

# Dispute Resolution Seminar

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

*by order of presentation*

### **Bess DuRant**

*Sowell & DuRant, LLC*

*Columbia, SC*

*(Course Planner)*

Bess DuRant, a member of Sowell & DuRant, LLC, is a litigator engaged in complex business disputes on both the trial and appellate level. Her practice includes corporate governance issues, bet-the-company litigation, shareholder disputes, derivative actions, along with other business torts and contractual disputes. Bess' practice also includes trust and estate litigation. She has been recognized by *Best Lawyers* in the fields of Commercial Litigation, Litigation – Trusts and Estates, and Appellate Practice. Sowell & DuRant is the smallest firm in South Carolina included and ranked in *Chambers USA Guide* for General Commercial Litigation.

Bess is a Supreme Court Certified Mediator and Arbitrator. She is a member of the Supreme Court's Commission on Alternative Dispute Resolution, a member of the South Carolina Bar's Dispute Resolution Section Council, and a member of the South Carolina Bar's Trial and Appellate Advocacy Section Council. She is an adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina School of Law, teaching Alternative Dispute Resolution. She calls Washington and Lee University and the University of South Carolina School of Law her alma maters.

## **The Honorable Clifton Newman**

*S.C. Circuit Court*

*Kingstree, SC*

**Hon. Clifton Newman (Active/ Retired)** served over 23 years as a judge on the South Carolina Circuit Court before joining JAMS as a mediator, arbitrator and neutral evaluator. Judge Newman presided over the South Carolina State Grand Jury and numerous high-profile civil and criminal cases, including, most recently, *The State v. Richard Alexander Murdaugh*. He is best known for his calm demeanor and thoughtful decision-making. A business court judge for over a decade, Judge Newman has immense experience presiding over complex litigation.

Over his years as a solicitor and during his judicial career, Judge Newman presided over myriad case types, including professional negligence, business torts, construction defect, governmental liability, insurance coverage, wrongful death and class actions. A former president of the American College of Business Court Judges, he is adept at handling the issues and complexities of commercial litigation. Additionally, he oversaw cases involving police shootings, false arrests and other governmental liability matters. With over two decades of judicial experience, Judge Newman employs the same even-tempered and balanced approach in all cases.

Judge Newman received his undergraduate degree from Cleveland State University. He obtained his juris doctor from Cleveland State University School of Law, where he gained early judicial experience serving as chief justice of the University Judiciary, the student court. He formed a successful private practice in Cleveland, Ohio, and ultimately settled in both Columbia and Kingstree, South Carolina where he continued successfully practicing law. He served as an assistant solicitor for Williamsburg County for over 16 years and spent 24 years in private practice prior to being unanimously elected to the South Carolina Circuit Court in 2000. He was unanimously reelected thereafter until his recent retirement to active/retired status.

## **The Honorable Kelly Pope-Black**

*S.C. Family Court*

*Campobello, SC*

Kelly Pope-Black has a 25 year legal career spent as a litigator, family court judge, mediator and court appointed receiver. She travels the state mediating cases ranging from adoption, high conflict divorces, probate matters and civil disputes. Since 2019, Kelly has mediated over 1,300 cases. In January 2023, she was appointed to the ADR Commission by the South Carolina Supreme Court where she serves on the program committee and neutral training committee. When she's not mediating across the state, you can find Kelly competing with her horse, Leo, in the hunter/jumper circuit throughout the Southeast or with her husband, Jody, visiting their daughter in Nashville where she is a student at Belmont University and an aspiring country music singer and songwriter.

**Angus Lawton**

*Lawton Law Firm  
Mount Pleasant, SC*

Angus M. Lawton graduated from Duke University in 1984 and the University of South Carolina School Law in 1988. He has an AV rating from Martindale Hubbell, and he has been certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy in Civil Practice Advocacy and Civil Trial Law. Mr. Lawton has been selected as a South Carolina Super Lawyer every year since 2012. He has spoken at numerous CLEs and authored several articles regarding the practice of law in South Carolina. He recently authored a book titled *Mediation and ADR in South Carolina* for the South Carolina Bar, and it was published early in 2025. His practice areas include mediation, personal injury, and workers' compensation.

**Natalie Bluestein**

*Bluestein & Douglas, LLC  
Mount Pleasant, SC*

Natalie graduated from the College of Charleston with a BA in English. She received a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of South Carolina before receiving her JD from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1993. SC Bar activities include several committees and longtime Regional Chairmanship on the Resolution of Fee Disputes Committee. Natalie has been on a number of Boards, including the SC Women Lawyers Association (President, 20--); Charleston County Bar Association (President, 2014-2015); Family Recovery Court; Mediation volunteer, Mediation Center of Charleston, Charleston County Family Court Liaison Committee Chair, and a founding member (Board member) of the Charleston Cooperative Family Law Association. She has organized and presented CLE's for over 25 years.