

fcba NEWS

JANUARY 2026

Nominations for the 2026 FCBA Election

Pursuant to Article V, Section 21 of the Association's Bylaws, the FCBA Nominations Committee is beginning the process of preparing the ballot for the 2026 annual election. Positions to be filled are: President-Elect; Secretary; Assistant Secretary; Assistant Treasurer; Chapter Representative to the Executive Committee; four (4) members of the Executive Committee; three (3) members of the Nominations Committee; and four (4) FCBA Foundation Trustees.

The first step of this process is for members to notify the Nominations Committee of their interest in being nominated, or to recommend other members for consideration

for nomination. Nominations should be sent to the Chair of the Nominations Committee, Kathy Kirby, via email to kkirby@wiley.law, with a copy sent to kerry@fcba.org. Please give the name of the member to be considered for nomination, a brief statement about why the individual is being nominated, and the position they are being recommended for by **Friday, January 23, 2026**.

The Nominations Committee will present a slate of nominations to the membership via email and the in newsletter. At that point, members will have the option of making additional nominations as outlined in the Bylaws.

2026 National Telecommunications and Technology Moot Court Seeks Practitioners to Serve as Judges

The Law & Technology Institute and the Moot Court Association of the Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, together with the Federal Communications Bar Association are pleased to announce that the 32nd Annual National Telecommunications and Technology Moot Court Competition will be held at CUA Law on **Friday, February 6**, and **Saturday, February 7, 2026**.

This year's competition seeks attorneys to serve as Briefs Judges and Oral Arguments Judges. Brief Judges will receive submitted briefs on or around Tuesday, January 20th, and they will be due back on Wednesday, February 4th. A score sheet provided by the Committee will guide Briefs Judges in grading the briefs and allocating points.

Oral Arguments Judges are needed for the competition rounds on both the evening of Friday, February 6th and the morning/afternoon of Saturday, February 7th. Oral



Argument Judges will be provided with a Bench Memo before the competition to assist them prepare for the event. **If you would like to volunteer as a Briefs or Oral Arguments Judge, please contact Lee G. Petro at LPetro@Dickinson-Wright.com by Tuesday, January 20, 2025.** No experience is necessary!

Upcoming Key Events

Privacy and Data Security/Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Robotics Committees CLE Seminar

Date/Time: Tuesday, January 13, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

Topic: Keeping Pace with Privacy and AI Developments

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Wireless Telecommunications Committee CLE Seminar

Date/Time: Thursday, January 22, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

Topic: The Upper C-Band Auction: Stakeholder and Government Perspectives

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New York Chapter Lunch and Learn - Virtual

Date/Time: Thursday, January 29, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. ET

Topic: New York Legislative AI and Technology Agenda for 2026: A Discussion of Legislative Initiatives in New York for the 2026 Legislative Session

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Consumer Protection CLE Seminar

Date/Time: Thursday, February 12, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

Topic: Federal and State Consumer Protection Developments in 2026

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Wireline Committee Lunch and Learn – Hybrid

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 18, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

Location: In person at Wiley Rein LLP, 2050 M Street NW and virtually

Topic: The Future of Universal Service: Contribution Reform

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PRESIDENT'S Message

HELLO, FCBA –

Happy New Year! 2026 already is shaping up to be a busy and productive one for the FCBA.

I'm not a big believer in traditional New Year's resolutions, but I have heard that taking incremental, concrete steps can be the start of a new habit. And what better habit to cultivate than being an active FCBA member? With that in mind, if you haven't been to an FCBA CLE or other committee events lately, I encourage you to sign up today for one or two. Just try it!



Thanks to our committee co-chairs, you've got a lot of great programs to choose from. Here are a few:

- On Jan. 13 from noon-2 pm ET, our Privacy and Data Security and Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Robotics Committees will sponsor a CLE on Keeping Pace with Privacy and AI Developments.
- On January 22 from 1-3 pm ET, our Wireless Committee will sponsor a CLE on The Upper C-Band Auction: Stakeholder and Government Perspectives. (Thanks for bringing the band back together.)
- On January 29 at noon ET, the New York Chapter presents a lunch-and-learn on the New York Legislative AI and Technology Agenda for 2026.

You can further build your FCBA memory muscle by signing up to be a judge at the 2025 National Telecommunications and Technology Moot Court competition. This is the 32nd year of the annual moot court competition, which the FCBA co-hosts with the Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law. It's a fantastic event and is all part of the FCBA's commitment to paving the way for the next generation of lawyers in our field. I'm excited to be one of the judges, and hope to see many of you there too. To sign up, please email Lee Petro (LPetro@Dickinson-Wright.com).

And while you're thinking about ways to get involved, don't forget that nominations for the 2026 FCBA Election are due January 23. If you're interested in serving, or there is someone you'd like to recommend, please reach out to the Chair of the Nominations Committee, Kathy Kirby (kkirby@wiley.law). It's a terrific way to help shape the future of our bar.

I hope you continue to find community in the FCBA, and I look forward to all we'll accomplish together in 2026.

Matt DelNero
FCBA President 2025-2026

fcba THE TECH BAR

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE LIAISON

Kathleen Kirby

Tuesday, January 13, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET Keeping Pace with Privacy and AI Developments

The FCBA's Privacy and Data Security and Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Robotics Committees will co-sponsor a CLE on **Tuesday, January 13, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET** entitled **Keeping Pace with Privacy and AI Developments**. The program will be held virtually via the Zoom platform.

[Click here to register.](#)

Make sure to sign in to your account to receive the member rates!

If you are registering on behalf of a member, please sign in using their credentials. By doing this, the information will be linked to their account.

If you have any registration issues, please contact [Elina Gross](#).

FCBA will apply for 2.0 hours of MCLE credit from the VA Bar. This program has NOT yet been approved. Attorneys licensed outside Virginia may use the certificate and materials provided to apply for credit in their jurisdictions.

Agenda

12:00 – 12:05 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Danielle Davis, Director, Technology Policy, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

12:05 – 1:00 p.m.

AI AND PRIVACY: PERSPECTIVES FROM POLICYMAKERS AND REGULATORS

The policy landscape for AI and privacy is rapidly developing—with debates at both the federal and state levels over whether and how these spaces should be regulated, and who should take the lead. This panel will discuss developments

at the federal level, including recent Administration actions and priorities articulated in the AI Action Plan, as well as congressional proposals and debates related to preemption, moratoriums, and regulation. The panel will also discuss state actions and developments, from legislation to regulatory enforcement.

Moderator:

Nate Beltran, Policy Advisor, U.S. House of Representatives

Panelists:

Kaitlyn Karpenko, Assistant Attorney General, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office

Senator James Maroney, Senate Deputy Majority Leader, 14th District of Connecticut

Edgar Rivas, Senior Policy Advisor, United States Senate - Senator John Hickenlooper

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

AI AND PRIVACY: PERSPECTIVES FROM INDUSTRY

As AI transforms business operations, how are companies navigating the privacy challenges that come with it? This panel brings together industry leaders to discuss practical use cases for AI, emerging compliance hurdles, and the evolving regulatory landscape. Panelists will share views on federal proposals, the patchwork of state privacy laws, and recent calls for moratoriums on state AI and privacy regulations—highlighting what these developments mean for innovation and consumer trust.

Moderator:

John Eagle Miles, Associate, Mintz

Panelists:

Rudy Brioché, Adjunct Professor, Media Law, School of Media & Public Affairs, The George Washington University

Paul Eisner, Vice President, Cybersecurity, USTelecom—The Broadband Association

Tatiana Rice, Senior Director for U.S. Legislation, Future of Privacy Forum

David Valdez, Vice President, Privacy, Cybersecurity & AI, CTIA

Thursday, January 22, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET The Upper C-Band Auction: Stakeholder and Government Perspectives

The FCBA's **Wireless Telecommunications Committee** will sponsor a CLE on **Thursday, January 22, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET** entitled **The Upper C-Band Auction: Stakeholder and Government Perspectives**. This program will be held virtually via the Zoom platform.

[Click here to register.](#)

Make sure to sign in to your account to receive the member rates!

If you are registering on behalf of a member, please sign in using their credentials. By doing this, the information will be linked to their account.

If you have any registration issues, please contact [Elina Gross](#).

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Agenda

Together with its restoration of the Federal Communications Commission's auction authority in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Congress tasked the Federal Communications Commission with "completing a system of competitive bidding" for "not less than 100 megahertz in the band between 3.98 gigahertz and 4.2 gigahertz" (the Upper C-band). The Commission released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on November 21, 2025, to satisfy its mandate from Congress, seeking input on questions including how much spectrum to make available for auction, how to successfully transition incumbent operations as necessary, and how to

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► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

support successful coexistence between the new operations and radio altimeters in adjacent frequencies. Stakeholders and government panelists will discuss the work being done to answer those questions and more.

Speakers:

Arpan Sura, Senior Counsel and Chief AI Officer for FCC Chairman Brendan Carr

Umair Javed, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, CTIA

Tim White, Vice President, Engineering & Technology, Aerospace Industries Association

Additional speakers to be announced.

Thursday, February 12, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET Federal and State Consumer Protection Priorities in 2026

The FCBA Consumer Protection Committee will sponsor a CLE on Thursday, February 12, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

ET entitled **Federal and State Consumer Protection Developments in 2026**. This program will be held virtually via the Zoom platform.

[Click here to register.](#)

Make sure to sign in to your account to receive the member rates!

If you are registering on behalf of a member, please sign in using their credentials. By doing this, the information will be linked to their account.

*If you have any registration issues, please contact **Elina Gross**.*

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Agenda

This CLE will examine consumer protection developments in 2025 at the FCC, FTC, and at the state level, and will forecast priorities for 2026. The FCC continues to crack down on unwanted and illegal robocalls through both rulemaking proceedings and enforcement actions, and has taken several actions to remove noncompliant filers from the agency's Robocall Mitigation Database. The FTC has been particularly active in the enforcement space, focusing on robocalls, data privacy issues, and difficult-to-cancel subscription services, among other things. State attorneys general and government agencies, meanwhile, are increasingly focused on establishing and enforcing data privacy laws, governance and accountability of artificial intelligence (AI), and illegal robocalls.

Speakers to be announced.

The Federal Communications Law Journal

The *Federal Communications Law Journal* (FCLJ) has long been an important source of legal scholarship on communications issues, and the FCBA is proud to offer the journal as a benefit to our members.

FCBA members may now decide how they would like to receive the journal. The *FCLJ* itself will continue to be published in hard copy, however, rather than receiving hard copies as a default, we'll be distributing electronic links to the content.

For those of you who would like to receive the *FCLJ* electronically, you don't have to do anything. We'll email you when a new issue is published. You may also visit <http://www.fclj.org/volumes/> to view archived volumes.

For those of you who would like to receive the *FCLJ* in hard copy format, you should sign up for this option by following the instructions below. The hard copy journal is free, but it must be ordered through our website.

- Log in to your account by [clicking here](#).
- Once logged in, click on "My Profile" and then "My Account" buttons on the top left menu bar.
- Scroll down to the Additional Information section. Select Yes in response to the **FCLJ Subscription - Hard Copy Format** question.
- Click on "Save Changes", and you're done!

If you have any questions, please email Kerry Loughney (kerry@fcba.org).

Thank You to Our 2025-2026 **FCBA PLATINUM SPONSORS!**



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COMMITTEE AND CHAPTER Events

Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Robotics Committee

Event: CLE Seminar co-hosted by the Privacy and Data Security Committee

Date/Time: Tuesday, January 13, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

Location: Virtual via the Zoom platform

Topic: Keeping Pace with Privacy and AI Developments

Cost: \$150.00 for Private Sector Members; \$95.00 for Non-Profit 501c3 Members; \$50.00 for Government/Academic/Transitional/Retired Members; No charge for Law Student Members; \$205.00 for Non-Members

For more information: See [page 3](#)

[Click here to register.](#)

Consumer Protection Committee

Event: CLE Seminar

Date/Time: Thursday, February 12, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

Location: Virtual via the Zoom platform

Topic: Federal and State Consumer Protection Developments in 2026

Cost: \$150.00 for Private Sector Members; \$95.00 for Non-Profit 501c3 Members; \$50.00 for Government/Academic/Transitional/Retired Members; No charge for Law Student Members; \$205.00 for Non-Members

For more information: See [page 4](#)

[Click here to register.](#)

New York Chapter

Event: Lunch and Learn – Virtual

Date/Time: Thursday, January 29, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. ET

Location: Virtual via the Zoom platform

Topic: New York Legislative AI and Technology Agenda for 2026: A Discussion of Legislative Initiatives in New York for the 2026 Legislative Session

With federal efforts to regulate AI remaining uncertain, state legislatures have been moving forward to regulate various aspects of AI and technology. New York has been at the forefront of this effort. This webinar will discuss the

latest legislative efforts regarding AI and technology in New York.

Speakers: Matt Hennings, Assistant Secretary for Program Police, NY State Assembly, Jean Macaffer, Legislative Counsel to NY State Assemblyman Steve Otis (Chairperson, NY Assembly Science and Technology Committee), Elan Silver, Senior Counsel, Office of NY State Senator Kristen Gonzalez, AI Law & Policy (Chairperson, NY Senate Internet and Technology Committee), and additional speakers to be announced.

[Click here to register.](#)

Privacy and Data Security Committee

Event: CLE Seminar co-hosted by the Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Robotics Committee

Date/Time: Tuesday, January 13, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

Location: Virtual via the Zoom platform

Topic: Keeping Pace with Privacy and AI Developments

Cost: \$150.00 for Private Sector Members; \$95.00 for Non-Profit 501c3 Members; \$50.00 for Government/Academic/Transitional/Retired Members; No charge for Law Student Members; \$205.00 for Non-Members

For more information: See [page 3](#)

[Click here to register.](#)

Wireless Telecommunications Committee

Event: CLE Seminar

Date/Time: Thursday, January 22, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

Location: Virtual via the Zoom platform

Topic: The Upper C-Band Auction: Stakeholder and Government Perspectives

Cost: \$150.00 for Private Sector Members; \$95.00 for Non-Profit 501c3 Members; \$50.00 for Government/Academic/Transitional/Retired Members; No charge for Law Student Members; \$205.00 for Non-Members

For more information: See [page 3](#)

[Click here to register.](#)

Wireline Committee

Event: Lunch and Learn – Hybrid

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 18, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET

Location: In person at Wiley Rein LLP, 2050 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036, and virtually via the Webex platform

Topic: The Future of Universal Service:

Contribution Reform

As demand on the FCC's Universal Service Fund increases and traditional telecommunications revenues decrease, the Fund is under tremendous pressure. As a result, Congress and the FCC are both considering options to reform the USF contribution system. Recently, Congress's bipartisan, bicameral USF Working Group sought comment on potential reforms. FCC Chairman Brendan Carr has also proposed solutions for improving the long-term sustainability of the Fund. The panelists will discuss the state of USF contribution reform policy both on the Hill and at the FCC, as well as potential statutory and regulatory solutions.

Moderator: Annick Banou, Partner, HWG

Speakers: Mary Huang, Senior Communications and Technology Counsel, Office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui, Joe Kane, Director, Broadband and Spectrum Policy, Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, Angie Kronenberg, President & CEO, Sligo Solutions LLC, Lynn Follansbee, Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships, USTelecom, Alex Stephain, Legislative Director and Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Congressman Richard Hudson

[Click here to register.](#)

Join the FCBA and FCBA Foundation on Social Media!

The FCBA and the FCBA Foundation invites you to “Like” and “Follow” our pages today to be in the loop for upcoming events, share fun pictures of your FCBA friends and colleagues, and grow your social media network! Come join the conversation!

FCBA: [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) (@fcba_law)

FCBA Foundation: [Foundation LinkedIn](#) (FCBA Foundation)

To Update Your Membership Contact Information

To update your contact information, log in to your **member account** and click the About or My Profile sections.

If you are changing your membership type/category (e.g. Private Sector to Government; Law Student to Private Sector, etc.), you must email Elina Gross (elina@fcba.org) so she can update it.

The FCBA is gearing up for its 2026 scholarship and stipend programs, which will award hundreds of thousands of dollars to outstanding high school and law school students, thanks to the generous contributions of FCBA members, industry sponsors, and others. Below are the details of the programs, including information on applications.

If you have any questions about these programs, please contact Stephanie Budaker at stephanie@fcba.org.

2026 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The FCBA Foundation College Scholarship Program provides financial support and laptop computers to DC public high school students to assist them attend college. Over the program's 30 years, the Foundation has helped 437 local high school students attend college with generous scholarship awards. In 2025, the Foundation committed \$295,000 to graduating seniors selected because of their academic achievements and service to school and community, with individual scholarships ranging from \$8,000 to \$20,000.

The Foundation's web-based application lets interested high school seniors matriculating to college next fall apply for a scholarship online. The College Scholarship application is available at <https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/fbacollegescholarship>.

The deadline for submission of applications is Friday, February 20, 2026. The Foundation plans to conduct interviews of promising applicants in early April 2026. We will notify successful applicants of their scholarship awards before May 2026.

2026 LAW SCHOOL SUMMER INTERNSHIP STIPEND PROGRAM

The FCBA Foundation will award stipends to law students employed as unpaid summer interns through its Law School Summer Internship Stipend Program. The

program provides stipends to students from around the country who want to dedicate their time and talent over the summer to government service in areas related to telecommunications, media, and technology (TMT) law, including broadcasting, cable, information technology, television, telephony, satellite, and wireless. It also can include work at government/public sector entities addressing other communications-related areas, including internet law and policy, privacy, cybersecurity, copyright, emerging technologies, and related policy and legal issues.

The Law School Summer Stipend Program awards stipends of up to \$10,000 per student; last year, the program provided \$16,500 in support to six outstanding law students. The Foundation considers funding from other sources in making award decisions and generally will adjust its stipend awards based on total funding received.

Details on the Law School Summer Stipend Program application dates and process will be released in the coming weeks.

2026 LAW SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The FCBA Foundation Law School Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to rising second- or third-year students currently enrolled in

accredited law schools in the United States who have a demonstrated interest in pursuing a career in TMT law. In 2025, the Foundation awarded \$20,000 in scholarships to seven outstanding law students. The scholarships are payable to the applicable law school in one lump sum to help the student with tuition or other education-related expenses.

Details on the Law School Scholarship application dates and process will be released in the coming weeks.

FCBA Foundation Scholarship and Internship Programs – Call for Volunteers!

FCBA members, we need your help! Last year, with the help of our volunteers, the Foundation awarded \$331,000 in College Scholarships, Law School Scholarships, and Law School Summer Internship Stipends. We need reviewers to help students achieve academic success.

Volunteers will review students' written applications and/or conduct interviews with the most promising applicants as part of the selection process. Your help is more important than ever -- ***we expect the number of scholarship applications to be higher than last year's record.***

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The FCLJ is Looking for Articles

The *Federal Communications Law Journal* (FCLJ), the official academic journal of the FCBA, is hosted by The George Washington University Law School. It has long been an important source of legal scholarship on communications issues, and the FCBA is proud to offer the journal as a benefit to our members.

The *Federal Communications Law Journal* (FCLJ) editorial board at The George Washington University Law School is seeking article submissions for potential publication in the upcoming issues of the FCLJ. Interested members may submit articles to the Senior Articles Editor, Spencer Banwart (fcljarticles@law.gwu.edu). Articles may also be submitted through ExpressO or Scholastica. For general inquiries about the FCLJ, please contact the Editor-in-Chief, Ella Hillier (fclj@law.gwu.edu).

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

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Please see below for additional information on each program and how to volunteer.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Graduating high school seniors demonstrate through their applications and personal interviews that their academic achievements, service to school and community, and commitment to learning show their potential to succeed in college and make positive contributions to their communities. That's where you come in—we need help reviewing these promising students' applications.

The last week of February, each volunteer reviewer will receive a group of applications to review, plus detailed reviewing and grading instructions, to review by Friday, March 13. We then will invite the most promising candidates back for personal interviews to be held in late

March through early April. Volunteers will be contacted with interview dates once they are confirmed.

If you would like to review college scholarship applications, please email the FCBA Foundation at foundation@fcba.org by **Friday, February 6, 2026. Please indicate whether you are interested in reviewing written applications, participating in interviews of the candidates, or both!

LAW SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP AND SUMMER INTERNSHIP STIPEND PROGRAMS

The Law School Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to rising second or third-year students enrolled in accredited law schools in the United States who have a demonstrated interest in pursuing a career in TMT law.

The Law School Summer Internship Stipend Program provides stipends to students from around the country who want to dedicate their time and talent

over the summer to government service in tech and telecom related fields.

Application reviews for both the Law School Summer Internship Stipend and Law School Scholarship program will take place in late March. Specific details on the process and timeline will be provided to volunteers closer to the date.

If you would like to review law school scholarship or summer internship stipend applications, please email the FCBA Foundation at foundation@fcba.org by **Friday, February 6, 2026.

If you don't have time to volunteer this year, please consider making a monetary donation to the FCBA Foundation to support these programs.

If you are able to donate, please follow the instructions below:

- [SIGN IN](#) with your member credentials in order to link it to your account.
- Once in your profile, click **Donations** in the top menu bar for a list of funds.

Save the Dates for the 2026 FCBA Annual Seminar! May 15-17 at The Hotel Hershey

Mark your calendars now and make plans to join your colleagues at the **FCBA Annual Seminar at The Hotel Hershey on May 15-17, 2026!** Watch for program details in the coming months.

Known for its refined elegance, signature service, and abundant amenities, The Hotel Hershey, one of the finest Historic Hotels of America, is a must-visit destination in Chocolate Town® U.S.A.

The Hotel Hershey offers a variety of **activities** for the whole family. Make a splash in the indoor pool, set up a friendly game of basketball or volleyball at the sports complex, and experience the great outdoors with miles of hiking trails and the falconry program. Deepen the experience with a soothing massage at **The Spa at Hershey**. To learn more about The Hotel Hershey and its amenities and activities, go to: <https://www.thehotelhershey.com/>.



TMT LAW & POLICY PIPELINE PROGRAM

The FCBA is grateful to the firms, companies, and associations who financially sponsor the TMT Law & Policy Pipeline Program. If you are interested in sponsoring the Program for the 2025-2026 year, please do so by following these instructions:

- **SIGN IN** to your account. If you are sponsoring on behalf of a member, sign in using their credentials (username and password).
- Once in your profile, click **EVENTS** in the top menu bar. From there click **FCBA TMT Pipeline Program Sponsorship FY26**. Select the level and complete the transaction.

TMT LAW & POLICY PIPELINE PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

■ Order of the Coif (\$5,000)	■ Magna (\$1,000)
■ Summa (\$2,500)	■ Cum Laude (\$500)

Sponsors will receive name recognition for their support in the FCBA newsletter, on the FCBA website, and via social media. In addition, the top two sponsorship tiers will receive logo recognition in the newsletter. This sponsorship is for July 1 through June 30. Note that sponsorship contributions to the FCBA's TMT Law & Policy Pipeline Program are not tax deductible. If you wish to sponsor over at a level over \$5,000, please contact Elina at elina@fcba.org.

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Get to Know an FCBA MEMBER

Chris Bjornson

By: Laura Phillips

Chris Bjornson has taken a career path that is not usual for a DC-based communications practitioner. He worked at several public policy roles in Texas and in DC before attending law school in the Communications Law program at the Catholic University of America. These days you can find him at Steptoe LLP where he is Of Counsel. Chris takes his FCBA membership role seriously and he is currently co-chair of the Transactional Practice Committee. He has also been a co-chair of the Access to Government, International Telecommunications, and Video Program and Distribution Committees. I was happy to have a chance to connect with Chris and find out a bit more about his career trajectory and thoughts about what makes a successful professional in our field.



Q: What attracted you to the field of communications?

A: My interest in the communications industry happened even before law school. It started with me seeing how important electronic communications were becoming in my professional life amidst a changing landscape in technology coupled with the then-pending Telecommunications Act of 1996. I decided to go to graduate school at the University of Texas' Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs to start my education, which continued in law school and, with constant changes, up to this day.

Q: Tell us about the various places you've worked through the years.

A: I identify pretty strongly as a Texan. I attended UT as an undergrad and then my career started at the Travis County Tax Office coordinating voter registration drives. I then became a special assistant to the Tax Collector handling our legislative program and a variety of tax collection, motor vehicle registration and titling and voter registration issues. I helped get Motor Voter passed by the Texas Legislature before it was enacted nationally. I then moved with my boss to the Texas Attorney General's Office to help run the child support enforcement program. So, a pretty wide range of positions and public policy duties. After graduate school I spent two years as a

consultant to state governments, and then I attended law school. I went to work for Mintz and I have been with Steptoe since 2009.

Q: Have things unfolded in your career more or less the way you planned?

A: Back when I was at the Tax Office, I envisioned entering local politics someday and so far, that hasn't happened and likely won't. I had always thought about the law, though, and my public service days focused my thoughts on a career in communications law so that has come to pass. I knew then and know now that communications remains a dynamic field with the near constant introduction of disruptive technologies so that's been one constant.

Q: What's the most interesting or challenging thing that you've done in your current position?

A: The most interesting thing I have encountered in my time as a telecommunications attorney is the complexity and chaos of a World Radiocommunication Conference. I served as a member of the U.S. delegation for WRC-2015. The pace of the four-week conference moves from a slog to breakneck and back again, sometimes with no rhyme and reason. And the different approaches, positions, and tactics of the multitude of member states and voting blocs is fascinating to watch.

Q: Is or was there something interesting or someone who surprised or impressed you during your career and why?

A: The people who have impressed me the most are my mentors – Cecelia Burke (my first boss), Pantelis Michalopoulos, and Ben Griffin – all brilliant and effective. Someone who surprised and impressed me who comes from my time before law school when I was working on state election law for the tax office is Kevin Brady. I worked for a Democratic elected official, and he was a freshman state representative on the Elections Committee of the Texas House. He dealt with us honestly and supported our legislation after we answered all his questions in detail. I continued to interact with him and observe his Washington career where he would rise to become Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. He always maintained a sense of humility and caring about other people that we should all emulate (and I wish I could do so more consistently and successfully).

Q: What do you enjoy reading?

A: I enjoy reading presidential biographies, with an especial interest for those on LBJ. I have read at least one biography on each president. I just finished reading Drive by Tom Johnson who was a Special Assistant to LBJ and then President of CNN under Ted Turner.

Q: Is there something (a hobby or other tidbit) people don't know about you that you are willing to share?

A: I have a friend from college who happened to be one of the people returning from Europe on September 11, 2001, whose flight was, like many others, diverted to the airport in Gander Canada. He wrote a book about his experience over those several days recounting the random acts of kindness he experienced in Gander. He also created a "pay it forward" project at his company in Austin where he gives

Get to Know an FCBA MEMBER

CHRIS BJORNSON

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

his employees the day off on 9/11 and have them do three random acts of kindness in the community. His story is part of the Broadway (now, post-Broadway) play "Come from Away." He ultimately started a non-profit charity named Pay It Forward 9/11. I serve on the board of directors. Among other things we are working on a school curriculum promoting about the importance of random acts of compassion and kindness in honor the people of Gander who selflessly served so many during those days and those who perished on 9/11.

Q: Can you share your perspective on the pitfalls to avoid or other career advice for those who are just getting started in the communications field?

A: Especially as it relates to interacting with the FCC or advocating for it, always try to think about the issues you are dealing with in the context of why they are in the public interest. It's a critical step to go from what a client wants to formulating a sound basis as to why the result would also advance the interests of the public at large.

Q: How has your life changed as a result of COVID-19 and what are you looking forward to doing next?

A: Unfortunately, I think COVID-19 separated a lot of us from routine personal interaction. I hope we can see more socialization, but I fear that some of the decrease in in-person meetings or events has become somewhat permanent.

Q: How long have you been an FCBA member, and what to you is the value of FCBA membership?

A: I joined the FCBA in 2000 and have been a committee co-chair for one committee or another since 2002. While the networking and continuing education benefits of membership are obvious in terms of the events and CLE

courses the FCBA offers, the advantages are manifold for committee co-chairs. We get to develop deeper relationships with our fellow co-chairs and even become experts in various sub-fields of communications law. I encourage more junior communications professionals to join and become active in whatever way is meaningful to them. You really cannot find a better association in terms of all that it offers its members.

Interested in learning more about another FCBA member? If there is a member you'd like to know better, contact Laura Phillips at laura@phillipscommlaw.com.

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Communications Attorney: 3rd-5th year – Cooley LLP has an opportunity available for an Associate to work with the Communications practice group in our Washington, D.C. office. Our ideal candidate will have 3-5 years' experience in communications regulation, policy and transactional matters, including

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FCBA Extends a Warm Welcome to Its Newest Members!

(as of 12/31/25)

Shari Aberle, Twin Cities PBS

Bryan Boyle, FCC

Chris Clements, U.S. Department of Justice

Kevin Cummins, Franklin Square Group

Amanda Igra, FCC

Alice Jou, FCC

Jeanne Le Delaizir, Fiber Broadband Association

John Menges, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP

Andrew Mincheff, Corning Inc.

Ken Moriyasu, Nikkei Asia

Zenji Nakazawa, FCC

Shama Nathan

Laura Possessky, Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Sydney Shah

Matthew Shapanka, Covington & Burling LLP

Alexandra Van Cleef, Akin Gump

And huge thanks to those who recruited them: Celia Lewis, Marissa Mitrovich, Michael Pryor, Sylvia Strobel, and Cassie Vangellow

Calendar

January 13 CLE Seminar: Keeping Pace with Privacy and AI Developments

January 22 CLE Seminar: The Upper C-Band Auction: Stakeholder and Government Perspectives

January 29 Lunch and Learn: New York Legislative AI and Technology Agenda for 2026: A Discussion of Legislative Initiatives in New York for the 2026 Legislative Session

February 6-7 32nd Annual National Telecommunications and Technology Moot Court Competition

February 12 CLE Seminar: Federal and State Consumer Protection Developments in 2026

February 18 Wireline Committee Lunch and Learn

May 15-17 FCBA Annual Seminar at The Hotel Hershey in Hershey, PA



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