

MEMPHIS NEWSMAKERS

Stengel Elected President Of Construction Counsel Association

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Evans Petree PC shareholder **Elizabeth B. Stengel** has been elected the first female president of the Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel, a not-for-profit professional association of Tennessee attorneys with practices related to the construction industry.

Stengel is a construction and surety lawyer and the practice area leader for Evans Petree's litigation practice group. Her practice involves representing owners, contractors, suppliers, design professionals and sureties in a variety of facets of the construction process, ranging from licensing and registration to risk management and dispute resolution, among other things.

Hometown: Memphis (born and raised)

Experience: I received my J.D. from the University of Memphis School of Law in 1987 and my license to practice law on April 25, 1988. I am admitted to practice law and have litigated various construction cases in the state courts of Tennessee and Mississippi and in the United States Federal Courts in the Western, Middle and Eastern Districts of Tennessee, the Eastern District of Virginia, the Northern District of Mississippi, and the United States Bankruptcy Courts. The highlight of my legal career was being admitted to the United States Supreme Court in 2005. Interestingly, the second high point of my legal

career was serving on a jury in a matter in the Shelby County Criminal Court, Division VIII approximately 10 years ago. The insight to the inner workings and deliberations of a jury have since assisted me in my trial work.

What talent do you wish you had? I always wanted to play the piano or the keyboards on the same level as Herbie Hancock, a jazz legend and Grammy-winning musician. Unfortunately, it was not in the cards for me.

Who has had the greatest influence on you and why? There are two people in my life that have had a great deal of influence on me. First, my late father, Bill Bobbitt, who taught me that honesty and truthfulness are paramount in all things I do. He implanted the thought in me that "your word is your bond!" The second influential person in my life is the late Honorable Judge Charles O. MacPherson, Division II Circuit Court of Shelby County, Tennessee. Judge MacPherson told me to follow two rules when dealing with lawyers, clients, witnesses and those involved in the court system: "Treat others the same way you want to be treated and always be on time/never let a client wait for you." I have lived by these rules since I started practicing law in 1988.

Tell us a little about the Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel and how you became involved. The Tennessee Association of Construction Counsel was



ELIZABETH B. STENDEL

founded in 2003 by a group of construction lawyers in Tennessee who recognized the need to bring together Tennessee attorneys with practices serving contractors, building material and equipment suppliers, architects, engineers, and building owners in order to share insight and experiences with others in the same areas of practice. TACC was created for the purpose of monitoring, gathering and sharing knowledge of legal matters of interest to the construction industry and mentoring and assisting in the education and professional

development of attorneys practicing construction. More importantly, TACC provides for a forum for fraternal interaction and networking for attorneys serving the construction industry.

What unique legal issues do firms in the construction industry face? The issues that construction law firms face can be varied and complex. But the one thing that we do when assisting our clients is to find a way to resolve conflicts before they start. It's what I refer to as "preventive maintenance."

What are your goals as TACC president? My goal as president is to continue the commitment to emphasize diversity in the construction industry at all levels, including TACC. Diverse backgrounds bring different perspectives and new ideas. When you bring people who have different life experiences together, you have education, innovation and opportunity to learn. As a construction lawyer for 30 years, I have experienced and seen how the construction industry and those representing contractors have changed over the years. TACC has moved toward being more inclusive and continues to work towards this. In fact, TACC and the construction industry as a whole are realizing that if we bring people (regardless of sex, age, race, ethnicity) to work together to achieve diversity, we can make positive changes in what we do for others.

What do you consider your greatest accomplishment? Waking up each day with a smile on my face and always remaining optimistic.

What do you most enjoy about your work? I believe the most enjoyable aspect about work is helping clients through tough situations and finding satisfactory solutions in resolving their problems.

If you could give one piece of advice to young people, what would it be? Follow your dream and never give up no matter how tough it is.