



**Chief Justice Harold D. Melton**  
**CHAIR, CHIEF JUSTICE’S COMMISSION ON**  
**PROFESSIONALISM**

Chief Justice Harold Melton was appointed to the Georgia Supreme Court by Governor Sonny Perdue on July 1, 2005. Prior to joining the Court, Justice Melton served as Executive Counsel to Governor Perdue. Before that, he spent 11 years in the Georgia Department of Law under two Attorneys General where he dealt with issues ranging from the creation of the Georgia Lottery Corporation to the administration of Georgia’s tobacco settlement.

Justice Melton received a Bachelor of Science degree from Auburn University and his Juris Doctorate from the University of Georgia in 1991. He serves on the Board of Atlanta Youth Academies and is on the local and national board for Young Life youth ministry. A native of Washington, D.C., Justice Melton currently resides in Atlanta with his wife, Kimberly, and their three children.



**Dawn M. Jones**  
**PROGRAM CHAIR**

Dawn M. Jones worked in various urban hospital ICU settings as a critical care registered nurse in her first career, gaining fourteen years of critical care experience before pursuing a law degree. After practicing law for 15 years on the defense side, Dawn established The Firm of Dawn M. Jones, LLC in May of 2014 to obtain justice for clients and their families for injuries resulting from malpractice, trucking collisions, slip/trip and falls, nursing home negligence, wrongful death and other serious tort-related matters. Additionally, Dawn has served as court-appointed Receiver for a multi-million-

dollar joint venture to ensure the continued functioning of the JV company during the pendency of the litigation. Further information about The Firm of Dawn M. Jones, LLC can be found at [www.dawnjoneslaw.com](http://www.dawnjoneslaw.com).

Dawn is highly active in local bar, state bar and non-profit activities, currently serving as President of the State Bar of Georgia. She is a frequent speaker on expert witness, product liability, nursing and physician malpractice, professionalism, and other law-related topics throughout the State of Georgia. In addition to speaking at various events and seminars annually, Dawn has received numerous awards and honors recognizing her service and dedication to the legal profession and to the community at large. Such recognition includes the 2018 Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Virginia School of Nursing, the 2017 Commitment to Equality Award from the State Bar of Georgia Committee to Promote Inclusion in the Profession, the 2015 Thomas R. Burnside Excellence in Bar Leadership Award from the State Bar of Georgia, the 2012 Attorney A. T. Walden Legacy Award from the Gate City Bar Association Judicial Section, the 2012 Leadership Award from the Atlanta Bar Association, the 2010 Barbara A. Harris Award for Service to the Community from the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys, the 2010 R. Pruden Herndon Service Award from the Gate City Bar Association, and the 2010 Seth D. Kirschenbaum Diversity Award from the Multi-Bar Leadership Council, among others.

Dawn received a Law degree from Georgia State University College of Law, a Master of Science degree in Critical Care Nursing from Georgetown University, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from the University of Virginia. She is admitted to practice law in the State of Georgia and has one dog, Jack Jones. Dawn's other fur babies, Meadow Jones and Cleopatra Jones, have crossed the rainbow bridge.



## **Professor Tanya Washington Hicks**

### **MODERATOR**

Tanya Washington Hicks is a Professor of Law at Georgia State University College of Law. She earned her J.D. from The University of Maryland School of Law and then clerked for Associate Judge Robert M. Bell on the Maryland Court of Appeals. After practicing as a toxic tort defense litigator in the Baltimore office of Piper & Marbury, she completed two fellowships and earned her LL.M. from Harvard Law School.

Professor Washington Hicks has taught Civil Procedure I and II, Family Law, Education Law and Race and Law at Georgia State for the past 18 years. Her research and scholarship focus on issues related to educational equity, domestic violence, racial justice, inclusion and diversity, marriage equality, and children's constitutional rights. Her articles and op-eds have been published in law journals and periodicals across the nation, and Supreme Court Justice Kennedy, cited her co-authored amicus brief in his majority opinion in the landmark marriage equality decision, Obergefell v. Hodges.

Professor Washington Hicks believes the true value of the law lies in its capacity to improve the human condition and this creed animates her work. She served for three years on the Atlanta Human Relations Commission, volunteered with various organizations that provide support to Atlanta's unsheltered population, cooked and served food at area soup kitchens, filed several amicus briefs in Georgia appellate cases and in federal circuit and U.S. Supreme Court cases, and provided countless hours of pro-bono work. Her work as an educator activist also includes serving for 2 years as Director of the John Lewis Fellowship Program, a Humanity in Action program funded by a grant to the National Center for Civil and Human Rights from the Mellon Foundation. Professor Washington Hicks' work as a public intellectual have been recognized and celebrated by the Gate City Bar, with the President's Award for Excellence, and by Georgia State University, with the Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching and Scholarship. Professor Washington Hicks currently serves as President of the Faculty of the African Diaspora Association (FADA) for Georgia State University and she frequently conducts team building and diversity trainings and workshops for organizations, law firms and university departments.



### **Judge Nina Markette Baker**

Nina Markette Baker is a Superior Court Judge for the Coweta Judicial Circuit. She was appointed to the bench by Governor Brian Kemp and took office in June of 2019. Before that, she won four consecutive terms as Solicitor-General of Troup County being first elected in 2004. Prior to being elected Troup County Solicitor-General, Judge Baker worked as a domestic relations attorney, a part-time Assistant Solicitor and as an attorney on the indigent panel for Troup County Juvenile Court. She also previously served as an assistant Municipal Court Judge for the City of LaGrange.

In 2017 Judge Baker was named Georgia Solicitor-General of the year and in 2006 she was honored as one of Georgia Trend's Top 40 Under 40. She currently serves as a member of the Board of Governors for the Georgia Bar Association and was named to the newly formed State Bar committee, Seeking Equal Justice and addressing Racism and Racial Bias.

Judge Baker is a graduate of LaGrange High School, Converse College in Spartanburg, SC and Mississippi College School of Law in Jackson, Mississippi.

She lives in LaGrange with her husband, James, who is also an attorney, and their two children, Jack, 16 and Nina Frances, 12.



### **Ashley D. Bell**

Ashley D. Bell is a member of Dentons' Public Policy practice. Leveraging his extensive experience with both the public and private sectors, Ashley develops solutions to effectively bridge the intersection of business, law and government.

Ashley served for four years in the Trump Administration, most recently as a Policy Advisor for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the White House Office of American Innovation. Simultaneously, Ashley served as the Regional Administrator for the US Small Business Administration (SBA) for the Southeastern United States.

As a White House policy advisor, Ashley played a key role in the implementation of the Opportunity Zone program, a bipartisan community development program established in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 to incentivize investments in low-income communities across the country. He oversaw the execution of all opportunity zone federal spending related to small business growth, including but not limited to start-ups.

At the SBA, Ashley focused on supporting underserved communities, women and minorities. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, he played an instrumental role in the promotion and implementation of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to help businesses navigate the unprecedented crisis. As a senior executive at the SBA, he worked to increase access to capital and contracting dollars for minority owned businesses through partnerships with the public and private sector.

Ashley is committed to furthering the growth of entrepreneurs and has worked closely with venture capital funds, qualified opportunity zone funds, and traditional lenders to leverage public and private resources to support economic growth. He frequently works with companies to create strategies related to local, state and federal incentives as well as supplier diversity.

Ashley's many successes and influence are made possible by his longstanding relationships with government officials on both sides of the aisle and at the federal, state and local level, as well as with leaders in small business, private equity and financial institutions in the private sector.

Prior to the serving in the Administration, Ashley represented clients across the country on a range of matters including corporate, litigation, banking, real estate and public finance. He also previously served as a County Commissioner and Vice President of the Georgia Association of Black County Officials (GABCO). He has served as General Counsel for the GABCO, the National Association of Black County Officials & Special Counsel for the National League of Cities Black Caucus.



### **Jake Evans**

Jake Evans is a Partner in Holland & Knight's Public Policy & Regulation and Litigation and Dispute Resolution Groups. Jake represents individuals and companies in matters involving complex litigation; government and regulatory work at the local, state and national level; and general business law advice and counsel. Jake is also Chairman of the Georgia State Ethics Commission, and serves on the Georgia Bipartisan Task Force for Safe, Secure, and Accessible Elections, the United States Commission on Civil Rights' Georgia Advisory Committee, and the Atlanta Ballet's Advisory Council.

Jake was named as one of Atlanta's Most Influential Leaders by Atlanta Magazine and James Magazine, and Jake has received numerous recognitions for his work as a lawyer.



### **Judge Dax López**

Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, Judge Dax López moved to Georgia at the age of six. Constantly on the move, Judge López lived in six states, mostly in the South, throughout his childhood. Judge López attended Vanderbilt University where he obtained a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. He obtained his law degree from Vanderbilt Law School, where he served as president of the Vanderbilt Bar Association and as an editor on the Vanderbilt Journal Transnational Law. After law school, Judge López served as the law clerk for the Hon. Hector M. Laffitte in the Federal District Court for the District of Puerto Rico. He

returned to Atlanta in 2002 to commence his career as an attorney at Holland & Knight, LLP, where he practiced in the complex civil litigation group for three years. Before joining the DeKalb State Court, Judge López also worked in the litigation groups of Ashe, Rafuse & Hill and Foltz & Martin LLC, where he handled class actions, complex civil litigation, employment matters, and product liability cases.

On August 10, 2010, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue appointed Dax to the State Court of DeKalb County, where he has presided over both criminal misdemeanor and civil matters. Judge López also presides over two sections of the DeKalb County DUI Court, which includes the only such court conducted entirely in Spanish.

Judge López is a past president of the Georgia Hispanic Bar Association, and serves on the Board of Directors of CETPA and the Advisory Board of Caminar Latino. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials. Judge López remains active in and committed to several other civic and community organizations.

On July 30, 2015, President Barack Obama nominated Judge López to the Federal District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

Judge López is married to attorney Zulma López. Together they are the proud parents of four children: Roberto Carlos, Sebastian, Elisa and Leo.



**Patrise M. Perkins-Hooker**

Patrise M. Perkins-Hooker is the Administrative Partner at Johnson & Freeman, LLC. She rejoined the firm after distinguished service as the County Attorney for Fulton County, Georgia. Prior to joining Fulton County she served as the vice president and general counsel for the Atlanta BeltLine Inc. for six years. She is a former partner with the law firm of Hollowell, Foster & Gepp, PC, where she was in charge of the Commercial Real Estate Group. She was a former Managing Partner of Johnson, Freeman & Perkins-Hooker. She also owned her own law firm for over 10 years.

Perkins-Hooker is an honors graduate of Georgia Tech and received her graduate degrees from Emory University Law and Business Schools. She was admitted to the Bar in 1984.

She has received numerous honors for her service to the legal profession and the community, including being inducted into the Gate City Bar Association's Hall of Fame, being presented the Leah Ward Sears Service to the Profession Award by the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys, being presented an Honorary degree from the John Marshall Law School in Atlanta, being presented the Eleonoré Raoul Greene Trailblazer Award from Emory University Law School and being presented the George A. Pindar Award for Lifetime Service to the Real Property profession. She has also received the Phoenix Award from the Mayor of Atlanta. This is the highest honor bestowed on citizens in Atlanta for their outstanding contributions.

She is happily married to Douglas R. Hooker. They have two children and eight grandchildren.



### **Justice Carla Wong McMillian**

Justice Carla Wong McMillian was appointed to the Supreme Court of Georgia by Governor Brian Kemp, taking office on April 10, 2020. Born and raised in Augusta, Georgia, she is the first Asian Pacific American to serve on a state's highest court in the Southern United States. Prior to joining the Supreme Court, Justice McMillian served on the Court of Appeals, where she was appointed by Governor Nathan Deal and took office in 2013. With her election the following year to that court, Justice McMillian became the first Asian Pacific American to be elected to a statewide office in Georgia.

Justice McMillian has also served as the State Court Judge for Fayette County, a position to which she was appointed by Governor Sonny Perdue in 2010.

Before her appointment to the bench, Justice McMillian was a partner in the litigation group of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP. Justice McMillian also had the privilege of starting her legal career as a federal law clerk for the Honorable William C. O'Kelley of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

Justice McMillian attended law school as a Woodruff Scholar at the University of Georgia School of Law. She also graduated with high honors from Duke University. Justice McMillian has been married since 1997 to her husband Lance, a professor at Atlanta's John Marshall Law School. They have two children and live in Fayette County where they have been long-time members of Dogwood Church.