MINUTES

ALABAMA STATE BAR
2025 GRAND CONVOCATION
AND
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Grand Hotel
One Grand Boulevard
Point Clear, Alabama 36564

July 19, 2025, at 9:15 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

President Tom Perry called to order the 148th Grand Convocation and Annual Business Meeting of the Alabama State Bar.

STATE OF THE JUDICIARY – CHIEF JUSTICE SARAH STEWART

President Perry recognized Chief Justice Sarah Stewart for the State of the Judiciary address. Chief Justice Stewart, who began her term six months ago, addressed the Bar with a focus on collaboration, transparency, and modernization within the judicial branch. She shared her early priorities, which included evaluating internal court operations, and increasing communication across all levels of the court system. She highlighted her commitment to strengthening the relationship between the judicial and legislative branches, noting the success of the accountability court bill in the recent legislative session. She thanked the Bar for their support and for collaboration on shared goals.

President Perry thanked Chief Justice Stewart for her remarks and pledged continued support and cooperation by the bar in improving the court system and access to justice in Alabama.

FIFTY YEAR STATUS

President Perry recognized any fifty-year members in attendance and informed everyone the Alabama State Bar would hold a 50-Year Milestone Luncheon on September 4, 2025, at Ross Bridge in Birmingham, Alabama.

RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Immediate Past President Buck recognized members of the judiciary, members of the Alabama state legislature, past presidents of the Alabama State Bar, and Leadership Forum alumni in attendance.

PRESENTATION OF THE J. ANTHONY "TONY" McLAIN PROFESSIONALISM AWARD

President-Elect Fred Helmsing presented the J. Anthony "Tony" McLain Professionalism Award to Sharon Stuart.

PRESENTATION OF THE MICHAEL ERMERT AWARD OF MERIT

President-Elect Helmsing presented the Michael Ermert Award of Merit to Tom Heflin.

PRESENTATION OF THE WILLIAM D. "BILL" SCRUGGS, JR. AWARD

President-Elect Fred Helmsing recognized Commissioner Edgar Black to present the William D. "Bill" Scruggs, Jr. Award to Marcel Black.

PRESENTATION OF PRESIDENT'S AWARD

President-Elect Fred Helmsing announced the President's Award recipient as Forrest Latta.

PRESENTATION OF THE COMMISSIONER'S AWARD

President-Elect Fred Helmsing announced the Commissioner's Award recipient as Commissioner Jerome Thompson.

PRESENTATION OF THE JEANNE MARIE LESLIE AWARD

Shannon Knight, Director of the Alabama Lawyers Assistance Program, presented the Jeanne Marie Leslie Award to Doug Benson.

PRESENTATION OF THE JESSE EVANS AWARD

John Brinkley, Chair of the Solo and Small Firm Section, recognized Jesse Evans' family on the inaugural presentation of the annual award named in recognition of Jesse Evans service and contributions to the legal profession. Brinkley then recognized Sam Irby and Taze Shepard (posthumously) as the 2025 honorees.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED

President-Elect Fred Helmsing announced recipients of awards presented at other times during the Alabama State Bar Annual Meeting.

Maude McLure Kelly Award	Hon. Tamara Harris Johnson
Susan B. Livingston Award	Sherrie L. Phillips
Justice Janie L. Shores Scholarship	Constance Hodges

PRESENTATION OF THE JUDICIAL AWARD OF MERIT AWARD

President-Elect Helmsing recognized the Honorable Robert Minor of St. Clair County, Alabama, as the Judicial Award of Merit recipient.

PRESENTATION OF THE VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM PRO BONO AWARDS

Eileen Harris, chair of the Pro Bono Committee announced the recipients of the Volunteer Lawyers Program Pro Bono Awards.

Albert Vreeland Award	Michael Jackson
Mediator Award	Charles Denaburg
Law Firm/Group Award	Jefferson County District Court Mediation Program
Law Student Award	Savannah Nelson

PRESENTATION OF PRESIDENT'S PLAQUE AND PIN

Immediate Past President Brannon Buck presented President Tom Perry with the President's Plaque and Past President's Ribbon. Executive Director Terri Lovell thanked President Tom Perry for his commitment to the Alabama State Bar and on behalf of the ASB staff presented him with a framed September Alabama Lawyer magazine cover.

PRESIDENT'S CLOSING REMARKS

President Perry thanked those in attendance for allowing him the opportunity and privilege to serve as president of the Alabama State Bar. He gave an overview of his tenure as president and highlighted his primary initiative, Harvesting Hope, which was created to recruit and assist lawyers to rural areas of Alabama and to provide them tools to be successful. Perry expressed his appreciation to his family, law firm, Tom Heflin, his Executive Council, and the ASB staff for their support during his presidency. He wished Fred Helmsing the best as he assumes the office.

RECOGNITION OF JANA GARNER AS PRESIDENT-ELECT

President Perry asked Jana Garner to come to the podium. President Perry congratulated Jana Garner on becoming president-elect. Garner made brief remarks and said that she looked forward to supporting incoming president Fred Helmsing in the coming year.

INSTALLATION OF FREDERICK G. HELMSING, JR. AS THE 150TH PRESIDENT OF THE ALABAMA STATE BAR

Chief Justice Sarah Stewart administered the oath of office to Fred Helmsing as he was introduced as the 150th president of the Alabama State Bar. Immediate Past President Perry presented him with the presidential gavel, pin, and ribbon. President Helmsing thanked Past President Perry for his leadership over the past year. President Helmsing also thanked Chief Justice Stewart, his

family, law firm, and members of the Alabama State Bar for their support and belief in him.

President Helmsing shared that his presidential theme, *Supporting What Matters*, will focus on the bar's role in strengthening the ethical, professional, and personal well-being of its members. He emphasized that justice, service, and lawyer wellness are not competing priorities, but pillars of a healthy legal life.

President Helmsing concluded by sharing that the role of Alabama State President comes with a deep sense of responsibility, not only to those who came before him, but to the lawyers across Alabama working every day to uphold justice and service their communities.

GRAND PRIZE DRAWING

Robyn Bernier and representatives of Insurance Specialists (ISI) were recognized for the drawing of the grand prize trip to Charleston, South Carolina. The winner was Allison Skinner. She also recognized other sponsors of the annual meeting and concluded by thanking the vendors, speakers, and lawyers for their participation in this year's annual meeting.

CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURNMENT

President Helmsing closed the meeting by reminding all in attendance that the 2026 annual meeting would be held July 15-18, 2026, at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama. He reminded commissioners of their brief meeting immediately following the annual business meeting. He then declared the 2025 Grand Convocation and Annual Business Meeting of the Alabama State Bar adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Tom Perry, President
Alabama State Bar, 2024-2025

Frederick G. Helmsing, Jr., President
Alabama State Bar, 2025-2026

ATTEST:

Terri B. Lovell, Secretary
Alabama State Bar