

## SPEAKER PROFILES

**BOBBY ALLEN** has been with the State Board of Workers' Compensation since 2015. He serves in the role of Director of Information Technology. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science and a Master of Science degree in Information Technology. He has over 20 years of IT experience including programming, database administration, system administration, and management. His role at the SBWC is to help maintain the IT infrastructure and to help ensure that the SBWC achieves its vision and strategic goals from a technical perspective.

**MELODIE BELCHER** was appointed Administrative Law Judge in 2002 and served as the Chief Judge from 2009 to 2012. She is an active participant with the Southern Association of Workers' Compensation Administrators and served as the President of the organization from July of 2013 to July of 2014. She currently serves as a Co-chair of the Administration and Procedures Committee for that organization. Melodie has also served as a Board Member of the National Association of Workers' Compensation Judiciary. She was inducted as a Fellow of the College of Workers' Compensation Lawyers in 2014. Melodie speaks regularly on a variety of workers' compensation issues and has moderated SAWCA's Regulator Roundtable at WCI in Orlando for several years. She lives in Lagrange, Georgia with her husband.

**TRACEE R. BENZO** founded Benzo Law with the overarching mission to both educate and advocate for injured workers across the state of Georgia. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies and Speech and Communications from Clemson University and graduated with distinction from John Marshall Law School in Atlanta. While attending law school and working full-time as a litigation paralegal, she served as President of the Black Law Student's Association, was a member of the award-winning mock trial and moot court teams, and served as the Legislative Review editor for The John Marshall Law Journal. She has received the Distinguished Alumni Award from John Marshall Law School and has been named to Who's Who Top Legal & Accounting Professionals, The National Bar Association's Trailblazers Under 40, and the Top 100 Women of Influence. She is an active member of the John Marshall School of Law Alumni Board, the Workers' Compensation Claimants Law Section, the Workers' Compensation Claimants Research Committee, and the Executive Committee of the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association.

**KIMBERLY BOEHM** is an Administrative Law Judge with the State Board of Workers' Compensation's Atlanta office. Prior to joining the Board, she represented claimants for several years and before that, had a defense practice representing employers, insurers, servicing agents and group funds as a partner with the law firm of Stone & Boehm in Duluth. She graduated from the University of Georgia with an undergraduate degree in history and philosophy and obtained her law degree from the Georgia State University College of Law in 1996. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, cooking, cheering on the Dawgs and most of all, spending time with her husband, Peter, and two daughters.

**JUDGE VIOLA DREW** is a graduate of Emory University School of Law. She became an administrative law judge with the State Board of Workers' Compensation in 1992. She has served as a Director of the Board, as Chief Judge, as Interim Executive Director, and as acting Director of the Licensure and Self-Insurance Division during her tenure with the Board. She is currently serving as Deputy Executive Director of the Board and she also continues to hear cases as an administrative law judge in Atlanta. She also serves as Ethics Counsel to the Board and as a member and staff liaison to the Rules Committee.

**LIESA GHOLSON** has been an Administrative Law Judge since 2008. She has served in both the Trial Division and in the Alternative Dispute Resolution (“ADR”) Division. She spent several years as Deputy Division Director of the ADR before being named Division Director in 2019. Judge Gholson joined the Board as a mediator and staff attorney in January of 2000, after having worked in law firm and corporate environments. In 2006 she became Division Director of the Settlements Division and then later, the first Division Director of the Division of Process Improvement and Oversight, which includes the operation of ICMS and training for both Board staff and outside users. Judge Gholson attended Georgia Tech and Universidad de Salamanca before completing undergraduate studies at the University of Georgia. She subsequently received her Juris Doctorate from the University of Georgia’s School of Law.

**TOMMY GODDARD** has lived in Dalton, Georgia his entire life. He graduated from the University of Georgia in 1980 with a bachelor’s degree in journalism, and graduated cum laude from the University of Georgia School of Law in 1983 with a Juris Doctorate of Law. He was admitted to practice law before the Superior Courts in Georgia on June 11, 1983. He was admitted to practice law before the Georgia Court of Appeals and Georgia Supreme Court on September 29, 1983, and he was admitted to practice law before the Federal Court for Northern District of Georgia on June 28, 1983. After having served in good standing with those courts for approximately 10 years, he was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States of America on June 21, 1993. He has been given the highest rating (AV) for attorneys by the leading authority on such ratings, Martindale-Hubbell. Tommy is presently the senior partner at Goodard and Hammontree in Dalton, Georgia. The firm was founded as a workers’ compensation practice but now branches out into all aspects of personal injury law. His main focus is in the area of Georgia Workers’ Compensation, Social Security Disability/SSI, and Adoptions (both domestic and international).

**CRISTINE K. HUFFINE** represents employers, professional employment organizations, insurance companies, servicing agents and self-insureds in workers’ compensation issues. Her clients include small businesses and Fortune 500 companies alike, including national retailers, restaurants, food and beverage companies, and trucking and logistics services, as well as various school board associates and governmental entities. Cristine attended Penn State University, earning a BS in Criminal Justice. She attended law school at the Dickenson School of Law in Carlisle, Pa. While in law school, she interned at the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office in the Tort Litigation Section. Cristine is a Partner at Swift, Currie, McGhee & Hiers, LLP, joining the firm in 2001. Prior to joining Swift Currie, Cristine practiced at other major national law firms with offices in Atlanta, focusing on employment and labor law, as well as environmental law. Cristine also practiced in Pennsylvania. She previously served as a law clerk for the Honorable Sheryl Ann Dorney for the Court of Common Pleas in the 19th Judicial District in York, Pennsylvania.

**DAVID IMAHARA** is the Chief Judge in the Hearing Division at the State Board of Workers’ Compensation. David has been involved in Georgia’s workers’ compensation system for over to 16 years. David is a frequent speaker on hearings, mediations, the Board’s paperless/online processes, and workers’ compensation. David obtained his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Georgia, and is a member of the State Bar of Georgia, California, and the District of Columbia. David is married and has three kids—Grant, Matthew, and Claire. In his spare time, David enjoys coaching his kids’ sports teams—soccer, basketball, and baseball.

**DEBORAH KROTENBERG** joined the State Board of Workers' Compensation as the Division Director of Managed Care & Rehabilitation. She is a Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of State University of New York (S.U.N.Y.) at Albany with a degree in Sociology and English Lit. She obtained her JD degree from Emory University School of Law in 1992 and began practicing Workers' Compensation law representing injured workers in Columbus Georgia. In 1994 she relocated back to Atlanta and joined a Workers' Compensation defense firm representing employers and insurers, becoming partner in 1999. Since joining the Board, she also: serves as an overflow Board Mediator in the Alternate Dispute Resolution Division; serves on the Board's Advisory Committee; and gives presentations at seminars as well as to small and large groups throughout each year.

**LAUREN LOEB** is the Division Director of the Appellate Division at the State Board of Workers' Compensation. Prior to joining the Board, Lauren represented employers, insurers and self-insureds at a large defense firm in Atlanta. Lauren attended the University of Georgia where she earned a Bachelor of Business Administration and New York Law School where she earned a Juris Doctor. In her free time, Lauren enjoys spending time with her husband and son.

**JUDGE JOHNNY MASON, JR.**, a native of Atlanta, obtained his B.A. in 1978 from the University of Pennsylvania, and obtained his law degree in 1984 from Woodrow Wilson College of Law. Judge Mason was in the private practice of law as a trial lawyer from 1985 through 1995, primarily practicing in the areas of civil rights, domestic law, workers' compensation, criminal defense, and personal injury. In 1995, Judge Mason was appointed as an Administrative Law Judge with the State Board of Workers' Compensation. In 2000, on appointment by the Governor, Judge Mason served for one year as Chief Judge of the Office of State Administrative Hearings and, thereafter, returned to the Workers' Compensation Board where he continues to date.

**HONORABLE FRANK R. MCKAY** is the Chairman and Chief Appellate Court Judge for the State Board of Workers' Compensation. Judge McKay received the 2019 National Judge Comp Laude Award from WorkCompCentral at its annual Awards Gala in Newport Beach, CA. In 2019, Judge McKay was named to the Board of Advisors for the Workers' Compensation Institute (WCI) in Orlando, Florida. He is the Immediate Past President of the Southern Association of Workers' Compensation Administrators (SAWCA) and he serves on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Workers' Compensation Judiciary and on the Board of Directors for the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (IAIABC). He also serves on the Board of Directors of Kids' Chance of Georgia and he is a Fellow in the College of Workers' Compensation Lawyers. He is a Georgia Advisory Committee member for the Workers' Compensation Research Institute. He is on Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr's Statewide Opioid Task Force. He came to the Board in 2013 from private practice where he was a partner in the Stewart, Melvin and Frost law firm in Gainesville, Georgia. His practice was concentrated in workers' compensation, and he tried and presented many cases before the Administrative Law Judges and the Appellate Division of the State Board and appeals to the Superior Courts and the Georgia Court of Appeals. He was a former Special Assistant Attorney General handling workers' compensation claims for the State of Georgia. He was on the State Board's Advisory Council prior to being appointed the Chairman by the Governor in 2013 and reappointed in 2017. He obtained his law degree (J.D.) from Walter F. George School of Law, Mercer University, and his undergraduate degree (B.A. Economics) from Clemson University.

**SHARON REEVES** is an Administrative Law Judge with the State Board of Workers' Compensation, serving the Macon Office. Her territory covers the central part of South Georgia. She is a Double-Dawg, having earned her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Georgia. Prior to joining the Board, Judge Reeves spent more than 20 years in the private practice of law. When Judge Reeves is not on the bench, she enjoys spending time with her family, attending her children's sporting events, volunteering in her community, and following the Georgia Bulldogs.

**RICHARD HAMPTON SAPP, III** is an Administrative Law Judge with the State Board of Workers Compensation. He handles the Northwest Georgia territory including the Dalton and Rome areas. Prior to his appointment as an Administrative Law Judge, he was a partner at the Atlanta law firm, Swift Currie, handling workers compensation cases for 24 years. He also spent four years after graduation from law school handling a variety of cases including workers compensation cases at the Dalton law firm of Kinney and Kemp. He is a 1984 graduate of Emory University and a cum laude 1987 graduate of Mercer Law School. Judge Sapp is married to a wonderful teacher, has four great kids, likes to fly fish, and is often found hanging out with his golden doodle named Penny.

**MICHELLE THOMAS** received her undergraduate degree from the College of William and Mary and her law degree from The Columbus School of Law at Catholic University. She began her legal career as a claimant's disability attorney in her hometown of Athens, Georgia. In 2000, she joined an insurance defense firm in Atlanta as a workers' compensation associate. Thereafter, she spent several years working for an insurance company as part of their workers' compensation defense team, before returning briefly to private practice in 2016. In 2018, she joined the State Board of Workers' Compensation as a mediator, helping parties to resolve issues and achieve settlement across the state. In 2019, in addition to her role as a mediator, she began serving as a Staff Attorney for the Appellate Division of the Board, assisting the Appellate Judges with their decisions in workers' compensation cases on appeal. In her free time, Michelle enjoys baking, reading, and yoga. She is fluent in German and frequently travels to Germany with her boyfriend, Henry, to visit friends and family.

**NICOLE TIFVERMAN** is an Administrative Law Judge with the Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree with highest distinction from the University of Rhode Island in 1984. She graduated from Emory University School of Law in 1987 and was then admitted to the State Bar of Georgia. Prior to her appointment as an ALJ in 2011, she practiced workers' compensation law for 24 years, representing employees, employers and insurers. Judge Tifverman hears cases in Savannah, Claxton, and Millen, Georgia and, also mediates when her schedule permits.

**WILL WHITE** is a partner in the law firm of Smith, Welch, Webb & White in McDonough, Georgia. He practices general civil litigation, primarily representing school boards, local government entities and businesses. In workers' compensation, Will has over twenty years' experience in representing self-insured school systems