

**WILLIAM C. GENTRY**

**RESUME OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- BIRTHPLACE:** Jacksonville, Florida  
May 14, 1946
- PERSONAL:** Children: Jennifer (Lawyer), Stephanie (Teacher)  
and Allison (Veterinarian)
- EDUCATION:** University of Florida College of Law, J.D.  
1971, *magna cum laude*  
University of Florida, 1964-67  
Jacksonville University, 1967-68, B.A.
- EMPLOYMENT:** Duval County School Board (2008-12) ,(Chairman (2010-11 )  
  
Law Office of W. C. Gentry (January 1, 2000 - )  
  
Gentry, Phillips and Hodak, P.A. (August 1986 - 1999)  
  
Bedell, Dittmar, DeVault, Pillans & Gentry,  
Professional Association (September 1971 - July 1986)

W.C. Gentry is a Board-Certified Trial Lawyer who has handled some of Florida's most high-profile cases involving public health, safety and education. He is a past President of the Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers and has received its highest award for Outstanding and Distinguished Service in the Pursuit of Justice. Since 1976, he has been recognized as a Florida Leading Attorney and has received the highest rating possible from Martindale Hubbell, which is the most prestigious attorney-peer-review system.

**PUBLIC SERVICE AND RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:**

Mr. Gentry has broad experience and a record of achievement in Law, Education, Environmental, Health and Business matters. He has been successfully engaged in numerous complex issues and much of his career has been devoted to leading and working with others to achieve collaborative success. These experiences include the following:

**Jax Journey 2016.** W. C. Gentry was appointed by Mayor Lenny Curry, City of Jacksonville, in January 2016 to the reconstituted Jax Journey Oversight Committee and elected Chairman. The purpose of the Oversight Committee is to identify factors contributing to crime and delinquency and recommend programs to eliminate or reduce

crime, and particularly violent crime. Presently, the Jax Journey oversees approximately \$10 million for various initiatives that provide both short term and long term impact on crime. The Jax Journey is uniquely data-driven and enters into performance-based contracts that require proof of success and attainment of predetermined benchmarks in order to justify funding. The reinvigorated Jax Journey under Mayor Curry grows out of an initiative in 2007 to engage the city to stop the proliferation of violent crime in Duval County. Mr. Gentry chaired the Education Committee of the original Jacksonville Journey and then served on the initial oversight committee from 2008 to 2012. Under his leadership in 2016, the Committee elevated its conversation to a community-wide strategic dialogue, eliminated programs that were not meeting accountability standards, expanded successful programs and is launching after-school and summer literacy programs in partnership with Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) in the most challenged elementary schools where only approximately 25% of children can read; an unequivocal factor leading to delinquency and crime.

**Read It Forward Jax Coalition.** In 2015, with the urging of the Duval County School Board, Mr. Gentry founded the 501(c)(3) "Read It Forward Jax Coalition" (RIFJC), and chairs that initiative. Made up of over 30 local organizations that work with the school system, and in collaboration with the District, RIFJC facilitates communication and coordination among child serving organizations to assure every Jacksonville child meets their highest literacy potential. The achievements of RIFJC in its first 2 years include creating and implementing the only data-sharing agreement between Duval Schools and child-serving agencies in the state (and one of the few in the nation) to track and assess the performance of children coming from PreK into the public school system; convening training sessions for private early learning providers to better understand literacy requirements of DCPS and build better alignment between PreK and elementary school; unprecedented collaboration between the public Library system and schools, resulting in every Duval County student having a library card and much greater involvement with the Library; and in conjunction with Jax Journey pilot programs, the Jacksonville Children's Commission is revamping its after school programs to provide more literacy support for students.

**Sulzbacher Center.** Since 2014, Mr. Gentry has served on the Board and heads the campaign to build a center for homeless women and families which has raised private funding of over \$6 million and navigated the complexities of FHA tax credits to fund the \$18 million facility. The new facility will provide services to female veterans and pediatric services not only for residents, but for the surrounding underserved community.

**Duval County School Board.** Mr. Gentry was elected to the Duval County School Board (November 2008-12) and served as Chairman in 2010-2011. Under Mr. Gentry's chairmanship, the District launched a citywide initiative, "Read It Forward Jax", reallocated scarce resources to provide intensive literacy professional development to K-3 teachers as well as literacy training to all content teachers, and greatly expanded after-school and summer reading programs. After only one year, K-2 scores in reading proficiency increased 8% and the new summer reading program yielded significant pre to post percentile improvements. As a Board member, Mr. Gentry was also an

advocate for career education and increasing college readiness. During his four year term, the percentage of Duval students completing a college ready curriculum rose to 83%, far exceeding the state average and in 2011, Duval County was named one of the top five reform districts in the nation by the Fordham Institute.

**Special Counsel to the Florida Senate.** From 2004 to 2007, Mr. Gentry served, pro bono, as special trial counsel to President Jim King and the Florida Senate in a lawsuit by South Florida school districts to hold unconstitutional certain changes to the education funding formula. As part of the constitutional challenge based on Uniformity and Adequacy provisions of the Florida Constitution, the case ultimately involved many factual issues and required an understanding of complex economic analyses and the state budgeting process. Mr. Gentry served as lead trial counsel in successfully defending the State.

**Special Counsel to the Mayor and Special Assistant State Attorney (1987-90).** Until the early 1990s, Jacksonville was known as the city that “stinks” and for decades was plagued by “rotten egg” odors. In addition to being a matter of civic embarrassment, Jacksonville was the antithesis of Florida’s tourist image of a clean, healthy and inviting environment. In 1987, Mayor Tommy Hazouri appointed Mr. Gentry to serve as special counsel on the environment to do an exhaustive investigation of the sources of the odor problem and to recommend industry, governmental and regulatory steps that could be taken to eliminate the odor nuisance. In conjunction with that appointment, State Attorney Ed Austin appointed Mr. Gentry Special Assistant State Attorney to advise him of any potential criminal charges. As a result of Mr. Gentry’s leadership and work over a period of some three years, the City Council passed ordinances to regulate odor and odor emissions; numerous offending industries were identified, some of which were dumping toxic and noxious effluent into city storm drains; the Grand Jury issued a Presentment, and by the early 1990s, the odor problem was resolved.

**Race to the Top.** In 2010, Mr. Gentry was appointed by the Governor to serve on the State of Florida Race to the Top Working Group. The Governor appointed the Chair and Mr. Gentry was elected Vice Chair. The Working Group was able to engage all stakeholders and submit a broadly supported, successful application for the second round Race to the Top grant. Subsequently, Mr. Gentry was appointed by the Governor and again elected Vice Chair to the Florida Task Force on Excellent Education. That Task Force studied various value added and other assessment systems and made recommendations regarding teacher assessment, evaluation and compensation systems.

**State of Florida Council on Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI).** In 2002, Mr. Gentry was appointed by the Governor to the State of Florida Council on Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI) to study and report on education issues assigned by the Legislature and the Governor. He served as Chairman of CEPRI in 2004 and 2005. Mr. Gentry was directly involved in a number of education research projects, including a study of state higher education graduation rates and time to diploma; how to better strategically align higher education offerings with state employment and development needs; a study which led to a comprehensive report on

career and professional education and became the template for “career academy” legislation; an analysis of Pre-K education and a lengthy report and recommendation to the State of Florida regarding the essential elements of a quality Pre-K system; and a comprehensive report on the unintended consequences of inflexible class size restrictions. Mr. Gentry also lead a collaborative study between CEPRI, The Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership and the University of North Florida to design and ultimately report statistically valid research linking the quality of professional development of teachers and literacy outcomes of their students. CEPRI reports can be reviewed at <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us/studies.htm>.

**Early Learning Coalition of Duval.** In 2006, Mr. Gentry was appointed to the Board of the Early Learning Coalition of Duval which administers state and federal funds for workforce child care assistance and provides oversight of the state voluntary pre-kindergarten program in Duval County, Florida. He served as Vice Chair and on the Executive Council of the Coalition. During his term, a major focus of the ELC was development of quality child learning centers by providing training, assistance and accountability. The ELC also undertook longitudinal studies to assess the effects of programs on student readiness and continued to expand emphasis on early literacy. Mr. Gentry’s term ended in 2014.

**The Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership.** In 1998-99, Mr. Gentry helped create The Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership, an \$8 million regional professional development and leadership academy created to provide outstanding professional development for school educators. The Center was established with an independent board that worked with local colleges, universities and school systems to develop and deliver the highest quality professional development and leadership training and provide new levels of accountability and fidelity of implementation. Mr. Gentry was a founding member of the board and served as Vice Chair and then Chair from 2007 until becoming a school board member. After completing that service, he returned to serve as a key board member/strategist at a critical juncture in the Schultz Center’s evolution. He remains active with the Schulz Center today.

## **RELEVANT LEGAL EXPERIENCE**

**State of Florida vs. Tobacco.** From 1995-1998, Mr. Gentry shared principal responsibility for handling the most complex litigation in the history of the nation in behalf of the State of Florida against the Tobacco Industry. The resulting settlement not only provided billions of dollars to the State for health care costs caused by cigarettes, but also paved the way for major concessions by the Industry to eliminate underage marketing of tobacco and required the Industry to subsidize anti-smoking and public health initiatives which have positively impacted the public health of the state and the nation. The Florida Tobacco case involved extraordinarily complex factual, scientific, legal and constitutional issues and required review and assimilation of thousands of pages of information and hundreds of pages of memoranda and legal arguments. From 1995 to 1998, Mr. Gentry was directly involved in overseeing and handling over 120 hearings and 18 appeals and helped craft the strategy and obtained the discovery which ultimately resulted in the Tobacco Industry entering into the unprecedented settlement.

The Tobacco litigation required not only the highest levels of competence and capacity to absorb huge amounts of information, but also the ability to maintain focus, solve myriad complex factual and legal problems, and build a team and collaborative effort toward a successful conclusion.

**Trial Lawyers Care.** From 2001-2003, Mr. Gentry was a Founding Board Member of Trial Lawyers Care, Inc. which was dedicated to providing pro bono legal services to the victims of 9/11. He was heavily engaged in doing the initial legal research and analysis of the various conflict of laws issues involved in the multi-jurisdictional plane crashes and in helping develop processes, protocols and guidelines for intake and handling claims by the hundreds of volunteer attorneys who offered free legal assistance to victims and their families.

**WRITING AND TEACHING:**

In his last year of college and before attending law school, Mr. Gentry taught American History and Civics at the high school level. In law school, he was an editor of the University of Florida Law Review, was published and mentored other writers. He also was an assistant professor of legal writing. Mr. Gentry has written numerous appellate briefs and has authored numerous papers and articles. He has taught and lectured extensively on legal and professional matters. In 2000, he served as Adjunct Professor of Civil Trial Practice at the University of Florida College of Law. He has frequently spoken to civic and community groups and written about public education and community issues.

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:**

**The Florida Bar:**

Certification: Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer  
Florida Supreme Court Certified Circuit Court Mediator

Supreme Court/Florida Bar Special Committee on Judicial Evaluations (2006-07); Florida Code and Rules of Evidence Committee (2002-06); Judicial Administration Selection and Tenure Committee (1998-2003; Chairman 2001-2002); Florida Bar Special Committee on Regulation of Practice of Law (1996-97); Florida Rules of Civil Procedure Committee (1987-92; 94-01; Chairman 1995-96); Florida Bar Special Committee on Advertising (1986-88); Board of Civil Trial Certification (1984-86); Judicial Nominating Committee, 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit (1982-84)

**Florida Justice Association (f/k/a Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers):**

Past President; Board of Directors; Recipient- Career Leadership Award, 1994; Recipient-1999 "Perry Nichols" Award (Presented by Chief Justice M. Harding) for "Outstanding and Distinguished Service in the Pursuit of Justice"

**American Justice Association (f/k/a Association of Trial Lawyers of America):**

Sustaining Member, 1975 - Present; Board of Governors (1985-91; 93-97).  
Founding Board Member, Trial Lawyers Care dedicated to providing pro bono legal services to the victims of 9/11 (2001-2003)

**Jacksonville Bar Association**

**American Bar Association**

**American Board of Trial Advocates – Diplomat**

**Chester Bedell Inn of Court – Master Emeritus**

**Federal Judicial Nominating Commission (2006 - Present)**

**OTHER:**

Martindale-Hubbell AV rated since 1976

Florida Guidebook, Law & Leading Attorneys (1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1976 - )

Woodward and White, The Best Lawyers in America ( 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1986- )

Florida Trend Magazine, Florida's Top Trial Lawyers (1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 1999)

Special Counsel to the Mayor on the Environment, City of Jacksonville (1987-90)

Special Assistant State Attorney, Fourth Judicial Circuit, State of Florida (1987-90)

1988 recipient of the Outstanding Service Award of the Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board

Editor-in-Chief, AFTL Audio Journal (1990-96)

Ethics Commission, City of Jacksonville (1994-97; Chairman 1996-97)

Trial counsel to the State of Florida in litigation against the Tobacco Industry (1996-1998)

Adjunct Professor, University of Florida College of Law (2000)

Board of Directors, Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership (1999- ; Chair 2007-08)

Board of Directors, Trial Lawyers Care (Created to provide pro bono legal services to the Victims of 9/11) (2001-2002)

Board of Directors, State of Florida Council on Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI; 2002 - ; Chair 2004-05)

Trial Counsel to the Florida Senate, DCD Constitutional Challenge (2004-2007)

Board of Directors, Alliance for World Class Education (2004-09)

Board of Directors, Early Learning Coalition of Duval (2006 -14); Member, Executive Committee, Past Vice Chair)

Board of Trustees, University of Florida College of Law (1999-2008);  
Chairman 2005-2007) Emeritus (2008- )

Chair, Education Subcommittee, Jacksonville Journey (2007-08)

Member, Jacksonville Journey Oversight Committee (2008-12)

Member, Duval County School Board (2008-12; Chair 2011)

Member, Florida School Boards Association (Chairman, Committee on Quality Education and State Funding, 2009-10)

Vice Chair, State of Florida Race to the Top Working Group (2010)

Vice Chair, State of Florida Task Force on Excellent Education (2010-11)

Board of Directors, Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce (2010-11, ex officio)

Board of Directors, Jacksonville Public Education Fund (2010-11)

Member, City of Hope Leadership Group (Times Union Initiative, 2010-11)

Member, Empowering Effective Teachers Coalition (United Way of Northeast Florida, 2010-12)

Chairman, Law and Civics Partnership (2012 - )

Chairman, Sulzbacher Center for Women and Families Capital Campaign (2014 - )

Member, Board of Directors, Sulzbacher Center (2014 - )

Chairman, Read It Forward Jax Coalition (2015 - )

Chairman, Jax Journey Oversight Committee (2016 - )