

Bulla's Background Perfect Fit for Court of Appeals

BY ROBERT HORNE, NEVADA LAWYER STAFF

Nevada Court of Appeals Judge Bonnie Bulla's wealth of experience as a litigator and as discovery commissioner in the Eighth Judicial District Court serves her well in her position on Nevada's newest court.

Her 34 years of practice have helped her understand how cases proceed through litigation—from the filing of a complaint through trial or other resolution, as well as having developed skills to be able to accurately apply the law to resolve disputes—and this experience has served her well as an appellate judge.

Bulla also points to her service in professional organizations as having helped shape her legal career. She served as president of the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys and is a member of the Howard D. McKibben Chapter of the American Inns of Court.

"So too has my being actively involved in a number of professional associations," Bulla said. "My years as a member and officer of these and other organizations enabled me to hone my leadership and communication skills and allowed me to make many lasting friendships and be effective in the collaborative process necessary on an appellate court."

Bulla grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, and graduated from Arizona State University in 1984 with a bachelor's degree in economics. She then earned her juris doctor at the Arizona



State University College of Law (now the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law) in 1987.

Her favorite course in law school was Evidence, which has served her well during her distinguished career.

"It played an important role in my decision to become a litigator," Bulla said. "I was also very fortunate to have worked for and eventually become a partner with the late Neil Galatz, who was one of Nevada's preeminent trial attorneys for many years. Neil always reminded me that evidence is as important to lawyers as anatomy is to doctors."

Bulla started her law career as a private practitioner, where she primarily handled professional negligence cases. She worked on the PEPCON litigation—a well-known mass tort litigation that arose out of a devastating explosion in 1988 at a large chemical manufacturing facility in Henderson.

In 2007, Bulla was selected by the judges of the Eighth Judicial District Court to become the court's discovery commissioner. She served as discovery commissioner for 12 years until she was appointed to the Nevada Court of Appeals by Governor Steve Sisolak in February 2019. She replaced Judge Abbi Silver, who was elected to the Nevada Supreme Court.

It was in her role as discovery commissioner that Bulla further developed her expertise in the application of the Nevada Rules of Civil Procedure, the Rules of Evidence, and other pertinent statutes and caselaw.

“That enabled me to timely resolve thousands of discovery disputes between the parties who appeared before me,” Bulla said. “This skill set has served me well on the Nevada Court of Appeals, which is often referred to as a court of error correction. This essentially means that the court’s job is to ensure that the legal issues presented to us are efficiently resolved through the proper application of relevant statutory law and rules, and caselaw.”

Bulla added that the ability to carefully analyze the issues and curiosity about the law are probably the most important skills or qualities a Court of Appeals judge must possess.

“In addition to the ability to carefully analyze the issues presented, a good appellate judge needs to have an abiding curiosity about the law and the tenacity to work through an issue until it is resolved and understand its impact on the parties and the legal community as a whole,” she said.

For attorneys who have an interest in serving on the Court of Appeals, Bulla

recommends practicing in an area of the law that you enjoy and learn it well, first and foremost.

“On the Court of Appeals, we handle a wide range of criminal, civil, and family law matters,” Bulla said. “If you have the opportunity to take an appellate pro bono case, do it! Make it a habit to write a little bit every day and become comfortable editing your work with a critical eye.”

Although appointed by Sisolak, Nevada law mandated that Bulla run in the next general election to retain the seat and complete the original term. She won that election in November 2020, and she has already decided to seek re-election in 2022.

“I am planning to seek re-election to a full six-year term next year, because I enjoy the work and I believe my extensive experience allows me to serve

the legal community and the public as well,” Bulla said.

Bulla said attorneys begin their interactions with the appellate courts when they file their appeals with the clerk’s office of the Nevada Supreme Court. For matters referred by the

Supreme Court to the Court of Appeals, the clerk of the Court of Appeals assists in scheduling cases for timely disposition including oral argument. Bulla’s clerk and chambers can be contacted by mail, email, or telephone.

As far as interacting with her office, Bulla said her staff is very responsive to the bar. Attorneys can contact her office at COADept3@nvcourts.nv.gov. “We realize appellate practice presents unique challenges for attorneys,” she said.

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Parsons Behle & Latimer is pleased to announce that attorney **Jamie K. Tract (née Rinehart)** has joined the Reno, Nevada office as of counsel.



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Jamie Tract is a corporate transactional attorney who represents clients on a wide range of business start-up, corporate governance and real estate transactional matters involving complex contract drafting and negotiation. She practices primarily on the Corporate Transactions & Securities and Real Estate practice teams at Parsons Behle & Latimer.

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