

# Elder Law Committee Seminar

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

*by order of presentation*

### **Andrew J. Atkins**

*Millender Elder Law LLC*

*Columbia, SC*

*(Course Planner)*

Andrew J. Atkins is a partner at Millender Elder Law LLC. He is admitted to practice in South Carolina. He is a member of the Richland County Bar Association, the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA), and the South Carolina Chapter of NAELA (SC NAELA). Mr. Atkins is the former Chair of the Elder Law Committee of the South Carolina Bar, and, for the past ten years, has served as the Chair or Co-Chair of the CLE Subcommittee of the Elder Law Committee. Mr. Atkins is the current President of SC NAELA, and, in 2013, he was selected as Outstanding Chapter Member of SC NAELA. Mr. Atkins is also an adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law, co-teaching a course on Elder Law with Sarah St. Onge, his partner at Millender Elder Law LLC. Mr. Atkins earned his B.A. degree from Furman University and his J.D. degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law.

### **Barbara Brunson**

*Law Office of Barbara Brunson*

*Columbia, SC*

*(Course Planner)*

Barbara Brunson is a native South Carolinian and graduate of the College of Charleston and University South Carolina Law School. She practiced law with Nelson, Mullins prior to becoming in-house counsel for two national mortgage lenders. She established her own law practice in 2010, which includes elder law, bankruptcy and consumer law.

Ms. Brunson includes elder law in her practice because she observed the many areas of law that affect the elderly population when her own parents aged and wanted to help other families and individuals address these issues. She is an active member of the SC Bar Elder Law Committee, including the CLE subcommittee, and she participated in drafting revisions to Article V of the Probate Code, which governs powers of attorney and guardianship/conservatorship issues. She is a member of the South Carolina Bar Elder Law Committee, SC Bar Probate Section, South Carolina Bankruptcy Law Association, and SC Bar Consumer Law Section.

## **Sarah St. Onge**

*Furman University*

*Greenville, SC*

Sarah Garland St. Onge started at Millender Elder Law in 2018 and became a member (partner) at the firm in 2021. She brings over fifteen years of experience in advocating for people with disabilities and their families. Her knowledge includes an understanding of the services and systems in South Carolina available to people with disabilities and the elderly. This knowledge base allows her to take a holistic approach to problem solving, including establishing working plans based upon her client's goals. Mrs. St. Onge has brought federal litigation to enforce the rights guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act, drafted amicus briefs in both state and federal courts, and investigated allegations of abuse and neglect at facilities throughout South Carolina.

She has experience in the fields of estate planning, probate, elder law, administrative law, mental health law, litigation, appellate practice, and affirmative litigation.

Mrs. St. Onge teaches Elder Law at University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law with Andrew J. Atkins. She also taught Legal Writing for five years.

She is active in the South Carolina Bar, serving on the Elder Law Committee, a past chair; a member of SC Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, serving on the Board of Directors; and has taught continuing legal education classes on guardianship, alternatives to Guardianship, Medicaid, estate planning, ethics, and advanced directives. She chaired the Article 5 Task Force, which was the body that drafted the changes to the guardianship and protective proceedings portion of the Probate Code. She is a contributing editor and author to *A Practical Guide to Elder and Special Needs Law in South Carolina, Second Edition*, published by the South Carolina Bar.

## **Mitchel Payne**

*Fisher Phillips LLP*

*Columbia, SC*

**Mitchell C. Payne** is a Partner in the firm Payne & Black, LLC with offices in Rock Hill and Columbia. Mr. Payne received his master's in accounting from the University of South Carolina in 1981 and his JD from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1984. Mr. Payne concentrates his practice in the fields of Elder Law, Long Term Care Planning, Medicaid Eligibility, Estate Planning, Disabilities and Special Needs Law, Probate and Estate Administration, and Guardianship and Conservatorship. Mr. Payne is a Member of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys and a Charter Member of the Academy of Special Needs Planners. He is a founding board member and past Chair of the Carolina's Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys and a Past President of the South Carolina Chapter of NAEJA. Mr. Payne is a current member and Past Chair of the Elder Law Committee of the South Carolina Bar.