



For Immediate Release

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Richard A. Courtney Elected President of Special Needs Alliance

November 4, 2014 (Tucson, Arizona)-- Richard A. Courtney, CELA (Certified Elder Law Attorney), a founding partner of [Frascoigna Courtney, PLLC](#), Jackson, Mississippi, has been elected president of the Special Needs Alliance (SNA). SNA is a national nonprofit association of attorneys committed to helping individuals with disabilities, their families and the professionals who represent them.

“Given the economic and political environment, I see an increasing need for SNA members to advocate on behalf of individuals with special needs and their families,” observes Courtney. “Budgets continue to shrink and the administrative rules for benefit programs are tightening, resulting in the loss of critical supports.

“As state governments move people out of large, long-term care facilities, it’s their responsibility to ensure that the community-based services are in place that will enable them to thrive. Yet, in much of the country, residential waiting lists are years long.”

One of Courtney’s daughters, Melanie, has cerebral palsy and is a staunch self-advocate. “She’s very concerned about the availability of services that enhance the independence of individuals with disabilities,” he says. “There’s a shortage of transportation options across much of the nation, and that can be very isolating.”

He points to SNA’s contribution to a groundbreaking court decision in *Saccone v. Board of Trustees of Police and Firemen Retirement System*. “We were one of the advocacy organizations to file supporting information—an amicus brief—explaining why an individual with disabilities

whose parent was a retired New Jersey public employee should be entitled to have survivors' benefits paid into a first party special needs trust. This was an important victory," he explains, "since protecting funds in that manner enables an individual to maintain eligibility for government programs that often provide critical support. Already, SNA members are using this precedent to push for similar system change in other states. We have long been urging Congress to pass the Disabled Military Child Protection Act, which would give comparable rights to the surviving children of members of our armed forces."

Courtney is an adjunct professor at the University of Mississippi School of Law and regularly provides training to the National Association of Social Workers, Mississippi Alzheimer's Association and the state's Department of Adult Protective Services. He is on the steering committee for NAELA's (National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys) special needs law section and has taught the organization's course on special needs counseling. He is also a fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC).

Also named to the **SNA board of directors**: **Scott Suzuki, Esq.**, Honolulu, Hawaii, as president-elect; **Katherine Barr, Esq.**, Birmingham, Alabama, as vice president; **Jefferey M. Yussman, Esq.**, Louisville, Kentucky, as treasurer; **Brian Rubin, Esq.**, Buffalo Grove, Illinois, as secretary. Newly elected as directors: **Morris Klein, Esq.**, Bethesda, Maryland; **Jennifer Lile, Esq.**, Canton, Ohio; and **Mary O'Byrne, Esq.**, Lutherville, Maryland. Continuing as directors: **Ann N. Butenhof, CELA**, Manchester, New Hampshire; **Robert W. Fechtman, CELA**, Indianapolis, Indiana; **Robert B. Fleming, CELA**, Tucson, Arizona; **Mary Alice Jackson, Esq.**, Sarasota, Florida; **Dennis A. Sandoval, CELA**, Riverside, California; and **Kelly A. Thompson, Esq.**, Arlington, Virginia.

SNA membership is based on a combination of relevant legal experience in the disability and elder law fields, direct family experience with disability, active participation with national, state, and local disability advocacy organizations, and professional reputation.

For more information about the Special Needs Alliance, or to locate a member attorney in your area, visit www.specialneedsalliance.org or call 1-877-572-8472.

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