|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| blair_l.png | Laurel R.S. Blair  Partner  Charleston, SC, US  t: 843.720.4670  e: laurel.blair@wbd-us.com |

Laurel R.S. Blair is a strategic advisor and litigator with over 20 years of experience counseling professional fiduciaries and individuals in the estate and trust administration, private wealth, private banking and wealth management areas. Her clients include financial institutions serving as trustees, personal representatives/executors, and conservators. Laurel advises financial institution chief fiduciary officers, in-house general counsel, trust officers, investment portfolio officers, and registered investment advisors.

A member of the firm’s Financial Services sector, Laurel provides bespoke, customized solutions, values confidentiality and strategic negotiation to minimize reputational risk, and works well across time zones.

Professional focus: strategic negotiation, advice, pre-litigation dispute resolution, and fiduciary litigation in matters including trust modifications, breach of fiduciary duty issues, document construction, investment portfolio concentrations, asset valuation issues, tax issues, distributions, will contests (capacity/undue influence), inter-beneficiary disputes, special assets issues, corporate issues, declaratory judgment/judicial guidance petitions to resolve technical issues and facilitate trust and estate administration, fiduciary appointment/substitution matters, estate administration (including claims against estates), and certain financial institution regulatory and compliance issues.

Laurel is a Certified Mediator (S.C. Board of Arbitrator and Mediator Certification: Dispute Resolution and Negotiation).

Representative Experience

Any result the lawyer or law firm may have achieved on behalf of clients in other matters does not necessarily indicate similar results can be obtained for other clients.

* Successful representation of financial institution trustee in judicial proceeding for Court-approved modification of $150 million trust, with ratification of portfolio concentration retention and all past trustee investment decisions during trust administration back to 1943 inception, reallocation of risk exposure for investment decisions from trustee to board of advisors, and favorable trustee compensation adjustment.
* Prevailed for widow of NASCAR racing team owner on appeal before S.C. Court of Appeals and S.C. Supreme Court. Issue: whether multimillion dollar securities designated for widow before death were owned by widow or were includible in estate. Supreme Court Opinion clarifies Uniform Commercial Code Article 8 application and displacement of common law, providing certainty in determining when and how securities ownership arises and limiting financial institution risk exposure caused by random factors such as asset owner death and third-party intermediary implementation delays. In re: Estate of Rider, 407 S.C. 386, 756 S.E.2d 136 (S.C. 2014).
* Prevailed on summary judgment (US Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit) for an American multinational financial services company as Trustee on breach of fiduciary duty and fraud claims in multimillion dollar trust matter, based on alleged conflict of interest created by trust administration services and commercial lending rendered under bank’s full-service business model. A loss could have undone the industry’s full-service business model. Mozingo v. Wells Fargo Bank, 2012 WL 4473128, USDC, D. South Carolina (Sept. 26, 2012)
* Successful defense of financial institution trustee in trust litigation matter to remove LLC manager, preserve trust assets and minimize continuing exposure (where LLC manager in trust-owned LLC context embezzled assets and submitted inaccurate financial information to trustee).
* Prevailed on behalf of American multinational financial services institution (summary judgment affirmed by SC Court of Appeals) in will/trust construction dispute. Holcombe-Burdette v. Bank of America, 371 S.C. 648, 648 S.E. d2 480 (Ct. App. 2006).
* Successful defense of financial institution trustee in multimillion dollar will contests regarding the estate plans of former Clemson University President Robert C. Edwards and his wife, Louise O. Edwards. Waggoner et al v. Bank of America, N.A. as Co-Trustee for the Robert C. Edwards Trust and as Co-Personal Representative for the Estate of Robert C. Edwards et al, 2009-CP-39-1235; Waggoner v. Bank of America, N.A. as Co-Trustee for the Louise O. Edwards Trust and as Co-Personal Representative for the Estate of Louise O. Edwards et al, 2009-CP-39-1234.

Professional & Civic Engagement

* Probate, Estate and Trust Council (Legislative Subcommittee), South Carolina Bar (2023)
* South Carolina Bar Probate Code Revision Committee (2011 – 2014)
* Greenville, SC Estate Planning Council (President (2010 – 2011), Treasurer, VP-Membership, VP-Programs, Director)
* Greenville, SC Estate Planning Study Group (2000 – 2012)
* South Carolina Bar
* University of Virginia Alumni Association
* Junior League of Charleston, SC 2012-present
* Junior League of Greenville, SC 1995-2012

Thought Leadership

* "Ethical and Practical Considerations Associated with the Attorney-Client Privilege and Work Product Doctrine in the Context of Estate Planning, Estate and Trust Administration, and Fiduciary Litigation;" Presentation to the South Carolina Bar (Probate Bench and Bar), September 2023
* “Fiduciary Liability Update: Corporate Trustee Liability Exposure Flash Points and Risk Management Considerations;” Presentation to the National Trust Closely Held Business Association Conference, September 2022
* “Fiduciary Issues in ESG Investing;” Presentation to the American Bar Association, June 2022
* “ESG Investing and the Duty of Loyalty: Oil and Water, or Chocolate and Peanut Butter?” Presentation to the Wealth Management and Trust Conference, American Bankers Association, February 2022
* "Recent Legal Developments and Trends Affecting Fiduciaries and Counsel;" Presentation to Charleston, South Carolina Estate Planning Council, 2020
* "Developments and Trends Affecting Professional Fiduciaries;" Presentation to Bank of America, N.A. private bank, trust, and investment teams, 2019
* "Forming a Holding Company...Easy, Right?" Presentation to the 44th Annual National Trust Closely Held Business Association Conference, 2019
* "Current Fiduciary Issues and Developments in the Law;" Presentation to the South Carolina Bankers' Association 2019 Trust and Wealth Management Conference
* "Strategic Fiduciary Solutions;" Presentation to the South Carolina Bar Convention, 2018
* "Strategic Planning in Anticipation of Controversy;" Presentation to the Estate Planning Council of Columbia, SC, 2018
* "LIBOR: No Longer the World's Most Important Number?"; Womble Bond Dickinson Client Alert, 2017
* "Fiduciary Management of Closely Held Assets: Risks and Portfolio Considerations;" Presentation to the 41st Annual National Trust Closely Held Business Association Conference, 2016
* "Practical Risk Management Considerations in Trust Administration;" Presentation to the South Carolina Bankers' Association Trust and Wealth Management Conference, 2016
* "Top Ten Risks in Trust Specialized Assets in Trust Administration;" Presentation to the National Trust Real Estate Association Annual Forum, 2014

Honors & Awards

* Recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America* (BL Rankings), Litigation – Trusts and Estates, Trusts and Estates, 2013 – Present
* Received the Best Lawyers® "Lawyer of the Year" Award in the field of Litigation – Trusts and Estates (Charleston), 2022
* Super Lawyers Honoree, Estate Planning & Probate, Business Litigation, *South Carolina Super Lawyers*magazine (Thomson Reuters), 2014 – 2018
* Recognized in *Charleston Business Magazine*'s Legal Elite, Estate & Trust Litigation (Top Vote Recipient 2023), Banking & Finance, Business Litigation, Tax & Estate Planning, 2017 – Present
* Legal Elite of the Upstate, South Carolina, 2012
* “Best and Brightest Under 35” Nominee, *Greenville Business Magazine*, 2002

Education

J.D., Syracuse University College of Law, 1993

* Dean’s List
* Editor/Executive Board Member of the Legislative Research Bureau 1991-1993 (Editorial Service Award, 1992-1993)
* National Environmental Moot Court Appellate Team
* Lionel L. Grossman Trial Competition

B.A., University of Virginia, 1990

* Dean’s List
* Distinguished Majors Thesis
* Jefferson Society of the University of Virginia

Admitted to Practice

South Carolina

United States District Court for the District of South Carolina

United States Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit

United States Tax Court

Related Services & Sectors

**Services**

Fiduciary Litigation; Inheritance, Fiduciary And Trust Disputes And Litigation; Dispute Resolution And Litigation; Wealth Management

**Sectors**

Financial Services; Private Wealth