



TALLAHASSEE
BAR ASSOCIATION

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TALLAHASSEE BAR BULLETIN



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I begin my term as President of the Tallahassee Bar Association, I am filled with gratitude, humility, and excitement for what lies ahead. The TBA has long been a cornerstone of our legal community—bringing attorneys together not just as professionals, but as colleagues, collaborators, and advocates for justice. This year, I look forward to continuing that legacy while laying the foundation for new growth, engagement, and impact. My focus will center on three key initiatives:

First, increasing membership. The TBA should reflect the full breadth and diversity of our legal community. Whether you're a new attorney just finding your footing or a seasoned practitioner with decades of experience, this organization is for you. We want to connect, listen, and create space for everyone who seeks camaraderie, development, and a greater sense of belonging in the local bar.

Second, enhancing member benefits. We are committed to delivering real value through expanded CLE offerings, more meaningful networking opportunities, and resources that empower you in your practice. We know your time is valuable, and we want your TBA membership to be one of the most worthwhile investments you make this year.

Third, increasing the TBA's notoriety and visibility in the community. In a time when engagement around diversity and inclusion has softened in some corners of the profession, we are doubling down. Our commitment to fostering diversity of people, background, and thought is

stronger than ever. That means continuing to go beyond our comfort zones and into the community—participating in programs like the Nikki Ann Clark Low Bono Center in partnership with the Clerk's Office, and Gwen Marshall's community initiative where TBA attorneys assist self-represented litigants with their legal paperwork.

If you haven't yet been involved with those efforts, I invite you to join us. We are always looking for volunteers and for new ways to make a difference. This year is about building—not just on what we've done well, but on what's possible when we lean in, show up, and move forward together. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President. I look forward to working alongside each of you as we shape a vibrant and inclusive future for the Tallahassee Bar Association.

Jami Coleman

TBA President



“TALLAHASSEE BAR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER TO ENHANCE THE LEGAL PROFESSION, PROMOTE FELLOWSHIP AMONG THEIR COLLEAGUES AND SERVE THE COMMUNITY.”

EVENTS *Recap*

Board Swearing-in Ceremony and Happy Hour

On January 9th, TBA's 2025 Board of Directors was officially sworn in by Judge Dawn Caloca-Johnson at the Leon County Courthouse. President Jami Coleman laid out her goals for her tenure as presidency, including increased access to CLEs for members. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed light snacks provided by Luxe Catering. Immediately following the ceremony, members walked over to Hayward House for a happy hour which included delicious food, drinks, and networking.



Past Presidents' Reception

TBA held its Annual Past Presidents Reception February 5th at the Governor's Club. During the event, two TBA members were recognized for their achievements. Virginia "Ginny" Dailey received the Martha Barnett Women Lawyers of Achievement Award. This award was established to honor an outstanding woman lawyer from Florida's Second Judicial Circuit. Dailey has achieved professional excellence, served as a mentor, and advocated for the advancement of women in the legal profession. Kelly Ann Kennedy Broadway received the Thomas M. Ervin, Jr. Distinguished Young Lawyer Award. Each year, this award is presented to a young lawyer who exemplifies the contributions that the late Tom Ervin made to the legal profession, The Florida Bar, and the TBA. Broadway has worked to encourage camaraderie between lawyers, exhibited high standards of professionalism, and has participated in activities that promote interaction and collegiality among TBA members.



March CLE Luncheon

TBA members enjoyed a lively panel discussion on the recent changes to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure on March 18th. Panelists included Judge Robert Hinkle, Judge Jonathan Sjostrom, Don Hinkle, and Melanie Leitman, who each provided a unique perspective before a packed house in Killeen Hall at St. John's Episcopal Church.



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THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL BRANDING FOR ATTORNEYS

By Jamie Van Pelt
CEO The Radley Firm, Inc.



In a world - and a legal profession - where competition is fierce and client expectations are high, attorneys must be proactive in how they present themselves.

what makes you unique—whether it's your approach to client care, your specialization, or your involvement in local issues. By focusing on the authentic things that differentiate you, you'll attract the clients who resonate with your values, experience, and expertise.

Stay Top-of-Mind

Effective branding keeps you visible in the minds of potential clients. A strong personal brand means you don't just blend into the background—you're memorable, approachable, and reliable. Consistent branding across all touchpoints ensures that when legal matters arise, you'll be the first attorney they think of.

At The Radley Firm, we understand the power of authentic branding, and we're here to help you elevate your presence in Tallahassee's legal community.

Personal branding, or the way you market yourself as an individual professional, is more important than ever for lawyers. As members of the Tallahassee Bar Association, you clearly understand the power of growing your network and your brand, and how they can influence your reputation, client base, and overall success. Now, it's time to use that power to reach your goals!

Build Trust and Recognition

Think of your personal brand as the first impression clients and peers have of you. An intentional and professional brand helps build trust, which is the cornerstone of any successful legal practice. Whether it's through a polished online profile, consistent messaging across social media, or speaking at community events, your brand establishes your credibility and expertise. In a town like Tallahassee, where word-of-mouth recommendations and community connections play a significant role, a well-crafted brand can make you the go-to attorney in your field.

Differentiate Yourself in a Competitive Market

SPOILER ALERT: Tallahassee's legal market is dense and diverse. With so many talented professionals - like you, Dear Reader - it's crucial to stand out. A strong personal brand highlights

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5 QUICK & EASY CITATION PERSUASION TIPS

By: Kyle Sill¹

He are correct. Backpack be container. *See Stuart v. State*, 361 So.3d 921 (Fla.6th DCA 2026).

Please stop reading. Please believe that based on what you've read so far, I am unqualified to write on citation and persuasion. Because that is what the first **three** sentences immediately tell you. But how many of us would have counted the third as unpersuasive and detrimental to the argument being made? It is. It is just as offensive to a reader as the first two. It is just as sloppy. But many would discount the third and suggest “as long as it's there, it's fine”; or “citations don't matter as long as someone can at some point figure it out”; or “in a world of billable hours, writing proper citations isn't worth the time.” I'm here to suggest otherwise. The third sentence has the same effect as the first two—before the writer has barely begun: a loss of persuasion and credibility, desire to stop reading, and a taint on anything (even if it's good) that comes after because the writer appears sloppy and not attune to detail.

The good news is that these “small” faux pas, especially in the citation context, are easily remediable—and don't take heavy lifting (or *The Bluebook*²) to fix. So five easy citation tips to keep us credible and persuasive, and the reader engaged throughout, instead of distracted—even if for a second—on our citations.

1. *The Bluebook* is largely unnecessary; use Rule 9.800 instead

All citations in Florida court documents are governed by Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.800. It creates a uniform system for citation in the State of Florida. So if you are in a Florida state court, it controls. And it provides rules and examples for nearly every citation lawyers use on a daily basis: constitutions (state and federal), statutes, cases (state and federal, appellate and trial), administrative decisions, and rules of court. Best of all, it is short—just over 1.5% of the 365-page *Bluebook*.

¹ Kyle is a Senior Law Clerk for Judge Susan Kelsey at the First District Court of Appeal. He also teaches International Sales & Arbitration at FSU Law and coaches the Vis Moot team there. He has taught and presents on appellate advocacy, persuasion, research, writing, and citations. The views expressed in this article are solely his and do not represent the views of his or any judge, the Court, or any other organization or entity.

² THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION (Columbia Law Review Ass'n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020).

Rule 9.800 controls if it covers the citation—and again, overwhelmingly it will. If it does not, *The Bluebook* governs.³ So for things like abbreviations, which are not covered in rule 9.800, we use the *Bluebook*. But if you must use the *Bluebook*, use the beginning, the Blue Pages. Make citation and *The Bluebook* easy. The Blue Pages govern court papers and writing. The more expansive White Pages govern academic writing and are unnecessary, unless something is not covered by the Blue Pages, you need extra clarification or examples, or you are writing a law review article. Rarely is it necessary to delve into the abyss of the White Pages. If rule 9.800 doesn't cover it; the Blue Pages will.

As a last and final resort, if not in rule 9.800 or *The Bluebook*, we resort to the *Florida Style Manual* published by FSU Law Review. This is a last and final resort; but between rule 9.800 and *The Bluebook*, there is not much left uncovered. From citations and signals, to abbreviations, books and dictionaries, and web-based materials, those two cover them. What may not be covered is special legislative materials particular to Florida. The *Florida Style Manual* does a great job of this Florida-specific need. But otherwise, rule 9.800 and the Blue Pages of *The Bluebook* have you covered.

2. There is no superscript in legal writing

Rule 9.800 contains no superscript. It does not exist. The only example of superscript is in *The Bluebook*—and it is for footnotes. Footnotes are the only proper use of superscript in legal writing. Too often lawyers use superscript in the court parenthetical (Fla. 1st DCA), or even for a reporter (157 So. 2nd 819). This is incorrect and unsupported by any citation rule, manual, or guide. Too often lawyers let their word processing software auto-correct to superscript ordinals. You can turn that feature off easily: file—options—proofing—AutoCorrect Options—Auto Format—Replace—Ordinals (1st) with superscript.

3. There is no ALL CAPS in legal writing

Rule 9.800 contains no all caps. *The Bluebook* contains no all caps. It does not exist. Using all caps is YELLING. And no one wants anything yelled at them—let alone a citation. Too often attorneys use all caps for citing constitutions or statutes. This is likely because they are trying to recreate the SMALL CAPS used in the White Pages of *The Bluebook*. First, the White Pages use small caps not all caps. But more importantly, rule 9.800 is the first and only reference for citing a constitution or statute. And it does not use all caps or small caps. It uses regular roman type.⁴ And also note, for both the federal and Florida constitution, the article or amendment comes first, not the State: Art. V, § 3(b)(3), Fla. Const.⁵ The same is true for

³ Fla. R. App. P. 9.800(p).

⁴ Fla. R. App. P. 9.800(e), (o).

⁵ Fla. R. App. P. 9.800(e), (o). *The Bluebook* is different because it is meant for a national audience. See THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION B.11, at 18 (Columbia Law Review Ass'n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020).

statutory citations in Florida court papers: the section symbol and section come first; Fla. Stat.— in regular roman type—appears last.⁶

4. There is always a space between So. and 2d or 3d—and never a period after the number

Rule 9.800 requires a space between the Southern abbreviation (So.) and the number following it (2d).⁷ Too often attorneys simply overlook the space. Or they use cut and paste or “copy with citation” features for their citation without double-checking the result. But subscription databases and reporters will sometimes remove the space when publishing. And the copy with citation features, while helpful, aren’t always perfect, whether that be in spacing or abbreviations.⁸ Double-check these automated features.

5. Supra and Hereinafter are nearly always inappropriate

Supra (and infra) and hereinafter are not used for cases, statutes, or constitutions.⁹ Supra and hereinafter are only appropriate for citation to, among other items, court filings, books, periodicals, legislative hearings, and internal cross-references. But never cases, statutes, or constitutions. Too often attorneys use supra for a second case citation or hereinafter when a case name is long. Neither are permitted. Instead, use *id.* or a short cite with just one of the party names (preferably, the first party). Designating a different name for a case, if the case has history, is done through a different rule and cannot be done by hereinafter.¹⁰

Returning to the beginning: *Stuart v. State*, 361 So.3d 921 (Fla.6th DCA 2026) instead becomes *Stuart v. State*, 361 So. 3d 921 (Fla. 6th DCA 2026). Even if potentially readable before, the citation was distracting and sloppy. And with a potentially newfound eye for citation, errors are easy to spot and fix.¹¹ See, citations can be simple, easy, and fun!

⁶ Fla. R. App. P. 9.800(f); see THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION B.12.1.2, at 19 (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020).

⁷ See Fla. R. App. P. 9.800(a)–(c).

⁸ For example, the proper abbreviation for Department is Dep’t—not Dept. The apostrophe signifies missing letters: so Department becomes Dep’t. The period signifies a new, made-up abbreviation: so Digital becomes Digit. See THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION 305 tbl.T.6 (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020).

⁹ See THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION B.4, at 8 (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020).

¹⁰ See THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION R.10.2.1(k), at 101–02 (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020).

¹¹ The comma after the case name was italicized; there was no space between the So. and 3d or the Fla. and 6th; and 6th was superscript.

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Congratulations to **Elizabeth Desloge Ellis** on her new role as President-Elect of TBA. We look forward to seeing how your dedication, passion and guidance will enhance the legal profession, promote fellowship among colleagues and serve the north Florida community.

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