

President's Message

Q&A with 2024-25 LBF President Judge (Ret.) John C. Davidson

Interviewed by 2024-25 Secretary Charles C. Bourque

Bourque: Tell us about yourself and your family.

Davidson: I was born in Baker, La., the oldest of three boys. After attending Baker High School, I attended Louisiana State University for both undergraduate and law school. While attending Baker High School, I met my wife. We married after high school and have three children, two boys and one girl. Upon graduating from law school, I practiced in New Orleans for a few years, before ending up in Alexandria. I was elected as a district court judge in 2004, retiring in September 2023. Currently, I stay busy with judicial assignments along with nonprofit and community projects, in between traveling and spending time with my grandchildren.

Bourque: How did you get involved with the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF)?

Davidson: I became a member in 1999 simply because I received an invitation to join an organization that performed important work. I was then appointed to the LBF Board as the district court representative. As a board member, I had the opportunity to observe the work and became personally invested in the purpose, mission and importance of the work of the LBF. I am truly grateful that I joined, even though it took a few years to grasp the breadth and importance of the LBF work.

Bourque: Why do you think the LBF is important to the law profession?

Davidson: As lawyers, we are consumed with solving problems for our clients, and I find that many lawyers, myself included, do not balance the demands of our profession with our personal life. Part of that balance is the recognition of the importance of our profession in the lives of the public we serve. As lawyers, we are in a unique position to champion those who desperately need a champion. The LBF helps lawyers support a system that

serves those citizens who need a champion but cannot afford a champion. The LBF helps us continue to build a lasting legacy for equal justice under the law in our state.

Bourque: Why do you think the LBF is important to Louisiana?

Davidson: Every person in our state should be provided equal access to legal assistance when confronted with a legal matter. Only those accused of criminal conduct are constitutionally entitled to an attorney. The vast majority of our citizens cannot afford legal representation. The LBF works to close the gap between those who can afford legal representation and those who cannot in an effort to build a true system of justice.

Bourque: What role does the LBF play in the Louisiana civil legal aid network?

Davidson: The LBF is the largest funder of civil legal aid in Louisiana and constantly explores opportunities to continue to strengthen and support an equal system of justice in our state.

Bourque: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing civil legal aid in Louisiana?

Davidson: One of the biggest challenges we face is the lack of public service attorneys. Without public service attorneys, the needs of those people who cannot afford an attorney cannot be met. Unfortunately, the public service attorneys tend to be at the low end of the pay scale. As a result, many of our dedicated public service attorneys have to maintain an outside practice to pay their bills. The ongoing challenge is to attempt to close the economic pay gap. Additionally, I want to



Judge (Ret.) John C. Davidson

focus on supporting the pro bono efforts of lawyers and organizations that volunteer their time and effort to assist in providing legal services.

Bourque: What do you hope to accomplish this year as LBF president?

Davidson: I am going to work hard to empower our outstanding LBF staff to continue to help build a level playing field for the low-income citizens in our state. We have many groups and individuals throughout the state who work hard on this issue every day. We will continue to form partnerships and collaborations to support and advance their work.

Bourque: What is your favorite memory with the LBF so far?

Davidson: I have a collection of favorite memories as part of the LBF. I love hearing directly from our grantees about their incredible work and ideas for more progress. I love meeting people in every corner of the state as they work to create a lasting legacy of a justice system that serves our citizens in a fair and impartial manner. My biggest regret is that I did not get more involved much earlier in my career. There is so much important and rewarding work to be done.

Bourque: What advice do you have on improving the practice of law for young lawyers?

Davidson: While law schools prepare lawyers to understand the study of law, application of the law to real-life legal problems is something that requires much more practice. Our field is one that requires constant study and application of knowledge to the legal problems encountered in the practice. Unfortunately, many of my best lessons were learned from mistakes. Use mistakes as a learning tool. Do not be afraid to ask for help

Continued next page

LBF Honors Distinguished Award Recipients at Gala

The Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) will celebrate its 38th Annual Fellows Gala on April 19 in honor of the 2023 Distinguished Jurist Elizabeth Erny Foote, Distinguished Attorney Harry J. (Skip) Philips, Jr., Distinguished Professor John K. Pierre and Calogero Justice Award recipient Bernard E. (Bernie) Boudreaux, Jr.

Distinguished Jurist Elizabeth Erny Foote is a U.S. District Court judge for the Western District of Louisiana, with her duty seat in Shreveport. Appointed by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, Judge Foote serves on the Judicial Security Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States. Until her appointment to the bench in 2010, she was a partner in the Smith Foote Law Firm, LLP, in Alexandria, where she had been engaged in active practice since 1979. She received her undergraduate degree from Louisiana State University with college honors, her master of arts degree from Duke University and her law degree from the LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center. She served as an adjunct professor at LSU Law Center in appellate advocacy and as an instructor on motion practice in the law school's "intersession" program. She was the first woman to serve as an officer in the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), serving as treasurer, and later served as LSBA president in 2008-09.



Judge Elizabeth Erny Foote



Harry J. Philips, Jr.



John K. Pierre



Bernard E. Boudreaux, Jr.

Distinguished Attorney Harry J. (Skip) Philips, Jr. is of counsel at Taylor, Porter, Brooks & Phillips, LLP, in Baton Rouge where he has practiced since graduating from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center in 1983. He was managing partner of Taylor Porter for nine years. He is a former president and member of the LBF's Board of Directors and currently serves on the Grants and Governance committees. He is a member of the Louisiana State Law Institute Council.


Distinguished Professor John K. Pierre has been serving as Southern University Law Center's chancellor since 2016. Previously, he became a faculty member in 1990 and later became vice chancellor of institutional accountability and the evening division in 2006. He received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Southern University in 1980, a master's degree in tax accounting from Texas Tech University in 1982 and a JD degree from Southern Methodist University

School of Law in 1985.

Calogero Justice Award recipient Bernard E. (Bernie) Boudreaux, Jr. has been an associate with the law firm of Jones Swanson & Huddell, LLC, since 2013. He received a BA degree from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and his JD degree from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center in 1961. In 1964, he began practicing law in Franklin, La., later becoming district attorney in the 16th Judicial District. He and Judge William Hunter created the first drug court in Louisiana. He retired as district attorney in 2000 to become executive counsel for Louisiana Gov. M.J. (Mike) Foster. He initiated and coordinated the effort to renovate the current Louisiana Supreme Court building. He co-authored a book published by West Publishing Company, *Sentencing Guidelines Manual*. He continues to serve on the Louisiana State Law Institute's committee to enact the Louisiana Code of Evidence.

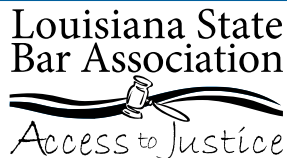
LBF Q&A continued from page 452

from more experienced attorneys. Additionally, talk to the opposing counsel and let your word matter. Much of the backlog I saw as a judge was a direct result of attorneys failing to communicate before a matter was heard. Judges set conferences with attorneys to assist with communication in cases. Reach out before a matter is heard to see if issues can be resolved without judicial involvement. You build your reputation every day with every interaction. Guard your reputation with your actions. Lastly, try to live a balanced life focused on your emotional and physical health. It is easy to lose sight of life outside our profession with the demands of our profession.




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