

SOUTHEASTERN WOMEN
SEWL
LITIGATORS SUMMIT

**5th Annual
Southeastern Women Litigators Summit**

**March 5-6, 2026
Hyatt Regency, Savannah, GA**

Anchored in Advocacy



Georgia Defense
Lawyers Association
Advancing the Civil Defense Bar®



HOTEL INFORMATION

The Hyatt Regency is located at 2 West Bay Street, Savannah, Georgia. Group reservations for the meeting can only be made for registered seminar attendees. Guaranteed reservations must be accompanied by a major credit card. The Hyatt Regency will not hold any reservations unless secured by a credit card. The room rate at the Hyatt Regency is \$273.00/night plus tax (single or double occupancy).

BOOK HOTEL

All deposits are refundable up 72 hours prior to arrival. Availability of rooms at the group rate is subject to the SEWL room block and for reservations made on or before, Wednesday, February 11, 2026, the cutoff date. Reservations requests received after the room block has been fully reserved or after the release of unused rooms on February 11, 2026, will be accepted based on a space and rate availability basis.

Getting There

You can fly into the Savannah Hilton Head International Airport (SAV). The hotel is approximately 10 miles from Savannah Hilton Head International Airport (SAV).



REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration Fees

- **\$335** Early Registration for State Members* through February 18; **\$435** beginning February 19
- **\$480** Early Registration for State Non-Members* through February 18; **\$580** beginning February 19
- Optional Networking Dinner/Separately Ticketed: \$95
- Sponsoring Firm Registrations Code Required

[Register Now](#)

*Must be a member of your state organization to attend at member rate; Georgia attorneys **MUST** be a member of GDLA or have a GDLA membership application pending to register/attend.



Law firm Sponsor Opportunities Still Available—contact [Jennifer Ward](#).

ANCHORED IN ADVOCACY

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Hyatt Regency | Savannah, Georgia

Thursday, March 5

12:00 pm - 12:45 pm

Registration and Networking Lunch

12:45 pm - 1:00 pm

Welcome and Announcements

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

From the Bridge: Judicial Guidance for Smooth Sailing in Court

Step aboard for an insider's view from those who command the bridge – our esteemed panel of judges. This session will explore best practices for keeping your case sailing smoothly between the navigational beacons, as well as tips for avoiding hazards that could send even your strongest arguments careening off course. Judge Wood and Judge Gobeil will share candid guidance on professionalism, preparation, presentation, timing, witness management, and more. Attendees will disembark with a clear map to navigate the sometimes-choppy waters of the courtroom.

Moderator: Tracy O'Connell, Ellis Painter, Savannah, GA

Panelists:

Honorable Lisa Godbey Wood, U.S. District Court Judge
for the Southern District of Georgia, Brunswick, GA

Honorable Elizabeth D. Gobeil, Court of Appeals of Georgia, Savannah, GA

2:00 pm - 2:15 pm

Networking Break

2:15 pm - 3:15 pm

Mastering the SEAS: Scene to Evidence in Pursuit Probes

Dive into the core principles of effective pre-suit discovery and investigations by mastering the SEAS: Scene Preservation, Expert Involvement, Avoiding Spoliation, and Securing Critical Evidence. This session will provide practical guidance on preserving critical evidence, managing the scene immediately after an incident, integrating experts early without prematurely committing to conclusions, and avoiding costly spoliation pitfalls. Learn how to conduct thorough investigations and ensure vital evidence is safeguarded to build a strong foundation for your case.

Panelists:

Melissa Cleary, McAngus Goudelock & Courie, Raleigh, NC

Brittany Levine, Ellis & Winters, Raleigh, NC

Keely Wilson, Rainey, Kizer, Reviere & Bell, Jackson, TN

3:15 pm - 3:30 pm

Networking Break

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Navigating Choppy Waters:

Mastering Discovery Disputes Without Losing Your Bearings

Discovery disputes can feel like sailing through unpredictable seas. In this dynamic panel, experienced women defense trial attorneys share battle-tested strategies for steering through contentious discovery, holding course under pressure, and bringing your case safely into port. From charting a clear discovery plan and responding to surprise squalls, to knowing when to reef the sails or drop anchor with the court, our panelists will discuss practical approaches to managing discovery and disputes efficiently and effectively—without capsizing your credibility or your case strategy.

Panelists:

Nickisha Woodward, Lewis Brisbois, North Charleston, SC

Kate Whitlock, McAngus Goudelock & Courie, Atlanta, GA

Marian W. Scalise, Richardson, Plowden & Robinson, SC

5:15 pm - 6:45 pm

Networking Reception

7:00 pm

Optional Networking Dinner (Ticketed Event) - Join your colleagues for dinner in a beautiful setting overlooking the Savannah River.

Friday, March 6

8:00 am - 8:30 am

Networking Breakfast

8:30 am - 9:30 am

All Hands-on Deck: Managing Experts Before Trial

This session will chart a practical, defense-focused course through expert discovery—helping attendees navigate when to bring experts aboard, how to keep them on course with pretrial obligations, and how to integrate their opinions into a trial strategy that stays seaworthy from port to verdict. Our seasoned panelists will steer participants through how expert discovery fits within the broader pretrial voyage, including key disclosure requirements and the strategic integration of expert testimony into the currents of a case. Discussion topics include selecting and preparing experts, managing reporting obligations, and conducting expert depositions that not only clarify the waters but also preserve material for impeachment or for launching Daubert and Frye challenges. The panel will also explore strategic considerations unique to civil defense practice, such as timing and crafting motions to cabin or exclude expert testimony and ensuring expert opinions stay anchored to the factual record to maintain credibility with the jury. We'll dock the program with key takeaways and open the floor for a Q&A—your chance to get your bearings before returning to open waters.

Panelists:

Amanda Coop, Groth Makarenko Kaiser & Eidex, Nashville, TN/Atlanta, GA

Megan Jones, Clark May Price, Birmingham, AL

Marcia McShane, Fisher Phillips, Nashville, TN

9:30 am - 10:30 am

Raising the Sails: Ready for Trial

Ready your sea legs and chart your course into the high seas of trial in this practical, fast-paced session. Our panel of seasoned litigators know the ropes of successful trial preparation and will share their own actionable insights and proven effective tactics for the pre-trial stage of litigation. From plotting a pre-trial task list to spotting appellate issues on the horizon, navigating the complexities of jury charges, and crafting ship-shape motions in limine and bench briefs, Attendees will gain a steadier hand at the helm as they raise their sails and cast off for the courtroom.

Moderator: Karen K. Karabinos, Chartwell, Atlanta

Panelists:

Elissa Haynes, Freeman Mathis & Gary, Atlanta, GA

Amanda Graham, Gaines Gault Hendrix, Birmingham, AL

Lynn Lawyer, Travelers, Nashville, TN

10:30 am - 11:00 am

Networking Break

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Charting the Course to Persuasion:

The Art of Jury Selection and Opening Statements

Effective advocacy begins well before sailing into opening statements. Explore how to set the desired tone and steer how jurors perceive your case through thoughtful and precise jury selection. Then, embark on a journey through developing a strategic and compelling opening statement which establishes a foundational narrative that can be carried through your opening statements and beyond.

Panelists:

Kim DeShazo, Webster Henry, Birmingham, AL

Megan McCarthy, Ball Ball Matthews & Novak, Montgomery, AL

Amber O'Connell, Swift Currie McGhee & Hiers, Atlanta, GA

12:00 pm

Closing Remarks and Adjournment