

## **Shepherdstown Regional Meeting Presenter Bios**

### **J. Zak Ritchie**

Zak's practice focuses on complex commercial and government litigation. He also frequently handles appeals in state and federal courts. Zak founded the firm after working in private practice and as assistant solicitor general in the Office of the West Virginia Attorney General. As an assistant solicitor general, Zak concentrated on federal regulatory challenges in the energy and environmental sectors, defended state laws from constitutional challenge, and frequently appeared before the state's highest court. In litigation over federal rulemaking before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, Zak coordinated the state's legal strategy with an array of national trade groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Business, and the National Mining Association, among others. Since joining the private practice, Zak has also developed a growing commercial and appellate practice concerning disputes over corporate governance, shareholder derivative law, and insurance coverage, as well as the defense of matters involving lawyers and their firms.

A native of the Mid-Ohio Valley, Zak graduated from West Virginia Wesleyan College and West Virginia University College of Law. Following law school, Zak served as a law clerk to the Hon. John T. Copenhaver of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia and the Hon. Stephanie D. Thacker of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

### **Rachael L. Fletcher Cipoletti**

Rachael L. Fletcher Cipoletti is Chief Lawyer Disciplinary Counsel for the West Virginia Office of Lawyer Disciplinary Counsel. She has been with the ODC since 2002 and became Chief Disciplinary Counsel in 2008. Rachael also serves as Special Judicial Disciplinary Counsel for the Judicial Investigation Commission. Rachael is a frequent lecturer on ethics and professionalism for the West Virginia University College of Law, the WV State Bar, and the American Bar Association.

Rachael is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, United States Southern District of West Virginia, United States Northern District of West Virginia, United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit and the Supreme Court of the United States of America. Rachael was previously an attorney with Legal Aid of West Virginia. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from West Virginia University and also earned her Juris Doctorate from West Virginia University. She currently serves on the Future of the Law Committee for the WV State Bar, is the ODC liaison to the WV Judicial and Lawyer Assistance Program, serves on the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, and serves on the ABA's standing committee for the Commission on Lawyer

Assistance Programs Consortium on Professionalism Initiatives. She is a lifetime member of the West Virginia University Alumni Association, a member of the American Bar Association, a member of the Center for Professional Responsibility, and a member of the National Organization of Bar Counsel.

### **Judge Debra McLaughlin, Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit**

Judge Debra McLaughlin was raised in Manassas, Virginia. She has been a resident of Morgan County from 1999 until 2019 where she practiced law and raised a family. In 2019, she relocated to Berkeley County to accommodate her 16-year-old's education in the dual enrollment program between Shepherd University and St. Maria Goretti High School.

She has a 1990 bachelor's degree in sociology with a concentration in criminal justice and psychology from St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, where she was an Honors Program graduate. She has a 1993 law degree from the University of Kansas School of Law.

Judge McLaughlin was an associate at the law firm of Bochetto & Lentz and later a Katherman & Heim from 1994 to 1999. In 1999, she joined the firm of Harmison & Savasten in Berkeley Springs. Shortly thereafter, she became a part-time assistant prosecutor for Morgan County. In 2002, she was appointed to the office of Morgan County Prosecuting Attorney; she was elected to the position in 2004 and re-elected in 2008, 2012 and 2016.

Governor Jim Justice appointed her to the bench in the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Morgan, Berkeley and Jefferson Counties) in August 2017 and she served until May 2018. He appointed her again in March 2019. Between May 2018 and November 2018 she was a solo practitioner practicing in criminal defense and abuse and neglect. Between December 2018 and March 2019 she was an assistant Jefferson County prosecutor.