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## The Appellate Practice Section - An Invaluable Resource for All Your Appellate Needs

by Susan W. Fox

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The Appellate Practice Section of The Florida Bar is an organization of approximately 1400 attorneys devoted to promoting excellence in appellate practice in Florida's state and federal courts. Its members include civil and criminal lawyers, plaintiff and defense lawyers, and others interested in the appellate process, including those who practice primarily at the trial level but are also active in pursuing appeals. At our meetings, you can meet opposing counsel, get tips to better your practice, brainstorm with others who work in your area, market your practice, network, and develop credentials.

The section takes great pride in its publications and CLE programs. If you have ever attended the "Conversation with the Court" or the famed dessert reception at The Florida Bar's convention, these are the section's signature events. Ongoing CLE programs include an annual board certification review course, and "Hot Topics" seminar. Monthly telephonic seminars allow attorneys to gain appellate CLE without leaving their desks.

Foremost of the section's publications is *The Record: Journal of the Appellate Practice Section*. *The Record* continues to be published quarterly and consists of scholarly articles of interest to appellate lawyers as well as appellate news, case updates, book reports, editorial columns, judicial profiles, and information regarding board certification.

A second publication no appellate lawyer can live without is *The Florida Appellate Practice Guide*, a three-ring binder that presents invaluable information about the section, and detailed information about each appellate court, including location and contact information, judicial profiles, phone numbers, names of law clerks, the court's most current "Notice to Attorneys" with its special or local requirements, case statistics, court history, and other information.

The section is also a regular contributor of scholarly articles to *The Florida Bar Journal*.

Another publication not to be missed is the section's Web site: [www.flabarappellate.org](http://www.flabarappellate.org), which has regular updates, section information, upcoming events, and past issues of *The Record*. Finally, the section is publishing a pro se handbook later this year for self-represented litigants.

While many general practitioners still handle appeals, there is a growing trend toward recognition of appellate practice as a unique specialty area. In 1993, the Supreme Court of Florida directed The Florida Bar to offer a board certification in appellate practice. The first attorneys were certified in appellate practice in June 1994. Certification is the highest level of recognition by The Florida Bar of the competency and experience of attorneys in this area of law.

To be certified in appellate practice, a lawyer must have practiced law on a full-time basis for at least five years with substantial involvement — 30 percent or more — in appellate practice during the three years immediately preceding application. Each certified lawyer must pass peer review; complete 45 hours of continuing legal education within the three years immediately preceding application; and pass a written examination demonstrating knowledge, skills, and proficiency in the field of appellate practice to justify the representation of special competence. Board certification is valid for five years, during which time the attorney must continue to practice law and attend Florida Bar-approved continuing legal education courses. To be recertified, requirements similar to those for initial certification must be met. Not all qualified lawyers are certified, but those who are board certified have taken the extra step to have their competence and experience recognized.

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