

Welcome to the Heart of America

Hon. Lajuana M. Counts & Blake A. Shuart



Hon. Lajuana M. Counts has served as a U.S. magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri in Kansas City since September 2018. She currently serves as the president of the Federal Bar Association's Kansas/Western District of Missouri Chapter. Blake Shuart is a trial attorney at Hutton & Hutton Law Firm in Wichita, Kansas, specializing in medical malpractice, mass torts, and general personal injury. He is the president-elect of the FBA chapter for the Districts of Kansas & Western Missouri.

These days, many people outside the Midwest associate the Kansas City metropolitan area with two things: Our barbecue and our sports teams. But when City Councilman J.A. Boppert championed a new slogan for our city in 1915—the “Heart of America”—his vision went well beyond ribs and Super Bowls. He called on citizens and businesses to promote the slogan based on progress and pride, as well as geography—Kansas City is, in so many ways, the center of it all. You could throw a dart in the center of the country and barely miss us. The metropolitan area of Kansas City – there is a Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, only separated by the two rivers which bear their names -- also serves as a primary connection point between Kansas and Missouri.


On behalf of the Chapter for the Districts of Kansas & Western Missouri, we hope you'll include the Heart of America in your travel plans this fall, when we will proudly host the FBA's Annual Meeting & Convention at The Westin Kansas City at Crown Center, Kansas City, Missouri, on September 5-7.

Kansas City is the perfect place for our chapter to host this tremendous event, as it forms the geographic nucleus of our membership. As the only chapter to encompass two different federal court districts—the District of Kansas and the District of Western Missouri – many of our chapter

members base their practice here. Two U.S. district courthouses are within a stone's throw of each other in Kansas City. You can leave the Robert J. Dole Courthouse in Kansas City, Kansas, head east across the Missouri River for three miles, and arrive at the Charles E. Whittaker Courthouse in Kansas City, Missouri. Our chapter covers four area law schools: Washburn University and the University of Kansas on the Kansas side; the University of Missouri and the University of Missouri – Kansas City on the Missouri side. Outside the Kansas City area, many of our members practice in Wichita, Topeka, Springfield, and Jefferson City—all of which host U.S. courthouses.

Kansas City also has its own rich legal history, beginning with a lawyer named Henry B. Bouton, who hung up his shingle in 1851—one year after the Town of Kansas was incorporated and renamed Kansas City. The current Mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, Quinton Lucas, is an attorney and member of the KU law faculty. His predecessor, Sylvester “Sly” James, Jr., was a noted attorney as well.

While you're here, we'll show you around, with a focus on some of this rich history that makes the city great. For those who elect to arrive a bit early, we'll have a civics event on Wednesday and a reception afterwards. The convention will kick off on Thursday with a series of great CLE programs, a Public Service luncheon, and a reception that evening at the National World War I Museum and



Memorial. The Super Bowl Champion KC Chiefs also have a preseason home game that evening. Whether watching the game in person or on the TV, you can still experience how Chiefs fans cheer on our team in style!

On Friday, we'll start the morning with a powerful event celebrating the 70th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, including a slate

and the Fellows of the Foundation event.

The convention will conclude on Saturday with a National Council meeting, Presidential Installation Luncheon honoring incoming 2025 National President Glen McMurry, presentation of the Earl Kintner Award, and chapter breakout sessions.

Along the way, of course, we'll have plenty of barbecue from both sides of the state line, and you will

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of tremendous speakers. We'll pick back up with more CLE programming—topics include civil rights litigation, sports law & litigation, patent litigation, criminal trials, a mock mediation workshop, women lawyers, and a recap of the recent groundbreaking *Burnett v. National Association of Realtors* case—with an Awards Luncheon featuring remarks by retired U.S. Senator John Danforth in between. The FBA Foundation will meet that afternoon, followed by a cocktail event at Tom's Town Distilling Company

have time to visit places to enjoy Kansas City's rich cultural arts history, listen to American Jazz, and experience the legendary Negro Leagues Baseball Museum at 18th & Vine Street.

In Oklahoma!, Rodgers & Hammerstein declared "Ev'rythin's up to date in Kansas City. They've gone about as fur as they c'n go!" We hope you'll come from near and far to join us at the 2024 FBA Annual Meeting & Convention this September, where we'll keep you up to date on all things FBA! ☺