



FDCC

DEFENSE LAWYERS. DEFENSE LEADERS.

CORPORATE COUNSEL SYMPOSIUM

From Bourbon Street
to the Boardroom Suite:

NAVIGATING RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES

Bourbon
Street



SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2026



NEW ORLEANS, LA



WINDSOR COURT HOTEL

Where Legal Excellence Meets Strategic Innovation

The most challenging legal issues facing corporate and defense counsel today don't come with roadmaps. They demand collaboration, insight, and the kind of practical wisdom that only comes from shared experience. FDCC's Corporate Counsel Symposium creates that essential space—where seasoned professionals gather to address the complex realities shaping modern legal practice.

Built by in-house counsel for legal professionals who value substance over superficiality, CCS delivers focused dialogue on the issues that directly impact you. Our curriculum addresses the critical intersections of law, business, and technology that define today's legal landscape. The program includes at least 2 hours of ethics/professionalism CLE credit, and all sessions are designed to provide practical takeaways you can implement tomorrow.

SOME OF THE ESSENTIAL DISCUSSIONS INCLUDE

- Real stories from the trenches as FDCC members share their “how we solved it” moments in engaging TED Talk-style presentations on being a new GC and navigating career transition;
- Insider perspectives, such as “What CFOs Really Care About and How Legal Can Support Them” and skills to be “The Deal Support Team” for mergers and acquisitions;
- Cutting-edge sessions on employment law, deposition preparation strategies, and crisis management before reputational damage spirals;
- Practical tools for decision-making under pressure, creating contracts you can rely on, and aligning contracts, insurance coverage, and claims;
- Pertinent discussions on ethical leadership in challenging times, attorney-client privilege for in-house counsel, and practicing in multiple jurisdictions; and
- Tech topics: Learn best practices for scaling AI to a mature program and providing value to the business and leave with your cyber incident playbook.

Throughout the symposium, FDCC members will present case studies in an accessible format, sharing how they've successfully navigated complex challenges. These peer-to-peer insights offer the kind of practical knowledge that will transform how you approach similar situations.

Beyond the robust educational content, CCS provides meaningful networking opportunities, including intimate Dine-Around experiences at New Orleans' finest establishments—all within walking distance of the city's vibrant cultural heart.

The symposium welcomes all FDCC defense and corporate counsel members, as well as non-member guests, to join these important conversations.

EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE THAT PURPOSEFUL PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION MAKES AT FDCC'S CCS 2026.



Sunday, September 27, 2026

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Registration

3:00 pm - 3:15 pm

Welcome by CCS Chairs and FDCC Officers

3:15 pm - 4:15 pm

Managing Risk: Aligning Contracts, Coverage, and Claims

Corporate counsel routinely rely on contracts and insurance to manage risk, but gaps between the two can create significant exposure. This panel examines risk transfer across the full lifecycle—from contract drafting through claim handling and coverage disputes—and focuses on where expectations break down in practice.

Panelists

Sarahna McMurtry - EVP General Counsel, First Acceptance Insurance Company
Elizabeth Fitzpatrick - Chief Risk Officer, Island Companies
James Biese - Litigation Supervisor, SECURA Insurance



4:15 pm - 5:15 pm

The Deal Support Team: In-House Legal's Role in Bringing Value to M&A Transactions and Their Aftermath

Join us to explore how corporate counsel can bring value to the deal process, whether they're running the transaction or playing a supporting role. Panelists will share best practices for how to structure deals, ensure company and industry risks are addressed, and provide continuity and operations support through the critical post-deal integration period.

Moderator

Alonzo Washington - Member, Flaherty Sensabaugh Bonasso PLLC

Panelists

April Y. Berman - SVP, Special Counsel & Executive Advisor, Asurion
Andrew Chumney - Associate General Counsel, Core Natural Resources, Inc.
Jeff Lisenby - EVP, General Counsel, & Corporate Secretary, ProAssurance Group
Joe Falasco - Managing Member, Quattlebaum, Grooms & Tull PLLC

5:15 pm - 6:30 pm

Networking Reception

6:30 pm

Dine Arounds



Monday, September 28, 2026

7:00 am – 8:00 am

Registration and Breakfast

8:00 am – 8:15 am

Welcome and Introduction of Committee Members

8:15 am – 8:30 am

Introduction of Sponsors

8:30 am – 9:30 am

When AI Meets the Big Easy: Governing Generative AI Beyond the Proof of Concept

Artificial intelligence is no longer a novelty—it's a core business capability that demands disciplined legal leadership. This panel will provide a practical roadmap for general counsel navigating the next phase of AI use, providing concrete guidance on governing generative AI, managing evolving legal and regulatory risks, and aligning AI initiatives with organizational strategy and culture. The discussion will focus on how legal teams can help their organizations move from early experimentation to scalable, mature AI programs—without getting lost in the fog of hype (or the French Quarter). Attendees will leave with actionable tips on AI adoption and oversight and clear strategies for positioning the legal function as a leader in responsible, value-driven AI maturity.

Moderator

James Biese - Litigation Supervisor,
SECURA Insurance

Panelists

Kiera McGroarty - Associate General Counsel,
Discovery Senior Living
Brent Messel - Senior Corporate Counsel,
VAREX Imaging
Hunter McMahon - President, iDiscovery
Solutions, Inc.

9:30 am – 10:30 am

Navigating Multi-Jurisdictional Practice Challenges for In-House Counsel

Modern in-house counsel often experience pain points managing unauthorized practice of law concerns, conflicting regulatory requirements, jurisdictional complications, remote work, and the complexities of coordinating outside counsel across jurisdictions. Gain insights into mitigating ethical and licensing risks for in-house legal teams, managing and aligning outside counsel across jurisdictions, and preserving privilege and confidentiality.

Moderator

Geneau Thames - VP, General Counsel & Secretary,
Harford Mutual Insurance Group

Panelists

Brian S. Kuhlmann - Assistant General Counsel,
Shelter Insurance Companies
Jeffery Guillory - Senior Director Associate General
Counsel, First Acceptance Insurance Company

10:30 am - 10:45 am

Networking Break

10:45 am - 11:00 am

FED TALK: So, You're the New GC - Now What? Jeff Kelsey - General Counsel, IMC Logistics

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Prevent, Defend, and Recover: The Cyber Incident Playbook

This program brings together governance, insurance, and operational decision-making for corporate counsel to reduce exposure and drive better outcomes when a cyber incident occurs. Cyber risk is a corporate-wide legal and business issue, not just an IT problem. A cyber incident can trigger operational disruption, financial loss, regulatory scrutiny, and legal liabilities. These costs often exceed technical remediation costs. We will cover actions to take before a breach occurs, including oversight of cyber risk, incident response plans, and cyber insurance. When a breach occurs, the first 72 hours are the most critical. The program will discuss business, legal, insurance, and forensics issues, including ransom payment decisions, incident response, and taking steps to ensure actions align with insurance coverage. Finally, the program will address issues after the immediate crisis ends. You will leave with a concise playbook emphasizing preparedness, early and active legal involvement of counsel, and practical takeaways to shield your company from cyber exposure.

Moderator

Scott Salter - Partner, Starnes Davis Florie LLP

Panelists

Jessica Eldridge - SVP, Forensic Accounting Insurance Services, J.S. Held

Jane Warring - Partner, Zelle LLP

David T. Vanalek - SVP, Chief Legal and Compliance Officer, Richmond National Insurance

Kate Barecchia - SVP, Legal, IntegriChain, Inc.



12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Networking Lunch

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Beyond Burnout: Tools for Thriving in a High-Pressure Profession

Modern legal practice brings real challenges: constant urgency, pressure to be perfect, isolation, tech disruption, and the quiet toll of long-term stress. This program highlights several primary obstacles most attorneys share and explains why they are so persistent in today's environment. We'll pair each challenge with practical, realistic strategies that help lawyers set boundaries, reduce mental overload, and reconnect with purpose. Participants will depart with actionable takeaways they can put to work immediately, along with tools to build a healthier and more sustainable legal career.

Moderator

Jeff Miller - VP, Legal and Division General Counsel, Ryan LLC

Panelists

Darleene D. Peters - Partner, Irwin Fritchie

Vince Castiglione - General Counsel, Tata Consumer Products

Ty Kelly - Shareholder, Baker Donelson

2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

What CFOs Really Care About - and How Legal Can Support Them

This panel brings the CFO perspective into sharp focus, drawing on real-world lessons from close partnerships between Legal and Finance. Panelists will explore what consistently matters most to CFOs—from predictability, risk calibration, and decision-ready advice, to timing, business context, and credibility—and why even well-intentioned lawyers can inadvertently create friction or financial surprise. Designed for in-house counsel who want to be stronger business partners, this session moves beyond theory to practical takeaways you can use immediately: how to frame legal risk in financial terms, improve collaboration during planning and forecasting cycles, and deliver legal guidance in a way that resonates with finance leadership. Expect candid discussion, concrete examples, and insights your CFO probably wishes you already knew.

Panelists

Scott Katcher - Chief Legal Officer, J.S. Held LLC
Frances G. Zacher - VP, Legal Counsel, Concentrix Corporation
Brian Dickman - CFO, First Acceptance Insurance Company

3:00 pm - 3:15 pm

Networking Break

3:15 pm - 3:30 pm

FED TALK: Navigating Transition

John Henley - Chief Claims Officer, Swyfft



3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Mastering Corporate Witness Preparation for Regulatory Matters, Depositions, and Trial

Join an experienced panel for an in-depth discussion on effective methods in preparing and defending corporate representatives for depositions and witness interviews in high-stakes regulatory investigations and litigation. Panelists will discuss common pitfalls, strategies to control the narrative, and practical preparation techniques.

Moderator

Jennifer Mauer Lee - Equity Partner, Fee, Smith & Sharp, LLP

Panelists

Ebony Morris Hughes - Partner, Foley Mansfield, PLLP
Marisa A. Trasatti - General Counsel of Sciton, Inc. and Partner at Bowman and Brooke, LLP
Atoyia Harris - Senior Counsel, Proskauer
Megan S. Peterson - Partner, Simon Peragine, Smith, and Redfearn, LLP

4:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Privilege Under Pressure: Navigating the Evolving Landscape of Attorney-Client Privilege for Corporate Counsel

We are in an era of uncertainty and heightened scrutiny on corporate communications, especially those involving in-house counsel, in which the attorney-client privilege is anything but a given. Join this session to learn business-friendly best practices for preserving the attorney-client privilege, navigating multi-state and international idiosyncrasies, and dealing with the new challenges posed by lawyer and non-lawyer interactions with GenAI tools.

Speaker

Todd Presnell - Partner, Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings LLP

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Networking Reception

6:30 pm

Dine-Arounds



Tuesday, September 29, 2026

7:00 am - 8:00 am

Breakfast

8:00 am - 9:00 am

Ethical Leadership in Challenging Political Times

In an era defined by polarization, rapid information cycles, and heightened public scrutiny, join this panel to explore how in-house counsel and law firm leaders can anchor their decision making in core ethical principles while responding to political pressures, stakeholder expectations, and organizational mission. Gain skills to lead with clarity and integrity and to respond consistently, even when the “right” answer is not immediately obvious. Attendees will hear how to manage board expectations, employee activism, client demands, and public perception, and to align legal strategy with organizational mission and values, ensuring that counsel remains a stabilizing force.

Moderator

William Vita - Partner, Shook, Hardy & Bacon L.L.P.

Panelists

Danielle Waltz - Assistant Vice President of Government Relations and Associate General Counsel, WVU Health System

Stuart Risch - Partner, Shook, Hardy & Bacon L.L.P.

9:00 am - 10:00 am

Gumbo of Liability: A Rich Mix of Employment Law Hot Topics

The employment law landscape in 2026 presents a dynamic mix of regulatory shifts, evolving case law, and emerging workplace challenges. Our employment law panel will address the following key areas: Artificial Intelligence in the Workplace, Wage and Hour Developments, Noncompete and Restrictive Covenant Trends, Remote and Hybrid Work, Workplace Harassment and Culture, and Leave and Accommodation Obligations. It will take participants through the hot-button issues, shifting environments and expectations, and critical concerns for both in-house lawyers and outside counsel.

Panelists

Liz Roussel - Partner and Member of Executive Committee, Adams & Reese

Robert Lockwood - Founder and Shareholder, Lockwood & Associates

Dessi Day - Partner, Pierson Ferdinand LLP

10:00 am - 10:15 am

Networking Break

10:15 am – 11:15 am

Creating Contracts You Can Rely On

Join this distinguished panel as they discuss creating contracts that work for you when you need them from both sides of the “v,” whether drafting with AI or not. The panel will explore and recommend contract best practices and discuss pitfalls so that attendees will leave understanding what works and what doesn’t along with a list of handy do’s and don’ts.

Moderator

Paul Williams - Partner, Shook, Hardy & Bacon L.L.P.

Panelists

Chris Maxie - General Counsel & Secretary, CSC Service Works, Inc.

Jama Cantrell - Assistant General Counsel, Microsoft Corporation

Ian Botnick - Associate General Counsel - Safety and Infrastructure, Atkore International

11:15 am – 12:15 pm

Crisis Mode: Brand Management, Social Media Risk, and the Corporate Response Playbook

Panelists will discuss how to handle social media exposure, decide when to speak (and when not to), and manage the legal and reputational consequences of public scrutiny. Attendees will also gain insight into strategies, options, and resources available to support in-house teams in high-pressure moments.

Moderator

Madison Dini - General Counsel, Lynch Regenerative Medicine & Partner, Michelman Robinson

Panelists

Brian D. Walters - Executive Vice-President, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, Matthews International Corporation

Jean-Luc Renault - Vice President, Infinite Global

12:15 pm

Closing Remarks



CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION CREDITS

Accreditation will be sought in those jurisdictions requested by registrants that have continuing legal education requirements.

FDCC MISSION STATEMENT

We are a professional trade association of peer-reviewed, premiere defense and corporate counsel and industry executives, dedicated to leading the profession by advancing the principals of civil justice, actionable knowledge, and fostering the trust and value of fellowship.

Why FDCC?

To be THE inspired community of vetted defense counsel, exceptional leaders and even better people.

2026 CCS CO-CHAIRS



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HeplerBroom LLC



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Geneau Thames
Harford Mutual Insurance Group

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