

Fifth Annual Mid-South Agricultural and Environmental Law Conference

Speaker Biographies

Mr. Greg Cole joined the Farm Credit System more than 29 years ago as a student intern with what was then known as the Farm Credit Bank of St. Louis. During his tenure, Greg has served in various roles and was named as President and Chief Executive Officer of AgHeritage Farm Credit Services by the Board of Directors in April 2008. Prior to being named CEO, Greg was the Chief Operating Officer for AgHeritage. Greg earned a Bachelor of Science of Agriculture Business and Economics at Arkansas State University and is a graduate of LSU Graduate School of Banking. AgHeritage Farm Credit Services is a cooperative lending institution with managed assets in excess of \$1.1 Billion that services the financial needs of the agricultural community in 24 counties throughout Central and Southeast Arkansas. AgHeritage Farm Credit Services is part of the national Farm Credit System with assets in excess of \$260 billion and is one of four Farm Credit associations in Arkansas with total assets in excess of \$2.8 billion. Farm Credit is the largest single lender to agriculture in the U.S. and in the state of Arkansas. Its mission is to serve Agriculture and Rural America.

Wes Ward serves as the Secretary of Agriculture for the State of Arkansas. Wes was appointed to the position in March 2015 by Governor Asa Hutchinson. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Business with an emphasis in Agricultural Finance from Arkansas State University. Wes earned a law degree and completed the LL.M. program (Master of Laws) in Agricultural and Food Law at the University of Arkansas. Wes has been serving in the United States Marine Corps for nearly 15 years and has completed deployments to Afghanistan and Jordan. He is currently a Captain and a Civil Affairs Officer in the Marine Corps Reserves.

Stephen Alexander Vaden is an American lawyer who has been nominated by President Donald Trump to become General Counsel of the United States Department of Agriculture. Prior to his nomination, he served on the Trump administration's USDA landing team. Vaden has a B.A. from Vanderbilt University and a J.D. from Yale Law School. He clerked for Julia Smith Gibbons of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and for Samuel H. Mays Jr. of the United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee. Vaden has practiced law at Patton Boggs and Jones Day, specializing in litigation at the appellate level, election law, and administrative law.

Kristi Boswell currently serves as a senior adviser to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue on immigration and labor issues. Prior to her role as senior advisor she worked as Director of Congressional Relations at the American Farm Bureau Federation. She advocated Farm Bureau policies to Congress and regulatory agencies on issues relating to farm labor, this includes ensuring agriculture has access to a legal and

stable workforce through immigration reform, commenting on proposed regulations that affect agricultural employers, and review of US Department of Labor implementation of the Fair Labor Standards Act and Occupational Safety and Health Administration enforcement. Prior to her work at Farm Bureau, Kristi practiced creditors' rights, labor and employment litigation, and general corporate defense in Omaha Nebraska.

Ray Starling serves as the Special Assistant to the President for Agriculture, Agricultural Trade, and Food Assistance on the National Economic Council. Before this appointment Ray served as Chief of Staff for Senator Thom Tillis and also fulfilled the roles of senior advisor and general counsel before being appointed to Chief of Staff. Ray has also worked as general counsel to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services and as general counsel to the Speaker of the House for North Carolina.

Jerry Kelly Jerry Kelly began his law practice in Carlisle, Arkansas in 1984 and opened an additional office in Lonoke, Arkansas in 1995. His practice areas include tractor trailer and automobile wreck cases, highway construction site automobile accident cases, insurance bad faith cases, agricultural-commercial litigation cases, all types of personal injury and wrongful death cases, product liability cases, tire defects cases, and medical malpractice cases. Mr. Kelly was widely recognized as one of several trial counsel having tried the *Schafer, et al. v. Bayer Crop Science, et al.* case in Lonoke County, Arkansas, wherein the Plaintiffs received an extraordinary \$48 million jury verdict. The *Schafer* case has been recognized among the legal community and the public as being the landmark case in Arkansas that overturned the punitive damage cap legislation of 2003, as well as the case that played a great part in the negotiations for the global \$750,000,000.00 settlement of the rice GMO state and federal litigation. Mr. Kelly is currently co-counsel and has filed over 2500 Complaints representing Corn Farmer Plaintiffs in Federal Court and Minnesota State Court in connection with the *Syngenta* litigation, which just recently culminated in a \$1,500,000,000.00 global settlement. Presently, Mr. Kelly is extensively involved in the pending Monsanto/BASF/Dicamba MDL litigation wherein thousands of farmer plaintiffs are seeking crop loss damages caused by Dicamba volatility.

John Tull is a founding member of Quattlebaum, Grooms & Tull PLLC. In over 100 jury trials, Mr. Tull has served as lead counsel on behalf of large and small businesses and individuals in cases involving business torts, breach of contract, products liability, toxic torts, environmental litigation, securities fraud, franchise disputes, trade secrets, personal injury, First Amendment, and other matters. Mr. Tull has served as defense counsel for major herbicide manufacturers in a number of cases including claims of personal injury and crop damage resulting from allegedly excessive drift propensity of a herbicide. He has also defended numerous agricultural aviation services including claims of negligence and breach of warranty. In addition to handling civil cases, Mr. Tull has also represented numerous agricultural aviators and other parties before the Arkansas State Plant Board.

Kristine Tidgren is an adjunct assistant professor in the Agricultural Education & Studies Department and the director for the Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation. Kristine's work focuses on studying

and interpreting laws impacting the agricultural industry. In particular, she focuses on agricultural taxation. Since joining CALT in 2013, Kristine has written hundreds of articles and blogposts to keep tax professionals, practicing attorneys, producers, and agribusiness professionals informed about legal developments impacting their business. She also writes technical chapters for the National Income Tax Workbook and regular articles for farm publications. In addition to her writing, Kristine speaks to many professionals and producers each year regarding tax and agricultural law topics. She also plans and provides instruction for CALT-hosted seminars, including the annual federal income tax schools.

Lucian T. Pera joined Adams and Reese in 2006 and focuses his practice on commercial litigation, media law, and legal ethics work. Lucian is a past Treasurer of the American Bar Association and the current President of the Tennessee Bar Association. Lucian's civil litigation practice has ranged widely and includes a variety of commercial, personal injury and intellectual property litigation, as well as numerous state and federal appeals. Lucian's extensive bar association work in the field of legal ethics and professional responsibility has resulted in local Tennessee, and national practice and leadership. He represents and advises attorneys, law firms, their clients, and businesses who deal with lawyers about all aspects of the law. Recent assignments have included defense of lawyers in disciplinary investigation, counseling clients with disciplinary and other claims against lawyers, advising law firms about loss prevention and claims, and defending and prosecuting motions to disqualify lawyers or for sanctions.

R. Seth Hampton joined Quattlebaum, Grooms & Tull PLLC in 2014. His practice primarily focuses on real estate, agriculture, commercial finance, regulatory compliance, and business succession and estate planning for farm families and closely-held agribusiness corporations. Mr. Hampton represents clients in conveying and exchanging real property and real-property interests, such as easements, purchase options, and rights of refusal; preparing and negotiating lease agreements for agricultural, recreational and commercial properties; resolving title issues and boundary disputes; and developing agricultural, recreational and commercial properties. His experience includes assisting clients with major asset purchases, structuring tax-free real estate conveyances, forming business organizations, including corporations, limited liability companies, general and limited partnerships, and joint ventures, and financing business operations and real estate acquisitions. He also advises clients on matters concerning water rights and irrigation permitting, and compliance issues with environmental and land use regulations.