

ABC Update

BY RACHEL THYRE VOGELTANZ AND CRAIG M. GENO

ABC-Certified Attorney Appointed as Bankruptcy Judge in Louisiana



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Rachel Thyre Vogeltanzt has had her own solo practice in Covington, La., since 2013. She is certified in consumer bankruptcy law and serves on the ABC's Standards Committee. Craig Geno is a bankruptcy practitioner in Jackson, Miss. He is certified in business bankruptcy law and is a past president and chairman of ABC's board of directors.

Stephen D. Wheelis was appointed by the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals on April 25, 2019, to serve as a judge for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Louisiana in Alexandria and Monroe. Prior to his appointment, he was a shareholder with Wheelis & Rozanski, APLC in Alexandria, La., for more than 20 years and initially practiced as a partner with Provosty, Sadler & deLaunay for 14 years prior to forming Wheelis & Rozanski.

Judge Wheelis received his J.D. in 1985 from Tulane University School of Law and his B.A. in legal studies from Northeast Louisiana University (now University of Louisiana Monroe) in 1981.

His primary practice areas included the representation of creditors and trustees in all bankruptcy chapters, banking, business and commercial law, and litigation and appeals. Prior to the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005 (BAPCPA), he also represented debtors in chapter 11 reorganizations and chapter 7 matters. He actively practiced bankruptcy law throughout all districts of Louisiana and in many other states *pro hac vice*, having appeared in bankruptcy courts on behalf of clients in more than 25,000 cases since 1985. During his 33 years in private practice, he appeared before 15 Louisiana bankruptcy judges. He previously served as an adjunct professor for paralegal studies at Northwestern State University and Louisiana College, and he taught courses for the American Institute of Banking.

Judge Wheelis is a board-certified business bankruptcy specialist, certified by the Louisiana Supreme Court and the American Board of Certification (ABC) on Jan. 1, 1997. He served from 2011-19 on ABC's board of directors and on its Standards and Faculty Committees, and he has been an ABI member since 1995. Over the years, he has encouraged his associates and colleagues to seek ABC certification and notes that in 2005, the BAPCPA amendments included specialization as one of the grounds for judges in considering applications for compensation and enhanced compensation. His certification has been important to him,

as he feels that it adds significant credentials to a lawyer's resume, and it is important especially for clients seeking attorneys with requisite credentials and backgrounds such as certification by the ABC.



Hon. Stephen D. Wheelis

Judge Wheelis served as a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) Bankruptcy Law Advisory Commission from 1995-98 and from 2018-19, and he chaired the LSBA Board of Legal Specialization from 2009-10. In addition, he served as an assistant bar examiner for Code III from 2005-19 and held memberships in the

Louisiana Bankers Association, having served on its Bank Counsel Committee; in the Louisiana State, American and Alexandria Bar Associations; and in the LSBA House of Delegates as a Ninth District Representative. He is a member of the American Inns of Court and the Federal Bar Association, and an associate member of National Association of Chapter 13 Trustees. He also appeared consecutively in the 2007-19 editions of *Louisiana Super Lawyers* for business bankruptcy/creditors' rights law.

Judge Wheelis has found the different perspective he has from the other side of the bench very interesting and realizes how different the roles of an advocate are when compared to the role of a judge. He sees everything from a completely different perspective, he leans on his experiences with the other bankruptcy judges before whom he practiced while he was in private practice, and he relies on their good points and positive traits to influence his role as a bankruptcy judge. His investiture took place on Sept. 27, 2019.

Judge Wheelis was born in West Monroe, La., and attended West Monroe High School. He is married to Lynn Alley Wheelis and has three children.

He joins many ABC-certified attorneys on the bench, and his ABC family wishes him all of the best in his new role serving the people of the Western District of Louisiana as bankruptcy judge. **abi**

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