



PHOTO: READ HOUSE & GARDENS BY ANGELA PEDICONE-BAKER

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## Launching Into 2026 With Purpose

We hope all our chapter members and business partners have had a strong and energizing start to the new year. As we look back, we also hope you were able to close out 2025 on a high note—especially by joining us for our annual Holiday Party at the **Museum of Nature and Science**. It was a wonderful evening of celebration and connection, and we're grateful to everyone who attended.

As the year wrapped up, the board met to review and finalize our **full calendar of events for 2026**. We're excited to share that we have a dynamic lineup planned—thoughtful educational programming, meaningful community engagement, and opportunities to connect with fellow members and business partners. There's truly something for everyone.

Looking ahead, we have a strong lineup of programming planned for the first half of the year. In April, our chapter will participate in the **National Conference in Baltimore**, offering members a valuable opportunity for education, networking, and national-level engagement. May brings a combined educational and social focus as we highlight **Mental Health**, with events designed to include and engage our business partners as well. As we move into June, we'll celebrate **Pride Month** with dedicated educational programming, paired with a Business Partner Networking event to continue strengthening the relationships that support our chapter community.

We're looking forward to a year filled with learning, collaboration, and community. Thank you for being part of our chapter—we're excited to share an inspiring 2026 with you.

*Enjoy! First State Chapter Board Members*

# First State Chapter Board Members and Committee Chairs

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Denise Frawley  
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Please forward all article submissions for future newsletters to:  
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Pchase@hfddel.com

### First State Chapter's Website:

[www.firststateala.org](http://www.firststateala.org)

### Spring 2026 Edition Editors:

Angela Pedicone-Baker & Page Chase



## A Message from our President:

There's something about spring in Delaware that just feels like a reset. There is a little more sunshine, a little more energy in the city of Wilmington, and a good reminder that the long stretch of winter is (hopefully!) behind us. I always love this time of year when everything starts to feel lighter and brighter.

As we head into the season, I'm looking forward to connecting with many of you, and I hope you'll take a minute to check out our website for the exciting events we have coming up. I'm also excited to connect with members and our business partners at the ALA National Conference in Maryland this month. It should be a great opportunity to learn, share ideas, and spend time together.



I'm excited for what's ahead for our chapter!

*Best, Jessica*

JESSICA TOMB	FIRST STATE CHAPTER PRESIDENT
<a href="http://www.firststateala.org">www.firststateala.org</a>	



### This Month in Legal History



#### March 1, 1875

Civil Rights Act of 1875 is passed and allows African Americans to access public transport and other accommodations. In the Civil Rights Cases of 1883, the Supreme Court ruled that the Act was unconstitutional

#### March 3 1879

Belva Ann Lockwood, a feminist, politician and attorney is the *first woman admitted to practice law before the Supreme Court*. She lobbied Congress throughout the 1870s until they finally passed an anti-discrimination law that she herself had drafted. She first argued a case before the Supreme Court in late 1880



**First State**  
Chapter



**STAY CONNECTED WITH US!**

Don't miss out on our latest updates, events, and exclusive content!

You can also find us at our website:  
**firststateala.org**

Follow us on social media:



Instagram: [@firststateala](#)



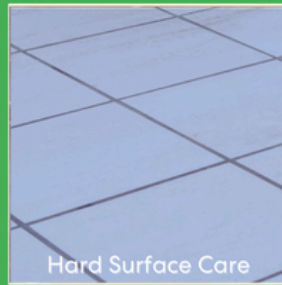
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## REMINDER

We've launched an exclusive email list serv for valued members. Enhance communication and stay informed about updates, events, and opportunities by emailing **[chaptermembers@firststateala.org](mailto:chaptermembers@firststateala.org)**.

Remember to whitelist this email to avoid missing any communications.

Stay Updated: Get timely notifications about events and announcements.

Engage and Connect: Join discussions and connect with fellow members.

Thank you for being an integral part of our community. We look forward to staying connected and fostering a more engaged and informed membership!

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### **Save the Date: Annual Blood Drive**

Our annual blood drive is officially scheduled for *October 15, 2026*, from *9:00 AM to 2:00 PM*. It's still a bit down the road, but we want to make sure everyone has it on their radar early.

As we get closer to the date, we'll share more details, reminders, and ways you can get involved. Thank you in advance for helping us make a meaningful impact in our community.

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**EVELYN LIN**  
SENIOR MANAGER  
GUNNIP & COMPANY LLP  
EMAIL: ELIN@GUNNIP.COM

The First State Chapter is pleased to feature **Evelyn Lin**, Senior Manager in the Audit Department at **Gunnip & Company LLP**, as part of our quarterly member spotlight. Evelyn has been a valued presence in Delaware's accounting and legal-services community, bringing both technical expertise and a genuine commitment to relationship-building.

### **A Career Built on Expertise and Service**

Evelyn joined Gunnip & Company LLP in 2018 and has steadily advanced into her current leadership role within the firm's Audit Department. A proud graduate of the *University of Delaware*, she has also been deeply engaged in the broader professional community, most notably serving as the *immediate past chair of the Delaware Society of CPAs*.

Before joining Gunnip, Evelyn built a strong foundation in public accounting, developing a skill set that now supports a diverse portfolio of clients across multiple industries.

### **About Gunnip & Company LLP**

Gunnip & Company LLP is a Delaware-based CPA firm with more than 70 years of history serving clients throughout Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland. The firm provides comprehensive accounting, tax, and business consulting services, pairing big-picture strategic insight with meticulous attention to detail.

Evelyn's own practice focuses on law firm accounting and audits of employee benefit plans, areas where precision, regulatory awareness, and trust are essential. Gunnip's long-standing reputation as a reliable advisor to multinational corporations, small businesses, entrepreneurs, and individuals is strengthened by professionals like Evelyn who bring both technical depth and a client-centered approach.

### **Proudest Professional Accomplishment**

When asked what she values most in her work, Evelyn points to the impact she has on her clients' long-term financial health. She takes pride in helping organizations strengthen their financial records and internal controls—work that supports accuracy, transparency, and stability. Her contributions help clients operate with confidence, knowing their systems are sound and compliant.

### **Trends and Challenges on the Horizon**

Evelyn notes that many clients are focused on improving the accuracy and efficiency of their financial systems while navigating evolving regulations and industry standards. Supporting clients through these changes—especially as technology and compliance expectations continue to shift—remains a central part of her role.

### **A Decade of Experience Supporting Law Firms**

Working with law firms requires a nuanced understanding of professional-conduct rules and the unique financial structures within legal practices. Evelyn has spent more than ten years performing audits and reviews of law firm financial statements and assisting with compliance evaluations under Rules 1.15 and 1.5(f) of the Delaware Lawyers' Rules of Professional Conduct. This specialized experience allows her to guide firms with clarity and confidence.

### **Why She Supports the ALA**

Evelyn's appreciation for the ALA is rooted in the organization's welcoming and inclusive culture. She notes that networking can sometimes feel intimidating, but the ALA community consistently creates an environment where connections form naturally and authentically. That sense of support is what keeps her engaged and enthusiastic about the organization's mission.

## Stronger Together AssuredPartners is now Gallagher

We're delighted to share that our longtime business partner, AssuredPartners, has officially joined the Gallagher family! The full transition wrapped up in early 2026, and their website now seamlessly redirects to Gallagher's home base.



# Gallagher

This exciting transition means more for you and your organization – more expertise, more resources, and more of the same great service you've come to expect. Together, we're expanding relationships and expert offerings in our local communities and across the globe.

This milestone brings about 10,900 talented team members into Gallagher and boosts their strength across major U.S. sectors like transportation, energy, healthcare, and public entities. It also marks one of the largest strategic acquisitions of a U.S. insurance broker – a big moment worth celebrating.



**First State**  
Chapter



## Scholarship Opportunity

### Scholarship Eligibility Criteria

The scholarship is open to students who are interested in attending the Fall 206 Paralegal Certificate program.

- Cumulative grade point average of at least 3.5 for most recent academic program.
- Demonstrated leadership ability.
- Participation in extracurricular activities.
- Performance of community service.

### Supplemental Materials Required for Application

In addition to the application form, the following information and/or materials are required to qualify for consideration:

- An Official transcript.
- An Essay describing how this scholarship will enhance your current or future legal career (500 words maximum).
- Two letters of recommendation. Please include contact information, relationship to reference and how long you have known them.
- A Resume.

[for more information and to apply click here](#)

FIRST STATE  
CHAPTER BOARD  
ANNOUNCEMENT:  
IDEA COMMITTEE  
TRANSITION



Thank you Christina for  
your exceptional service  
and for continuing to lend  
your leadership to the First  
State Chapter.

The First State Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators extends its sincere appreciation to **Christina Oaddams** of Armstrong Teasdale for her dedicated leadership and years of service as Chapter President. Christina's commitment, steady guidance, and passion for strengthening our community have left a lasting impact on our chapter and its members.

We are delighted to share that Christina will continue to serve on the Board in her new role representing the **IDEA Committee (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility)**. Her insight and enthusiasm for advancing meaningful initiatives will continue to shape the chapter's direction in important ways.

If you have questions, comments, or ideas you'd like to share with Christina as she champions the work of the IDEA Committee, she welcomes your outreach:

CHRISTINA OADDAMS  
SENIOR MANAGER OF OFFICE OPERATIONS  
FACILITIES  
ARMSTRONG TEASDALE LLP  
TELEPHONE: 302-416-9689  
EMAIL: COADDAMS@ATLLP.COM

*Congratulations!*

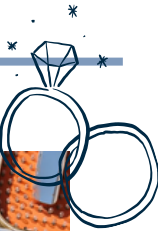
Warm Congratulations to Megan... now **Megan Godwin!**

Chief Operating Officer at Abrams & Bayliss LLP, recently celebrated her wedding in fabulous Las Vegas. We're all looking forward to seeing some photos from what we're sure was a joyful and unforgettable celebration.

Please join us in wishing Megan and her new husband every happiness as they begin this exciting new chapter together.

If you'd like to send your congratulations directly, you can reach her at:

Email: [henry@abramsbayliss.com](mailto:henry@abramsbayliss.com) (still Henry for the moment!)  
Abrams & Bayliss LLP  
20 Montchanin Road, Suite 200  
Wilmington, DE 19807  
Office: (302) 778-1000  
Direct: (302) 778-1014



## TWO NEW BABY BOYS JOIN THE FIRST STATE CHAPTER FAMILY

The First State Chapter is over the moon with excitement as we celebrate two very special new arrivals. Our Board members **Page Chase** and **Angela Pedicone Baker** have each welcomed adorable baby boys, instantly doubling the cuteness quotient of our chapter.

We're convinced these little gentlemen are already demonstrating early leadership qualities. Reports suggest strong vocal projection, impressive delegation skills, and a firm commitment to keeping their parents on a dynamic, round-the-clock schedule.

These little guys have already mastered the art of swaddling negotiations and late-night scheduling conflicts – skills that will serve them well should they ever decide to follow in their mamas' footsteps and join the world of legal administration someday. We fully expect them to be running meetings (or at least running around them) in no time.

Page and Angela, we are cheering you on as you dive into this new adventure filled with tiny socks, baby giggles, and the occasional (okay, frequent) diaper emergency. Your ALA family is thrilled for you and can't wait to meet the newest members of your growing teams.

Please join us in sending big congratulations, warm wishes, and maybe a little extra coffee their way.



Nathan Baker



Jett Chase



## April: National Conference Baltimore, MD

ALA's **2026 Annual Conference & Expo** will take place **April 12–15, 2026**, in National Harbor, Maryland, bringing together legal management professionals from across the country for ALA's marquee event.

Attendees can expect thought-provoking presentations, interactive educational sessions, and opportunities to connect with peers and industry partners, along with keynote sessions from nationally recognized speakers designed to deliver practical insights for today's legal organizations.

[Register Here](#)



## May: Education + Social: Mental Health

Our chapter is gearing up for a meaningful series of May Education and Social events focused on mental health and well-being.

Keep an eye on your inbox—more details will be shared soon so you can plan to join us and take part in these important conversations.



## June: Education: Pride Month

### Social: Business Partner Networking

As we head into summer and everyone's schedules start to fill up, our chapter is preparing a meaningful set of June events you won't want to miss. Our Education session will honor Pride Month, and our Social will bring members and Business Partners together for a mid-year networking opportunity.

More details will be shared soon—please keep an eye on your inbox.

Even in a busy season, these gatherings are a great chance to reconnect, recharge, and check in with one another.



## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CLM?

The First State Chapter encourages and promotes ALA's Certified Legal Manager (CLM) Program.

To learn more about CLM please visit [ALA's National Website](#).

Are you an ALA member that has questions or needs help? Please utilize the [ALA Online Community](#) for resources to support you.

Don't forget to check out the ALA's [Legal Management Magazine](#) to stay up to date on trends in our industry.

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## Policy Pulse – Governance Edition

Update: ISS Finalizes 2026 Benchmark Policy Changes

Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS) has released its 2026 Benchmark Policy Updates, signaling notable shifts in expectations for public companies across governance, compensation, and shareholder rights. These updates follow ISS's 2025 global policy survey and public comment period, and they will influence proxy voting recommendations throughout the 2026 season.

### Key Highlights

- **Stricter Oversight of Board Accountability:** ISS is sharpening its scrutiny of boards that fail to address material governance failures, including risk oversight lapses and inadequate responsiveness to shareholder concerns.
- **Executive Compensation Adjustments:** The 2026 updates refine how ISS evaluates pay-for-performance alignment, with increased attention to long-term incentive structures and the use of performance metrics tied to risk and sustainability.
- **Shareholder Proposal Framework Updates:** ISS is revising its approach to environmental and social proposals, reflecting evolving investor expectations and regulatory pressures. Companies may see higher support for proposals tied to climate risk, political spending transparency, and human capital management.
- **Governance Standards for M&A and Capital Allocation:** New guidance clarifies ISS's expectations for fairness, disclosure, and board process in transformative transactions, including SPAC-related activity and large-scale buybacks.

### Why It Matters

ISS recommendations significantly influence institutional voting behavior. These 2026 updates will shape how boards prepare for proxy season, structure compensation programs, and engage with shareholders. For legal administrators, the changes underscore the need for:

- Stronger documentation of board processes
- Clearer disclosure around compensation and risk oversight
- Proactive engagement strategies ahead of annual meetings
- This policy shift reinforces the growing emphasis on transparency, accountability, and long-term value creation in modern corporate governance.

## HALF DAY SEMINAR

On November 10, the First State Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators gathered for an energizing and interactive half-day seminar focused on one big question: *What will the law firm of tomorrow look like?*

The program explored the rapidly evolving legal workplace—from shifting professional roles to innovative office design to the strategies firms need to attract and retain top talent. Attendees engaged with industry experts through presentations, panels, and roundtable discussions that sparked thoughtful dialogue and fresh ideas.

### Session 1: Office Design & Hybrid Environments

Led by Core States Group, this session offered a forward-thinking look at how physical space and hybrid work models are reshaping the modern firm.

### Sessions 2–4: Administrative Professionals, Talent Strategies & Future-Focused Roundtables

Guided by Debbie Foster of Affinity Consulting, these sessions examined the expanding impact of administrative professionals, best practices for attracting and retaining talent, and collaborative discussions on what the future law firm should prioritize.

A special thank-you goes to our panelists—**Ashanti Crawford, Shannon Hamlin, DCP, Joe Oquendo, and Sueann Hall**—for sharing valuable insights on building and sustaining strong teams. We are also grateful to **Debbie Foster** for her dynamic leadership throughout the day and her inspiring perspective on how administrative professionals are shaping the next generation of legal operations.

We extend our appreciation to **Tiphani DiRenzo, NCIDQ**, for her thoughtful presentation on designing the law firm of the future, and to **Sherry Leary, CLM**, for hosting us in *Morris James LLP's* beautiful new *Avenue North* space. Finally, heartfelt thanks to **Joseph Lofink, Jr., CPA, Julie Dubreuil, and Rachel Nuzzi, SHRM-CP** for planning and executing such a successful event.

The seminar left attendees feeling inspired, energized, and proud to be part of a community committed to learning, evolving, and leading the profession forward.



## ANNUAL BOARD RETREAT



*First State*  
Chapter

The First State Chapter held its annual board retreat on November 17, 2025, at Tonic Bar & Grill. The retreat offered the board an opportunity to step back from day-to-day operations and focus on strategic planning for the year ahead.

Throughout the session, board members collaborated to finalize the full calendar of events for 2026, ensuring a robust lineup of educational programs, networking opportunities, and member-focused initiatives. The board also reviewed upcoming leadership transitions and confirmed any changes to board roles for the new year, reinforcing a smooth and transparent governance process.

In addition to planning and organizational updates, the retreat provided space for broader discussions about chapter goals, member engagement, and ways to continue strengthening the value the association delivers to its community. With a clear roadmap and renewed energy, the board is looking forward to a productive and engaging 2026.

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## Calling All Long-Time Members: Share Your Chapter Throwbacks!

We're building a special feature to **honor the legacy and evolution of our chapter**—and we'd love your help. If you have throwback photos, memorable stories, or reflections from years past, please share them with us! Whether it's a snapshot from a decades-old event or a tale of how the chapter shaped your professional journey, your contributions will help inspire and connect our community.

Send your stories and photos to any of the contacts listed below. We can't wait to showcase your chapter history in upcoming newsletters!

- ALA Board: [board@firststateala.org](mailto:board@firststateala.org)
- Page Chase: [pchase@hfddel.com](mailto:pchase@hfddel.com)
- Angela Pedicone-Baker: [angela.pedicone-baker@us.dlapiper.com](mailto:angela.pedicone-baker@us.dlapiper.com)
- Or reach out to anyone on the board



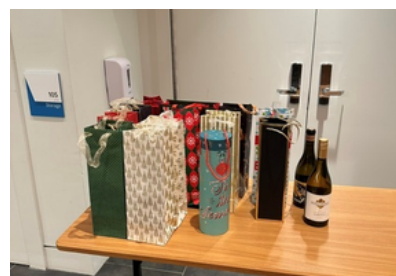
## ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Our beloved annual Holiday Party returned this year, and it truly became the unforgettable evening we had hoped for. It offered a much-needed pause from the daily rush—a chance for everyone to step away from the hustle, soak in a festive atmosphere, and celebrate the season with laughter, warmth, and wonderful company. The celebration took place at the Delaware Museum of Nature & Science, which provided the perfect backdrop for a night filled with joy.

### The Evening's Highlights

- Cozy vibes and joyful conversations filled the space
- Moments to reminisce on the year's biggest milestones
- Plenty of laughs, delicious food, and shared cheer
- Hands-on wreath making with The Delaware Center for Horticulture
- The always-popular Wine Exchange made its return, with guests swapping wrapped bottles and discovering fun surprises
- Our Annual National Conference Raffle added excitement, giving attendees a chance to win their trip to National

The night reminded us how important it is to pause, reconnect, and embrace the spirit of the season. Surrounded by warmth and community, we reflected on our shared journey, rekindled connections, and raised a glass to all we accomplished—and to the bright path ahead.



# Upcoming National Events



## 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO

Our marquee event where legal managers convene for professional development, networking and fun!

April 12-15, 2026 | National Harbor, Maryland

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## 2026 CHAPTER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Whether you currently hold a volunteer role within your chapter or are considering one, look no further than this educational event.

July 16-18, 2026 | Tempe, Arizona

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## LEVEL UP: ALA'S LEGAL MANAGEMENT FUNDAMENTALS

Level up your legal management career at this conference for early career professionals and anyone looking for a refresher in a specific area of management.

September 18-19, 2026 | Chicago, Illinois

**21ST ANNUAL CITY RESTAURANT WEEK – WILM., DE**  
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A WEEK OF PRIX-FIXE DINING AT WILMINGTON'S PREMIER RESTAURANTS



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**DANCING @ THE GRAND:**  
**'80S DANCE PARTY WITH DJ ZIP!**  
FRIDAY, APRIL 17 @ 7:00 PM





# First State Chapter

## BUSINESS PARTNERS

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### BRANDYWINE BLUE LEVEL



# IT Solutions



# First State Chapter

## CHRISTIANA LEVEL

