

# THE FLORIDA FAMILY LAW AMERICAN INN OF COURT

## 2021-2022 AMENDED BYLAWS

### Article One

#### General

Section 1. Purpose. The purposes of the Florida Family Law American Inn of Court are set forth in its Organizational Charter issued by the American Inns of Court Foundation.

Section 2. Nature of Association. The Florida Family Law American Inn of Court shall be and remain chartered and affiliated with the American Inns of Court Foundation as a member Inn and shall be an unincorporated association composed of judges, practicing lawyers, law school educators, recent law school graduates, and law students who accept an invitation to membership as hereinafter described.

Section 3. Location. The Florida Family Law American Inn of Court shall be located in the City of Jacksonville, County of Duval, State of Florida.

### Article Two

#### Membership

Section 1. Active Members. There are four classifications of active members in an American Inn of Court, as defined in the bylaws of the American Inns of Court Foundation. To become an Associate, Barrister or Master of the Bench, attorneys must maintain a caseload that is at least fifty percent (50%) family law. A Judge may only be invited to be a Judicial Member, Honorary Judicial Member or Emeritus Member. There shall be a limit of one hundred twenty-five (125) members in the Inn, with the goal of having the following approximate annual breakdown of membership within such categories, as determined each year by the Executive Committee, as follows: Sixty-five (65) Masters of the Bench, thirty-five (35) Barristers, twenty (20) Associates, and five (5) Pupils. However, the Executive Committee shall have the authority in a given year to exceed the one hundred twenty-five (125) member cap for good cause shown. In calculating the total number of members of the Inn, Pupils, Associates, Barristers and Masters of the Bench shall be counted, Judicial, Emeritus and Honorary members shall not be counted.

a) Masters of the Bench:

(1) Membership as Masters of the Bench or Masters shall be held only by Florida-licensed lawyers and law professors with at least fifteen (15) years of experience and who have demonstrated superior character, ability and competence.

(2) At least half of the active Masters must be practicing lawyers.

(3) Retention of status as a Master is contingent upon reasonable Inn activity to be periodically reviewed by the Executive Committee.

(4) There is no required tenure of membership in this category but it is suggested that Masters serve continuously for at least five years before becoming eligible for election to Emeritus status. Such status is subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.

b) Barristers:

(1) Membership as Barristers shall be held only by Florida-licensed lawyers with between five (5) to fifteen (15) years of experience and who have demonstrated good character and a desire to improve and refine their skills as trial and appellate advocates.

(2) Each Barrister will serve staggered four (4) year terms so that approximately one-fourth of the Barristers will be succeeded each year. If a Barrister is unable to serve the entire four-year term or the Executive Committee determines that the Barrister has not demonstrated sufficient participation in the activities of the Inn, an interim Barrister may be invited and selected to replace the Barrister; and upon termination of the original Barrister's term, the interim Barrister may be eligible to serve another four-year term, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee and the Masters of the Bench.

c) Associates:

(1) Membership as Associates shall be held only by Florida-licensed lawyers with between one (1) and five (5) years of experience and who have demonstrated good character and desire to improve and refine their skills as trial and appellate advocates.

(2) Each Associate shall serve a staggered three-year term so that approximately one-third of the Associates will be succeeded each year. If an Associate is unable to serve the entire three year term or the Executive Committee determines that the Associate has not demonstrated sufficient participation in the activities with the Inn, an Interim Associate may be provided and selected to replace the Associate, and upon termination of the original Associates term, the interim Associate may be eligible to serve another three year term, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee and the Masters of the Bench.

d) Pupils:

(1) Membership as Pupils shall be held by full-time students in their second or third year of study at an accredited law school who have evinced a keen interest in the practice of family law.

(2) The term of membership for Pupils is one (1) year.

(3) A Pupil's membership may be terminated at the sole discretion of the Executive Committee for any reason.

(4) Pupils may participate in all activities of the Inn but shall not be voting members.

(5) Pupils shall be selected based on professor recommendation and majority vote of the Executive Committee.

**Section 2. Inactive Members.** The Executive Committee may confer Emeritus and Honorary memberships as set forth herein and in the Organizational Charter.

a) Masters of the Bench (Masters)-Emeritus

(1) Emeritus membership status shall be granted sparingly. A Master of the Bench seeking Emeritus status must have demonstrated distinguished and exceptional service to the Inn, have been a Master of the Bench for a minimum of five (5) years and must have been approved for the status by an affirmative vote of 75% affirmative vote of a quorum of Masters present at a meeting called for that purpose.

(2) Emeritus Masters will be under no obligation to pay dues, attend meetings or participate in other programs of the Inn but will enjoy all privileges of active membership except the right to vote. An Emeritus Master shall only be required to pay for his/her attendance at a monthly pupillage group presentation/meeting.

(3) Emeritus Masters shall retain such membership status for life if they so desire.

(4) Emeritus Masters who are past recipients of the Rudy Hernandez Professionalism Award shall retain the right to vote on that award.

b) Honorary Members.

(1) Honorary membership status is based upon distinguished service to the bench or bar, in the education of law students, in furtherance of the objectives of the Florida Family Law American Inn of Court, or in the achievement of other noteworthy accomplishments.

(2) Honorary Members may be elected from time to time upon nomination by the Executive Committee and upon a 75% affirmative vote of a quorum of Masters present at a meeting called for that purpose.

(3) Honorary Members shall be under no obligation to pay dues, attend meetings or participate in other programs of the Inn but will have all privileges of membership except the right to vote. An Honorary Member shall only be required to pay for his/her attendance at a monthly pupillage group presentation/meeting.

(4) Honorary Members may serve until resignation, death or readmission on a regular member status.

### Section 3. Judicial Membership.

a) Judicial Members. Judicial members shall be sitting family law Judges, Magistrates or Hearing Officers.

b) Honorary Judicial Members. A member of the judiciary who is not currently serving on the Family Law Bench but who continues to participate on a regular basis may be considered for Honorary Judicial Membership. Such a member may serve for as long as he/she remains a member of the Judiciary. Upon retirement such a member may be considered for Honorary Membership.

### Section 4. Terms of Membership. Membership is for the following terms:

- a) Pupil - one year
- b) Associate - three years
- c) Barrister - four years
- d) Master of the Bench - until resignation, death or emeritus status
- e) Master Emeritus – until resignation or death
- f) Judicial Member – until rotation out of family division, unless elected as Honorary Judicial Member or Honorary Member.
- g) Honorary Judicial Member – For so long as they remain a member of the judiciary.
- h) Honorary member - until resignation, death or readmission in a regular member status

Each year, approximately one-third (1/3) of the Associates and one-fourth (1/4) of the Barristers shall rotate off after having participated as a member for the maximum amount of the relevant term of membership. However, an

exception to the General Rule(s) regarding term length may be made for Associates and Barristers upon a 75% vote of the Executive Committee for exceptional service to the Inn.

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**Section 5. Changing Membership Category.** Except for a member moving to Honorary status or a Master of the Bench moving to Emeritus status, no Inn member may move from one category to another without (a) participating in a one-year hiatus from Inn membership and (b) being affirmatively invited thereafter to membership in the new category by a 75% affirmative vote of a quorum of Masters present at a meeting called for that purpose.

**Section 6. Dues.** Membership dues for the Inn shall use a graduated structure and shall be in the amounts as may be approved from time to time by majority vote of the Masters of the Bench. Each Inn member must pay his or her dues before attending the first meeting of the Inn year. Failure to timely pay dues shall result in termination of the member's membership in the Inn. The dues shall be structured so that they are low enough to encourage the participation of less-experienced lawyers, but high enough that the Inn may accomplish its goals without incurring debt.

Honorary Members, Honorary Judicial Members and Masters Emeritus are under no obligation to pay dues, attend meetings or participate in other programs of the Inn, but are entitled to all of the privileges of membership except the right to vote with one exception, see Article 2, Section 2(a)(4). Should an Honorary Member or Master Emeritus choose to attend a meeting, that member will pay only for the cost of that dinner meeting. **In the case of an Honorary Judicial Member, Court Administration will be billed only for the cost of the dinner meeting attended.**

**Section 7. Meetings and Attendance.** Meetings shall be held at least eight (8) times per year at such times as the Executive Committee may determine. To maintain membership in the Inn, a member must attend at least one-half of the Inn's dinner/program meetings. The Inn's annual banquet will be considered one of the dinner/program meetings.

After three (3) absences, the member shall be contacted by the chair of the Membership Committee in order to determine if he/she wishes to remain in the Inn. If the member does not desire to remain an active member of the Inn, he/she will be dropped from the rolls and all dues will be forfeited.

Members who RSVP for a meeting but who do not appear shall be billed \$50 for the cost of the dinner meeting. Members who do not RSVP for a meeting but attend the meeting shall be billed \$50 for the cost of the dinner meeting. This cost may be waived on a case by-case basis by majority vote of the Executive Committee.

The Inn shall endeavor to have at least one social event per year wherein members may invite guests. No non-member of the Inn shall be brought as a guest of a member to dinner/meetings of the Inn more than once by the same member in any given year. No non-member may attend a meeting unless accompanied by the sponsoring member.

Section 8. Termination of Inn Membership. Termination of Inn membership may be voluntary or involuntary.

a) Voluntary - Membership in any category may be voluntarily terminated by a member's resignation from the Inn. The resignation shall be by letter from the member to the Inn President, outlining the reason(s) for the withdrawal. If the members of the Executive committee, by a vote of 75% of those present at a noticed meeting called to consider the issue and approve, then the membership shall be considered voluntarily terminated and the former member in the future may again be considered for invitation to membership. The Inn, however, shall have no obligation to automatically reinstate a member who has voluntarily terminated his or her membership.

b) Involuntary - Membership in any category may be involuntarily terminated for failure of a member to pay dues on a timely basis. A member may be terminated for failure to attend a minimum of 50% of the dinner/program meetings of the Inn.

c) No later than October 15<sup>th</sup> of each year, the Treasurer of the Inn shall provide the President a list of those who have failed to fully pay their dues for the current Inn year. The Inn President, before October 30<sup>th</sup> of the same year, shall then advise the member by letter of his or her termination. Involuntary termination under this paragraph shall be automatic.

d) No later than June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year, the Treasurer and or Membership Chair of the Inn shall provide the president a list of those who during the preceding Inn year failed to attend the minimum number of meetings. The Inn President, before the start of the next Inn year, shall then advise the member by letter of his or her involuntary termination of membership. Involuntary termination under this paragraph shall be automatic; however, the Executive Committee, either on its own motion or on appeal by a terminated member, may by majority vote make exceptions for members who were unable to attend the required percentage of meetings because of chronic health problems or other extraordinary circumstances.

e) Membership in any category shall be involuntarily terminated if a member is convicted of a crime, or is suspended or disbarred by the courts of any state or by the courts of the United States. Such termination is automatic and no appeal is permitted.

f) Membership in any category may be involuntarily terminated for any other reason, including unprofessional conduct which brings the Inn into disrepute, upon a vote of 75% of the Masters of the Bench present at a noticed meeting called to consider the issue.

A member who is involuntarily terminated for any reason is not eligible for later membership in the Inn, except upon a vote of 75% of the Masters of the Bench present at a noticed meeting called to consider the issue.

Section 9. Selection of New Members. Membership is by selection and not by application. Nominations for new members shall each year be solicited from the entire Inn membership. Inn members shall not advise nominees that they are being considered for membership, nor shall they disclose that information to others not part of the Inn. Each year, the Vice President shall appoint a Membership Committee and shall chair the Membership Committee. The Committee shall necessarily include the President, the immediate past President, the Membership chair and the Mentor chair. The Committee is to formulate a recommended slate of new members in each category (Pupil, Associate, Barrister and Master of the Bench) and shall present that slate to a meeting of the masters of the Bench for approval. No nominations shall be received from the floor. Approval requires an affirmative vote of 75% of the Masters of the Bench who are present at the meeting. Those on the slate who are approved will be invited to membership in the appropriate category. In selecting qualified new members, the Inn shall seek to establish and maintain a membership that is diverse in its race, gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. New member selection shall occur during the period from May 1<sup>st</sup> to August 15<sup>th</sup> after the last regular dinner program meeting of the Inn.

Invitations to new members approved by the above process shall be by written letter signed by the Inn President. Such letters shall describe the goals of the American Inns of Court, the responsibilities of an Inn member and the applicable dues.

### Article Three Organization

Section 1. The Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall be composed of the officers and such other active members as determined by a majority vote of those Masters present at a meeting duly called for that purpose. The duties of the Executive Committee and its members are as set forth in the Organizational Charter, as set forth in these Bylaws and as set forth below:

- a) Determine the dates of the operative year of the Inn;
- b) Set the time, date, and location of at least seven (7) regular meetings throughout the operative year and ensure notice to all members entitled to attend each such meeting by hand delivery, U.S. mail or e-mail at least seven (7) days prior to such meetings;
- c) Call any special meetings as it deems necessary and schedule the annual elections meeting which shall be open for attendance of all Masters;
- d) Determine the Order of Business at meetings;
- e) Select and extend membership to Pupils upon recommendation of law professors or based upon written applications;
- f) Select and extend membership to Associates upon recommendation of the Membership Committee for selection by the Masters at the Annual Masters Meeting;
- g) Select Barristers upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee for selection by the Masters at the Annual Masters Meeting;
- h) Select Masters upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee for selection by the Masters at the Annual Masters Meeting;
- i) Grant Emeritus status to active Masters consistent with these bylaws;
- j) Nominate persons for election as Honorary Judicial Members and/or Honorary Members consistent with these bylaws;
- k) Establish such Committees as may be necessary to carry out the business, responsibilities and objectives of the Inn;
- m) Levy, assess dues and assess late fees in amounts that it deems appropriate;
- n) Establish the beginning and end of the operative year and schedule the events to occur therein;
- o) Organize and place members in the Pupillage Groups;
- p) Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the President.

**Section 2. The Officers.** The officers of the Inn shall include a President, President elect/Counselor, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Program Coordinator and the Membership Chair. Other officers may be designated by the Executive Committee as need demands. The Executive committee shall consist of all officers and shall be generally charged with oversight of the Inn.



a) Duties of the President. In addition to other duties which may be imposed by the Masters and by the Trustees of the American Inns of Court Foundation, the President shall have the following duties, which, in the absence of agreement between them as to division, shall be allocated by vote of the Executive Committee of the Inn:

- (1) Schedule and preside at all meetings of the Inn;
- (2) Ensure that an annual curriculum and agenda for Inn meetings and activities are developed and furnished to members;
- (3) Notify members of their appointment to serve on Inn of Court Committees/Pupillage Groups;
- (4) Call and conduct meetings of officers and committees as required to plan and conduct activities of the Inn;
- (5) Conduct all Inn activities in accordance with the Articles, Bylaws and Policies of the American Inns of Court Foundation and the Charter and Bylaws of the Inn;
- (6) Supervise and monitor Pupillage Group activities in order to encourage the proper functioning of this important aspect of Inn organization;
- (7) Encourage attendance at all Inn meetings;
- (8) Serve and liaison with other Inns of Court as they may be established;
- (9) Extend Invitations for membership in the Inn of Court as authorized by the Executive Committee and, when applicable, upon recommendation of the Membership Committee;
- (10) Fulfill or delegate the duties of any Officer in the event of a brief absence.

b) Duties of the President-elect/Counselor.

- (1) The President-elect/Counselor shall execute the functions of the President in his or her absence. The President-elect shall take office as President, respectively, at the conclusion of the President's term of office following the meeting in which the new President-elect is elected.
- (2) The President-elect/Counselor assists the President in his or her responsibilities and the duties of the President-elect shall be determined by the President.
- (3) In the event that the President has an extended absence or is unable to act for an extended period of time, his/her duties shall be performed by the

President-elect. In the event the President should cease to hold office for any reason, the President-elect shall serve as that officer for the remainder of the term of office vacated, and shall then serve as officer for the term for which he/she was elected. In the event both the President and President-elect should cease to hold office for any reason, the Executive Committee shall elect an acting officer to hold office until the next meeting designated for the purpose of elections.

c) Duties of the Secretary. The Secretary shall:

(1) Prepare, maintain and forward to the American Inns of Court Foundation Secretary, at least annually, a complete roster of all present and past members of the Inn specifying name, last known address, telephone number, membership category, beginning date of membership and ending date of membership;

(2) Prepare and maintain such minutes or records of meetings of the Inn as may be directed by the Executive Committee or the American Inns of Court;

(3) Ensure delivery of notices of meetings, by hand delivery, U.S. mail or e-mail, to those active members entitled to attend, upon the direction of the Executive Committee;

(4) Perform other such duties as may be assigned by the President or Executive Committee.

d) Duties of the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall:

(1) Receive and disburse monies and other property paid to the Inn of Court in accordance with directives and policies of the American Inns of Court Foundation;

(2) Prepare and maintain accurate financial records of the Inn in accordance with the directives and policies of American Inns of Court Foundation;

e) Duties of the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator shall

(1) Be responsible for the organization of the individual pupilage groups and the selection of a chairperson for each group; and

(2) Shall further organize and coordinate the presentations of each pupilage group for the monthly meetings and apply for continuing legal education credit from the Florida Bar.

f) Duties of the Membership Chairperson. The Membership Chairperson shall:

(1) Be responsible for the organization, transition and rotation of Inn members including, but not limited to terms of membership, changing membership category, membership termination and selection of new members subject to the approval requirements of these Bylaws.

(2) This chairperson shall also be responsible for maintaining current records relating to members including, but not limited to meeting attendance and other related issues.

**Section 3. Election of Officers.** The officers shall be elected in the following manner. The Membership Committee shall prepare a slate consisting of one nominee for each officer position which needs to be filled for the upcoming year. To be approved, an officer nominee must be approved by at least 75% of a quorum of Masters present at a meeting of the Masters of the Bench. Should a nominee not be approved, the Vice President, who is also Chair of the Membership Committee or, in his or her absence, the President, shall invite officer nominations from the floor. Such nominations shall require the same 75% approval of a quorum of Masters present.

a) The President shall serve a two-year term and shall be elected in even numbered years.

b) The President-Elect shall serve a two-year term and shall succeed the President and shall be elected in even-numbered years.

c) The Vice President shall serve a one-year term, but may be elected to two successive terms.

d) The Secretary shall serve a two-year term and shall be elected in even numbered years.

e) The Treasurer shall serve a two-year term and shall be elected in odd numbered years.

f) The Program Coordinator shall serve a one-year term, but may be elected to successive terms.

g) The Membership Chair shall serve a one-year term but may be elected to successive terms.

h) Duties of each officer shall be delineated in a handbook which may be amended by the Inn upon a majority vote of those present at a meeting of the Masters of the Bench.

**Section 4. Committees.** The Executive Committee may establish standing and ad hoc committees from time to time from among the active members of the Inn, and from time to time may change or discontinue committees. The officers shall appoint committee members and chairs of the committees who shall serve as directed by the Executive Committee.

**Section 5. Pupillage Groups.** All active members will be assigned to a Pupillage Group by the President or the President's designee.

a) Each Pupillage Group shall be chaired by a Master whose duties include general supervision over the Group, monitoring of attendance and participation by Group members, encouragement of meaningful participation in the Group's activities, encouragement of contact between Masters and other members of the Group between meetings and general supervision of the presentation of the Group's topics.

b) Each Pupillage Group shall be composed of individuals from each category of Inn membership.

c) Each Pupillage Group shall conduct at least one program per year at an Inn meeting on an assigned topic. The program should present practical and provocative, family law related issues, techniques and ethical considerations to stimulate in-depth discussions during and following the programs. The President or the President's designee will select a Program Chair for each Pupillage Group. Pupillage groups shall also meet on an informal basis as part of the informal mentor program to ensure that the Barristers, Associates and the Pupils of the Group improve their professional skills and ethics consistent with the goals of the American and Florida Family Law American Inn of Court.

**Section 6. Quorum.** A quorum is established by the presence of a majority of Inn members entitled to vote. Members may not vote by proxy. However, the Executive Committee may establish procedures to allow balloting by mail or e-mail.

#### **Article Four** **Fiscal Matters**

**Section 1. Fiscal Year.** The Fiscal Year of the Inn (July 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>) for financial reporting purposes shall be the same as the operative year set by the Executive Committee.

**Section 2. Management of Fiscal Matters.** Financial matters within the Inn shall be managed and controlled in accordance with the policies and directives established by the American Inns of Court Foundation, the Charter of this Inn, and these Bylaws.

a) This Inn shall remit annually to the American Inns of Court Foundation a reasonable amount to be levied by the Board of Trustees of said Foundation for the purpose of paying its proportionate share of operating expenses of the said Foundation.

b) The Executive Committee is empowered to levy and collect assessments in the form of dues in the amounts in which it may deem appropriate in order to meet its obligations to the American Inns of Court Foundation as well as to this Inn's operating

needs. Failure to pay assessments and dues within a reasonable time and after reasonable notice may be considered by the Executive Committee as grounds to terminate membership of the person in default.

c) The Treasurer shall be responsible for managing the financial matters of the Inn. The Treasurer will provide notice of the dues assessments, keep the books necessary to account for the expenses of the Inn, and effectuate the payment to the Foundation.

#### Article Five

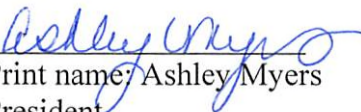
#### Approval of Amended Bylaws

These Bylaws shall be considered approved upon a 75% affirmative vote of the Masters of the Bench voting on the issue. In the discretion of the Executive Committee, the vote may be conducted by e-mail or at a meeting of the Masters of the Bench.

The Bylaws and proposed amendments to them shall be sent by e-mail to all Masters of the Bench at least 48 hours before any vote. The Secretary of the Inn shall be responsible for maintaining a current copy of the Bylaws and a history of approved changes to the Bylaws.

These Bylaws may be amended upon a two-thirds vote of the active Masters in attendance at a meeting called for that purpose.

Approved by the Masters of the Inn on April 21, 2021

  
Print name: Ashley Myers  
President