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Everett Catts

The 32nd annual Georgia Bar, Media & Judiciary Conference will include panel discussions covering a variety of topics from mental health to the media's coverage of the courts to Georgia's abortion law.

Former Gov. Nathan Deal. (Photo: John Disney/ALM)

Hosted by the Georgia First Amendment Foundation, the in-person event will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feb. 24 at the State Bar of Georgia in Atlanta. It will include eight sessions and will focus on issues where the First Amendment, journalism, courts and the law intersect. The conference also will offer seven continuing legal education credit hours, including one ethics hour, for the attorneys in attendance.

“The conference has always been designed to try to bring together in conversation a number of groups that are often adversarial in court, including ... the media, judges, lawyers and legislators,” said Peter Canfield, who chairs the conference's planning committee and serves as of counsel with Jones Day. “The idea is to create a conference every year in which issues of the day can be discussed in a way that is less confrontational and hopefully sheds more light than heat.”

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney. (Photo Hyosub Shin/ hshin@ajc.com)

One discussion titled “Reporting on the Courts: A New Frontier?” will include Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney, who has presided over several recent high-profile cases, including the 2020 presidential election special grand jury investigation; Atlanta Constitution-Journal senior reporter Tamar Hallerman; Georgia Supreme Court spokeswoman Kathleen Joyner; U.S. Supreme Court Associated Press reporter Mark Sherman; and Richard Vining, a University of Georgia associate professor of political science.

Canfield said that panel will show “how reporting [on] the courts is evolving, as people see [them], for better or worse, now as more political than they used to be perceived.”

Another talk titled “Where Medicine Meets Law and Politics: Georgia and the Demise of *Roe V. Wade*” will focus on Georgia’s abortion law and include State Reps. Tanya Miller, D-Atlanta, and Tyler Paul Smith, R-Bremen; Dr. Carrie Cwiak, an OB/GYN and professor at Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health and director of family planning at the Emory School of Medicine; and AJC statehouse reporter Maya T. Prahbu.

A discussion titled “Movement on Mental Health” will include keynote remarks from former Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal and four panelists: Henry County Superior Court Chief Judge Brian Amero, Kevin Tanner, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities’ commissioner; state Sen. Brian Strickland, R-McDonough; state Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver, D-Decatur; and attorney **Carey Miller of the Robbins Firm.**

“We’re very fortunate to have Governor Deal join us to talk about how the state deals with mental health, in which there was a significant landmark bipartisan legislation last year to reform the mental health system,” Canfield said. “I think most observers see that as the culmination of a process that Governor Deal started a number of years ago when he was governor.”