



AMERICAN
BANKRUPTCY
INSTITUTE

Consumer Practice
Extravaganza

Faculty Biographies

Edward C. Boltz is the managing partner of the Law Offices of John T. Orcutt, P.C. in Durham, N.C., where he represents clients in not only chapter 13 and 7 bankruptcies, but also in related consumer rights litigation, including fighting abusive mortgage practices and developing solutions for student loans. Mr. Boltz served as the president of the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys (NACBA) from 2013-16 and remains on its board of directors, co-chairing its Legislative Committee. He served on ABI's Consumer Bankruptcy Commission from 2017-19 and on the Bankruptcy Council for the North Carolina Bar Association, for which he co-chaired the committee that created a mortgage-modification program for the North Carolina bankruptcy courts. Mr. Boltz is a frequent speaker on bankruptcy issues at both national and local seminars, including at NACBA conventions and workshops, past NCLC workshops and the North Carolina Bankruptcy Institute. In June 2019, he testified on behalf of NACBA in Congress regarding the need for changes to the Bankruptcy Code to make student loans dischargeable and to the means test for disabled veterans. In 2008, he testified before Congress to similarly protect those in the National Guard and reservists, which was enacted as the National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Act. For the spring 2020 semester, Mr. Boltz served as an adjunct professor at the University of North Carolina School of Law, assisting clients in the Consumer Financial Transactions clinic with student loans. He is a member of the North Carolina State Bar, which certified him as a specialist in consumer bankruptcy law, and he is admitted to practice before the district courts in both the Eastern and Middle Districts of North Carolina. Mr. Boltz received his B.A. from Washington University in St. Louis in 1993 and his J.D. from George Washington University in 1996.

Christopher Celentino is a partner with Dinsmore & Shohl LLP in San Diego, where he focuses his practice on creditors' rights, fiduciary services litigation, business reorganization and workouts, and insolvency and bankruptcy law. His bankruptcy practice emphasizes representation of creditors and court-appointed trustees in chapter 7 and 11 cases, as well as representation of debtors in chapter 11 cases. He also has knowledge of mechanic's lien law and related construction litigation matters, as well as family law and related dissolution matters. Mr. Celentino's creditors' right practice emphasizes representing lenders and borrowers in workout and restructuring of commercial loans, secured transactions and lease transactions, and the pursuit of creditors' rights in commercial litigation matters. He is Board Certified in Business Bankruptcy Law by the American Board of Certification. In 2011, Mr. Celentino was selected as one of the "Transcript 10," comprised of 10 of the most noteworthy attorneys from San Diego County, by the *San Diego Daily Transcript*. In 2012, he was president of the California Bankruptcy Forum, having served previously as treasurer and secretary; in 2018, he served as a co-chair of its annual meeting. Mr. Celentino also is a former member and past president of the board of directors of the San Diego Bankruptcy Forum. He is a member of the San Diego County Bar Association, for which he served as chair of its Bankruptcy Law Section from 1992-93, and a secretary and vice president of the California State Bar Association Insolvency Committee, as well as a former member of the board of directors of the Bay Area Bankruptcy Forum. He is also former chair of the San Diego Financial Lawyers Group and has served since 1994 as a court-appointed mediation panel member to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of California. Mr. Celentino has served as both a court-appointed expert and privately-engaged expert in many cases involving unique issues of bankruptcy and divorce. He is rated AV-Preeminent by Martindale Hubbell, and has been listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* for Bankruptcy and Creditor/Debtor Rights/Insolvency and Reorganization Law since 2012. Mr. Celentino received his B.S. in 1984 from Northwestern University and his J.D. *cum laude* in 1987 from Georgetown University Law Center, where

he was co-founder and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Law and Technology*, and an associate editor of *The Georgetown Law Journal*.

Hon. Rebecca B. Connelly is a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Western District of Virginia in Harrisonburg, appointed in July 2012. Before joining the bench, she was the Standing Chapter 13 Trustee and Chapter 12 Trustee for the Western District of Virginia, and prior to that was in private practice in Virginia and in Washington, D.C. Judge Connelly is chair of the Judicial Conference Advisory Committee on the Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure. As a member of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges, she formerly chaired the NCBJ Federal Rules Advisory Committee. Judge Connelly is an adjunct professor of law at Washington and Lee University School of Law (teaching bankruptcy). She also is a conferee in the National Bankruptcy Conference and a frequent speaker for Virginia CLE, an author of two chapters of *Bankruptcy Practice in Virginia* (2004, reprinted 2008, and revised and reprinted 2016), and an active member of ABI since 1994. Judge Connelly has served as a contributing editor and a features author for the *ABI Journal*, and she has been a member of ABI's Consumer Bankruptcy Committee, as well as a speaker at its Annual Spring Meeting, Winter Leadership Conference, and regional conferences, including Views from the Bench. She also serves on the advisory board and volunteers for Credit Abuse Resistance Education. Judge Connelly formerly served on the board and as a volunteer for Rockbridge Area Hospice. She received her B.A. in 1985 from the University of Maryland and her J.D. in 1988 from Washington & Lee University School of Law.

Jeffrey S. Fraser is a partner with ALAW in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and presides over the firm's Bankruptcy Practice. In this pivotal role, he works closely with each state's managing attorneys to develop legal strategies and provide comprehensive training. Mr. Fraser is actively involved in the Southern District of Florida's Bankruptcy Bar. He chaired the Local Rule Committee from 2019-20 and was a founding member of the district's Lawyer Advisory Committee (LAC). He served as the LAC chair in 2020 and 2021. Originally from Jamaica, Mr. Fraser is also a former Jamaican-American Bar Association President. He was listed in Super Lawyers as a Florida Rising Star from 2019-23. He also was honored as a Blackshear Fellow by the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges (NCBJ) in 2017, and he was honored in 2020 as one of ABI's "40 Under 40." Mr. Fraser has published articles on consumer bankruptcy issues in the *American Legal & Finance Network* and *Default Servicing News*. He also holds the highest rating by Martindale-Hubbell. Mr. Fraser received his B.A. in 2007 from the University of Miami and his J.D. in 2010 from the University of Miami School of Law.

Leonard L. Gumport is the founder of Gumport Law Firm, PC in Pasadena, Calif. He is admitted to practice in Alaska, California, the District of Columbia and New York, and he is a member of the panel of mediators of the ADR programs of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California and the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California. Mr. Gumport is AV-rated by Martindale Hubbell. He received his undergraduate degree from Yale University and his J.D. from Columbia Law School.

Aleksandra K. Fugate is an associate with Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP in Rochester, N.Y., and the supervising attorney for Bankruptcy and Evictions within the firm's Default Servicing Group. She concentrates her practice in bankruptcy matters, including loss mitigation and evictions matters. Ms. Fugate is a member of the New York State and Monroe County Bar Associations. She received her

B.S. from State University of New York at Buffalo and her J.D. from State University of New York at Buffalo Law School.

Hon. Elizabeth L. Gunn is a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C., appointed on Sept. 4, 2020. A COVID-era selection and appointment, she was sworn in by Zoom from her living room. Prior to her appointment, Judge Gunn served as an Assistant Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Virginia as the bankruptcy specialist for the Division of Child Support Enforcement. She also practiced law in Richmond, Va., at Sands Anderson PC and McGuireWoods LLP. In 2017, Judge Gunn was honored as a member of ABI's inaugural class of "40 Under 40." In 2022, she was recognized by the Bar Association of the District of Columbia as its Judicial Honoree and recipient of the BADC's Suzanne V. Richards Foundation Grant. Judge Gunn serves on the advisory board of the *American Bankruptcy Law Journal* and is a coordinating and associate editor of the *ABI Journal*. In addition, she sits on the boards of the Federal Bar Association Bankruptcy Section, International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation, American Bar Association, National Conference of Federal Trial Judges and the Chesapeake Chapter of the Turnaround Management Association, and she hosts the popular American Bar Association Business Law Section Podcast "Bad Boys of Bankruptcy." She also is a member of the Walter Chandler Bankruptcy Inn of Court and is Board Certified in Consumer Bankruptcy Law by the American Board of Certification. Judge Gunn received her B.A. *cum laude* from Willamette University and her J.D. *cum laude* from Boston College Law School.

D. Edward Hays is a founding member of Marshack Hays LLP in Irvine, Calif. He was admitted to practice in 1992. Mr. Hays has been a Certified Bankruptcy Law Specialist with the State Bar of California from 2016 to the present. He also has been selected on numerous occasions to present to national, state, county and local bar associations on various legal topics, including bankruptcy law, family law in bankruptcy cases, labor law in bankruptcy, exemptions, enforceability of spendthrift trusts, evidence, pretrial and trial practice, and recent developments in bankruptcy law. In 2011 and 2014, Mr. Hays presented at the Southern California Trust and Estate Planning annual conference on the treatment of trusts in bankruptcy. In 2018, he presented an all-day seminar on evidence to the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys. In 2019, he was asked to speak at the annual conference of the National Association of Bankruptcy Trustees on the administration of trusts in bankruptcy, and he was selected to present a seminar on evidence at the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges in Washington, D.C. During that trip, he also was admitted to appear before the U.S. Supreme Court. Mr. Hays received his B.A. in business with honors from California State University at Fullerton in 1989 and his J.D. from the University of Southern California Law Center in 1992, where he was a member of the Hale Moot Court Honors program.

Hon. Jennifer H. Henderson is Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Northern District of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, initially sworn in on Feb. 16, 2015, and named Chief Judge on Oct. 1, 2022. Previously, she was a partner with Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP's Bankruptcy, Restructuring and Distressed Investing Practice Group in Birmingham, Ala., where she represented debtors and creditors in bankruptcy cases, out-of-court workouts and restructurings and bankruptcy-related litigation. Judge Henderson clerked for Hon. Thomas B. Bennet and is listed as a 2014 Alabama Super Lawyers "Rising Star." She received her B.A. *magna cum laude* from Birmingham-Southern College in

2001 and her J.D. *summa cum laude* from the University of Alabama School of Law in 2004, where she was a member of the Order of the Coif and a special works editor for the *Alabama Law Review*.

Hon. Meredith A. Jury is a retired U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Central District of California in Riverside, appointed from 1997-2018 by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. She also served on the Ninth Circuit Bankruptcy Appellate Panel (BAP) from 2007-17. Since her retirement, she has been writing *pro bono* appellate briefs for consumer debtors or amicus for NACBA. Prior to her appointment to the bench, Judge Jury had spent her entire attorney career as a civil, municipal and bankruptcy litigator for the law firm of Best, Best & Krieger in Riverside, joining as the first woman associate in 1976 and becoming its first woman partner in 1982. She has participated in innumerable panels about various aspects of bankruptcy law at local and Ninth Circuit programs. As a member of the BAP, Judge Jury was lead author of *In re Vallejo*, 408 B.R. 280 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2009), primarily concerning the eligibility of a city to file chapter 9. She received her B.A. *cum laude* from the University of Colorado, where she was elected Phi Beta Kappa, and her J.D. from UCLA. She also received Masters degrees in economics and English/education from the University of Wisconsin.

Hon. Michael B. Kaplan is Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the District of New Jersey in Trenton, initially appointed on Oct. 3, 2006, and named Chief Judge on May 1, 2020. He has presided over numerous notable cases, including *Revel AC Inc.*, *Crumbs Bakeshop Inc.*, *Sur La Table Inc.*, *LTL Management LLC*, *Blockfi Inc.*, *Rite Aid Inc.* and the *Invitae Corp.* Prior to taking the bench, Judge Kaplan served as a standing chapter 13 bankruptcy trustee, as well as a member of the chapter 7 panel of bankruptcy trustees, where he received case appointments as both a chapter 11 and chapter 12 trustee. His private practice included the representation of institutional lenders consumer debtors (under both chapters 7 and 13), business debtors and individuals undergoing reorganization pursuant to chapter 11. Judge Kaplan is a Fellow of the American College of Bankruptcy and has been appointed by the director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AOUSC) to a term as the Third Circuit representative to the Bankruptcy Judges Advisory Group, in addition to appointments as the bankruptcy judge representative for the Risk and Finance Management Advisory Council, Human Resources Advisory Council and Budget & Finance Advisory Council to the AOUSC. As a member of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges, Judge Kaplan has served as treasurer and executive board member. He serves currently as a member of the Judiciary Advisory Council for the Rabiej Litigation Law Center. Over the past 30 years, he has spoken to numerous bar associations and business organizations, and since 2009 he has taught as an adjunct professor at Rutgers University School of Law. Judge Kaplan has authored several articles relating to bankruptcy issues and is a co-author of West's *Consumer Bankruptcy Manual* and *Consumer Bankruptcy Handbook*. He received the NCBJ President's Award for Excellence, the Conrad B. Duberstein Memorial Award given by the New York Institute of Credit, the Judicial Service Award from the Association of Insolvency and Restructuring Advisors, the National Association of Chapter 13 Trustees' 2006 Distinguished Service Award and New Jersey State Bar Association's 1999 Legislative Recognition Award. Prior to taking the bench, Judge Kaplan served as mayor and councilman for the Borough of Norwood, N.J., and as a member of the Norwood Planning Board. He received his A.B. from Georgetown University in 1984 and his J.D. from Fordham University School of Law in 1987.

Nicole Mariani Noel is a shareholder at Kass Shuler, P.A. in Tampa, Fla., where she has been practicing in the fields of bankruptcy, creditors' rights and insolvency, real estate, consumer and business litigation

since 2009. She heads the Bankruptcy practice group for the firm and handles cases throughout the state of Florida in all districts, as well as District of Colorado, Eastern and Southern District of Texas, all three Districts in Tennessee, and the Northern and Southern Districts of Illinois. Ms. Noel is the president of the Tampa Bay Bankruptcy Bar Association (TBBBA) for the 2024-25 bar year. She formerly chaired the Bankruptcy Practice Group for the American Legal and Financial Network (ALFN) and the Case Law Update Subcommittee for the Real Property Finance and Lending Committee of the Real Property Probate and Trust Law Section of the Florida Bar. She also recently authored a chapter on bankruptcy in *Florida Foreclosure Law*, published by Fastcase. Ms. Noel is active in the community and is an adjunct professor at Stetson University College of Law, St. Petersburg College and Hillsborough Community College, teaching bankruptcy, real property finance, business law and civil litigation. She participated in the 2016 NextGeneration program, held during the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges (NCBJ), and she was honored to become a Fellow for the Florida Bar Leadership Academy. In addition, she has been named one of ALFN's Junior Professionals and Executives Group (JPEG)'s standout young professionals to watch in 2016 and most recently received the 2023 Industry Achievement Award for the ALFN. Ms. Noel received her undergraduate degree from Florida State University and her M.B.A. and J.D. from Stetson University School of Business Administration and Stetson University College of Law, respectively.

Krista M. Preuss is the standing chapter 13 trustee for the Eastern District of New York in Jericho, appointed on Oct. 1, 2021. Prior to that, she was the chapter 13 standing trustee for the Southern District of New York from Feb. 1, 2018, through May 31, 2023. Prior to her 2018 appointment, she was the staff attorney for Chapter 13 Trustee Marianne DeRosa for more than 12 years. Ms. Preuss has lectured on chapter 13 bankruptcy issues at numerous law school classes and seminars. She is a member of the Hudson Valley, Nassau County, Suffolk County and Westchester County Bar Associations, and ABI. Ms. Preuss serves on the Consumer Lawyers Advisory Committee for both Brooklyn and Central Islip for the Eastern District of New York. She also is a board member of the National Association of Chapter 13 Trustees, for which she also serves on its Public Relations Committee and Mortgage Committee. Ms. Preuss received her J.D. from Albany Law School, where she was president of its tax law society.

Dynele L. Schinker-Kuharich is the Standing Chapter 13 Trustee for the Northern District of Ohio in Canton. Prior to her appointment in 2018, she was a member of the panel of chapter 7 trustees for the Northern District of Ohio and was also an attorney in private practice, where she had concentrated her client representation on bankruptcy and consumer law issues for more than 19 years. Ms. Schinker-Kuharich was an adjunct professor at The University of Akron School of Law, and she has frequently spoken at seminars both locally and nationally on topics related to bankruptcy and consumer law. She also has been published in the *Norton Bankruptcy Law Adviser*, *NACTT Quarterly* magazine and *ConsiderChapter13.org*. Ms. Schinker-Kuharich is a member of the National Association of Chapter Thirteen Trustees, for which she currently serves as an at large board member. She also co-chairs its Inclusion and Acceptance Committee and is an active member of the editorial board for the *NACTT Quarterly* magazine. Ms. Schinker-Kuharich is a member of ABI and a former member of the National Association of Bankruptcy Trustees, the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys, the Portage County Bar Association, the Stark County Bar Association and the Akron Bar Association, for which she previously served as chair of its Commercial Law Section.

Hon. Joshua P. Searcy is a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Eastern District of Texas in Tyler, appointed on March 1, 2021. Previously, he was an attorney with Searcy & Searcy, P.C. in Longview, Texas, where his bankruptcy practice included representing debtors and creditors in chapters 7, 11, 12 and 13, as well as chapter 7 and 11 trustees. He also represented and defended financial institutions, handled real estate matters and nonbankruptcy civil litigation, and provided general representation to a municipality, including as city prosecutor. Judge Searcy has served as secretary on the Executive Council of the Bankruptcy Section of the State Bar of Texas, is a past recipient of the Section's Romina L. Mulloy Bossio Achievement Award, and is a member of ABI's 2018 class of "40 Under 40." He is admitted to practice in the State of Texas, the U.S. District Courts for the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Districts of Texas, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court. Mr. Searcy received his B.A. in Spanish and history from Trinity University in San Antonio and his J.D. from Baylor University School of Law in 2005.

Kristin A. Zilberstein is an attorney with ZBS Law, LLP in Irvine, Calif., and the firm's Bankruptcy manager. She has 15 years of experience in the default industry, more specifically within the bankruptcy court representing mortgage-servicers, commercial lenders and auto lenders. Ms. Zilberstein has specialized in the litigation side of the bankruptcy court, including adversaries, motions for relief, objections to claims, appeals and chapter 11 cases. In addition, she has written several articles and participated in numerous webinars and seminars. Prior to entering the default industry, Ms. Zilberstein began her 26-year career in general liability insurance defense, specifically personal injury and construction defect. She is licensed to practice in all state and federal courts in California, Washington, Texas and Colorado, the District Court of Nebraska, and the Ninth Circuit BAP and Ninth Circuit. Ms. Zilberstein has been a member of the ALFN Bankruptcy Practice Group since 2014 and currently serves as its secretary. She is rated AV-Preeminent by Martindale Hubbell and was named by *Angle Magazine* as one of "16 Women Who Rocked 2016." In January 2021, Ms. Zilberstein was one of DS News' Top 25 Women of Law, and in February 2021 DS News included her in its Honoring Excellence Among Female Legal Minds edition. She received her B.A. in economics from the University of California San Diego in 1995 and her J.D. from California Western School of Law in 1998.