

September 26, 2025

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From the Dean



88.5% first-time pass rate on the July bar exam! This remarkable accomplishment reflects their hard work, perseverance, and commitment to excellence. Passing the bar exam is one of the most demanding and rewarding achievements,

representing months of rigorous study, unwavering dedication, and the mastery of complex legal knowledge and skills. We are excited to welcome these new attorneys as they join the legal profession as licensed practitioners.

These results also reflect the dedication and support of our **Spear the Bar summer** 2025 program run by our Bar Success team—Jami Farrell, Nancy Benavides, Laura Dennis, Karusha Sharpe, and Cecelia Smith. Their efforts included supplemental lectures, a dedicated Canvas resource page,

individualized tutoring, progress tracking, a student food pantry, and other initiatives that provided our graduates with every possible advantage. Please join us in congratulating our alumni on this major accomplishment.

Note: This figure includes all FSU Law graduates who sat for the Florida bar exam for the first time this July. We also proudly recognize and celebrate the achievements of our graduates who took a bar exam in other jurisdictions this summer.

Erin O'anna Dean Erin O'Connor



The Annual Fund—built through charitable gifts—provides resources for the College's most pressing needs and advances our mission of excellence. Contributions sustain student scholarships, enrichment programs, bar-exam preparation, and much more.

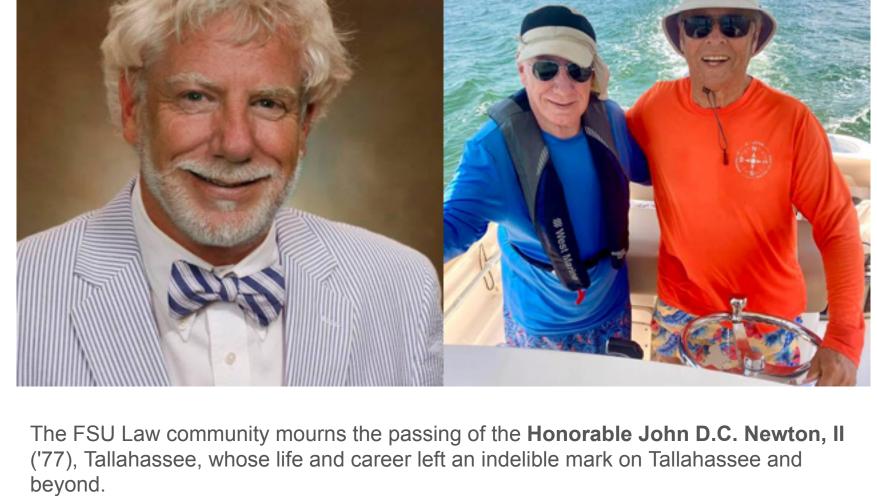
Thanks to remarkable alumni generosity, last year, the College of Law's alumni

giving rate ranks among the top law schools nationally—let's do it again this year. Every gift, of any amount, directly benefits our students, faculty, and entire law school community and is fully tax-deductible. You can participate when you receive a call or

email from our students beginning September 29, or give online anytime at give.fsu.edu/law. Your support strengthens the College of Law today and builds the foundation for tomorrow's leaders.

Thank you for your support! Donate

In Memoriam: John D.C. Newton, II



dedicated the bulk of his legal career to public service: as a law clerk for a federal judge, a public defender, senior assistant attorney general in the Office of the Florida Attorney General, general counsel for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and finally a judge for the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings.

Newton earned his undergraduate and law degrees from Florida State University. He

Newton served as president of the **Tallahassee Bar Association** and was active in The Florida Bar, Legal Aid Foundation, Tallahassee Women Lawyers, and Legal Services of North Florida. He also taught Florida Administrative Law as an adjunct professor for FSU Law.

Judge Robert Hinkle. "He was precisely what we want our judges to be: conscientious, respectful, unbiased. And perhaps most important of all, a good person. He made the profession a little better than it would have been without him." Newton was a partner at **Berger Singerman** and a shareholder at **Messer, Caparello**,

"John Newton had a splendid career as a lawyer and judge," said United States District

Madsen, Lewis & Goldman, P.A. While at Berger Singerman, his career intersected with one of the most important legal moments in modern American history. He served on the team of attorneys working for Vice President Al Gore during the historic Bush v. Gore legal battle in the aftermath of the 2000 presidential election. FSU Law Dean and Professor Emeritus Don Weidner credits Newton for his return

to sailing following his 25 years of serving as Dean. "It was impossible to not get swept

up in John's sheer love of life, people, and of sailing. His approach to life was

inspirational. John was an absolutely lovely guy; I'll miss him very much."

Close friend and fellow attorney Cari Roth ('83) said Newton's real superpower was connecting people. "Untold numbers of jobs were obtained, help received, or friendships forged from a John connection. His network was wide, and he used it for good in so many ways," says Roth.

Jennifer Heckman, FSU Law alumna and Employee Recruitment Director, shared, "I count myself lucky to be one of those friends. John was my next-door neighbor for close to 25 years, and our friendship, forged over years of front porch conversations,

was a combination of mentorship, humor, and support. He spoiled my children with weekend donut delivery and later celebrated my move from private practice to FSU Law. His beloved alma mater was where, as he put it, he fell in love with the law. He told me what a great privilege it was to be part of a law student's journey." Newton never hesitated to share the less glamorous side of his early career with young lawyers. As a public defender arguing his first case before the Florida Supreme Court, he fainted at the podium. "All the justices were kind and called to check on my well-

"He served his community with humility. I was his campaign treasurer when he unsuccessfully ran for county judge. The day after the election, he stood on a busy corner waving a "Thank You" sign, grateful for the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. His opponent at the time, Leon County Circuit Judge Ron Flury ('93), remembers his professionalism and integrity, and added, 'more importantly than being a good lawyer and a good administrative law judge, he was a great dad. His

being," Newton said years later. "Now it's a good story to share with new lawyers, just

daughter [Colleen] meant everything to him." Heckman concluded. Newton embodied what FSU Law strives to instill in its graduates: professional excellence, public service, and deep commitment to community. His legacy lives on in the profession he served so faithfully and the many people he lifted up along the way. - Tribute written by Jennifer Heckman, FSU Law alumna and Employee

FSU Law Faculty in the News

Alexander Tsesis was featured by the Tallahassee Democrat regarding a panel discussion held at Tallahassee's Westminster Oaks retirement community. The event featured veteran journalist Mary Ellen Klas, human rights expert

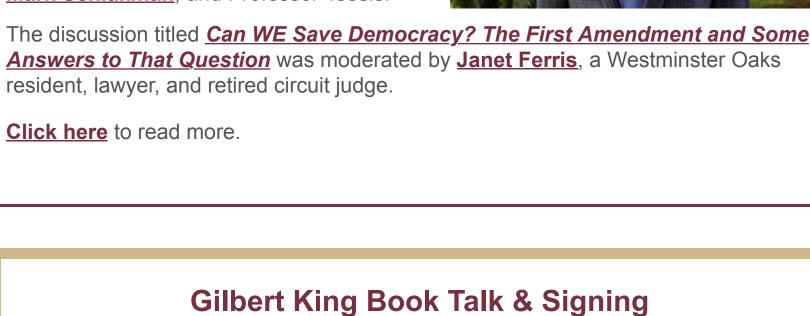
Mark Schlakman, and Professor Tsesis. resident, lawyer, and retired circuit judge. **Click here** to read more.

Last week, Professor and D'Alemberte

Distinguished Chair in Constitutional Law

like Justice Adkins said it would be."

Recruitment Director



Join us on October 15 at 7 p.m. in room 101 to hear from Pulitzer Prize-

winning author **Gilbert King** for a **special**

event featuring his latest work, Bone

In his newest book, Bone Valley, King

shares the true story of Leo Schofield, a

Valley. The event is hosted in partnership with Midtown Reader and will feature Professor Erika Nybor-Burch interviewing the New York Times bestselling author.



Services. She started her career as an

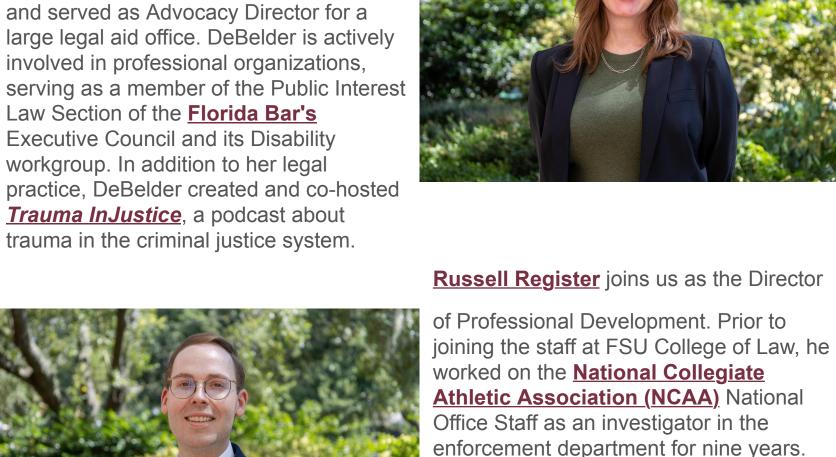
Assistant Public Defender in Jacksonville, Florida, and later shifted to civil legal aid

BONE

A TRUE STORY

man wrongfully convicted of his wife's murder and exposing layers of corruption, flawed evidence, and injustice in the criminal justice system. **RSVP** here.

Welcome to FSU: Career Service Advisors FSU College of Law Career Services is pleased to welcome two new team members,



Athletic Association (NCAA) National Office Staff as an investigator in the enforcement department for nine years. Register also worked for two years at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in the Ragin' Cajuns Athletics Department as the Compliance and Student-Athlete Development Coordinator. **FSU Law Student Spotlight: 3L Sheldon Burnell**

majoring in Sociology with two minors in Law and Philosophy. At FSU Law, Burnell is a member of the Moot Court Team, where he competes nationally. He is currently a Staff Editor for the *Journal of Land Use and Environmental*

Law and previously served as Executive Editor. He has also served on the Executive

Board of the Business Law Society and as a member of the Student Advisory Board for the Raising the Bar Professionalism Program. Burnell developed an interest in artificial intelligence, particularly in how it will shape the legal profession. He has taken courses

Professionalism.

or email him at sb22cx@fsu.edu.

Desired Practice Location: Florida,

Sheldon Burnell hails from Brattleboro.

degree from the University of Vermont,

Vermont, where he earned his bachelor's

Expected Graduation: May 2026

Field of Law Sought: Litigation

California, or North Carolina

exploring this topic, and his article, The Role of Law Schools in Cultivating a Professional Identity in the Era of AI, will be published by the Henry Latimer Center for From September 2020 through April 2024, Burnell worked for **Jason J. Sawyer**, Attorney and Counselor at Law. He conducted legal research and drafted motions and memoranda on a range of criminal defense issues in both state and federal courts. His work included drafting a motion for interlocutory appeal to the Vermont Supreme Court, which was granted. Burnell also drafted the appellate brief for that appeal, which resulted in the successful reversal of the trial court's decision. In the summer of 2024, Burnell worked at Coppins Monroe, P.A., drafting motions, contributing to an Eleventh Circuit appellate brief in a federal civil rights case, and researching issues involving governmental entities, employment disputes, and administrative law. Burnell reviewed discovery, interviewed witnesses, and assisted

Office as a certified legal intern, where he was able to argue hearings in court, handle the criminal calendar, as well as draft and argue a restitution brief that secured a favorable result. Burnell drafted an Early Neutral Evaluation Brief in a federal civil rights case, conducted statutory interpretation research for the Advisory Division, and supported litigation in suits against the City. Burnell brings substantial experience in drafting, research, and litigation. If you are

interested in connecting with or hiring Burnell after graduation, visit his LinkedIn profile

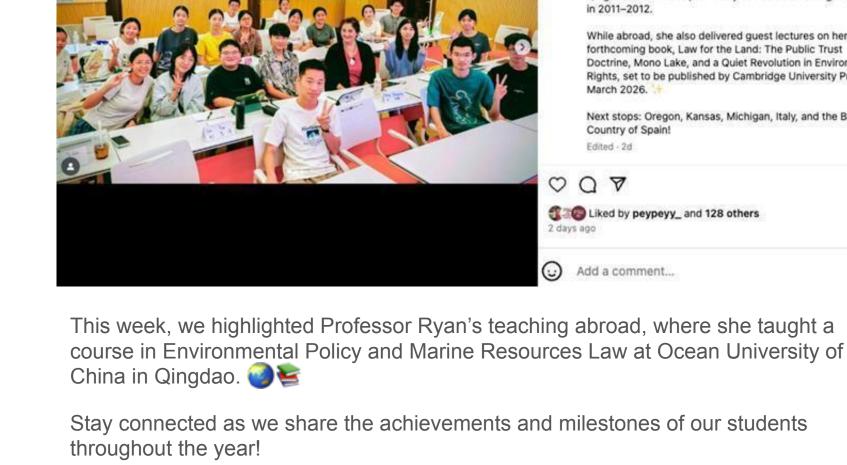
"Florida State Law has been both rigorous and rewarding. I look

In the summer of his second year, Burnell interned at the **San Diego City Attorney's**

attorneys at deposition, mediations, and evidentiary hearings.

forward to applying the skills and knowledge I've developed in law school to my future work and continuing to grow as a legal professional."

FSU Law Social Spotlight



Next stops: Oregon, Kansas, Michigan, Italy, and the Basque Edited - 2d OOA Size Liked by peypeyy_ and 128 others Add a comment... Post

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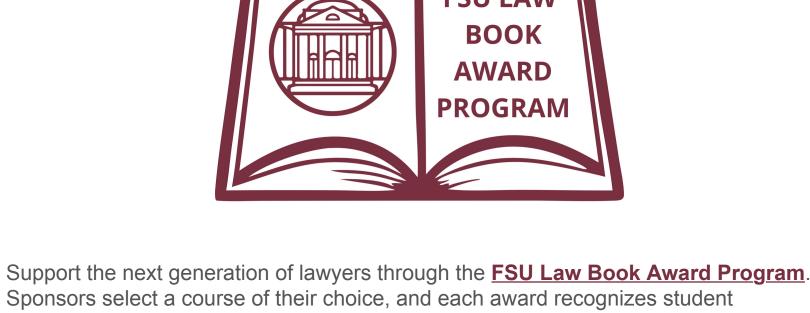
fsucollegeoflaw O Professor Ryan in China III

This fall, Prof. Erin Ryan is on research leave and making an

She just wrapped up teaching Environmental Policy and Marine Resources Law at Ocean University of China in Qingdao-where she previously served as a Fulbright Scholar

While abroad, she also delivered guest lectures on her forthcoming book, Law for the Land: The Public Trust Doctrine, Mono Lake, and a Quiet Revolution in Environmental Rights, set to be published by Cambridge University Press in

FSU LAW



achievement while helping the College of Law recruit and retain top talent. Contributions are fully tax-deductible. Become a Book Award sponsor today and make a lasting impact.

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