

2026 CAASNY Annual Meeting

May 18–19, 2026

Speaker Biographies

STEPHEN J. ACQUARIO, ESQ., is Executive Director and General Counsel of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC). In this capacity, Mr. Acquario presents a single voice for the county governments of New York State. He is responsible for the overall direction of the association and oversees the association's agendas to ensure a cohesive and coherent legal and legislative strategy on behalf of New York State's 62 county governments. Mr. Acquario graduated *magna cum laude* from Albany Law School. He holds a B.A. in Industrial and Labor Relations from the State University of New York at Potsdam. In addition, he earned a graduate certificate in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University. He is admitted to practice law in New York.

ROBERT BRAUMULLER, ESQ., is a Co-Managing Partner of Bleakley Platt & Schmidt, LLP, member of the Firm's Executive Committee, Chair of the Health Law Practice Group, and Chair of the Corporate Law Practice Group. Mr. Braumuller serves as outside General Counsel to several clients. He represents hospitals, ASCs and other outpatient facilities, physician groups, laboratories, pharmacists, technology companies, and medical suppliers. He serves as regular corporate compliance counsel to health industry clients, including large urgent care practices and complex multispecialty practices operating in New York and Connecticut. Mr. Braumuller has extensive experience representing health industry clients on compliance with the Stark Law, anti-kickback statutes and other health care fraud and abuse and health care regulatory laws. Mr. Braumuller also represents corporate clients in diverse industries on a full range of corporate transactions, including private mergers and acquisitions, franchise transactions, joint ventures, and restructurings. In addition, he counsels clients regarding general business matters and corporate governance issues. He received his J.D. (1995, *cum laude*) from Georgetown University, Project Editor, American Criminal Law Review, 1994-1995; his B.A. and M.A. from Georgetown University. Robert is admitted to practice in New York and Connecticut.

SARAH BURNS, ESQ., is a partner in the Complex Litigation Department at Simmons Hanly Conroy. She has substantial legal experience handling prescription opioid litigation, consumer safety cases, mass tort multidistrict litigations and other complex business torts. Over the past 14 years with the firm, Ms. Burns has secured billions of dollars in settlements on her clients' behalf. Her current caseload includes representing county and municipal governments against the pharmaceutical companies responsible for the aggressive and fraudulent marketing of prescription opioid painkillers that led to the opioid epidemic. Ms. Burns earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Tulsa College of Law, where she graduated with honors. She graduated from the University of Missouri, Columbia with a bachelor's in biochemistry. Sarah is licensed to practice in Missouri; the Eastern and

Western Districts of Missouri; the U.S. Patent Bar; the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit; and the Judicial Panel for Multidistrict Litigation. In addition, she is admitted pro hac vice in courts around the country.

PATRICK R. CUMMINGS, ESQ., is Counsel for the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC). In this capacity, he works with the New York State legislature regarding pending legislation to help county governments run more efficiently. Mr. Cummings also provides support, when requested, to county attorneys regarding laws, policies, and cases that impact counties. Prior to joining NYSAC in 2011, he was an Assistant County Attorney for Schenectady County. He is admitted to practice law in New York.

DOUGLAS E. GOODFRIEND, ESQ., is a New York Public Finance partner at Orrick with extensive experience in municipal general obligation financings for various New York counties, cities, towns, villages, school districts and fire districts. He frequently serves as bond counsel to municipal issuers participating in the financing programs of the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation and the grant and loan programs of the Rural Development division of the United States Department of Agriculture. Mr. Goodfriend's areas of New York municipal law interest include open spaces programs and financings, town and county improvement district formation, consolidation and improvement, innovative lease-purchase financings, bond resolution referendum law, village local improvement programs and the drafting of local laws and propositions, as well as state legislation on behalf of clients. He received his J.D. from Columbia Law School, 1985; his M.A. from the University of Chicago, 1978, his M.T.S. from Harvard University, 1975 and his B.A. from the New College of the University of South Florida, 1973. He is admitted to practice in New York.

LINDSEY HELMER HAZELTON, ESQ., Is a partner in the Labor & Employment Practice at Hancock Estabrook, LLP. Ms. Hazelton represents both private and public-sector employers in all aspects of labor and employment law. She regularly counsels clients on a variety of employment issues, including discrimination and harassment, wage and overtime matters, hiring and termination strategies, employee discipline and leaves of absence, and defends employment litigation claims before state and federal agencies and in the courts. Ms. Hazelton's practice also focuses on the representation of management, municipalities and school districts in labor matters, such as collective bargaining, contract management, grievance administration, labor arbitrations and unfair labor practice proceedings. Ms. Hazelton is a frequent lecturer and provides in-house training sessions to clients on various labor and employment topics. She received her J.D. from the University at Buffalo Law School, 1997 and her B.S. from Cornell University, 1994

ZAINA S. KHOURY, ESQ., is a member of Bleakley Platt & Schmidt's Health Care Law, Healthcare Litigation, and Corporate Law practice groups. Prior to joining us, Ms. Khoury represented a variety of medical professionals, including physicians, hospitals, and medical device manufacturers in malpractice and product liability claims, as well as professional misconduct allegations. She has previously held roles within the New York City Health and

Hospitals Corporation, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She has substantial knowledge of New York and federal health care regulations and fraud and abuse laws, including the anti-kickback statute, the Stark Law and their implementing regulations, and the implementation of corporate compliance programs. Ms. Khoury provides counsel to clients in the health care industry and other industries on regulatory compliance obligations and general risk management. Ms. Khoury received her J.D. (*cum laude* 2016) from Brooklyn Law School; B.A. from Lehman College in Philosophy, magna cum laude, minor in Law and Government, 2012. She is admitted to practice in New York, New Jersey and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

WHITNEY M. KUMMEROW, ESQ., is Partner at Hancock Estabrook LLP, practicing in the areas of labor and employment, municipal law, education, and startup & emerging businesses. She counsels both public and private sector employers in all types of labor and employment-related matters. Ms. Kummerow regularly represents clients regarding the New York State Taylor Law. She has served as Chief Negotiator, successfully negotiating collective bargaining agreements with a wide range of employee bargaining units for public employers across the State. In addition, she has served as an advocate presenter in contentious interest arbitrations involving various police departments and sheriff's offices. As a member of the Startup & Emerging Business Practice Area, Ms. Kummerow counsels entrepreneurs on various issues, including best hiring practices, policy creation, and initial wage and hour compliance for new businesses. Prior to joining the Firm, Ms. Kummerow clerked for and served as an Attorney Advisor at the United States Department of Labor's Office of Administrative Law Judges and worked as a judicial intern for the Honorable Jean K. FitzSimon of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. More recently, she practiced labor and employment law at Sobol & Sobol, P.C. in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She received her J.D. (*magna cum laude*, 2010) from Drexel University School of Law and her B.S. from Syracuse University.

EMILY A. MIDDLEBROOK, ESQ., is a Partner in the Labor & Employment, Municipal & Public Entities, Education and Nonprofit practice areas at Hancock Estabrook LLP. Ms. Middlebrook is a management-side labor and employer lawyer who represents private and public sector employers. She counsels employers on issues such as wage and hour compliance, leave obligations under state and federal law, addressing discrimination and harassment issues in the workplace and compliance with all applicable employment laws and regulations. Ms. Middlebrook regularly assists employers in developing employment policies and handbooks and addressing issues concerning employee work performance. Ms. Middlebrook also has experience in the defense of labor and employment litigation claims before state and federal courts and administrative agencies including the defense of claims under the New York State Human Rights Law, Title VII, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the New York State Public Employees' Fair Employment Act (the Taylor Law) and other labor and employment laws. Ms. Middlebrook also represents management in connection with labor arbitrations, collective bargaining and

in the negotiation of employment contracts. She received her J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law and her B.A. from Wells College.

DANIEL J. PAUTZ, ESQ., is a trial attorney at Bond Schoeneck & King, where he handles a wide range of litigation matters on behalf of individuals, corporations, insurance companies and public entities. He is well-versed in all phases of civil litigation, including investigations, pretrial discovery and motion practice. Mr. Pautz has successfully tried numerous cases to verdict in New York state and federal courts and has represented clients in the Appellate Division. His practice focuses on litigating business and commercial disputes for clients ranging from large institutions to small businesses. He also has extensive experience in defending toxic tort and other negligence claims in the areas of products liability, premises liability and motor vehicle accidents. He has also represented clients against claims of professional malpractice and has considerable experience in the areas of criminal defense and collection law. In addition to his practice, Daniel donates a significant amount of time to the firm's pro bono initiatives, including Syracuse City Court Eviction Defense Clinic. He received his J.D. (*cum laude*, 2008) from the University at Buffalo School of Law and his B.S. (*summa cum laude*, 2005) from Niagara University. He is admitted to practice in New York; the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York; the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York; the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York.

VICTOR L. PRIAL, ESQ., is a trial lawyer and appellate advocate at Smith Sovik with a breadth of experience in a variety of areas. He was named an Upstate New York State “Rising Star” by Super Lawyers in 2017. His practice focuses on products liability, professional malpractice, contract disputes, premises liability, labor law, personal injury, construction matters, and employment law. Mr. Prial joined Smith Sovik in 2014 after working at a prominent Syracuse law firm where he maintained a wide-ranging litigation practice representing clients in real estate, service, manufacturing, financial, construction and technology industries. Before relocating to Syracuse, he worked at a large law firm in New York City concentrating on complex commercial litigation including business litigation, products liability, employment, consumer protection and antitrust matters.

Mr. Prial began his career as a judicial clerk in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. While in law school at the Syracuse University College of Law, he was an Executive Editor of the Syracuse Law Review, where his student note was selected for publication. He received his J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law (2004); B.A. *Magna Cum Laude*, English and Spanish (1999). He is admitted to practice before all Courts of the State of New York and all U.S. District Courts of New York.

MATTHEW P. RYAN, ESQ., is Partner at Roemer Wallens Gold & Mineaux, LLP. He joined the firm after serving as associate general counsel for a labor union for almost 13 years. Prior to his labor union experience, he was an attorney in the private sector focusing on personal injury litigation. Mr. Ryan now concentrates his practice in all aspects of labor and employment law focusing on public sector labor relations. In this regard, he has conducted numerous arbitrations, collective negotiations, mediations, fact findings, and interest

arbitrations. His experience also includes representing parties before the New York State Public Employment Relations Board in all aspects of matters conducted before the Board. He also has significant experience in practice before the courts of the State of New York and New York's Federal Courts. He received his J.D., Albany Law School of Union University (2001) and his B.A., Political Science, Siena College in (1997). Matthew is admitted to practice in New York; United States District Court for the Northern District of New York; United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit; and the United States Supreme Court.

THOMAS I. SHERIDAN, ESQ., III is a partner at Simmons Hanly Conroy in the Complex Litigation Department. Based in the New York office, he has more than 45 years of experience trying cases and arguing appeals in the state and federal courts in New York and throughout the country. In recent years, his practice has focused on representing plaintiffs in pharmaceutical, medical device, and other mass tort litigation. Mr. Sheridan joined the firm as part of the 2014 merger of Simmons Browder Gianaris Angelides & Barnerd LLC and Hanly Conroy Bierstein Sheridan Fisher & Hayes LLP, which he joined as a named partner in 2004. Prior to 2004, he was a partner in the New York office of Torys LLP, an international law firm. Before entering private practice, he served for two years as a Law Clerk to the Honorable Thomas J Meskill, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Mr. Sheridan has represented plaintiffs and defendants in trials and appeals involving a wide range of cases, including those involving pharmaceuticals, medical devices, automobiles, securities fraud, fiduciary duties, products liability, contracts, intellectual property, unfair competition, professional liability, insurance, real estate, and employment. In addition to his trial and appellate practice, he has served as a court-appointed mediator in numerous cases involving employment, contract, partnership, fiduciary duty, insurance, products liability, real estate, negotiable instruments and personal injury. He has also served as appellate counsel by appointment of the Court of Appeals to represent individuals in civil rights cases unable to afford a lawyer.

Mr. Sheridan received his B.A. *cum laude* (1973) from St. Michael's College, his J.D. *cum laude* from Fordham University School of Law (1976) where he was Associate Editor for the Fordham Law Review. He is admitted to practice in New York, the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit; Seventh Circuit; Eighth Circuit; Ninth Circuit; the U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York and the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York.

BRIAN S. SOLOKLOFF, ESQ., co-founded Miranda & Sokoloff, LLP, in 1998, where he continued his zealous advocacy for insurers, municipalities, and private clients. In 2008, he co-founded Sokoloff Stern LLP, where he continues as a high profile, well-respected federal litigator, to whom clients turn with their most challenging trial court and appellate court assignments. Mr. Sokoloff's broad-based litigation experience spans his entire legal career, often with a focus on difficult federal and constitutional issues, including alleged discrimination in employment and public accommodation, police misconduct, and election law issues. From 1986 to 1989, Mr. Sokoloff was an Assistant Corporation Counsel in the General Litigation Division of the New York City Law Department, representing the City of New York, its agencies, and employees in their role as employer and service provider.

Previously, Mr. Sokoloff worked for the NYC law firm of Thurm & Heller, LLP, serving as a partner for his last two years at the firm. He defended employment discrimination, police misconduct, municipal land use, and other civil rights cases, such as claims brought under the First Amendment's speech and religion clauses, for private business, municipalities, and schools, and acquired an expertise in handling insurance coverage litigation.

Mr. Sokoloff attended Brooklyn Law School, graduating cum laude in 1986. He was admitted to the bar in New York State in 1987. He is admitted to the following federal courts: United States District Courts for the Southern, Eastern, Northern and Western Districts of New York; the Second Circuit, and the United States Supreme Court. He was admitted pro hac vice in cases in Washington, D.C., Texas, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and California.

TENO A. WEST, ESQ., serves as the Managing Partner of West Group Law PLLC. His practice focuses primarily on representing municipal governments in the areas of water and wastewater law, solid waste management, environmental, regulatory, public-private partnerships, alternative project delivery, public contracts, municipal law, litigation, procurement law, administrative law, and construction law. Mr. West has extensive experience in representing government agencies and municipalities in the public procurement process and is a frequent lecturer on this and related subjects. He has served as the lead negotiator for the development of several cutting-edge environmental and civic municipal infrastructure projects throughout the United States.

Mr. West has special experience in the development of urban renewal and municipal construction projects representing municipalities and development corporations in the procurement, construction, operation, and financing of a variety of civic projects, including sports stadiums, municipal buildings, and educational facilities. His litigation experience includes representing public clients on numerous matters, including in connection with challenges to legislation, environmental matters, Freedom of Information Law issues, Article 78 proceedings, project approvals, bid protests, construction claims, and contract enforcement. Mr. West has assisted governments with the drafting and enactment of legislation necessary for alternative project delivery methods to be lawfully implemented.

His experience as a lawyer was preceded by a unique opportunity to serve as the Town Manager of Hardwick, Vermont, and Town Administrator of Carlisle, Massachusetts. In his capacity as a municipal manager, he also served on regional solid waste district governing boards in both states. His numerous professional associations and memberships include the Design-Build Institute of America; the International Municipal Lawyers Association; the Solid Waste Association of North America; the International City/County Management Association; and the American Bar Association. Mr. West is also admitted to the New York Bar; the New Jersey Bar; the Massachusetts Bar; the Pennsylvania Bar; and the Connecticut Bar. Mr. West received his J.D. from New England School of Law and his M.P.A. from the University of Vermont.

STEVEN WARD WILLIAMS, ESQ., joined Smith Sovik in 1995 and was made a partner in 1997. Since joining the firm, he has earned a reputation as an excellent trial lawyer. Mr. Williams handles a wide range of litigation matters, including construction accidents, automobile accidents, labor and employment law, products liability, contracts, professional

malpractice and general liability. He has represented high profile clients such as the National Basketball Players' Association (NBPA) and has appeared as a legal analyst on television programs such as The O'Reilly Factor and Hour CNY.

After law school, Mr. Williams served as an officer in the U.S. Navy's Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps. There he gained valuable trial experience. He was promoted to the position of Senior Trial Counsel (i.e., senior prosecutor), where he supervised a staff of prosecutors. He specialized in handling some of the Navy's most complex and high-profile cases. In 1994, Mr. Williams was assigned as counsel to Rear Admiral F. M. Dirren, Jr. Steve advised the Admiral on a wide range of issues, including, but not limited to, labor and employment, tort law and criminal law. He was twice awarded the Navy Commendation Medal.

Mr. Williams earned his B.A. from Cortland College and then worked in the New York State Legislature as a writer. He attended law school at California Western School of Law in San Diego, California. Mr. Williams was admitted to the California Bar in 1990 and the New York Bar in 1994. He is admitted to practice before all Courts of the State of New York and California, all U.S. District Courts of New York, the Second Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals and the Court of Military Appeals.