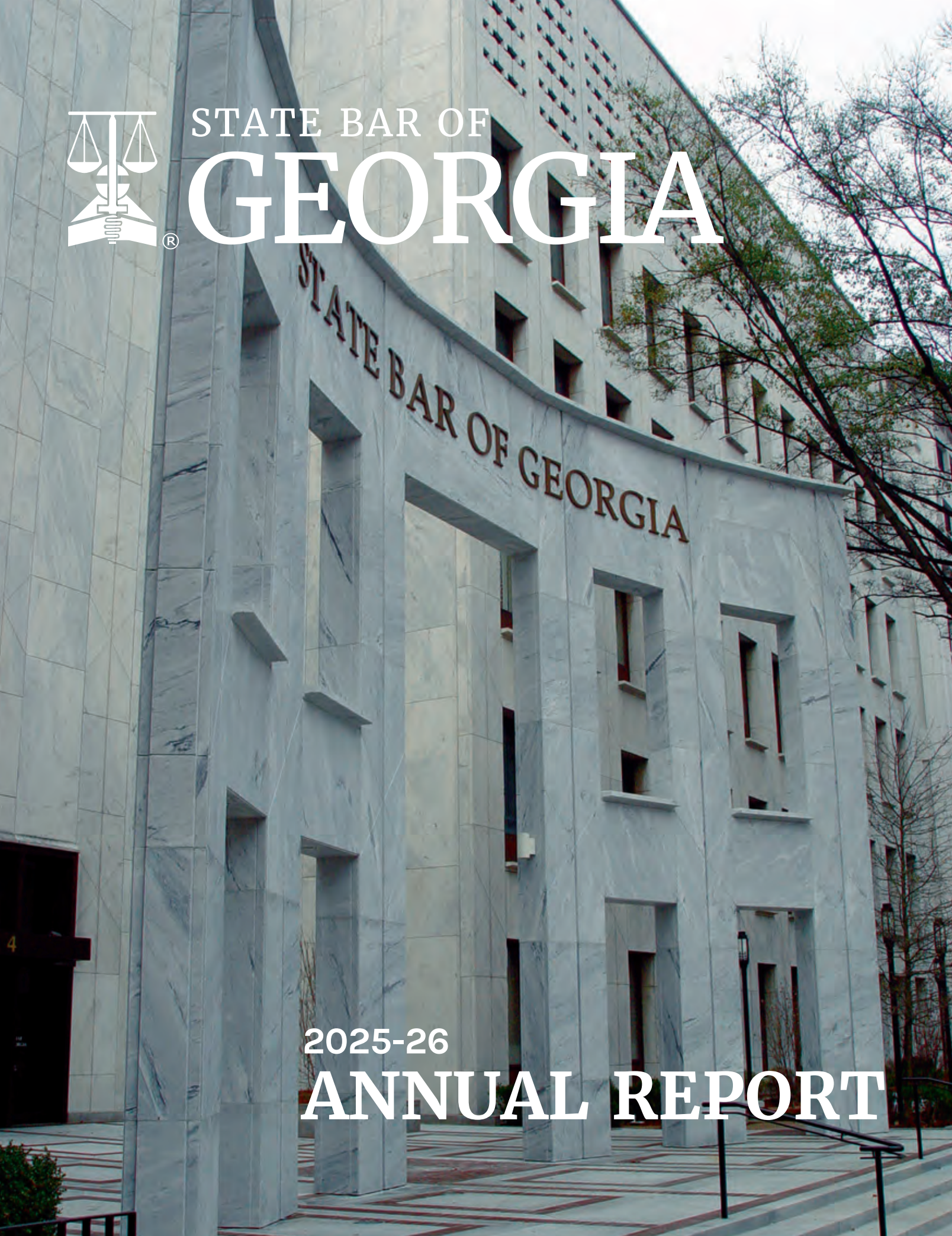


STATE BAR OF

GEORGIA

2025-26

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT
Christopher P. Twyman

PRESIDENT-ELECT
William C. "Bill" Gentry

TREASURER
R. Javoyne Hicks

SECRETARY
Shiriki Cavitt Jones

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Ivy N. Cadle

YLD PRESIDENT
Veronica R. Cox

YLD PRESIDENT-ELECT
Virginia C. Josey

YLD IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Kenneth Mitchell Jr.

ROCKDALE CIRCUIT
Thua G. Barlay

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 7
Norbert D. "Bert" Hummel IV

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 12
Joyce Gist Lewis

GWINNETT CIRCUIT, POST 1
David S. Lipscomb

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 13
R. Gary Spencer

PAULDING CIRCUIT
Martin E. Valbuena

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

ALAPAHA CIRCUIT, POST 1
Daniel Jackson Connell III

ALAPAHA CIRCUIT, POST 2
Hon. Clayton Alan Tomlinson

ALCOVY CIRCUIT, POST 1
Michael G. Geoffroy

ALCOVY CIRCUIT, POST 2
Anne Templeton LaMalva

APPALACHIAN CIRCUIT
Kevin William Roper

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 1
Nicole Christine Leet

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 2
Miguel Angel Dominguez

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 3
Lisa Katsuko Liang

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 4
Jeffrey Ray Kuester

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 5
Catherine Koura

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 6
Tracee Ready Benzo

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 7
William M. Ragland Jr.

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 8
Hon. Paige Reese Whitaker

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 9
Keith Elliott Gammage

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 10
Edward Alexander Piasta

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 11
Hon. Jill Pryor

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 12
Joyce Gist Lewis

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 13
R. Gary Spencer

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 14
Edward B. Krugman

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 15
Letitia A. McDonald

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 16
James Daniel Blitch IV

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 17
Hon. JaDawnya C. Baker

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 18
Hon. Rachel R. Krause

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 19
Zahra S. Karinshak

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 20
Lindsey S. Macon

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 21
Patricia Anne Gorham

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 22
Kevin C. Patrick

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 23
Donna G. Barwick

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 24
Joseph Anthony Roseborough

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 25
Amanda Clark Palmer

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 26
Edward T. McAfee

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 27
Nancy Jean Whaley

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 28
J. Henry Walker IV

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 29
Tina Shadix Roddenbery

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 30
Shiriki Cavitt Jones

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 31
Hon. Robert David Wolf

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 32
Susan Patricia Coppedge

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 33
Hon. Susan Eichler Edlein

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 34
Allegra J. Lawrence

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 35
N. John Bey

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 36
Graham Elliott McDonald

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 37
Harold Eugene Franklin Jr.

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 38
Gillian B. Fierer

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 39
Anita Wallace Thomas

ATLANTA CIRCUIT, POST 40
Hon. Shukura L. Ingram

ATLANTIC CIRCUIT, POST 1
H. Craig Stafford

ATLANTIC CIRCUIT, POST 2
Hugh J. McCullough

ATTORNEY GENERAL
Christopher M. Carr

AUGUSTA CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Amanda Nichole Heath

AUGUSTA CIRCUIT, POST 2
Katrell Nash

AUGUSTA CIRCUIT, POST 3
John C. Bell Jr.

AUGUSTA CIRCUIT, POST 4
John R. B. Long

BELL-FORSYTH CIRCUIT
Hon. Philip C. Smith

BLUE RIDGE CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. David Lee Cannon Jr.

BLUE RIDGE CIRCUIT, POST 2
Eric A. Ballinger

BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT, POST 1
Stephen Elliott Tillman

BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT, POST 2
Martha Wilson Williams

CHATTAHOOCHEE CIRCUIT, POST 1
Amy Carol Walters

CHATTAHOOCHEE CIRCUIT, POST 2
Brandon Lee Peak

CHATTAHOOCHEE CIRCUIT, POST 3
Alex Musole Shalishali

CHATTAHOOCHEE CIRCUIT, POST 4
Donna Stanaland Hix

CHEROKEE CIRCUIT, POST 1
Philip Zachary Pritchard

CHEROKEE CIRCUIT, POST 2
Howard Mark Delashmit

CLAYTON CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Kathryn Lauranne Powers

CLAYTON CIRCUIT, POST 2
Hon. Charity Bridgewater

CLAYTON CIRCUIT, POST 3
Hon. Martin L. Cowen III

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 1
Katie Kiihnl Leonard

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 2
Ronald Arthur Lowry

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 3
Hon. Kimberly A. Childs

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 4
Patrick H. Head

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 5
Dawn Renee Levine

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 6
Laura Joan Murphree

COBB CIRCUIT, POST 7
Norbert Daniel Hummel IV

COLUMBIA CIRCUIT
Danny L. Durham

CONASAUGA CIRCUIT, POST 1
Terry Leighton Miller

CONASAUGA CIRCUIT, POST 2
Robert Harris Smalley III

CORDELE CIRCUIT
John Craig Cotton

COWETA CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Nina Markette Baker

COWETA CIRCUIT, POST 2
Jason W. Swindle Sr.

DOUGHERTY CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Joseph West Dent

DOUGHERTY CIRCUIT, POST 2
Thomas V. Duck III

DOUGLAS CIRCUIT
Dalia Racine

DUBLIN CIRCUIT
Joseph Carl Sumner Jr.

EASTERN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Paul W. Painter III

EASTERN CIRCUIT, POST 2
Lester B. Johnson III

EASTERN CIRCUIT, POST 3
Maria Justus

EASTERN CIRCUIT, POST 4
John Bell Manly

ENOTAH CIRCUIT
Hon. Joy Renea Parks

FLINT CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Amanda Renee Flora

FLINT CIRCUIT, POST 2
Andrew Jackson Welch III

GRIFFIN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Janice Marie Wallace

GRIFFIN CIRCUIT, POST 2
Hon. Rhonda Bender Kreuziger

GWINNETT CIRCUIT, POST 1
David S. Lipscomb

GWINNETT CIRCUIT, POST 2
Judy C. King

GWINNETT CIRCUIT, POST 3
Wesley Charles Ross

GWINNETT CIRCUIT, POST 4
Gerald Davidson Jr.

HOUSTON CIRCUIT
Ryan English

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Archibald A. Farrar Jr.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 2
Douglas Ray Woodruff

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 3
Thomas Lindsay

MACON CIRCUIT, POST 1
John Flanders Kennedy

MACON CIRCUIT, POST 2
Thomas W. Herman

MACON CIRCUIT, POST 3
Rebecca Holmes Liles Grist

MEMBER-AT-LARGE, POST 1
William Thomas Davis

MEMBER-AT-LARGE, POST 2
Rotsen Dara Diya Law

MEMBER-AT-LARGE, POST 3
Mike Prieto

MIDDLE CIRCUIT, POST 1
Mitchell M. Shook

MIDDLE CIRCUIT, POST 2
Jerry Neal Cadle

MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT
Hon. James T. Irvin

NORTHEASTERN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Mark William Alexander

NORTHEASTERN CIRCUIT, POST 2
R. Brent Hatcher Jr.

NORTHERN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Kimberly Wilkerson Higginbotham

NORTHERN CIRCUIT, POST 2
Hon. Richard Dale Campbell

OCMULGEE CIRCUIT, POST 1
Carl Santos Cansino

OCMULGEE CIRCUIT, POST 2
Ashley Mackin Brodie

OCMULGEE CIRCUIT, POST 3
Stephen Russell Morris

OCONEE CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Charles Michael Johnson

OCONEE CIRCUIT, POST 2
Hon. Stephanie Diane Burton

OGEECHEE CIRCUIT, POST 1
Daniel Brent Snipes

OGEECHEE CIRCUIT, POST 2
Troy Windel Marsh Jr.

OUT-OF-STATE, POST 1
Stacey McSwine Cameron

OUT-OF-STATE, POST 2
William J. Monahan

PATAULA CIRCUIT
Edward R. Collier

PAULDING CIRCUIT
Martin Enrique Valbuena

PIEDMONT CIRCUIT
Barry E. King

ROCKDALE CIRCUIT
Thua G. Barlay

ROME CIRCUIT, POST 1
Christopher Ross Jackson

ROME CIRCUIT, POST 2
J. Anderson Davis

SOUTH GEORGIA CIRCUIT, POST 1
Joseph Mulholland

SOUTH GEORGIA CIRCUIT, POST 2
Tabitha Edwina Payne

SOUTHERN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Paul Hamilton

SOUTHERN CIRCUIT, POST 2
Kathryn Drew Parrish Bennett

SOUTHERN CIRCUIT, POST 3
H. Burke Sherwood

SOUTHWESTERN CIRCUIT
Hon. R. Rucker Smith

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Stacey K. Hydrick

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 2
Otobong U. Ekpo

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 3
Hon. Shondeana Crews Morris

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 4
Donna Coleman Stribling

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 5
Keith E. Adams

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 6
Claudia Susan Saari

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 7
John G. Haubenreich

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 8
Tedra L. Cannella

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 9
Sherry Boston

STONE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT, POST 10
Hon. Dax Eric López

TALLAPOOSA CIRCUIT, POST 1
Michael Douglas McRae

TALLAPOOSA CIRCUIT, POST 2
Brad Joseph McFall

TIFTON CIRCUIT
Hon. Render Max Heard Jr.

TOOMBS CIRCUIT
Hon. Thomas Brittan Hammond

TOWALIGA CIRCUIT
Johnathan Lang Adams

WAYCROSS CIRCUIT, POST 1
Matthew Jackson Hennesy

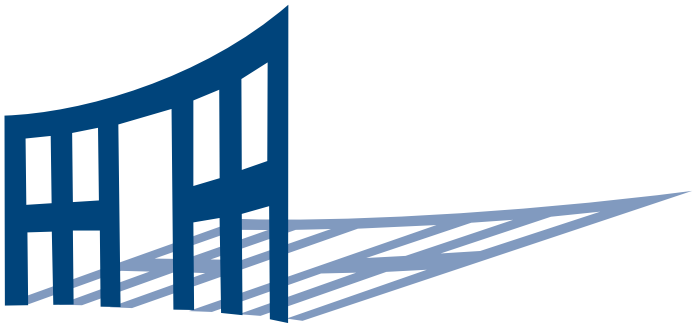
WAYCROSS CIRCUIT, POST 2
Vernon L. Chambliss

WESTERN CIRCUIT, POST 1
Hon. Lawton E. Stephens

WESTERN CIRCUIT, POST 2
Edward Donald Tolley

STATE BAR OF GEORGIA

2025-26 Annual Report



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President's Report

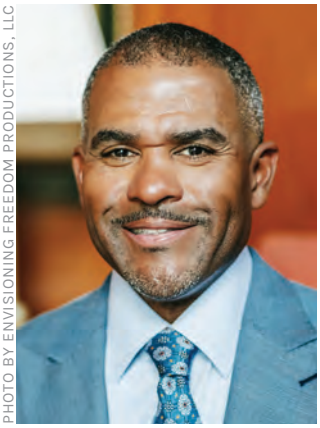


PHOTO BY ENVISIONING FREEDOM PRODUCTIONS, LLC

CHRISTOPHER P. TWYMAN

2025-26 President
State Bar of Georgia

It is with pride and pleasure that I report on the progress and accomplishments of this historic Bar year. A year ago, we outlined an agenda to improve our committee system, to continue the Bar's integration into and observation of artificial intelligence, to focus on our asset at 104 Marietta Street and seek leasing opportunities and maximize income potential, and to vigorously promote the rule of law.

We have answered that call. And we, together, have done more. We have taken action to place the Bar on a more solid governing and financial footing going forward.

Additionally, please know that this Bar year has been about more than those platform items and those action items that we debated and, at times, approved during our meetings. This year has also been about making the Bar more visible to our members. So, we made a point to move beyond the walls of our Bar building and outside of our Board meeting spaces to go where our members are. I was honored to visit local bar meetings and gatherings in Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, to share with attorneys throughout this state about the work of the Bar and the resources available to Georgia attorneys that are often unknown or overlooked. Although generations of State Bar presidents have traveled the state to meet with members, this year reinforced for me that the true value of those visits lies not in what we say, but in what we learn. The lesson I will carry forward is that meaningful leadership requires us to remain curious, accessible and willing to listen.

Likewise, I had the pleasure of attending a 7th Judicial District Judge's Meeting to discuss our work and initiatives supported by the Bar and promoted through our Bench and Bar Committee. Beyond just passing rules and promoting agenda items, this year has been about educating members on what we do as a Bar, and seeking more involvement and participation from our members.

Our message to members during these many visits was a consistent one: first, be informed about our focus areas of artificial intelligence, the Bar Center, Bar committee performance and the rule of law. Then, incorporate these resources into your local practices for the greater improvement of our collective law practice.

Artificial Intelligence

With that background, allow me to highlight our progress through the year beginning with our Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Committee.

This Bar year, we remained present with the advancement of artificial intelligence. In November 2025, we launched

our AI Toolkit to provide guidance for the use of AI in the practice of law and to promote the responsible use of the technology. The Toolkit's goal is simple: to support lawyers in using AI tools in ways that are ethical, appropriate and fully compliant with the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct. It offers recommendations, best practices, and resources to help lawyers make informed decisions about when and how to use generative AI. Through the continued great work of our Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Committee, we are fulfilling the Bar's mission to advance the science of law.

The Bar Center

Emerging technologies and AI will lend its hand to our work and focus on our Bar Center at 104 Marietta Street. In January, we signed with a new parking partner, Universal Parking, to bring an updated parking experience to Bar parking and better technology to improve revenue collection. Until now, visitor parking fees have been static and, at times, below market. As part of this new partnership, we will move to a dynamic pricing model in July to maximize revenue opportunities by charging our visitors true market prices. Our members, of course, will continue to enjoy priority and free parking.

Our new parking model is just one example of our efforts to strengthen the economic engine that is the Bar Center. We also turned our attention to occupancy, working closely with our broker to attract prospective tenants and maximize the value of our space.

Importantly, we have remained focused on more than simply filling square footage. Our goal has been to identify tenants who align with the mission of the Bar and the public we serve, while also moving closer to market-driven lease rates and strengthening the long-term financial position of the organization.

I am pleased to report activity in three categories: those opportunities that crossed the finish line, those still advancing through negotiations and those that ultimately chose a different path.

Among our successes, the Latino Community Fund has committed to nearly 2,000 square feet on the sixth floor, and the Georgia Innocence Project will occupy nearly 3,000 square feet on the fourth floor. Both organizations advance work that closely aligns with our broader commitment to access to justice and service to the public.

We also remain in active discussions with a nonprofit organization focused on workforce development and youth opportunity. Should that transaction come to fruition, it would result in occupancy of approximately 15,000 square feet on our second floor.

Not every opportunity reaches the finish line. During the year, we saw prospective arrangements involving an immigration-focused nonprofit, the U.S. Postal Service retail space and most recently a significant proposal involving nearly 30,000 square feet in the basement and sub-basement areas. While those opportunities did not materialize, they provided valuable insight into the market and reaffirmed the attractiveness of spaces that many would have previously considered difficult to lease.

Taken together, these efforts demonstrate meaningful progress toward a tenant mix that better reflects our mission, serves the public and supports the long-term financial health of the Bar Center.

As you know, we have continued to invest in the Bar Center through targeted upgrades and maintenance projects. Importantly, those investments were made without increasing member license fees directly, expanding our operating budget or relying on resources needed for day-to-day operations. Looking ahead, increased occupancy and leasing activity should help offset a portion of the costs associated with the facility and further strengthen the building's long-term financial position.

Please understand that these new lease relationships will not result in an imme-

diate windfall to the Bar Center coffers, but this leasing activity will generate additional revenue on the Bar Center side to help offset expenses related to the maintenance of the Bar Center.

Bar Committee Performance

This Bar year, we also brought more accountability to our committees and, as a result, realized more productivity from the committees. From the outset, we pressed committees to push comprehensive projects and work, not merely panels and presentations. We tightened minutes and other record-keeping rules to promote continuity from meeting-to-meeting, year-to year and to keep our committees on task. Additionally, and for the first time, we called on our committees to provide end-of-the-year activity reports for publication in the Board Book. These reports highlight the hard work of our committees this past Bar year, provide a summary to our greater membership of the committee work and hold our committees accountable to their respective missions.

Of course, while a year may seem like a long time, we all know that meaningful committee work cannot always be packaged into just 12 months. Committee work will continue, and some of those projects initiated during my Bar presidency will yield fruit in the coming months and years. This year, the Access to Justice Committee conducted a State of Pro Bono survey with plans to create a strategic plan for the next five years. As that committee completes its review of the survey results, I anticipate that in in the coming months the Access to Justice Committee will present its findings to the Executive Committee and this body. Just one example of our committees doing the work of the Bar.

We also welcomed a new division into the Bar fold. The Senior Lawyers Division (SLD) was established in February, culminating the hard work and vision of President-Elect Bill Gentry and a supporting cast who all worked tirelessly toward the division's creation. The Senior Lawyers Division's mission is, in part, to foster discussion about issues germane to older lawyers; create an interchange of ideas with other groups, including the Young Lawyers Division; provide mentoring opportunities to younger lawyers; and foster camaraderie among the older members of the State Bar. Our Bar will be well served by this new division.

The Rule of Law

And speaking of doing the necessary work of the Bar, there is one committee of which we are all members. We are all members of this learned profession. And part of our collective committee work—our professional work—is to promote the rule of law.

Promoting and defending the rule of law was a constant theme of this year. And it should be a focus and theme *every* year. Because understanding and defending the rule of law falls squarely in line with this Bar's stated mission—improving the administration of justice.

For years, the State Bar of Georgia has promoted the rule of law through law-related education. From the Journey Through Justice Program, which hosted 83 tours at the Bar and 14 on the road this Bar year, to our High School Mock Trial Program, we are bringing constitutional literacy to our youth, our future generation. To compliment these great programs, I, along with Chief Justice Peterson and YLD President Veronica Cox, filmed a series of educational videos for elementary students, middle schoolers and high school students to emphasize the importance of and to promote the rule of law.

On May 1, I had to opportunity to address a group gathered at the Supreme Court of Georgia for Law Day. At that event, I was able to remind other lawyers gathered there that throughout our history, our nation has faced moments that tested its commitment to the rule of law. But the legal system's ability to self-correct is not only a testament to the work of lawyers and judges working in defense of the rule of law, but validation that our system of government—that *we*—are a nation of laws, *not* of men.

This year, I was proud to stand and promote and defend the rule of law at every opportunity. Because without the rule of law, we, as lawyers, cannot fulfill our purpose.

CLE Compliance Period

One more note about the year. After years of work by dedicated volunteers, staff and our partners on the Court, the new CLE compliance period became a reality this year. I am proud that we were able to modernize the system in a way that provides greater flexibility and relief for Georgia lawyers while continuing to emphasize the importance of lifelong learning.

Continuing legal education matters because competence matters. It matters to our clients, to our courts and to the public we serve. These changes acknowledge the realities of modern practice while reaffirming our commitment to maintaining a profession that is knowledgeable, ethical and prepared for the challenges ahead. I believe this will prove to be one of those quiet but transformative improvements whose full value will be appreciated for years to come.

Thank You

To the Chief Justice and the Court: thank you being a partner in the work of the Bar. Your leadership and partnership are meaningful—not only to me, but in the success of our Board and the Bar. A special thanks to our liaisons, Justice Bethel, Presiding Justice Warren and Justice McMillian, for your collaboration during this Bar year.

To the Executive Committee: thank you for your support and for standing behind my initiatives. More importantly, thank you for your engagement, your deliberation and your vision. You showed up to every meeting dedicated and ready to work. And that made my service easier and enjoyable.

To the Board of Governors: thank you for how you represent your constituents and your dedication to showing up and making sure that we, as Bar leaders get it right. You were not here to provide a rubber stamp. You used your voice and offered sound debate. You keep us strong as a Bar.

And to the 56,000 lawyers in this state: thank you for putting your trust in me to lead as your 63rd president. It has truly been an honor and a privilege. ●

About the Bar

The State Bar of Georgia exists to foster among the members of the Bar of this state the principles of duty and service to the public; to improve the administration of justice; and to advance the science of law. All persons authorized to practice law in this state are required to be members.

The Bar has strict codes of ethics and discipline that are enforced by the Supreme Court of Georgia through the State Bar's Office of the General Counsel. Membership license fees and other contributions help the Bar provide programs that are mutually beneficial to its members and the general public. ●

TOTAL # OF STAFF

108 FULL TIME EMPLOYEES 8 PART TIME EMPLOYEES

TOTAL # OF BAR MEMBERS

55,699

LICENSE FEE FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS $270

Georgia's license and other mandatory fees rank **7th** lowest among 33 mandatory bar associations.

Executive Director's Message

PHOTO BY BONNIE J. HEATH PHOTOGRAPHY

DAMON E. ELMORE

Executive Director
State Bar of Georgia
damone@gabar.org

We are thrilled to present the fifth annual comprehensive report on the operations of the State Bar of Georgia. It is with great pride that we offer this broad snapshot of our work and accomplishments, showcasing the value we provide to our members and the public we serve. Our goal remains to provide meaningful insight into the benefits, services and opportunities available through the Bar while addressing many of the questions we frequently hear from lawyers across the state.

Five years ago, we committed to building on this report annually, and we remain dedicated to ensuring it is transparent, relevant, easy to navigate, and rich with meaningful data and statistics. We are grateful to our managers and to our Communications Department for their diligence in gathering, analyzing and presenting the information contained in these pages.

Your feedback continues to be invaluable. If there is something significant we have overlooked or an area where we can improve, we welcome your input. We are committed to continuous improvement, and your insights help us better serve our members and fulfill our mission.

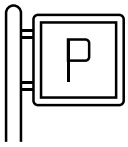
We are grateful for the leadership, vision and support of our 2025-26 president, Christopher P. Twyman, the Board of Governors and our volunteer leaders in advancing the work of the State Bar during this Bar year. The results reflected in the pages that follow, and the momentum we carry forward, are a testament to the dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment of our staff and volunteers. Together, we remain laser-focused on protecting the public, advancing the science of the law, and improving the administration of justice and the quality of legal services throughout Georgia.

We now look ahead to the new Bar year and the leadership of President William P. "Bill" Gentry. We are excited to support his vision and priorities while continuing our work to responsibly steward Bar resources, strengthen the contributions of our committees and volunteer leaders, navigate the opportunities and challenges presented by emerging technologies, and uphold our enduring commitment to the rule of law.

We are equally grateful to all of our volunteer leaders, as well as our liaisons with the Supreme Court of Georgia, Justice Charlie Bethel and Justice Carla Wong McMillian, for their guidance, partnership and support. Their engagement continues to strengthen the relationship between the Court and the organized Bar.

As we reflect on another successful year and look to the future, we embrace the opportunities and challenges ahead with optimism and purpose. We remain committed to becoming better with each passing day and to serving Georgia's lawyers and citizens with excellence. DEE ●

Member Benefits



STATE BAR PARKING DECK

Free Parking is available to all Bar members and is open Monday–Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free parking is also available on nights and weekends with a Bar card and picture ID. In 2024, the State Bar added six Level 2 EV charging stations on the fourth level. ●

VENDOR DIRECTORY

gabar.org/vendor-directory

The online Vendor Directory provides a listing of practice-related products and services; many offer discounts to Bar members. ●

MB | MemberBenefits

MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.

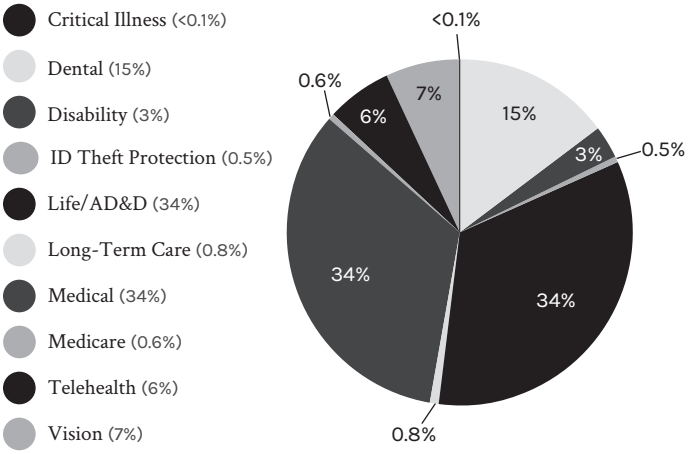
gabar.memberbenefits.com

Member Benefits, Inc., is the recommended broker of the State Bar of Georgia, Health, Dental & Vision Plans, plus Long-Term Disability and Long-Term Care. From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, there were 855 total enrollments in various individual insurance products and 782 enrollments in employer-insurance products in the past year. ●

MEMBER BENEFITS, INC., TOTAL PRODUCT ENROLLMENTS

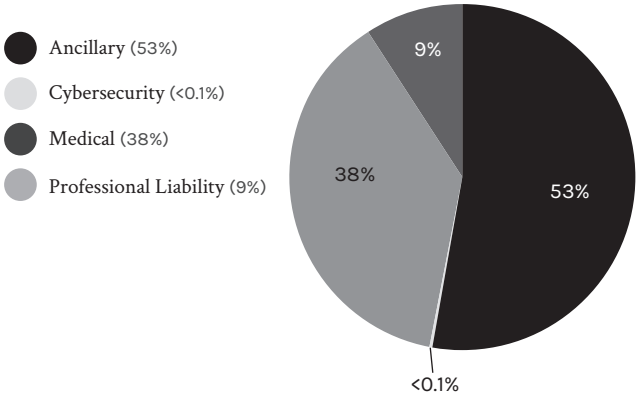
TOTAL # OF INDIVIDUAL PRODUCT ENROLLMENTS

9,256 ⇧5% since 2024-25



TOTAL # OF EMPLOYER PRODUCT ENROLLMENTS

4,895 ⇧19% since 2024-25



VLEX FASTCASE LEGAL RESEARCH

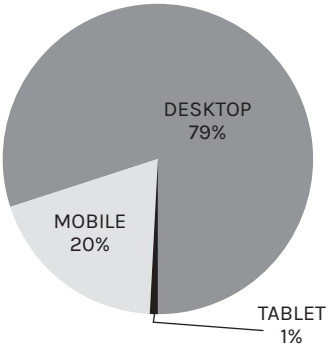
vLex Fastcase is provided free to all members and includes a comprehensive, national law library on your computer/tablet/smartphone, with online access to cases, statutes, regulations, court rules and bar publications. ●

RELIAGUIDE

gabar.reliaguide.com/home

ReliaGuide, with its Find a Lawyer directory, serves as the Bar's enhanced member directory that offers members the ability to create a profile with a photo, up to three practice areas, education, contact and license information at no cost. An expanded profile (Profile Plus) is available for only $15 a month. From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, interactions with member profiles totaled 580,028, including 86,676 profile views, 8,214 completed contact forms and 29,789 clicks on lawyer phone numbers and email addresses. ●

SEARCH DEVICE TYPE BREAKDOWN

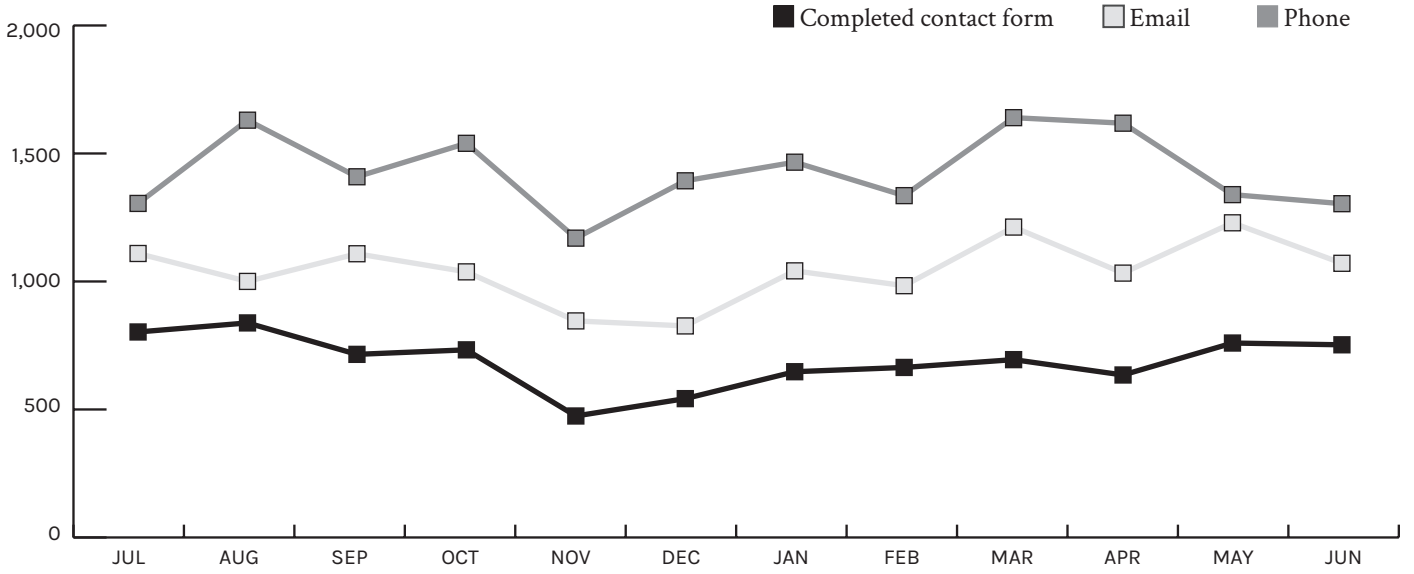


OF MEMBER PROFILE INTERACTIONS

580,028 ⇧7% since 2024-25

The majority of searches occurred on Tuesdays between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

OF RELIAGUIDE CONTACT ACTIONS JULY 1, 2025–JUNE 30,2026



The State Bar of Georgia offers a wide range of services and programs that benefit Bar members. Members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these services and programs, and are welcome to contact the staff members listed for further information. For more information on these programs and services, please visit www.gabar.org. ●

Bar Conference Center: Atlanta

404-419-0155 | conferencecenter@gabar.org

KYLE GAUSE, DIRECTOR

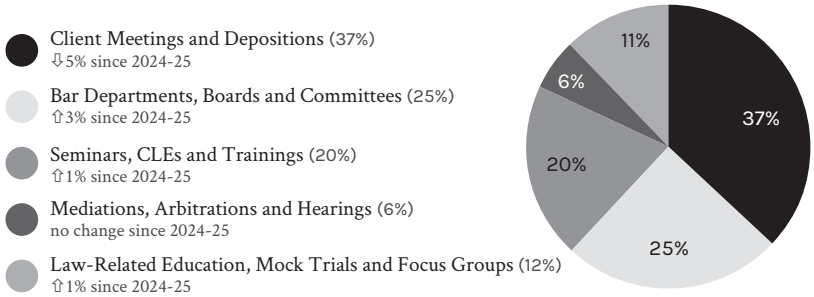
MONTHLY AVERAGE # OF ATTENDEES

1,357

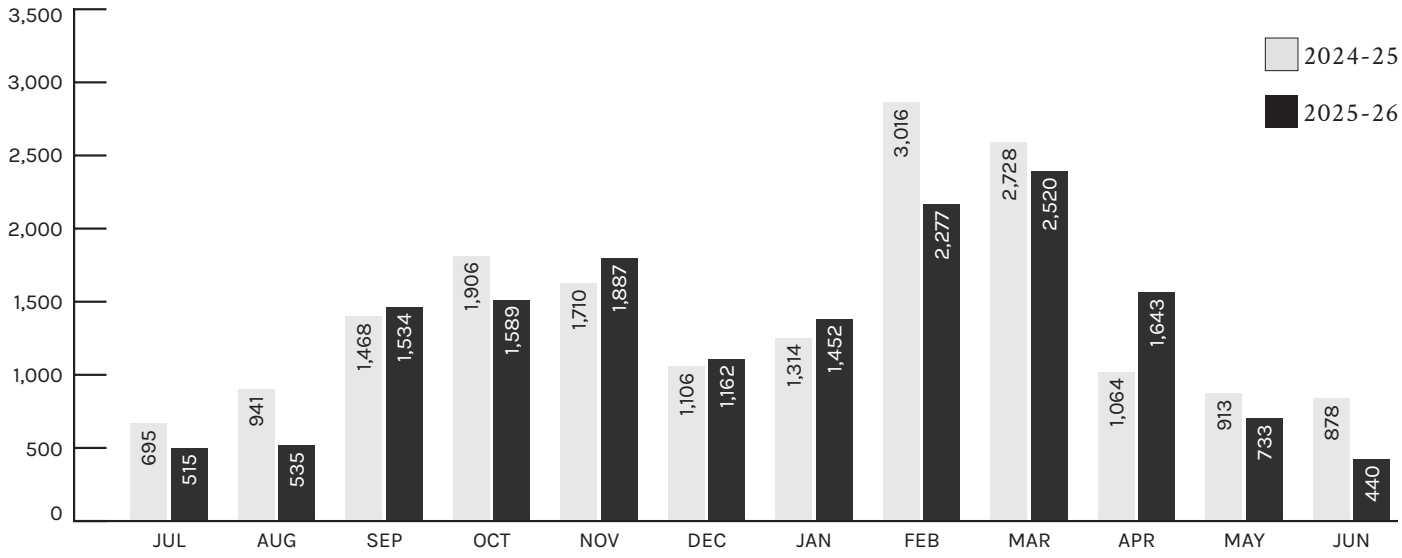
The State Bar of Georgia Conference Center is available for use by Bar members and legal organizations. With the increase in the request for hybrid and virtual offerings, the Conference Center is well-equipped to handle set-up for a number of virtual platforms (webinars, Zoom meetings, etc.), in addition to more traditional meeting formats.

The Conference Center features 13 unique meeting rooms that can host two to 200 attendees. ●

AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE BY EVENT TYPE



OF CONFERENCE CENTER VISITORS JULY 1, 2025 –JUNE 30, 2026



Center for Lawyer Wellbeing

www.gabar.org/wellbeing

R. JAVOYNE HICKS, CHAIR

The State Bar of Georgia's Center for Lawyer Wellbeing was created in 2024 to promote holistic wellness for legal professionals. Membership in the Center offers invaluable resources, networking opportunities and exclusive benefits designed to support lawyers' personal and professional growth.

We encourage all to join to help build a comprehensive and robust destination for lawyers that places wellness, wellbeing and resilience as a critical part of law practice and an essential element of lawyer competency. The voluntary annual membership fee is $40.

Goals of the Center for Lawyer Wellbeing

- Collaborating with Bar sections, committees and other entities to provide high-quality, up-to-date programming that will educate lawyers, judges, law students and other stakeholders on the significance of wellbeing issues and provide them with the tools they need to make a positive impact.
- Serving as a clearinghouse and repository of information on the work of the State Bar of Georgia, its sections, committees, divisions and programs in the area of wellbeing.
- Encouraging continued study of the connection between wellbeing, professionalism and discipline.
- Developing and sharing policies and best practices that move the profession toward healthier behaviors.
- Eliminating the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors.

Benefits of Membership in the Center for Lawyer Wellbeing

The benefits listed are a representative example of the current, planned and potential offerings to members. Benefits are subject to change.

- Discounts on continuing education and professional development.
- Discounts on wellness products and services.
- Priority access to wellness events and programs.
- Exclusive access to premium wellness resources.
- Networking with wellness experts and peers.
- Exclusive member-only events and perks.
- Recognition and rewards.

Highlighting the crucial link between prioritizing lawyer wellbeing and achieving a successful legal practice aligns with the State Bar's mission to enhance the quality of legal services. ●

Communications

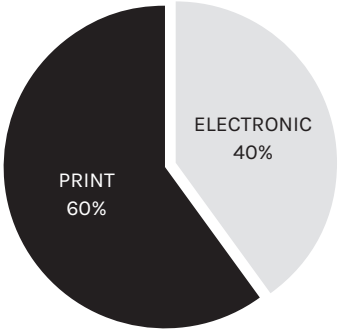
404-527-8761 | communications@gabar.org

JENNIFER MASON, DIRECTOR

The Bar's publications and media relations are coordinated by this department and various committees. This department is also responsible for maintaining the State Bar of Georgia website. The *Georgia Bar Journal*, published quarterly, is the flagship publication of the State Bar of Georgia. The department also handles a majority of the social media content for the Bar, coordinates the annual awards program and provides staff support for the Center for Lawyer Wellbeing Board. ●

GEORGIA BAR JOURNAL

DISTRIBUTION TYPE



OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

FACEBOOK
8,105
⇧2.9% since 2024-25

The State Bar's Facebook audience is split 65.8% women and 34.2% men.

INSTAGRAM
2,793
⇧9.6% since 2024-25

12% of the State Bar's Instagram interactions are by non-followers.

LINKEDIN
10,044
⇧12% since 2024-25

62% of the State Bar's LinkedIn audience is from the greater Atlanta area.

CONNECT WITH THE BAR

- www.gabar.org
- @statebarofgeorgia
- @statebarofga
- /state-bar-of-georgia
- @StateBarOfGeorgia

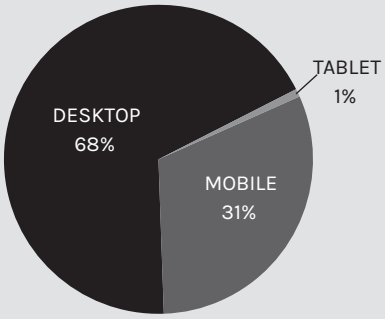
www.gabar.org

JULY 1, 2025–JUNE 30,2026

TOP FIVE PAGES VISITED

1. Member Directory
2. Home
3. Handbook
4. Public/Find a Lawyer
5. Search

DEVICE TYPE BREAKDOWN



TOTAL # OF USERS
2,880,257

TOTAL # OF VIEWS
6,996,186

TOTAL # OF SESSIONS
3,947,316

Continuing Legal Education Regulation

404-527-8710 | cle@gabar.org

DEE DEE WORLEY, DIRECTOR

This program operates under the Commission on Continuing Lawyer Competency and assists lawyers with keeping track of their CLE hours through an online CLE transcript that can be viewed by the lawyer any time by logging in to their member portal on the Bar's website, www.gabar.org.

The CLE requirement is designed to help lawyers maintain their professional competence throughout their active practice of law. In 2025 active lawyers were required to keep current on the law by attending a minimum of 12 hours of legal education including 2 ethics hours, 1 professionalism hour and 3 trial hours. Lawyers can complete these 12 hours by an approved CLE program attended either in person or through a distance-learning format. In addition to CLE programs, lawyers can receive CLE hours each year for coaching a high school mock trial team; judging a high school, college or law school mock trial competition; authoring a published legal article or observing a trial.

Starting in 2026, the Supreme Court of Georgia approved a rules change that moved the CLE requirement from an annual requirement to a biennial requirement. The first CLE deadline with the biennial CLE requirement is Dec. 31, 2027. The biennial CLE requirement is 18 CLE hours including 3 ethics hours and 2 professionalism hours. ●

OF ACTIVE BAR MEMBERS IN 2025-26
42,887

OF CLE PROVIDERS THAT SUBMITTED COURSES
810
⇩7% since 2024-25

OF BAR MEMBERS WITH A CLE REQUIREMENT
31,654

OF CLE COURSES APPROVED FOR CREDIT
19,088
⇩0.6% since 2024-25

OF BAR MEMBERS SUSPENDED FOR CLE NONCOMPLIANCE
55

OF CLE HOURS ATTENDED BY BAR MEMBERS
460,220
⇧2% since 2024-25

In the 2025-26 Bar year, **11,233** active lawyers received a CLE exemption (judge, out of state, age 70, Bar examiner, military, TILPP).

Fee Arbitration

404-527-8750 | feearbitration@gabar.org

DONNA DAVIS, DIRECTOR

The State Bar of Georgia's Fee Arbitration Program is a service provided to the public and the attorneys of Georgia. This Program provides a convenient mechanism for the resolution of fee disputes between attorneys and clients, and between attorneys in connection with the dissolution of a practice or the withdrawal of an attorney from a partnership or practice, or between attorneys concerning the allocation of fees earned from joint services.

Overview of Petition Process

There are four essential phases of the petition process:

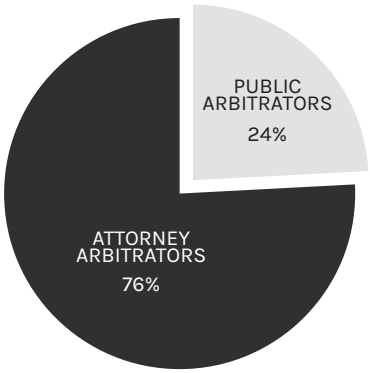
1 Petition
Petitions can be initiated by either the attorney or the client. In client-initiated petitions, co-petitioners are the people who were financially responsible for the client's legal fees.

2 Answer
Answers are submitted by the respondent. As of Jan. 28, 2022, respondents must agree to be bound in order for the Fee Arbitration Program to continue through the remaining processes.

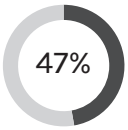
3 Committee
The committee and committee staff read the petition, answer, rebuttals and any additional information submitted to determine jurisdiction.

4 Hearing
If jurisdiction is accepted, arbitrators are selected and a hearing is scheduled. Parties are able to attend in person or participate by Zoom. Arbitrators must attend in person. ●

TOTAL # OF VOLUNTEER ARBITRATORS IN 2025-26
223



TOTAL # OF PETITIONS RECEIVED IN 2025-26
780

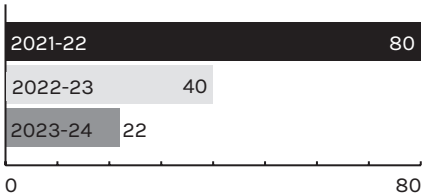


of cases resolved via settlement, declined jurisdiction, arbitration award, etc.

TOTAL # OF HEARINGS HELD IN 2025-26*
10

** In comparison, in calendar year 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fee Arbitration Program held 31 hearings; the program held 81 hearings in calendar year 2021, prior to the January 2022 Rule change requiring attorneys to be bound by the result of the arbitration.*

TREND IN # OF HEARINGS



Finance

404-527-8748 | ront@gabar.org

RON TURNER, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED FOR GLSP CAMPAIGN

$231,522

The Finance Department is responsible for safeguarding the financial integrity and sustainability of the State Bar of Georgia. The department manages all financial operations in compliance with accounting standards, statutory requirements, and the State Bar's internal regulations. It maintains public trust by ensuring fiscal responsibility, transparency, and efficient management of resources to support the Bar's mission and services to its members.

GETTYIMAGES.COM/DNY59

FY2026 Financial Summary

The State Bar operated at a planned financial deficit for the Bar year ending June 30, 2026. The State Bar's net assets are estimated to be in the range of $35 million to $37 million. The Bar year's end is June 30, and as such, this amount is estimated. The State Bar operates without any debt.

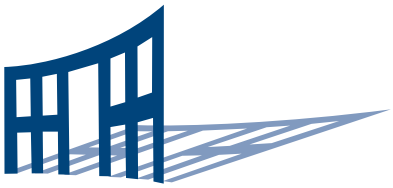
Approved FY26 Budget

The State Bar Board of Governors approved a budget with a deficit for the year ended June 30, 2026, of $1,074,873.

Management's Responsibility

The State Bar of Georgia's management is responsible for the information provided in the Financial Report. The basic financial statements and related notes are audited by an independent accounting firm in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. ●

Georgia Diversity Program



404-219-8174 | gadiversityprogram@gmail.com

HALIMA HORTON WHITE, DIRECTOR

The Georgia Diversity Program (GDP) remains committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within Georgia's legal profession. Through educational programming, professional development, leadership initiatives and pipeline programs, GDP continues to create meaningful opportunities for students, attorneys, judges, corporate counsel, government lawyers and legal organizations across the state.

GDP is comprised of law firms, corporate legal departments, government agencies and legal organizations that support the program through annual membership and active participation. Throughout 2026, the Steering Committee met regularly to develop programming, strengthen partnerships, and address issues impacting diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

Continuing Legal Education and Professional Development

In late March 2026, GDP presented its Spring CLE, which included topics such as U.S. Supreme Court and Supreme Court of Georgia updates, ethical guidelines for communicating with opposing counsel and immigration updates. The program was well attended and received positive comments from attendees. It was a dynamic presentation. For example, the Supreme Court update included audio from various U.S. Supreme Court oral arguments.

High School Pipeline Program

The High School Pipeline is one of GDP's signature initiatives. Bradley hosted 15 students during the two-week summer program that exposed high school students to lawyers and law students. Scholars met daily with their instructors—a high school guidance counselor and a lawyer. They worked with their scholars on writing (such as thank you emails and personal statements to get into college). They also worked on Lincoln-Douglas debates, including researching and analyzing topics approved for high school students, such as whether police should be required to wear body cameras at all times.

The highlight of the program is the lunches the scholars attend at different law firms, corporate legal departments and other organizations. This year, for example, the scholars learned about credit at Equifax, learned about how legal departments further corporate functions at Newell Brands, and learned about how professionalism and etiquette further relationships at Fisher Phillips. There is significant engagement in the program among the Atlanta legal community.

Business Development Initiative

In 2026, GDP launched planning efforts for its inaugural Business Development Symposium. This year, we will invite small businesses (rather than in-house counsel) to attend and to actually interview lawyers they'd like to hire in practice areas, such as immigration, corporate advice, trademarks and copyrights, estate planning and more.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

GDP continued to strengthen relationships with Georgia law schools, bar associations, corporate legal departments, law firms, government agencies and members of the judiciary. For example, we recently co-sponsored a Summer Associates Happy Hour with the Georgia Asian Pacific American Bar Association, the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys and others.

Looking Ahead

As GDP moves into 2027, we are determined to obtain significant engagement in programs that tangibly benefit lawyers, such as a Business Development Symposium where small businesses without in-house counsel will interview lawyers to hire. We will offer CLEs that tangibly arm lawyers with the knowledge they need to be effective in their craft. And we will expand our reach throughout Georgia.

Programming is supported by Georgia Diversity Program member firms. We are grateful to these firms, a list of which can be found at www.gabar.org/diversity, for their continued support and acknowledge that without their dedication, the work of the program would not be possible. ●

Georgia High School Mock Trial

404-527-8779 | mocktrial@gabar.org

RICH HARRIS, DIRECTOR

The Georgia High School Mock Trial (HSMT), recognized as one of the strongest in the nation as exemplified by three top 10 finishes in the last three National Championships, oversees an annual statewide competition of more than 130 schools (2,300+ students). Participating teams come from every region of Georgia, Valdosta to Dalton and Savannah to Columbus. Mock trial develops and enhances vital life skills such as public speaking, critical thinking and teamwork, while providing participants with practical knowledge of our legal system. The competition relies on thousands of volunteer hours by members of the State Bar and especially the Young Lawyers Division. Volunteer lawyers coach teams, coordinate and run the competition, write the case and staff the panels that judge rounds.

Law Academy

The program also conducts Law Academy, a three-day program each summer, designed to empower the top mock trial students with trial practice and leadership skills they can take back to their teammates. The faculty of Law Academy consists of highly experienced judges and trial lawyers. In 2026, due to student demand, the program will host two separate weekends, in Atlanta and Macon ●

Georgia HSMT by the Numbers

2026 SEASON

- 2,370 students (+337 since 2025)
- 135 schools registered (+8 since 2025)
- 371 coaches: judges, attorneys and teachers (+48 since 2025)

REGIONS

- 146 competing teams
- 17 locations across the state
- 700+ volunteers on judging panels (+70 since 2025)

DISTRICTS

- 54 teams (+2 since 2025)
- 9 locations across the state
- 200+ volunteers on judging panels

STATE FINALS

- 18 teams
- 89 volunteers on judging panels
- 5 rounds over 3 days to crown State Champion

State Champion Northview High School competed at the National High School Mock Trial Championship in Des Moines, finishing **2nd** (National Runner-Up) of 44 teams.

CONNECT WITH HSMT

www.georgiamocktrial.org

@GeorgiaMockTrial

@georgia_hs_mock_trial

Governmental Affairs // Legislative Program

404-526-8608 | jennm@gabar.org

JENN MCNEELY, DIRECTOR

GETTYIMAGES.COM/NASHVILLEDIN02

The 2025–26 Bar year marked another year of significant growth and engagement for the State Bar of Georgia's Governmental Affairs Department. Through legislative advocacy, member engagement, strategic communications and collaboration with Bar leadership, sections, committees and policymakers, the department continued to advance the Bar's mission of promoting the administration of justice and supporting the legal profession.

Legislative Advocacy

During the 2026 legislative session, the Governmental Affairs team monitored hundreds of bills and resolutions affecting the legal profession, the judiciary and the administration of justice. Working closely with the Advisory Committee on Legislation, the Executive Committee, Bar sections and committees, and legislative leadership, the department evaluated proposed legislation and advanced the Bar's legislative priorities throughout the session.

The Bar's most notable legislative accomplishment was the successful passage of legislation expanding the qualifications for quiet title special masters. The legislation increases the pool of qualified attorneys eligible to serve in these proceed-

ings, particularly benefiting rural judicial circuits while preserving the integrity and expertise required for these appointments.

The team also continued its advocacy in support of adequate funding for indigent defense. We monitored numerous proposals involving unlicensed practice of law, remote online notarization, judicial administration, civil procedure, probate practice, election law and other matters affecting Georgia lawyers and courts.

In addition to the regular legislative session, the department monitored and reported on the governor's 2026 special session.

Legislative Communications

Keeping members informed remained a central focus throughout the year. We published regular legislative updates during the general session, providing concise, nonpartisan summaries of significant legislative activity. Following both the regular and special legislative sessions, members received comprehensive recaps outlining enacted legislation and key developments affecting the practice of law. We also contributed legislative articles to the *Georgia Bar Journal*, including the annual Legislative Review and a Legislative Session Preview.

Member Engagement and Public Policy

The Governmental Affairs Department continued to strengthen relationships between the legal profession and state policymakers through numerous engagement opportunities. During the Bar's Annual Meeting, the department hosted the Legislative Appreciation Dinner, bringing together members of the judiciary, legislative leaders, constitutional officers and Bar leadership to strengthen relationships and foster collaboration between Georgia's legal and governmental communities.

Throughout the year, the department also coordinated meetings of the Advisory Committee on Legislation, providing members with opportunities to review legislative proposals, receive policy briefings and recommend positions on issues affecting the profession.

Gold Dome Track: Answering the Call

One of the department's signature accomplishments this year was the launch of Gold Dome Track: Answering the Call, a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to encourage attorneys to consider public service through elected office. Developed in response to the continued decline in the number of lawyers serving in the Georgia General Assembly, the program consisted of a two-part educational series. The first session featured a panel of current and former lawyer-legislators who shared candid perspectives on campaigning, serving in office and balancing legislative responsibilities with the practice of law. The second session provided participants with practical campaign training led by campaign finance attorneys, political consultants and election professionals covering the mechanics of running for office.

Looking Ahead

Building on the momentum of the past year, the Governmental Affairs Department will continue expanding member engagement opportunities, strengthening legislative relationships and advancing initiatives that support the legal profession and improve Georgia's justice system.

Future priorities include expanding the Gold Dome Track program through regional programming, increasing opportunities for member participation in the legislative process, strengthening communications with Bar sections and committees, developing a legislative externship program for law students and continuing to advocate for policies that enhance the administration of justice throughout Georgia.

Our team remains committed to serving as a trusted resource for Bar members, legislative leaders and the judiciary while ensuring that the voice of Georgia's legal profession is informed, engaged and effectively represented.

The State Bar of Georgia's Legislative Program is exclusively funded by voluntary contributions from our members. Any official position by the State Bar of Georgia, including its sections and committees, must follow the process outlined in Standing Board Policy 100, www.gabar.org/SBP100, and meet the standards set out by the U.S. Supreme Court in Keller v. State Bar of California. *The State Bar and affiliated entities cannot take an official position on legislation without following these policies and standards.* ●

Institute of Continuing Legal Education

678-529-6688 | icle@gabar.org

JULIA NEIGHBORS, DIRECTOR

The Institute of Continuing Legal Education of the State Bar of Georgia (ICLE) was established to promote a well-organized, properly planned and adequately supported program of continuing legal education by which members of the legal profession may enhance their skills, keep abreast of developments in the law, ethics and professionalism, engage in the study and research of the law, and disseminate the knowledge thus obtained. For more information about upcoming CLE programs, please visit icle.gabar.org. ●

TOTAL # OF ON DEMAND PROGRAMS SOLD
13,980

TOTAL # OF ON-DEMAND PROGRAM HOURS WATCHED
75,142

TOTAL # OF ICLE PROGRAMS OFFERED
56

OF LIVE-STREAM PROGRAMS
36 (64% of 2025-26)

OF INSTITUTES/ CONFERENCES
20 (35% of 2025-26)

OF VIRTUAL SUMMITS
1 (1% of 2025-26)

TOTAL # OF ATTENDEES
5,808

TOTAL # OF SPEAKERS
909

TOTAL # OF ICLE PROGRAM LOCATIONS
8

Amelia Island, Florida
Athens, Georgia
Atlanta, Georgia
Augusta, Georgia
Avon, Colorado
Jekyll Island, Georgia
Macon, Georgia
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

CONNECT WITH ICLE

icle.gabar.org
@statebargaicle
@iclega
/iclega

Law Practice Management

404-527-8770 | lpm@gabar.org

NKOYO EFFIONG, DIRECTOR

The Law Practice Management Program helps Georgia lawyers start, scale or shutdown their practices with less stress. Through our resource library, vendor directory, toolkits, webinars, consultations and the Take Charge! Conference, we equip lawyers and legal professionals to build future-ready law firms that are agile, strategic and prepared to navigate change in an increasingly fast-moving technology landscape. Our goal is not simply to help lawyers adopt new tools, but to help them use technology, sound practice management principles and human judgment in ways that strengthen sustainable practices while preserving the independence, ethics, advocacy and professional identity that make lawyers and the practice of law distinct. ●

OF STARTUP KITS DISTRIBUTED
140

OF LPM INSIDER SUBSCRIBERS
626

OF BOOKS IN THE RESOURCE LIBRARY
1,445

OF ATTENDEES AT THE 2025 TAKE CHARGE! CONFERENCE
95

OF LIBRARY PATRONS
2,248

OF ATTENDEES AT THE 2026 TAKE CHARGE! 1-DAY SUMMIT
36

Generative AI Toolkit

The Generative AI Toolkit is live on the website along with additional resources and guidance on how to ethically incorporate generative AI and emerging tech into your workflow. Get the information you need at www.gabar.org/ai.

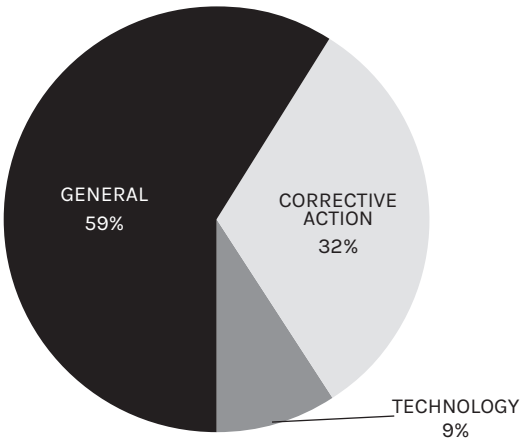
CONNECT WITH LPM

bit.ly/lpmnewsletter

@gabarlpm

/law-practice-management

CONSULTATION TYPE BREAKDOWN



Law-Related Education

404-527-8785 | lre@gabar.org

DEBORAH CRAYTOR, DIRECTOR

The Law-Related Education (LRE) Program offers K-12 teachers a wide variety of strategies for including LRE in their social studies, law, business and public safety curricula, as well as suggestions for relating LRE to language arts, science and math curricula. The program also offers the free interactive field trip known as Journey Through Justice (JTJ) for students in grades 4-12; maintains the Virtual Museum of Law at www.thelawmuseum.org; provides lesson plans, classroom resources and links to current events on more than 60 legal topics via online LiveBinders at www.livebinders.com/s/175847; conducts teacher workshops; presents at teacher and parent conferences; and sponsors the ABA Civics and Law Honor Roll for Georgia high school students. ●

OF JTJ FIELD TRIP GROUPS IN 2025-26

94

OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS IN JTJ IN 2025-26

4,267

TOP 5 VIRTUAL MUSEUM OF LAW VIDEOS BASED ON # OF VIEWS

VIDEO	# OF VIEWS	
"Brown v. Board of Education"	512,306	⇧4% since 2024-25
"Marbury v. Madison"	349,169	⇧6% since 2024-25
The Lizzie Borden Case	142,263	⇧2% since 2024-25
The Scopes "Monkey" Trial	117,245	⇧7% since 2024-25
The Amistad Case	116,145	⇧6% since 2024-25

TOTAL # OF VIEWS OF ALL MUSEUM OF LAW VIDEOS TO DATE

2,255,474

⇧7% since 2024-25

TOP 5 LIVEBINDERS BASED ON # OF VIEWS

VIDEO	# OF VIEWS	
First Amendment: Freedom of Speech, Press and Assembly	14,795	⇧32% since 2024-25
"Hands Up, Don't Shoot" Free Press or Fair Trial	12,345	⇧7% since 2024-25
General Cruel and Unusual Punishment Resources	12,027	⇧62% since 2024-25
University of California v. Bakke	11,515	⇧30% since 2024-25
Lizzie Borden	9,141	*new to the list this year*

TOTAL # OF VIEWS OF ALL LIVEBINDERS TO DATE

373,190

⇧745% since 2024-25

Lawyer Assistance Program

800-327-9631 | gabar@curalinc.com

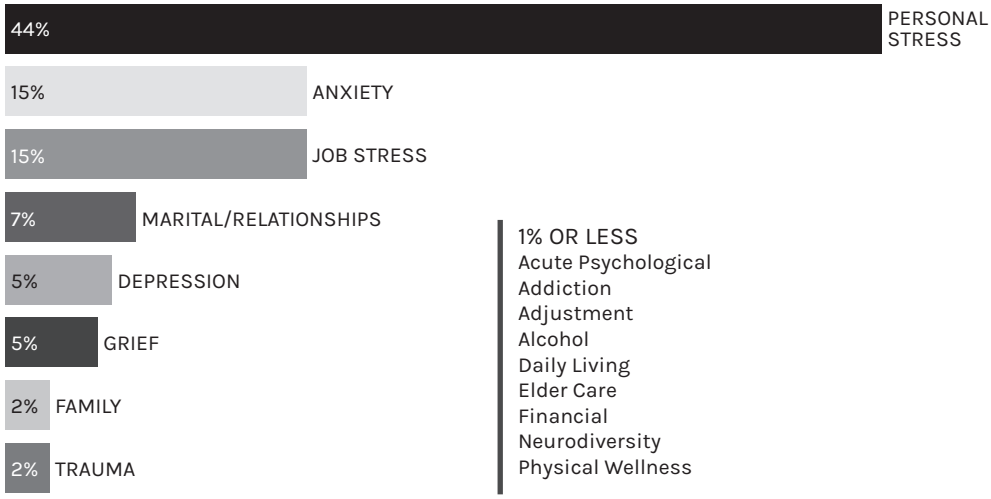
CURALINC HEALTHCARE, SERVICE PROVIDER

The Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) is a confidential service provided through SupportLinc, a program administered by CuraLinc Healthcare, to help State Bar members with life's difficulties. Members are entitled to six prepaid clinical sessions per calendar year.

LAP provides a broad range of helping services to members seeking assistance with stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, family problems, workplace conflicts, psychological and other issues.

Members may contact LAP for confidential assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling 800-327-9631. Visit www.gabar.org/lap for more information about LAP. ●

PRIMARY PRESENTING CONCERNS



UTILIZATION STATISTICS JULY 1, 2025–JUNE 30, 2026

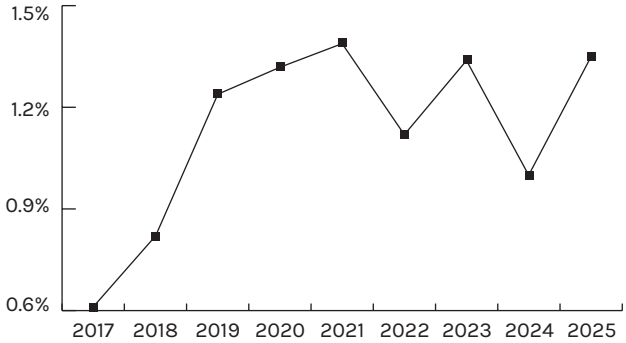
OF EAP CASES
413

Includes the total number of files, organizational services, information calls, etc., that have an open/service date that falls between, and includes, the reporting period date range.

OF ACTIVITIES
1,063

The total of services utilized includes the number of cases, technology participants and training participants that have an open/service date that falls between, and includes, the reporting period date range.

HISTORIC UTILIZATION



Meetings

404-527-8713 | meetings@gabar.org

GAKII KASSAMBA, DIRECTOR

The Meetings Department successfully planned and executed the State Bar of Georgia's four signature Board of Governors meetings during the 2025-26 Bar year, serving a combined 1,880 attendees across the Fall, Midyear, Spring and Annual meetings. In addition to these major meetings, the department coordinated the annual joint meeting with the Supreme Court of Georgia and several Executive Committee meetings, including a Court of Appeals dinner.

2026 Annual Meeting

The 2026 Annual Meeting reflected strong member participation and a continued commitment to delivering meaningful programming, thoughtful hospitality and a seamless attendee experience. With 920 attendees, the Annual Meeting represented the highest attendance among the year's major meetings and served as a cornerstone event for the Bar year.

Opening Night Festival

Family-friendly entertainment, games, and live music created a welcoming atmosphere for attendees and guests. The festival served as a signature attendee experience, combining family-friendly entertainment, games, and live music in an engaging setting. Survey responses highlighted the event's popularity and underscored its role in strengthening member connections and creating a welcoming atmosphere for members and their families.

Presidential Inaugural Gala

The Presidential Inaugural Gala marked the inauguration of William C. "Bill" Gentry as the 64th president of the State Bar of Georgia and included recognition of Kathya Jackson as the State Bar's Employee of the Year. A highlight of the evening was the inspiring address by Distinguished Service Award recipient Brenda Joy "BJ" Bernstein, whose remarks left a lasting impression on attendees and contributed to a memorable conclusion to the Annual Meeting.

Legal Exposition

Law-related vendors and professional service providers connected with attendees and supported the meeting experience. This year featured a diverse group of law-related vendors and professional service providers, who participated in the Legal Exposition creating meaningful opportunities for engagement between attendees and industry partners. Survey responses noted the value of exploring new products and services, learning about emerging legal technologies and connecting with exhibitors whose solutions enhance law practice management, client service and professional development.

Event Technology

The CrowdComms platform enhanced registration, communication, attendee engagement, meeting navigation and operational efficiency. Its success demonstrated the value of innovative event technology and strategic sponsorships in elevating the member experience while helping offset rising meeting-related costs.

Member Engagement

Governance sessions, CLE programming, networking events, wellness activities, and family-focused programming contributed to a well-rounded meeting experience. Survey feedback highlighted attendees' appreciation for the balance of educational content, meaningful networking opportunities and inclusive social programming. Many respondents identified the Annual Meeting as a valuable opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, engage with Bar leadership and participate in experiences that strengthened their connection to the State Bar community. ●

FALL 2025 | OCT. 10-12

204 ATTENDEES

178 in 2024 | ⇧14%

MIDYEAR 2026 | JAN. 15-17

535 ATTENDEES

241 in 2025 | ⇧122%

SPRING 2026 | MARCH 27-29

221 ATTENDEES

192 in 2025 | ⇧15%

ANNUAL 2026 | JUNE 11-14

920 ATTENDEES

644 in 2025 | ⇧43%

Membership

404-527-8777 | membership@gabar.org

AMANDA DRAPER, DIRECTOR

The mission of the Membership Department is to deliver high-quality service to State Bar members through responsive and effective communication—whether by phone, email or in-person interaction. On average, the department responds to approximately 75 phone inquiries and 60 emails daily, ensuring consistent support across all channels.

Staffed by a dedicated team of five professionals, the department serves a core membership of approximately 56,500 attorneys. This number increases annually by an estimated 1,000 new members. In addition to the core membership, the department also provides support to 7,200 individuals in other membership categories, including student, affiliate, provisional, resigned, retired, disabled, suspended, disbarred and terminated members.

A cornerstone of the department's service is the timely and accurate maintenance of the membership database, which houses critical attorney information. Members can update their information online or request changes through the department. Each year, more than 18,000 updates are processed. This data is essential in addressing inquiries from both the public and the membership base.

OF ACTIVE MEMBERS
43,338
⇧1.3% since 2024-25

OF EMERITUS MEMBERS
5,570
⇧9% since 2024-25

OF INACTIVE MEMBERS
7,668
⇩2% since 2024-25

OF NEW MEMBERS
1,650
⇧17% since 2024-25

Beyond database management, the department handles a variety of essential member services. These include invoicing and processing annual membership license fees, issuing Letters of Good Standing (approximately 3,500 annually), and assisting members with login access to the State Bar website. The team also processes approximately 1,100 new attorney enrollment packages annually, along with 200 photo IDs and 1,200 membership cards.

The Membership Department also manages the annual Board of Governors election. This includes oversight of the election process for all 153 board seats, verification of candidate petitions, ballot creation and ensuring voting compliance with established deadlines. The assistant director serves as the staff liaison to the State Bar of Georgia Elections Committee, coordinating meetings and assisting in the periodic review and revision of election procedures and policies. ●

SATELLITE OFFICE

Coastal Georgia Office: Savannah

912-239-9910 // 877-239-9910 | kindallh@gabar.org

KINDALL HARVILLE, OFFICE MANAGER

The Coastal Georgia Office of the State Bar of Georgia provides metro-Savannah attorneys more direct access to the Bar. Our facility is often used to provide space for CLE opportunities, depositions, mediations and client meetings. Our facility is a popular "halfway" meeting point for attorneys from Southeast Georgia, South Carolina or Florida to meet with those from Atlanta and other areas. Mediators like using this office because of its neutrality—mediations of varied sizes are frequently scheduled here.

Many solo practitioners enjoy having an impressive space to use when meeting with their clients. Our members also benefit from the ability to use videoconferencing and other available technologies as a means to conduct business with distant offices. These technologies allow more access to various meetings without additional travel and/or overhead costs. Some of the local bar associations, the Savannah Bar and the Port City Bar specifically, have occasionally used our facility for their monthly meetings or other events, such as meet and greets or awards ceremonies. One of our main activities is assisting public consumers by phone. Whether it is directing them to the Bar's website for attorney referrals, or transferring them to the appropriate department in the Atlanta office that can best assist them with their requests. We are very often the first interaction a member of the public has with the State Bar of Georgia. ●

 # OF CLIENT/MISCELLANEOUS MEETINGS
54 — 36% of 2025-26
⇧54% since 2024-25

TOTAL # OF EVENTS
148
⇧32% since 2024-25

 # OF DEPOSITIONS
30 — 20% of 2025-26
⇧15% since 2024-25

TOTAL # OF PEOPLE USING THE FACILITY
771
⇧33% since 2024-25

 # OF MEDIATIONS/ ARBITRATIONS
38 — 26% of 2025-26
⇧12% since 2024-25

 # OF INBOUND TELEPHONE CALLS
737 — 89% answered
⇩8% since 2024-25

 # OF WALK-INS
21 — 14% of 2025-26
⇧110% since 2024-25

 # OF CLE OPPORTUNITIES/ TRAININGS
5 — 3% of 2025-26
⇩17% since 2024-25

ATTORNEY LOCATIONS

Alpharetta	Macon
Atlanta	Marietta
Augusta	Milledgeville
Browns Summit (NC)	New Orleans (LA)
Brunswick	Peachtree Corners
Columbus	Richmond (VA)
Dallas (TX)	Rincon
Duluth	Savannah
Dunwoody	Statesboro
Gainesville	Tucker
Hinesville	Valdosta
Lancaster (SC)	Vidalia

SATELLITE OFFICE

South Georgia Office: Tifton

229-387-0446 // 800-330-0446 | lacarar@gabar.org

LACARA REDDICK, OFFICE MANAGER

The South Georgia Office located in Tifton serves more than 500 guests annually. Attorneys from across the state utilize the office for depositions, mediations, hearings, client meetings and continuing legal education programs. The space is also used for small receptions, socials, business meetings and other law-related training. Our office is a well-liked meeting space due because of its strategic location in Tifton, a key hub for several major transportation routes including I-75 and multiple U.S. highways.

The Tifton office features two conference rooms equipped with modern videoconferencing systems and other advanced technology, which enable seamless collaboration between in-person and remote participants and are compatible with a wide range of virtual meeting platforms. The conference rooms offer flexible, interchangeable configurations to accommodate various meeting, training and collaboration needs. There is also a guest office that provides attorneys with a professional workspace and a private setting for client meetings.

Our staff coordinates space requests and works diligently to respond to inquiries and correspondence from attorneys and consumers by phone, mail, email and in person. We also work closely with the Tifton Judicial Circuit Bar Association to organize meetings, support events and foster meaningful engagement throughout the community. The South Georgia Office is committed to providing excellent customer service and helping members strengthen their connection to the State Bar of Georgia. ●

 # OF CLIENT/MISCELLANEOUS MEETINGS
19 — 11% of 2025-26
⇩21% since 2024-25

TOTAL # OF EVENTS
167
⇩37% since 2024-25

 # OF DEPOSITIONS
42 — 25% of 2025-26
⇧14% since 2024-25

TOTAL # OF PEOPLE USING THE FACILITY
509
⇩29% since 2024-25

 # OF MEDIATIONS/ ARBITRATIONS
20 — 12% of 2025-26
⇩9% since 2024-25

 # OF INBOUND TELEPHONE CALLS
872 — 73% answered
⇩9% since 2024-25

 # OF WALK-INS
85 — 51% of 2025-26
⇩53% since 2024-25

 # OF CLE OPPORTUNITIES/ TRAININGS
1 — 1% of 2025-26
⇩80% since 2024-25

ATTORNEY LOCATIONS

Adel	Cordele	Marietta
Albany	Decatur	Moultrie
Alpharetta	Douglas	Ocilla
Americus	Dunwoody	Pembroke
Ashburn	Glen Allen (VA)	Savannah
Atlanta	Homerville	Thomasville
Brunswick	Jonesboro	Tifton
Cartersville	Leesburg	Valdosta
Cedartown	Lenox	Vienna
Columbus	Macon	

Sections

404-527-8782 | sections@gabar.org

MARY JO SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR

Sections are voluntary, non-appointed groups within the State Bar of Georgia that offer specialized resources and services tailored to specific areas of the law. Each section is led by member-elected leaders who develop and coordinate educational programs, community service initiatives and networking opportunities. Section leadership is also responsible for sharing relevant information about these events with their members, with support available from the State Bar's Sections team.

The level of activity within a section is largely driven by the engagement of its members. All Bar members in good standing are eligible to join a section by paying the annual dues set by each individual section; however, only active members of the State Bar may nominate candidates for section office or serve in a leadership role.

Sections also organize Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs—both accredited and non-accredited—at discounted rates for their members. ●

GETTYIMAGES.COM/ORBON ALIJA

During the 2025–26 Bar year, the State Bar's sections collectively offered **189.5 hours** of CLE-accredited programming. In addition to general credit hours, several programs included specialty credits. Approximately **4,965** members fulfilled their continuing legal education requirements through these offerings.

OF STATE BAR SECTIONS

52

While most of the 52 sections remain active throughout the Bar year, the largest sections continue to demonstrate consistent engagement.

- **Real Property Law**
  3,147 members (+3 since 2025)
- **Insurance Law**
  2,526 members (+33 since 2025)
- **Corporate Counsel Law**
  1,907 members (+116 since 2025)
- **Family Law**
  1,844 members (+3 since 2025)
- **General Practice & Trial Law**
  1,844 members (-6 since 2025)
- **Business Law**
  1,802 members (+72 since 2025)
- **Criminal Law**
  1,421 members (+33 since 2025)
- **Labor & Employment Law**
  1,344 members (+3 since 2025)
- **Fiduciary Law**
  1,258 members (+14 since 2025)
- **Intellectual Property Law**
  1,213 members (+36 since 2025)

Senior Lawyers Division

404-527-8778 | sld@gabar.org

JESSICA OGLESBY, DIRECTOR

ELIZABETH B. "BETSY" HODGES

2025-26 SLD President
State Bar of Georgia

The State Bar of Georgia's Senior Lawyers Division (SLD) was formally on established Feb. 5, 2026, creating a new professional home for attorneys age 55 and older to strengthen connections among senior lawyers while supporting mentorship, retirement and succession planning, cognitive health awareness and increased pro bono engagement.

Membership is automatic and free for eligible State Bar members in good standing, representing more than 25,000 Georgia attorneys. SLD members who wish to become voting members of the division may do so by paying voluntary dues of $25 each Bar year.

In its first few months, the division used its momentum and seized opportunities to host events for networking including receptions at Kilpatrick Townsend and the State Bar's Annual Meeting. Additionally, the SLD started what will likely be one of many collborative service events with the Young Lawyers Division to build member engagement—hosting a donation drive at the Annual Meeting to support ReThreaded, an organization that supports survivors of human trafficking. Community service partnerships were on display to help foster collaboration with younger lawyers within the legal profession.

The SLD is committed to creating meaningful opportunities for senior lawyers to connect, serve and lead. ●

INAUGURAL SLD OFFICERS

President
Elizabeth B. "Betsy" Hodges

President-Elect
Howard Delashmit

Treasurer
James Hyder

Secretary
Kendall Butterworth

TOTAL # OF VOTING MEMBERS

1,390

CONNECT WITH THE SLD

www.gabar.org/sld

@GeorgiaSLD

/senior-lawyers-division-state-bar-of-georgia

Transition Into Law Practice Program

404-527-8704 | tilpp@gabar.org

DEE DEE WORLEY, DIRECTOR

The Transition Into Law Practice Program (TILPP) is the mentoring and continuing legal education program for lawyers newly admitted to the State Bar of Georgia, unless exempted. The goal of TILPP is to afford beginning lawyers with meaningful access to experienced lawyers equipped to teach the practical skills, seasoned judgment, and sensitivity to ethical and professionalism values necessary to practice law in a highly competent manner.

Lawyers enrolled in TILPP satisfy the mentoring component by enrolling in one of three types:

1 Inside Mentoring
For an attorney who works in a law firm or organization and has a mentor within that firm or organization.

2 Outside Mentoring
For an attorney who is a sole practitioner with a mentor from another firm or organization.

3 Group Mentoring
For an attorney who is employed in a non-legal setting, unemployed or who otherwise does not have an individual mentor.

New lawyers must also complete 12 hours of CLE. Most will attend the Beginning Lawyers Program to fulfill 6 of those hours and their choice for the additional 6 hours. Lawyers who are prosecutors or public defenders must attend their applicable training, which will satisfy their CLE requirement for the year. ●

Did You Know?

The State Bar of Georgia was the first in the country to have a mandatory mentoring program for lawyers.

TOTAL # OF LAWYERS ENROLLED IN TILPP
862
⇧2% since 2024-25

OF PROSECUTORS
25
3% of 2025-26
⇧19% since 2024-25

OF PUBLIC DEFENDERS
31
3.5% of 2025-26
⇧3% since 2024-25

OF GROUP MENTORING
120
14% of 2025-26
⇧10% since 2024-25

OF INSIDE MENTORING
612
71% of 2025-26
⇧1.6% since 2024-25

OF OUTSIDE MENTORING
19
2% of 2025-26
⇩20% since 2024-25

OF DEFERRED
55
6.5% of 2025-26
⇩7% since 2024-25

Young Lawyers Division

404-527-8778 | yld@gabar.org

JESSICA OGLESBY, DIRECTOR

PHOTO BY ENVISIONING FREEDOM PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

VERONICA R. COX

2025-26 YLD President
State Bar of Georgia

The Young Lawyers Division is responsible for aiding and promoting the advancement of the younger members of the State Bar by providing a program of activities and projects which serve the profession and the public. All members who have not yet reached their 36th birthday or who have been admitted to their first Bar less than five years are automatically a member.

The Young Lawyers Division (YLD) provides service, networking and leadership opportunities through 30 committees and 10 affiliate organizations from around the state. With almost 10,000 active young lawyers, committees and affiliates offer local opportunities for young lawyers to be involved in their communities.

This year, the YLD hosted 60 networking, service and social events, offered programming totaling 22 CLE hours and connected with more than 2,000 attendees at events throughout the year.

The YLD Review

The YLD Review seeks to provide a forum for the discussion of subjects pertaining to the regulation of the legal profession and improving the quality of legal services, as well as other matters of general interest to Georgia lawyers. This year, *The YLD Review* published its first dual-language edition in English and Spanish. To read issues of *The YLD Review*, visit www.gabar.org/theyldreview.

YLD Signature Fundraiser

The 19th Annual Signature Fundraiser, was held on Feb. 28, 2026, at The Overlook on First in Macon, Georgia. Rebecca Grist, chief assistant solicitor-general for Bibb County, received the YLD Lifetime Achievement Award, and James Banter, partner at James Bates Brannan Groover LLP, received the YLD Signature Service Award. The Signature Fundraiser raised $23,000 for Middle Georgia Justice.

YLD Leadership Academy

The YLD Leadership Academy is a six-month cohort that begins in January each year and ends with a graduation ceremony at the State Bar of Georgia Annual Meeting. The program began in 2006 with 32 academy participants. The selected participants go through a competitive application process.

Applicants must be YLD members who have a history of involvement and leadership in their communities, offices and/or profession; who want to become more involved in the YLD and State Bar;

and who want to network with state and national leaders and hear their perspectives on effective lawyering and leadership. Young lawyers selected for the Leadership Academy attend monthly sessions around the state, which include CLE programming, a community service project and networking. To date, the program boasts more than 600 Leadership Academy alumni members, many who went on to leadership positions within the State Bar of Georgia. ●

2025-26 YLD Meetings

FALL 2025 | OCT. 10-12

In conjunction with the Board of Governors.

SPRING 2026 | APRIL 24-26

MIDYEAR 2026 | JAN. 9-11

In conjunction with the Board of Governors.

ANNUAL 2026 | JUNE 11-14

In conjunction with the Board of Governors.

CONNECT WITH THE YLD

www.georgiayld.org

@GeorgiaYLD

@georgiayld

/georgiayld

Board Action Items

SARAH I. COOLE, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

The following action items were taken by the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia during the 2025-26 Bar year. ●

2025 Annual Meeting | June 7

The Board approved the establishment of the Senior Lawyers Division; appointments to the State Disciplinary Boards, Formal Advisory Opinion Board, Georgia Legal Services Program and Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism; the 2025-26 Committees; the Executive Director election; the 2025-26 Election Schedule; and the Executive Committee election.

Proposed Rules and Bylaws Changes

- Article IX. Section 2. Senior Lawyers Division | YES, majority.
- Senior Lawyers Division Bylaws | YES, majority.
- Rule 1-707. Senior Lawyers Division | YES, majority.
- Bar Rule 1-202. Membership Status | YES, majority.
- Rule 1.15(II). Safekeeping Property-Trust Account and IOTLA | YES, majority.
- Rule 4-203.1. Uniform Service Rule | Did not pass.
- Rule 4-220. Notice of Punishment or Acquittal; Administration of Reprimands | YES, majority.

2025 Fall Meeting | Oct. 11

The Board approved appointments to the State Disciplinary Boards, the ICLE Board and the Commission on Continuing Lawyer Competency.

Proposed Rules and Bylaws Changes

- Rule 4-203.1(a) (Uniform Service Rule) | YES, majority.
- Eminent Domain Section Bylaws | YES, majority.
- Real Property Law Section Bylaws | YES, unanimous.

Legislative Proposal

- Professionalism Committee - Support for a Resolution of the General Assembly Recognizing April 2026 as Legal Professionalism Month | YES, majority.

2026 Midyear Meeting | Jan. 17

The Board approved nominations to the Georgia ABA delegate posts and nominations of the State Bar officers for the 2026-27 Bar year.

Proposed Rules and Bylaws Changes

- Article IV. Section 3. Misconduct and Removal | YES, majority.
- Rule 10-103. Funding | YES, majority.

New Legislative Proposals

- Indigent Defense Committee - Support for the Judicial Council's Budget Request for FY 2027 – Continued Funding for the Georgia Resource Center | YES, majority.
- Real Property Law Section - Expanding Legal Access to Qualified Special Masters - Amendments to O.C.G.A. § 23-3-63 | YES, majority.

2025 Spring Meeting | March 28

The Board approved the 2026-27 License Fees, State Bar Budget and Financial Resolutions.

2026-27 License Fees | YES, majority. Recommendations of the Executive Committee.

- Active Fees $294. ($24 increase from 2025-26.)
- Inactive Fees $147. ($12 increase from 2025-26.)

Approval of Other Bar License Fee Statement Items.

- Center, Division and Sections Dues ($10 to $50 opt-in).
- Clients' Security Fund ($15/year per member per Bar Rule 1-506).
- Professionalism Fee ($11/year).

Other Contributions.

- Legislative and Public Education Fund Contribution ($100 optional contribution).
- Georgia Legal Services Program Donation ($400 suggested individual contribution/$100 suggested contribution for YLD).

Proposed Rules Changes

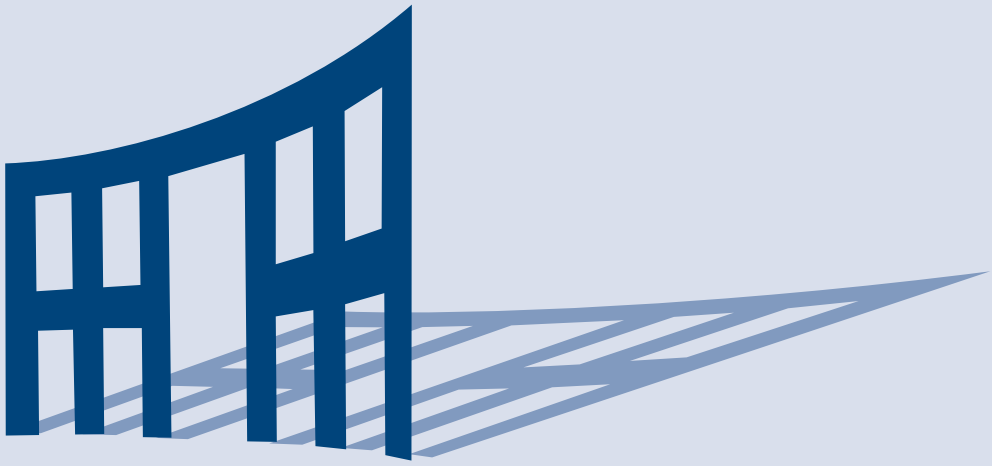
- Rule 4-221. Hearing Procedures | YES, majority.
- Rule 4-227. Petitions for Voluntary Discipline | YES, majority.

2026 Annual Meeting | June 5

The Board approved appointments to the State Disciplinary Board, Formal Advisory Opinion Board, Georgia Legal Services Program and Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism; the 2026-27 Committees; the Executive Director election; the 2026-27 Election Schedule; and the Executive Committee election.

Other Action Items

- The sunsetting of the Attorney Wellness Committee | YES, majority.
- The sunsetting of the Communications Committee | YES, majority.



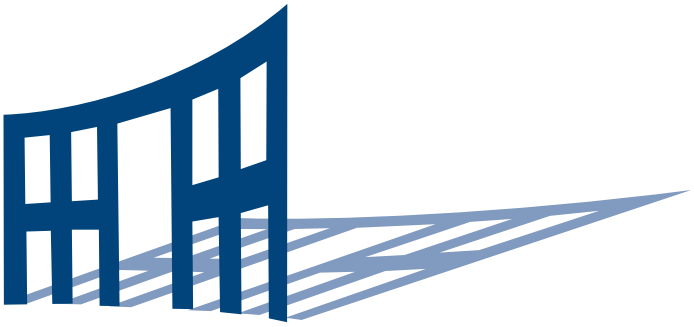
2025-26 REPORT OF THE

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

STATE BAR OF GEORGIA
1964

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

2025-26 Annual Report



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Report of the General Counsel

RUSSELL WILLARD, GENERAL COUNSEL

I am pleased to update you on the activity of the Office of the General Counsel, including a complete report for the just-concluded Bar year as well as the activity within the Office of the General Counsel since the close of the last Bar year. This annual report shows in detail the work that the State Bar's attorneys and support staff are doing to further the mission, outreach and oversight that you have entrusted to us. It is an honor each and every day to work alongside those whose reports fill this annual report, and I commend each and every one of them to you for the work reflected in these pages.

The Office of the General Counsel received 3,727 disciplinary grievances during the 2025-26 Bar year. This reflects an increase of 21% from the 2024-25 Bar year, after an increase of more than 30% from the 2023-24 Bar year to the 2024-25 Bar year. Through the work of the Disciplinary Division of the Office of the General Counsel, overseen by Deputy General Counsel for the Disciplinary Division Andreea Morrison, 254 disciplinary grievances were determined, after screening, to merit further consideration and were forwarded to the State Disciplinary Board for additional investigation. An additional 27 grievances were administratively mooted after an order of disbarment was entered by the Supreme Court of Georgia. The Court entered public orders in 57 cases during the 2025-26 Bar year, and the State Disciplinary Board imposed confidential discipline in an additional 38 cases.

Staff for the Office of the General Counsel served as both counsel to and administratively supported the work of the Clients' Security Fund Trustees. Fifty-five claims were investigated and processed by the Clients' Security Fund, and 31 claims were paid out reflecting a total disbursement of $423,026 to claimants.

During the 2025-26 Bar year, the Office of the General Counsel staff served as receiver or worked closely with attorneys who agreed to volunteer their time to serve as receivers for deceased or disbarred lawyers. One of the vaults left to the State Bar by the Federal Reserve upon their departure for their new Midtown property is regularly overflowing with old and abandoned files, and I encourage each and every one of you to have engaged conversations with your actual designated attorney or someone who could fill that role for you should you need it so as not to saddle your family with the herculean task of client file triage and return upon your passing.

Both the Board of Governors and the Formal Advisory Opinion Board have been diligently at work during the just-concluded Bar year, and the Office of the General Counsel has worked closely with both groups to ensure that filings are timely made with the Supreme Court to ensure that both proposed rule amendments and advisory opinions can be acted upon promptly by the Court. The specifics are laid out in detail in the reports provided by Deputy General Counsel for the Bar Counsel Division Bill NeSmith and Senior Assistant General Counsel John Shiptenko, and I encourage you to review how many rules have moved forward thanks to their support.

I want to thank the volunteers who the Office of the General Counsel works with daily. Many of these volunteers work within the legal profession but often our lay volunteers are just remotely connected to the legal profession, if at all. Both sets of volunteers routinely sacrifice personal and professional time to do the vital work of the State Bar, whether engaging as a member of one of our disciplinary boards, serving as a trustee of our Clients' Security Fund, digging into the meat of a proposed formal advisory opinion or one of the countless other ways that volunteers move the vital work of the State Bar forward. The work reflected in these pages could simply not be accomplished without their time, effort and commitment to public service.

Thank you for the trust that you have placed in me and the staff within the Office of the General Counsel. It is a true pleasure and privilege to serve as your general counsel. ●

Client Assistance Program of the Office of the General Counsel

JAKARAH EVERETT, ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL/CAP DIRECTOR

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) of the Office of the General Counsel is often the first point of contact that a dissatisfied client or former client has with the State Bar about an attorney. Most often, CAP intervenes to facilitate communication between attorneys and their clients, but it also supports former clients in retrieving their files from former attorneys and assists individuals with locating potential resources when the State Bar does not have the authority to help them. CAP's efforts quickly resolve issues for the public and save the State Bar the expenses associated with the formal grievance process where it is unnecessary.

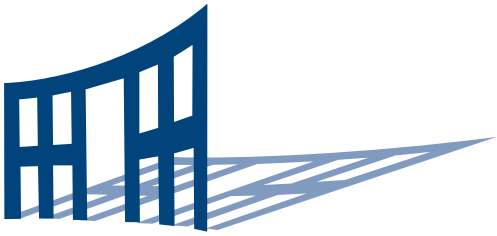
CAP attempts to resolve issues at an initial, informal stage where early intervention may provide a resolution before a Rule of Professional Conduct may be violated or actual harm occurs to the public. Through active intervention at this phase, CAP was able to resolve 87% of the issues reported to it during the 2025-26 Bar year outside of the formal grievance process. ●

TOTAL # OF LETTERS/EMAILS
2,776

TOTAL # OF CALLS
8,582

TOTAL # OF NEW COMPLAINTS
6,948 ⇧2% since 2024-25

87% of issues resolved outside the formal grievance process



Unlicensed Practice of Law Department of the Office of the General Counsel

404-527-8769 | upl@gabar.org

JOHN MARTY, DIRECTOR

The Unlicensed Practice of Law (UPL) Department of the Office of the General Counsel acts at the direction of a statewide Standing Committee and 10 District Committees representing each of the judicial districts in Georgia. All UPL committees are directly appointed by the Supreme Court of Georgia and are comprised of both lawyer and nonlawyer members, the latter of which must make up a majority of each committee. UPL committees are charged with the consideration of complaints received, processed and thoroughly investigated by the UPL Department. The Standing Committee additionally considers requests for advisory opinions. Most UPL investigations result in subjects either agreeing to comply or without the need for further action. Cases not resolved at the District Committee level are often referred for criminal prosecution, while others have resulted in the filing of injunctive relief actions when approved by the Standing Committee.

A registry of subjects who have either been permanently enjoined from engaging in the practice of law by court order or have voluntarily executed a cease-and-desist affidavit within the last two years may be found on the Bar's website. ●

OF PRELIMINARY UPL INVESTIGATIONS INITIATED
236 ⇧19% since 2024-25

OF SUBPOENAS PROCURED
79 ⇧182% since 2024-25

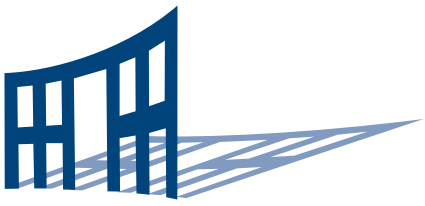
OF PRELIMINARY UPL INVESTIGATIONS CLOSED
240 ⇧12% since 2024-25

OF ATTORNEYS INELIGIBLE TO PRACTICE EXAMINED
>275 due to CLE non-compliance or unpaid license fees

OF FORMAL UPL CASES OPENED
115 ⇧77% since 2024-25

OF NOTARY LISTINGS ON HIGH-TRAFFIC WEBSITES REVIEWED
>2,000

OF FORMAL UPL CASES CLOSED
114 91% resulting in voluntary compliance or no further necessary action



State Disciplinary Board

JEFFREY WILLIAM DELOACH, CHAIR

The State Disciplinary Board is charged with investigating grievances for potential violations of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, issuing confidential discipline and determining whether there is probable cause to bring formal charges against an attorney. The work of the Board is an essential part of the State Bar of Georgia's regulatory function. As the chair of the State Disciplinary Board, I would like to thank each Board member for their service.

The 2025-26 State Disciplinary Board consisted of two ex-officio members—the president-elect of the State Bar of Georgia and the president-elect of the Young Lawyers Division; 12 investigating members—four lawyers from each of the three federal judicial districts of Georgia; two at-large members, and four non-lawyer, public members. During the 2025-26 Bar year, the Board held 10 meetings and managed eight in-person gatherings (Atlanta (3), Lake Oconee, Macon, Marietta, Rising Fawn, and Amelia Island (FL)). The remaining meetings were virtual.

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The Bar received 3,727 grievance forms this year. After review and screening by the Office of General Counsel, 3,020 grievances were closed or dismissed for their failure to state facts sufficient to invoke the jurisdiction of the State Bar (the number includes some grievances that were pending when the fiscal year began). A total of 254 grievances contained allegations which, if true, would amount to violations of one or more of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct (39 more than last year). Each of those grievances was referred to one of the district Board members for further investigation.

Investigating members of the Board handled an average of 18 cases during the Bar year. Members worked diligently and efficiently to report each case within 180 days. Each case required investigation and time away from the Board member's law practice, without compensation other than reimbursement of travel expenses. At the conclusion of each investigation, the Board member made a report and recommendation to the full Board. The Board dismissed 19 grievances, five of

TOTAL # OF GRIEVANCE FORMS RECEIVED

3,727 +647 since 2024-25

TOTAL # OF GRIEVANCE FORMS DISMISSED

3,020 *some pending at the beginning of the Bar year

TOTAL # OF GRIEVANCE FORMS REFERRED FOR INVESTIGATION

254 +39 since 2024-25

those with a letter of instruction to educate and inform the lawyer about the Rules of Professional Conduct. One hundred and sixty-five cases met the "probable cause" standard and were returned to the Office of the General Counsel for prosecution. In matters that met the standard for probable cause, 26 respondents received confidential discipline in the form of Formal Letters of Admonition or State Disciplinary Board Reprimands. In more serious cases, the Board issued a Notice of Discipline for some level of public discipline or made a referral to the Supreme Court of Georgia for a hearing before a special master.

The State Disciplinary Board took the following action during the 2025-26 Bar year:

ACTION TAKEN	# OF CASES
Confidential Reprimands	22
Formal Letters of Admonition	16
Cases Dismissed with Letters of Instruction	5

Public discipline imposed by the Supreme Court of Georgia is further described in the Annual Report of the State Disciplinary Review Board of the State Bar of Georgia.

It has been a privilege to work with such an outstanding group of volunteers to accomplish this important work on behalf of the State Bar of Georgia. I would like to recognize those members of the State Disciplinary Board as listed below who have unselfishly devoted so much of their personal and professional time to this necessary task. ●

2025-26 State Disciplinary Board

Lawyer Members

Neal Callahan, *Columbus*
Kassi Nicole Conley, *Atlanta*
Jeffrey William DeLoach, *Watkinsville*
Marcella Coladangelo Ducca, *Atlanta*
Jennifer Elizabeth Dunlap, *Columbus*
Pamela Felecia Everett, *Pooler*
Taylor H. Haley, *Saint Simons Island*
Christine Koehler, *Lawrenceville*
William H. Noland, *Macon*
Robert Smalley III, *Dalton*
Christian J. Steinmetz III, *Savannah*
Carl Robert Varnedoe, *Savannah*
Simon H. Bloom, *Atlanta*
Terri N. Gordon, *Decatur*

Non-Lawyer Members

Noemi de Miguel Mota, *Lilburn*
C. Anthony Smith, *Alpharetta*
Jennifer D. Ward, *Savannah*
Elisabeth Peyten Williams, *Atlanta*

Ex-Officio Members

Virginia C. Josey, *Macon*
YLD President-Elect
William C. Gentry, *Marietta*
President-Elect

State Disciplinary Review Board

NORBERT DANIEL HUMMEL IV, CHAIR

The State Disciplinary Review Board plays an important role in our disciplinary system and serves several functions. Under the Bar Rules, the Review Board offers an additional level of appellate review after a disciplinary case has been heard by a special master. The parties may elect to file exceptions and request review by the Review Board before the case is filed with the Supreme Court. In these cases, the Review Board considers the complete record, reviews the findings of fact and conclusions of law, and determines whether a recommendation of disciplinary action will be made to the Supreme Court of Georgia. The Board has the discretion to grant oral argument if requested by either party. The Supreme Court may follow the Review Board's recommendation but may also render an opinion that modifies the recommendation in some way.

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In addition, the Review Board reviews all cases involving reciprocal discipline. If a Georgia lawyer has been disciplined in another jurisdiction resulting in a suspension or disbarment, the lawyer is subject to reciprocal discipline in Georgia. The Review Board is charged with reviewing the record from the foreign jurisdiction and recommending the appropriate reciprocal disciplinary result in Georgia. These cases present many interesting issues for the Board and can be challenging when the lawyer objects to reciprocal discipline. In all cases, the Board must consider whether the case is in the correct procedural posture to be reviewed, whether the lawyer was afforded due process in the underlying disciplinary proceeding, whether the misconduct would result in similar discipline under our rules and recommend discipline which would be substantially similar to the discipline imposed in the foreign jurisdiction. The Review Board also issues Review Board Reprimands when directed by the Supreme Court and makes recommendations in reinstatement cases which involve suspensions with conditions for reinstatement as directed by the Supreme

Court. The Board also provides input on amendments to the Bar Rules involving the disciplinary process.

The Supreme Court approved amendments to the disciplinary rules which became effective July 1, 2018. Under these rules, the former Review Panel was renamed the State Disciplinary Review Board, and the size of the Board was reduced from 15 to 11 members. In particular, the number of lawyer members who serve on the Board from around the state was reduced from nine to seven. The Review Board is currently composed of two lawyers from each of the three federal judicial districts in Georgia, one at-large lawyer member and two non-lawyer members. These members are appointed in alternate years by the Supreme Court of Georgia and the president of the State Bar. Two ex-officio members also serve on the Board in their capacity as officers of the State Bar.

The following is a brief summary of public disciplinary action taken by the Supreme Court of Georgia during the period from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026:

FORM OF DISCIPLINE	# OF CASES	# OF LAWYERS
Disbarment/Voluntary Surrender	235	26
Suspensions	21	21
Public Reprimand	0	0
Review Board Reprimand	1	1

The foregoing summary does not begin to reflect the important issues that were carefully considered by the Review Board over the past year. In addition to attending regular meetings, each Board member must review material for each case prior to the meeting in order to make a fair and well-reasoned decision. This represents a major commitment of time and energy on the part of each Board member, all of whom acted with the highest degree of professionalism and competency during their terms. I would like to recognize the members of the Board as listed below who have unselfishly devoted so much of their time to the implementation of the disciplinary system of the State Bar of Georgia. ●

2025–26 State Disciplinary Review Board

Members

Northern District

Norbert Daniel Hummel IV, *Kennesaw*

William Hickerson Thomas Jr., *Atlanta*

Middle District

Veronica McClendon, *Macon*

Alex Musole Shalishali, *Columbus*

Southern District

Pamela Sue James, *Augusta*

John Ryd Bush Long, *Augusta*

Lay Members

LaShekia Hughes, *Macon*

Susan Leger-Boike, *Cordele*

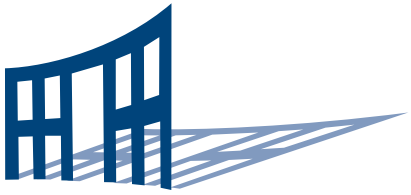
At-Large

Brandon Alexander Bullard, *Atlanta*

Ex-Officio

Ivy N. Cadle, *Macon*

Kenneth Mitchell Jr., *Decatur*



Clients' Security Fund

WILLIAM D. NESMITH III, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

The legal profession is one of few professions in which members create and maintain a means for clients to recover losses in rare instances of trust monies being misappropriated. Every U.S. state, including Georgia and Canadian provinces, has a fund for client protection. The State Bar of Georgia Clients' Security Fund is a public service of the legal profession in Georgia. Its purpose is to repay clients who have lost money because of a lawyer's dishonest conduct. Every lawyer admitted to practice in Georgia, including those admitted as a foreign law consultant or those who join the State Bar of Georgia without taking the Georgia Bar examination, contributes to this Fund. The Trustees are proud of the efforts made to maintain the integrity of the legal profession.

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Creation of the Fund

The Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia created the Clients' Security Fund by resolution on March 29, 1968. The Fund was formed "for the purpose of promoting public confidence in the administration of justice and maintaining the integrity and protecting the good name of the legal profession by reimbursing, to the extent deemed proper and feasible by the Trustees of the Fund, losses caused by the dishonest conduct of members of the State Bar of Georgia." In 1991, the Supreme Court of Georgia adopted the Clients' Security Fund rules (Part X), making it an official part of the rules of the State Bar of Georgia. That same year, pursuant to the rules, the Board of Governors assessed each State Bar member to fund and stabilize the Fund fully. The Clients' Security Fund rules have subsequently been amended to better fulfill the purpose of the Fund.

Administration of the Fund

The Clients' Security Fund Board of Trustees performs all acts necessary and proper to fulfill the purposes of and effectively administer the Fund. The rules,

issued by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia, establish a Board of Trustees consisting of six lawyer members and one non-lawyer member appointed to staggered terms by the president of the State Bar of Georgia. Trustees of the Fund receive no compensation or reimbursement for their service. The trustees select the chair and vice chair to serve as officers for the Fund. Pursuant to Bar Rule 10-104, the trustees serve a term of three years.

2025-26 Board of Trustees

Members

Karl David Cooke Jr., *Macon*
Michael G. Geoffroy, *Covington*
Shondeana Crews Morris, *Decatur*
Robert J. Kauffman, *Douglasville*
Tyronia Monique Smith, *Atlanta*
LaToya Simone Williams, *Warner Robins*

Non-Lawyer Member

Sammy Strode, *Savannah*

Executive Committee Liaison

R. Javoyne Hicks, *Atlanta*

These trustees have served tirelessly, and their dedication to this program is greatly appreciated.

Funding

Members of the State Bar of Georgia provide the primary funding for the Clients' Security Fund. All license-fee-paying members of the State Bar of Georgia are assessed $15 annually. On March 26, 2026, the Supreme Court of Georgia issued an order amending Bar Rule 10-103 (Funding) to make clear that the trustees of the Clients' Security Fund can spend up to the annually assessed amount and any surplus fund received from assessments in prior Bar years. The amendment became effective April 30, 2026.

The trustees of the Clients' Security Fund maintain all monies held in the name of the Fund and exclusively control the disbursement of the funds.

Loss Prevention Efforts

A crucial role of the trustees of the Fund is to promote and endorse rules and educational programs designed to prevent losses. Two significant programs exist to avoid lawyer theft of clients' funds.

Overdraft Notification

In November 1992, the Board of Trustees joined the Investigative Panel of the State Disciplinary Board in urging the Board of Governors to approve amendments to Disciplinary Standard 65 to create a trust account overdraft notification program. On Aug. 22, 1995, the Supreme Court of Georgia approved the amendment to Standard 65, effective Jan. 1, 1996. The primary purpose of the overdraft notification rule is to prevent the misappropriation of clients' funds by providing a mechanism for the early detection of improprieties in the handling of attorney trust accounts. Standard 65 was replaced with Rule 1.15 (III) with the Supreme Court's adoption of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct on Jan. 2, 2001 (www.gabar.org/handbook).

Payee Notification

During the 1993 legislative session, with the urging of the Board of Trustees, the Board of Governors endorsed legislation specifically designed to prevent lawyer theft of personal injury settlement funds. As a result of these efforts, the "payee notification rule" was approved as an amendment to the Insurance Code. This statute requires insurers to notify the payee of an insurance settlement when the check is mailed to the payee's attorney. This places the client on notice that the attorney has received settlement funds. Adopting this procedure has substantially reduced claims involving the theft of insurance funds.

Claims Process

Before the Clients' Security Fund pays a claim, the trustees must determine that the loss arose out of the client-lawyer or fiduciary relationship and was caused by the lawyer's dishonest conduct. The rules define "dishonest conduct" as acts "committed by a lawyer like theft or embezzlement of money, or the wrongful taking or conversion of money, property, or other things of value." The lawyer's "dishonest" conduct must result in their disbarment, indefinite suspension or voluntary surrender of their license. The final disposition does not need to result from a grievance but can be attained when credible information is presented from any source without a memorandum of grievance being filed. Claimants are responsible for providing sufficient documentation to support their claims.

Trustees of the Clients' Security Fund may also make awards on claims involving deceased, disabled or otherwise unavailable lawyers who could not be disciplined for their dishonest acts. At their discretion, trustees can evaluate the merits of a claim based on available evidence of dishonesty and improper conduct regardless of the lawyer's disciplinary status.

Claims filed by corporations or partnerships, government entities and certain members of the attorney's family are typically denied. The Fund also does not reimburse losses covered by insurance or resulting from malpractice or financial investments.

A statement of Fund balance, income and expenses for the period ending June 30, 2026, is on the next page. ●

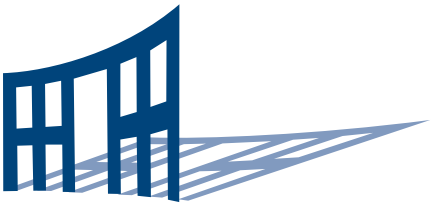
Annual Financial Statistics

	2024-25	2025-26
Balance ending June 30, 2026	$2,782,908	$2,715,520
Income to Fund		
Assessments	$ 767,625	$ 773,648
Restitution	$ 13,207	$ 58,477
Interest and Dividend Income	$ 60,224	$ 61,060
Gain/Loss Investment Assessment	$ 47,344	$ 5,762
Distributions from Fund		
Claims Paid	$ 870,020	$ 423,026
Restricted Expenses	$ 73,000	$ 190,000
Bond Premium Amortization	$ 3,704	$ 2,238
Investment Service Fee	$ 9,064	$ 7,224

Summary of Claims Activity

Following is a summary of claims activity from July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026.

ACTIVITY	2024-25	2025-26
Recorded Application Requests	48	71
Claims Filed	48	75
Claims Considered	59	60
Claims Approved	43	31
Claims Denied	4	2 4
Claims Tabled	7	15
Claims Reconsidered	9	4
Claims Administratively Closed	3	5
Claims Withdrawn	1	0
Claims Pending	38	60
Inactive Claims	5	18
# of Lawyers Invovled in Paid Claims	18	22



Formal Advisory Opinion Board

JOHN J. SHIPTENKO, SENIOR ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL

Formal Advisory Opinions

FAO Request Process

Requests for formal advisory opinions (FAOs) are submitted to Bar Counsel, who assesses the requests to determine the best way to handle the requestor's ethical issue. If the request is submitted to the Board, the Office of the General Counsel prepares the request for the Board's consideration and then researches the ethical issue to determine how the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct (GRPC) apply to the issue, whether a current FAO addresses the issue, and whether other jurisdictions have addressed the issue.

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Board Meetings

The Board works throughout the year, considering and researching the ethical issues presented in FAO requests and drafting proposed opinions. During the 2025-26 Bar year, the Board conducted two meetings.

If the Board accepts a request for the drafting of an FAO, the Board assigns one or more Board members to draft a proposed opinion. Bar Counsel supports the Board throughout the drafting process. If a request is rejected, the Board specifies the reason for rejecting the request, and Bar Counsel informs the requestor in writing of the Board's decision.

During the 2025-26 Bar year, the Board considered the following requests for a formal advisory opinion:

Formal Advisory Opinion Request No. 25-R2

FAO Request No. 25-R2 was received in the 2024-25 Bar year on or about June 25, 2025. The request was considered by the Board during the 2025-26 Bar year at its Sept. 9, 2025, meeting. The requestor presented the following questions:

1. *Are all lawyers who participate in conveyancing, or the closing of real estate transactions, governed by the Formal Advisory Opinions of the State Bar of Georgia, issued by the Supreme Court of Georgia, and by the UPL Advisory Opinions issued by the State Bar of Georgia Standing Committee on*

the Unlicensed Practice of Law, or only those lawyers who are participating in the closing of residential real property?

2. *May a lawyer participate in a closing transaction where he/she does not participate in the preparation and execution of the settlement/closing statement?*
3. *May a lawyer participate in a closing transaction where the closing funds are held and disbursed by someone other than a lawyer?*

The Board determined that the GRPC and existing opinions adequately address the issues raised in the request. Accordingly, the Board declined the request for the drafting of an FAO.

Formal Advisory Opinion Request No. 26-R1

FAO Request No. 26-R1 was received on or about Feb. 3, 2026. The requestor inquired about the following:

1. *Does the engagement letter consent provision described above constitute valid "informed consent" under Rule 1.6 (a) sufficient to authorize a lawyer to post a review of a former client on tiipstr?*
2. *Does a tiipstr review limited to characterizations of the client's conduct as a client—without disclosing the nature of the representation, privileged communications, or case-specific facts—constitute "information gained in the professional relationship" within the meaning of Rule 1.6 (a)?*
3. *If informed consent is obtained, may a lawyer ethically post: (a) a numerical rating; (b) written commentary that the client "failed to pay," "did not follow advice" or "was difficult to work with"; and/or (c) a "do not represent" designation?*
4. *Does the analysis differ for positive reviews—for example, stating that a client was "cooperative," "paid promptly" and "followed advice"—where the disclosure benefits the client?*
5. *May tiipstr permissibly provide guidance to lawyer-users that reviews complying with these parameters are ethically permitted in Georgia?*

At its April 14, 2026, meeting, the Board determined that the request was not of general interest to the members of the State Bar of Georgia and the GRPC adequately address the issues raised in the request. Accordingly, the Board declined the request for the drafting of an FAO.

Consideration of Proposed Opinions

Once a proposed opinion is drafted, the Board considers the draft to determine whether to approve the proposed opinion as drafted for first publication or modify it. Bar Counsel assists the Board as needed.

Approval of Proposed Opinion

Once the Board approves a proposed opinion for first publication, it determines whether to post the publication on the State Bar website or in the *Georgia Bar Journal* in accordance with Bar Rule 4-403.

First Publication of the Proposed Opinion

The first publication process offers State Bar members an opportunity to review the proposed opinion and submit comments to the Board through the Office of the General Counsel. The comments, any research materials and feedback from the Office of the General Counsel are provided to the Board. The Board reviews the proposed opinion in light of the comments and other information received and decides whether to modify the proposed opinion. If the proposed opinion is modified, and the Board determines the modifications are substantive, the first publication process is repeated.

Final Approval and Second Publication of the Proposed Opinion; Filing of Proposed Opinion with the Supreme Court of Georgia

Once the Board makes a final determination to approve and issue the opinion, it is published for a second publication and filed with the Supreme Court of Georgia. The Board decides whether to post the publication on the State Bar website or in the *Georgia Bar Journal* in accordance with Bar Rule 4-403. When the second publication of an opinion occurs, Bar counsel facilitates the publication with the State Bar's Communications Department and president, and files the opinion with the Supreme Court of Georgia.

Discretionary Review

Following the filing of the opinion, the Board decides whether to recommend that the Office of the General Counsel seek discretionary review of the opinion on behalf of the State Bar with the Supreme Court of Georgia. If the Board opts for discretionary review, Bar Counsel assists in this process by drafting the petition and filing it with the Supreme Court of Georgia. In accordance with Rule 4-403, the State Bar or the person who requested the opinion may file a petition for discretionary review, or the Supreme Court of Georgia may decide to review

the opinion on its own motion. If the Supreme Court of Georgia grants the petition for discretionary review or decides to review the opinion on its own motion, the State Bar and the person requesting the opinion shall follow the briefing schedule set forth in Supreme Court of Georgia Rule 10. Bar Counsel and the Board are available to assist the General Counsel in drafting the State Bar's brief in support of the opinion.

During the 2025-26 Bar year, the following opinion, drafted by the Board during the 2024-25 Bar year, continued through the discretionary review process.

Proposed Formal Advisory Opinion No. 24-1

May a lawyer use a third-party vendor to request the production of documents from a non-party pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 9-11-34(c) and to follow up on and effectuate such a request to a non-party, and if so, what degree of autonomy may the lawyer allow the third-party vendor?

On Sept. 18, 2024, the Board approved the proposed opinion for first publication. The proposed opinion was published on the State Bar website on Oct. 23, 2024, pursuant to Bar Rule 4-403 (c). State Bar members were invited to submit comments regarding the proposed opinion. On Jan. 23, 2025, based on the comments received, the Board approved an amended version of the proposed opinion for second publication and filing with the Supreme Court of Georgia. The Board also voted in favor of requesting that the Office of the General Counsel file a petition for discretionary review.

On Sept. 11, 2025, the Office of the General Counsel filed a petition for discretionary review with the Supreme Court of Georgia. The Supreme Court of Georgia issued an order granting discretionary review on Nov. 4, 2025, and directed the State Bar and other interested parties to address the question of whether FAO No. 24-1 should be approved. The State Bar filed its brief in support on Nov. 10, 2025, answering the Court's question in the affirmative. This opinion remains pending with the Supreme Court of Georgia.

Issuance of a Formal Advisory Opinion

FAOs are either issued by the Board (if no petition for discretionary review is sought or the Supreme Court of Georgia declines to review the opinion on its own motion) or the Supreme Court of Georgia (if the Court grants discretionary review or reviews the opinion on its own motion and approves the opinion). When an FAO is issued, Bar counsel drafts a notice of the issuance of an FAO, which is published on the State Bar website along with the opinion. Bar counsel also facilitates the placement of the opinion in the Handbook on the State Bar website and updates the FAO indexes.

Other Matters the Board Addressed During the 2025-26 Bar Year

Maxwell v. State, 367 Ga. App. 302 (2023)

In the 2023-24 Bar year, the Board received a copy of the concurring opinion issued by Presiding Judge Christopher J. McFadden in the above-referenced case, which questioned whether, considering Rule 4.2 and Comment [2] of the rule, "the district attorney or assistant district attorney may have violated it when they directed their investigator to question Maxwell outside the presence of his attorney and without notice to his attorney..." At the oral argument of the *Maxwell* case, counsel for the state pointed out that there are no relevant cases construing Rule 4.2 as it relates to the underlying ethical issue. The majority ruled that the Court need not construe Rule 4.2 to decide the case and that it is up to the State Bar to address the matter in the first instance.

This issue was also presented to the State Bar's Disciplinary Rules and Procedures Committee (DRPC) to consider whether Rule 4.2 should be amended in light of the concurring opinion. The Board decided to table its consideration of this matter pending the DRPC's decision regarding Rule 4.2. At its Jan. 16, 2026, meeting, the DRPC concluded its review and consideration of *Maxwell v. State* and decided that it would not recommend or propose any changes to Rule 4.2 or the Comments to Rule 4.2.

The Board was informed of the DRPC's decision, and at their April 14, 2026, meeting and decided to table this matter until the next FAOB meeting, allowing Board members more time to consider the issue presented.

Amendments to Rules 7.1 Through 7.5 and Their Impact on FAO Nos. 94-1, 97-3, 98-4, 00-2, 01-1, 05-6 and 16-3

At their April 14, 2026 meeting, the Board was informed that, in light of the Supreme Court of Georgia's Nov. 18, 2025, order approving amendments to the advertising rules (Rules 7.1 through 7.5) effective as of March 1, 2026, eight opinions, issued either by the Supreme Court or the Formal Advisory Opinion Board, contain references to those rules.

The Board was advised of the process approved by the Supreme Court of Georgia and used by the Board in prior years following amendments to the GRPC, under

which the Board reviewed existing formal advisory opinions to consider the impact the amended rules have on the opinions.

The Board decided that it would like to follow the previously approved process used in prior years to evaluate the eight identified opinions. A motion passed to recommend that the general counsel, in consulting with the Supreme Court regarding the process for assessing the effect of the amended rules on opinions, request the Court's approval for the Board to proceed under the previously approved process. The Supreme Court of Georgia's decision regarding the Board's process is pending.

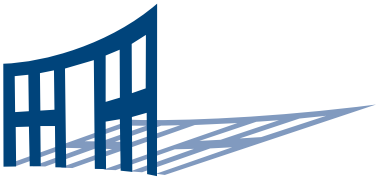
Formal Advisory Opinion Board

The Board, listed below, consists of active members of the State Bar who are appointed by the president of the State Bar with the approval of the Board of Governors.

Bar Rules

The Formal Advisory Opinion Board is governed by Bar Rules 4-223, 4-401, 4-402, 4-403 and 4-404, and its own internal rules. The Office of the General Counsel periodically reviews these rules, advises the Board regarding whether it should consider amending the rules and suggests proposed amendments.

Formal advisory opinions, opinion indexes and the rules governing the Board are located on the State Bar's website at www.gabar.org/advisory-opinions. ●



2025–26 Formal Advisory Opinion Board

At-Large
Edward B. Krugman, *Atlanta*
Martin A. Levinson, *Atlanta*
Letitia A. McDonald, *Atlanta*
Mary A. Prebula, chair, *Atlanta*
Jeffrey Hobart Schneider, *Atlanta*

Georgia Trial Lawyers Association
Christy Crowe Childers, *Macon*

Georgia Defense Lawyers Association
Jacob Edward Daly, *Atlanta*

Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
Amanda Rourk Clark Palmer, vice chair, *Atlanta*

Georgia District Attorneys' Association
Sherry Boston, *Decatur*

Young Lawyers Division
Emily Christine Long, *Lawrenceville*

Emory University
Professor Jennifer Murphy Romig, *Atlanta*

University of Georgia
Professor David N. Lefkowitz, *Athens*

Mercer University
Professor Patrick E. Longan, *Macon*

Georgia State University
Tia L. Gibbs, *Atlanta*

Atlanta's John Marshall Law School
Professor Jeffrey Alan Van Detta, *Atlanta*

State Disciplinary Board
Marcella Coladangelo Ducca, *Atlanta*

State Disciplinary Review Board
John Ryd Bush Long, *Augusta*

Executive Committee
R. Gary Spencer, *Atlanta*

Pro Hac Vice Program

NARIAH DANCY, *PRO HAC VICE* ADMINISTRATOR

Attorneys seeking to appear *pro hac vice* in State and Superior Courts and before the State Board of Workers' Compensation and the Georgia State-wide Business Court must comply with Uniform Superior Court Rule 4.4. Attorneys seeking to appear *pro hac vice* in Magistrate Court must comply with Uniform Magistrate Court Rule 7.5. Pursuant to both rules, attorneys applying for *pro hac vice* admission in Georgia must serve a copy of their application for admission on the State Bar of Georgia's Office of the General Counsel.

Applicants can submit their application and fee (check, money order or credit card) via mail or the online portal on the State Bar's website. The *pro hac vice* administrator creates a paper and electronic file for all applications received by mail and creates an electronic file for all applications received via the online portal. The paper files are purged annually. The *pro hac vice* administrator reviews the applications to determine whether the application contains the required information pursuant to the rule and its appendix and whether the attorney submitted the annual and application fees. The *pro hac vice* administrator also verifies the attorney's status with their home jurisdiction(s), determines if the attorney has any disciplinary history (and gets a copy if possible), and obtains the judge's name and address for the case.

If an attorney fails to provide the required fee(s) or provides an incorrect fee amount, the *pro hac vice* administrator will request the required fee(s) or correct fee amount via email or mail. If the attorney fails to provide information required by the applicable rule's appendix, the *pro hac vice* administrator requests that the attorney file an amended application with the Court and send a copy of the same to the Office of the General Counsel.

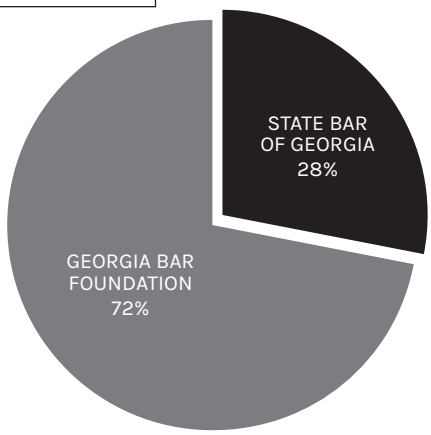
After the contents of the application are entered into the *pro hac vice* database, the information is verified and the fees are received, the *pro hac vice* administrator drafts a letter to the Court, reviewed by counsel within the Office of the General Counsel, explaining whether the application complies with the rule and its appendix. Occasionally, counsel may conclude that the attorney appears ineligible for *pro hac vice* admission under the rule and will file a Response with the Court to that effect.

Below is a chart reflecting the average monthly *pro hac vice* caseload.

AVERAGE MONTHLY CASELOAD	# OF CASES
Incoming calls	80
Incoming emails	120
Voicemails	40
Outgoing calls	50
Outgoing emails/letters	275

The rules state that any domestic or foreign lawyer granted admission *pro hac vice* must pay an annual fee of $200 on or before Jan. 15 for each subsequent calendar year of admission. If the annual fee is not received by Jan. 15, Georgia Rule of Professional Conduct 5.5(l) requires applicants to submit a late fee of $100, along with the annual fee, by March 1. In December 2025, the *pro hac vice* administrator sent 2,169 annual fee notice emails and 355 annual fee notice letters to applicants (and a copy to their sponsor), which includes a payment link and information on how to notify the Office of the General Counsel if the applicant is no longer admitted *pro hac vice*. If an applicant fails to submit the required annual and late fees, counsel provides the applicable court with a letter stating that the applicant is not in compliance with the rule.

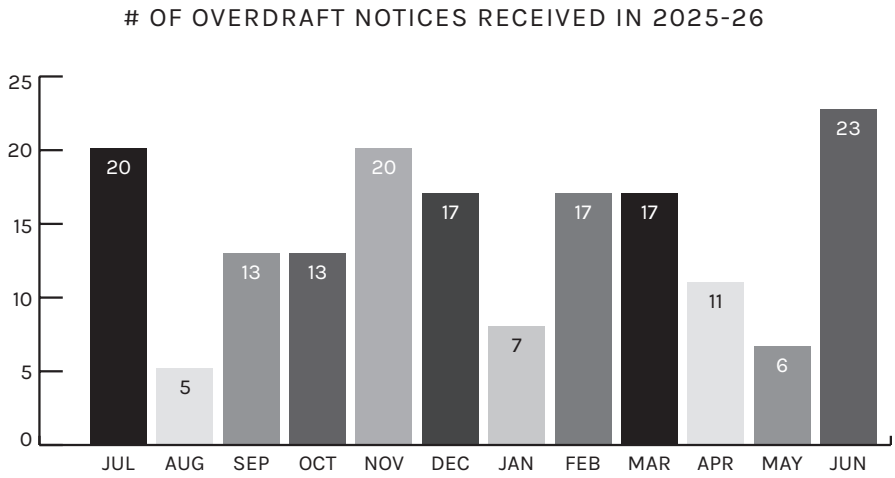
During the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, the Office of the General Counsel reviewed 2,108 *pro hac vice* applications. The Office of the General Counsel filed 15 formal responses with Georgia courts regarding the apparent non-eligibility of the applicant. The Office of the General Counsel collected a total of $628,425 from *pro hac vice* applicants. The fees are divided between the State Bar of Georgia and the Georgia Bar Foundation. The State Bar of Georgia received $175,825 from the total collected. The Georgia Bar Foundation received $452,600 from the total collected. ●



Overdraft Notification Program

REGINA PUTMAN, TRUST ACCOUNT OVERDRAFT NOTICIATION COORDINATOR

The Overdraft Notification Program received 169 overdraft notices from financial institutions approved as depositories for Georgia attorney trust accounts. Of the total number of notices received, three overdraft reports were received on the trust accounts of disbarred lawyers and one overdraft report was received on the trust account of a lawyer ineligible to practice because of unpaid Bar license fees. A total of 106 files were dismissed based on the receipt of satisfactory responses following the initial State Bar inquiry, three files were referred to the Law Practice Management Program, 15 files were forwarded to the State Disciplinary Board for possible disciplinary action and one file was closed because the State Bra received overdraft notification regarding the trust account of a disbarred member. (Several attorney overdraft files contained more than one overdraft notice regarding the same IOLTA account number. Some overdraft files opened during the latter part of FY 2025-26 remain open, pending final review and disposition.)



Financial Institutions Approved as Depositories for Attorney Trust Accounts

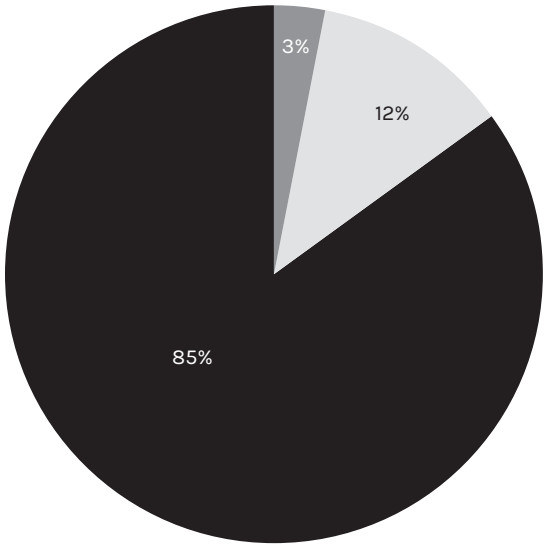
The number of financial institutions approved as depositories for attorney trust accounts is affected by bank failures, bank mergers, the physical presence of a financial institution branch office location within the state of Georgia and a bank's willingness to execute the Office of the General Counsel's overdraft reporting agreement and the Georgia Bar Foundation's interest rate comparability agreement. Currently, 164 banks and credit unions are reflected on the State Bar of Georgia's List of Financial Institutions Approved as Depositories for Attorney Trust Accounts. Of those approved banks, 10 financial institutions have obtained limited approval under Rule 1.15 (III) (c) (1) (i) (A) of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct to maintain and service qualifying Georgia IOLTA accounts for State Bar members whose clients request and agree that their funds be held at an institution that is neither in the state of Georgia nor in the state where the lawyer's office is located. An updated list of approved banks can be found at www.gabar.org/banks.

State Bar of Georgia Trust Account Overdraft Notification (TAON) Program—Office of the General Counsel

Rule 1.15 of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct mandates and the lawyer disciplinary system enforces the standard of safekeeping of client property as a fundamental fiduciary obligation of lawyers. The dishonor of drafts for insufficient funds drawn from client trust accounts is an early warning that a lawyer is engaging in conduct likely to injure clients. The TAON Program acts to significantly reduce the level of lawyer misappropriations. Financial institutions that maintain

lawyer trust accounts are required to notify the State Bar of Georgia's Office of the General Counsel of overdrafts, which enables the State Bar of Georgia to intervene before major losses occur and a significant number of clients and third parties are harmed. Participation by financial institutions is a prerequisite to their continued eligibility to hold lawyer trust accounts. The Bar rule also enables the Office of the General Counsel to counsel errant lawyers to take corrective action before the lawyer's misconduct becomes so egregious as to mandate serious sanction, including disbarment. ●

MONTH 2025-26	ACTUAL # NOTICES RECEIVED	FILES CLOSED/ ADEQUATE RESPONSE	FILES CLOSED/ LPMP	GRIEVANCES INITIATED	TOTAL CLOSED
July	20	11	0	0	11
August	5	10	0	1	11
September	13	10	0	1	11
October	13	4	1	1	6
November	20	6	2	1	9
December	17	12	0	2	14
January	7	2	0	0	2
February	17	10	0	3	13
March	17	23	0	1	24
April	11	4	0	3	7
May	6	1	0	1	2
June	23	13	0	1	14
TOTAL	169	106	3	15	124
PERCENTAGE		85%	3%	12%	



OVERDRAFT FILE DISPOSITION

- Adequate Response (85%)
- Board Initiated Grievances (12%)
- Law Practice Management Referral (3%)

Amendments to Bar Rules

WILLIAM D. NESMITH III, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

Requests for amendments to the Rules and Regulations for the Organization of the State Bar of Georgia may come from State Bar Officers, Committees, Sections or any State Bar member. If a member of the State Bar requests an amendment, the request is typically submitted to the Office of the General Counsel, the executive director, a State Bar officer or the governing committee associated with the particular rule(s). The Office of the General Counsel then will prepare a draft of the proposed rule amendment; however, Bar members may also provide their draft of a proposed opinion.

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The Office of the General Counsel typically circulates the draft of a proposed rule amendment amongst interested parties until it meets with general approval; it is then forwarded to the Executive Committee for their review. Pursuant to Article IV, Section 2 of the State Bar of Georgia Bylaws, the Executive Committee has the power to exercise all the powers of the Board of Governors between meetings of the Board and shall report to each meeting of the Board. Accordingly, the Executive Committee reviews the proposed amendment before it is presented to the Board of Governors. If approved, the proposed amendment is submitted to the Board of Governors for review and approval. If the Executive Committee does not approve a proposed amendment, it is typically not submitted to the Board of Governors. However, no specific rule states that a proposed amendment needs to be presented to or approved by the Executive Committee. Proposed amendments can be submitted directly to the Board of Governors by a member of the Board of Governors as a new agenda item.

After the Board of Governors approves the proposed amendment, the Office of the General Counsel prepares a Notice of Motion to Amend the Rules of the State Bar of Georgia. This Notice

is published in the *Georgia Bar Journal* or on the State Bar of Georgia website pursuant to Bar Rule 5-101. At the same time the Notice of Motion to Amend is published, a copy of the notice is filed with the Supreme Court of Georgia. At least 30 days after the publication date of the Notice, a Motion to Amend the Rules of the State Bar of Georgia and a Brief in Support of the Motion to Amend the Rules of the State Bar of Georgia may be filed with the Supreme Court of Georgia and published in accordance with Rule 5-101.

Pursuant to Bar Rule 5-102, Bar members are allowed to file comments or written objections to any motion to amend the Rules of the State Bar of Georgia. All objections shall be filed with the clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia by a designated date, with a copy served upon the General Counsel of the State Bar of Georgia. Each objection shall contain the grounds on which the objection is based. If desired, a request for oral argument on the proposed amendment may be requested. According to Bar Rule 1-503, the Supreme Court of Georgia, at its sole discretion, may grant or deny a request for oral argument. The clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia shall notify the General Counsel of the State Bar of Georgia and the person seeking oral argument of the date of any oral argument granted under the provisions of Rule 23 (b) of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Georgia.

If the Supreme Court approves or modifies and approves the amendment to the rules, the Office of the General Counsel notifies the entity requesting the amendment of the Supreme Court's decision and publishes a notice of the amended rule on the State Bar's website. The State Bar's Handbook is also updated accordingly. The State Bar Handbook is only available in electronic form and is found on the State Bar of Georgia website at www.gabar.org/handbook.

Following is a summary of actions taken during the 2025-26 Bar year regarding proposed amendments to the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the State Bar of Georgia:

Motion 2023-1

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on Nov. 18, 2025, effective March 1, 2026.

Part IV Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, Chapter I, Rule 4-102. Disciplinary Action; Levels of Discipline; Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct 7.1 Through 7.5

The amendments to these rules are a massive rewrite of the advertising rules.

Motion 2023-2

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on March 26, 2026, effective April 30, 2026.

Part I Creation and Organization, Chapter 2, Membership, Rule 1-207. Official Address and Change of Address

The amendments to this rule require members to provide the Bar with an email address as part of their official address.

Motion 2024-2

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on Nov. 10, 2025, effective Dec. 4, 2025.

Part VII Continuing Legal Education

The amendments to these rules are a massive rewrite of the Commission on Continuing Lawyer Competency and Continuing Legal Education rules based on the Lawyer Competency Task Force recommendations.

Motion 2025-9

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on Dec. 19, 2025, effective Feb. 5, 2026.

Part 1 Creation and Organization, Chapter 7, Rule 1-107. Senior Lawyers Division

This rule was established to create the Senior Lawyers Division.

Motion 2025-10

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on Dec. 19, 2025, effective Feb. 5, 2026.

Part IV Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, Chapter 1, Rule 4-102. Disciplinary Action; Levels of Discipline; Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct 1.15 (II). Safekeeping Property – Trust Account and IOLTA

The amendment to this rule stipulates that a lawyer holding or managing funds in a fiduciary capacity without representing any party must notify all parties in writing that neither the funds nor the lawyer is subject to the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct. Additionally, lawyers may not use their law firm trust or IOLTA accounts to hold fiduciary funds unless they represent a client in a specific matter.

Part IV Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, Chapter 2, Rule 4-220 (Notice of Punishment or Acquittal; Administration of Reprimands)

The amendment to this rule replaces the term "issued" with "read in the presence of the respondent" and requires the reprimand to be administered during the portion of the Review Board meeting open to the public. Additional changes clarify notice requirements for both the public and the respondent.

Motion 2025-11

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on March 26, 2026, effective April 30, 2026.

Part IV Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, Chapter 2, Disciplinary Proceedings, Rule 4-203.1. Uniform Service Rule

The amendment to this rule defines a lawyer's "official address" for serving documents; and authorizes State Bar Investigators or individuals approved by the State Disciplinary Board to serve Petitions for the Appointment of a Special Master

and Formal Complaints. The changes also specify acceptable methods of service and introduce the use of an affidavit to document unsuccessful service attempts.

Motion 2026-1

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on March 26, 2026, effective April 30, 2026.

Part X Clients' Security Fund, Rule 10-103. Funding

The amendment to this rule changes the current wording of the rule to make clear that the trustees of the Client Security Fund can spend up to the annual assessment plus any surplus funds from prior Bar year.

Motion 2026-2

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on June 25, 2026, effective July 23, 2026.

Part IV Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, Chapter 2, Rule 4-221. Hearing Procedures

The amendments to this rule refine hearing procedures by improving the management of disciplinary proceedings while preserving due process. A key addition expressly recognizes the special master's authority to address disruptive conduct by providing practical tools to maintain order and continue proceedings without resorting to contempt immediately. The amendments also update venue provisions to ensure that hearings can proceed even when traditional venue rules are impracticable. The amendments also expressly permit hearings before the special master that are not final evidentiary hearings to be held by video or telephone conference, reflecting modern practice and promoting efficiency while preserving existing venue requirements for final hearings.

Motion 2026-3

Approved by order of the Supreme Court of Georgia on June 25, 2026, effective July 23, 2026.

Part IV Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, Chapter 2, Rules 4-227. Petitions for Voluntary Discipline

The amendments to this rule clarify and streamline the procedures for Petitions for Voluntary Discipline by requiring that petitions for voluntary surrender of a Bar license be filed directly with the Supreme Court of Georgia, rather than with a special master, after a formal complaint has been filed. The Office of the General Counsel has 30 days to respond, and proceedings before the special master are expressly stayed and tolled while the petition is pending. ●

Judicial Procedures & Administration/ Uniform Rules Committee

WILLIAM D. NESMITH III, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

The Judicial Procedures & Administration/Uniform Rules Committee is a standing committee charged with monitoring the practical operation of Georgia's judicial system across all courts and recommending improvements to applicable laws and uniform court rules based on its observations and experience. The Committee reviews and evaluates all proposed legislation affecting the courts of this state and provides its findings and recommendations to the Executive Committee. The Committee also examines all proposed uniform and other court rules and makes recommendations regarding their adoption, modification or implementation to promote the fair and efficient administration of justice throughout Georgia's court system.

The Committee is comprised of 16 active members of the State Bar of Georgia, including the Executive Committee liaison, who are appointed by the president of the State Bar of Georgia.

During the 2025-26 Bar year, the Committee received and reviewed proposed amendments to the following Uniform Superior Court Rule that were approved by the Council of Superior Court Judges of Georgia:

- Rule 4.3. Withdrawal
- Rule 10.2. Opening Statement in Criminal Matters
- Rule 21. Limitation of Access to Court Files
- Rule 21.1. Motions and Orders
- Rule 21.3. Ex Parte Orders
- Rule 21.5. Amendments

After careful review and consideration, the Committee provided its comments, after review by the Executive Committee of the State Bar, to the Council of Superior Court judges reflecting concerns and comments on behalf of the State Bar. ●

Disciplinary Orders of the Supreme Court of Georgia

KATHYA S. JACKSON, CHAIR, STATE DISCIPLINARY BOARDS

REINSTATEMENTS GRANTED

Feb. 5, 2026	Muhammad Abdul-Warit Abdur-Rahim
March 12, 2026	Candace Lanette Sneed

REVIEW BOARD REPRIMANDS

Jan. 16, 2026	Muhammad Abdul-Warit Abdur-Rahim

SUSPENSIONS

Indefinite Suspensions

July 22, 2025	Charles M. Dalziel Jr.
Sept. 29, 2025	Joseph Pryor Durham Jr.
May 5, 2026	Francis X. Moore
May 19, 2026	Charles M. Dalziel Jr.

Definite Suspensions

Jan. 5, 2026	Stephanie Dianne Woodard
May 19, 2026	Hillman James Toombs

Interim Suspensions

Aug. 27, 2025	Matthew Jason Anderson
Aug. 27, 2025	Sean Patrick Collins
Aug. 27, 2025	Patrick Fitzgerald McKee
Sept. 10, 2025	Destin Michelle Gillum
Sept. 10, 2025	Mylee McKinney
Oct. 14, 2025	Nicole Jones
March 2, 2026	Michael P. Carestia
March 3, 2026	Kenneth DeWayne Teal
March 11, 2026	Angela Mary Kinley *(two cases)*
May 6, 2026	Nicole Krashun Carson
May 6, 2026	Jimmy Thomas Howell Jr.
May 7, 2026	Stephen Anthony Burroughs
May 7, 2026	Kerry Eston Hand
June 18, 2026	Mary Jane Palumbo Melton
June 18, 2026	Edward J. Tarver Jr.

INTERIM SUSPENSIONS LIFTED

Sept. 18, 2025	Mylee McKinney
Oct. 16, 2025	Nicole Jones
Oct. 24, 2025	Sean Patrick Collins
March 9, 2026	Michael P. Carestia
March 11, 2026	Angela Mary Kinley *(two cases)*
June 25, 2026	Mary Jane Palumbo Melton
June 25, 2026	Edward J. Tarver, Jr.

DISBARMENTS/VOLUNTARY SURRENDERS

July 22, 2025	Justin Allen Chin
Aug. 12, 2025	Dominique Marc Henri Lemoine *(two cases)*
Aug. 12, 2025	William Keith McGowan
Aug. 12, 2025	Kathleen Strang
Aug. 26, 2025	Vi Bui
Aug. 26, 2025	Allen Charles Jones
Sept. 16, 2025	Melvin Raines II
Sept. 16, 2025	Paul Gerard Wersant
Nov. 4, 2025	Brian Joel Aplin *(two cases)*
Nov. 4, 2025	Destin Michelle Gillum
Dec. 9, 2025	Je'Nita Lane
Dec. 23, 2025	Christopher Casey Taylor *(six cases)*
Jan. 21, 2026	Nubiyn Matamalaki Mosi Mzekewe
Feb. 3, 2026	Paul Jason York
Feb. 17, 2026	Bryan Matthew Pritchett
March 3, 2026	Joseph William Cloud
March 17, 2026	Charles Bruce Singleton Jr.
April 21, 2026	Leonard Richard Medley III
May 5, 2026	Shaquandra A. Woods
May 19, 2026	Matthew Jason Anderson
May 19, 2026	Brandon Andrew Cline
May 19, 2026	Clifford E. Hardwick, IV
June 16, 2026	Lisa Paige Lenn
June 16, 2026	Mylee McKinney
June 16, 2026	Andrew Thurston Murphy
June 16, 2026	Samuel David Ozburn

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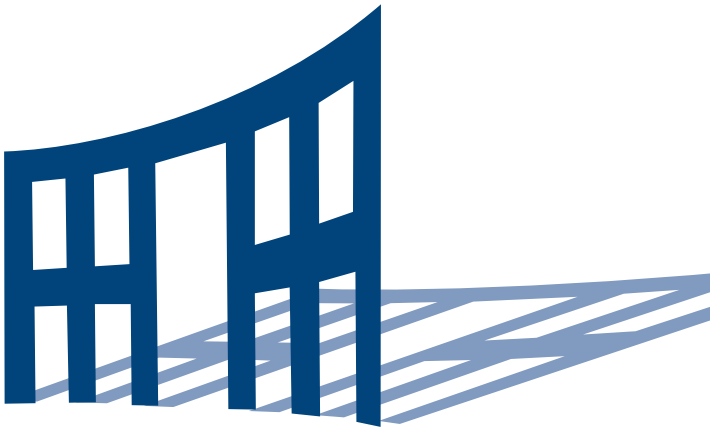

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