and Immediate Past President, the Government Law Section of the South Carolina Bar where she serves as a councilmember, the In-House Council Section of the South Carolina Bar where she serves as a Committee Member, the South Carolina Women Lawyers Association and the University of South Carolina Alumni Association. Ginny has also served as a member of the South Carolina Association of Counties Policy Steering Committee for Counties and Intergovernmental Relations and currently serves on the South Carolina Association of Counties Policy Steering Committee for Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation.

Ginny has been a contributor to the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC) Handbook on the Freedom of Information Act and has served as a speaker and panelist for the SCAC, the South Carolina Bar, and the South Carolina Special Purpose District Association.

John Nichols
Bluestein Thompson Sullivan, LLC
Columbia, SC

John Nichols received a BS in mathematics from Francis Marion College in 1978 and a JD from the USC School of Law in 1985. He began work with Rogers and Koon, PA, focusing primarily on property litigation. From 1986 to 1996, he worked for the South Carolina Court of Appeals as a law clerk, staff attorney, deputy chief staff attorney, and then chief staff attorney. At times he served as a law clerk for Chief Judge Alex Sanders, Associate Judge Randall Bell, and Acting Associate Judge (Retired Supreme Court Chief Justice) Bruce Littlejohn.

From 1996 to 2000 John practiced with Suggs & Kelly, PA, working primarily on multi-jurisdictional pharmaceutical product liability cases. In 2000 John and Marti Bluestein formed Bluestein & Nichols which is now Bluestein Thompson & Sullivan. John's primary focus was on appellate practice, general tort litigation and representing lawyers or judges before the Office of Disciplinary Counsel. In 2017, the Supreme Court appointed John to serve as the Disciplinary Counsel and he continued in that role until his retirement in 2023. John then returned "of counsel" to Bluestein Thompson Sullivan, where he practices general civil litigation, offers professional responsibility and ethics consultation, and handles appellate matters. He is also an ATA (Attorney to Assist Disciplinary Counsel) and is assigned primarily to investigate judicial disciplinary complaints.

From 2004 to 2018 John served on the SC Board of Law Examiners by Supreme Court appointment. In 2012 Governor Nikki Haley appointed John to the SC Commission on Indigent Defense and he was reappointed by Governor Henry McMaster. He is currently chair of the Commission. From 2013 to 2017 and 2023 to present, John served as outside counsel to the House Ethics Committee. He has also served as counsel to the Senate Ethics Committee, Speaker of the House Jay Lucas, and the Judicial Merit Selection Commission.

John is also admitted to practice law in the United States District Court for the District of South Carolina; the United States Courts of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, the Eleventh Circuit, and the Federal Circuit; the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims; and the Supreme Court of the United States. He has also been admitted *pro hac vice* in multiple jurisdictions, including California, Florida, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas. John has also been admitted and practiced before the Federal Multi-District Litigation Panel.

John has acted as chair or president for several other professional organizations, including the South Carolina Trial Lawyers' Association/South Carolina Association for Justice and the South Carolina Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. He served on the Chief Justice's Commission on the Profession from 2017 to 2023. In August 2024, the Supreme Court created a new Committee to independently investigate complaints against Supreme Court members and the Court appointed John as Chair of the Committee.

Since 1993 Judge Sanders and John have co-authored all versions of *The Trial Handbook for South Carolina Lawyers* published by Thomson Reuters (formerly West Publishing). Along with Professor Joel Samuels and Dean Colin Miller, John co-wrote the Fourth Edition of Professor James Flanagan's book, *South Carolina Civil Procedure* in 2020. Along with lawyers Elizabeth Scott Moise and Lyndey R.Z. Bryant, John co-wrote the Fifth Edition of Professor Pat Hubbard and Professor Bob Felix's book, *South Carolina Law of Torts* in 2023. John also authored *Service of Process in South Carolina* (SC Bar) and *Masters in Equity and Special Referees in South Carolina* (SC Bar), both of which are in their fifth edition. He has served as editor for the SC Bar's magazine, *The SC Lawyer*, and for the SCAJ magazine, *The Bulletin*. He has spoken at numerous CLE seminars for various groups and has served on numerous education committees for the SC Judicial Branch and other organizations.

John enjoys painting, playing guitar, traveling and hiking with his wife, Michelle, and spending time with his daughter, Beth, and his grandson, Max.

Adam Whitsett
South Carolina Law Enforcement Division
Columbia, SC

Adam Whitsett is the General Counsel of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. In that role, he advises SLED on all legal matters, including criminal investigations and civil litigation. He is a former Assistant Attorney General with the South Carolina Attorney General's Office where he worked in the civil division and represented the State of South Carolina, various state agencies, judges, and other entities on civil and regulatory litigation matters and appeals throughout the state. Adam has presented at numerous CLEs around the state on various topics, including expungements, FOIA, interrogations, sex offender registration, special searches, and gaming machine litigation. Before the Attorney General's Office, Adam was a litigator at The Finney Law Firm, Inc. Adam graduated from The Citadel and obtained his law degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law.

Ken Roper
Pickens County
Greenville, SC

Ken Roper was born in Pickens, and is a graduate of Liberty High School (1987), Furman University (B.A. Political Science, 1991), and the University of South Carolina (J.D., 1994). He has previously served as Pickens County Attorney (2004-2019), Municipal Attorney (Six Mile, Norris, and Liberty), and Municipal Judge (Norris and Liberty). Roper served for seven years as a prosecutor in our state's criminal courts, securing jury convictions in cases involving drug trafficking, armed robbery, and murder. As a member of the South Carolina Bar, Roper has lectured on the South Carolina Home Rule Act, civility in the practice of law and professionalism, and has served on both the State Bar's Pro Bono Committee and the Ethics Advisory Committee. A member of the South Carolina State Guard, Roper serves as a Government Affairs Officer for 8th Troop Command. He served on the Board of Directors for United Christian Ministries, the Liberty Chamber of Commerce, Easley Chamber of Commerce, and the Pickens Revitalization Association. In 2021 he was named an Appalachian Leadership Institute Fellow by the Appalachian Regional Commission. He is a member and past president of the Pickens Rotary Club and was named a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International. He is a Board member of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor and Ten at the Top. He currently serves on the South Carolina Department of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs E911 Advisory Committee, Vice Chair of the National Association of Counties Resilient Counties Innovation Council, 2025/26 President of the South Carolina Association of Managers, Administrators, and Supervisors, and on the Government Law Section Board of the South Carolina Bar Association.

Roper was appointed as the County Administrator, the chief executive officer of our county government, by Pickens County Council in July 2019. As Administrator, Roper is tasked with carrying out the vision of County Council by executing their policies, directives and legislative actions, and he is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Pickens County.

Bradley T. Farrar

*Aiken County
Aiken, SC*

Bradley T. Farrar is the County Attorney for Aiken County, South Carolina, and a retired U.S. Marine Corps judge advocate.

He is a graduate of the University of South Carolina, the University of South Carolina School of Law, the Air Force War College, and the Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

He regularly appears before religious and secular audiences to teach Christian strategic leadership principles and how to leverage the secular benefits of godliness as set forth in his book, *GOD and America: Lukewarm Is Not a Strategy* (Westbow, 2016).