

# Freeborn Atty Appointed To Lead Fla. Civil Rules Committee

By **Matt Perez**

Law360 (May 6, 2021, 3:38 PM EDT) -- Tampa-based litigator Jason P. Stearns in July will take the helm of the Florida Bar committee responsible for proposing and adopting changes to the state's civil procedure rules, according to a news release.

Law firm Freeborn & Peters LLP, where Stearns serves as a partner in its litigation practice group, announced April 26 that the attorney was appointed by Florida Bar President-elect Michael Tanner as the next chair of the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure Committee beginning July 1.

"The Civil Procedure Rules Committee is comprised of some of the most dedicated and experienced attorneys in the Bar, and I am honored that President-elect Tanner asked me to continue my service in this new role," Stearns told Law360.

"We are extremely proud of Jason and his appointment to serve as chair of the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure Committee," the firm's Tampa office managing partner Lawrence Ingram said in a statement.

The committee proposes, rejects and adopts amendments to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, which apply to all civil actions and special statutory proceedings in the circuit and county courts, except when concerning probate, family law and small claims matters.

Currently serving as a vice chair on the committee, Stearns will be taking over from Ceci Culpepper Berman, a board-certified appellate attorney and managing shareholder at Florida-based Brannock Humphries & Berman.

Stearns has been a member on the committee since 2016. Along with his work with the Florida Bar, he's also on the board of directors and the executive committee for the Federal Bar Association, Tampa Bay Chapter and part of the Hillsborough County Bar Association.

His practice focuses on commercial litigation, specifically issues involving patent, copyright and trademark infringement cases in federal court. He also handles other business-related issues such as contract disputes, fraud claims and trade secret matters.

Prior to joining Freeborn & Peters, Stearns worked at Phelps Dunbar LLP and clerked for Judge Elizabeth A. Kovachevich in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

Along with his legal work, he serves as an adjunct professor and advocacy coach at the Stetson University College of Law. He earned his bachelor's degree at Valdosta State University and his law degree at Stetson University.

"This appointment is not only the natural result of his standing in the legal community, but also the result of his years of tireless involvement with the Florida Bar, the Federal Bar Association, Stetson Law School, and other local legal organizations," Ingram said. "We are confident that the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure Committee will benefit greatly from Jason's energy, integrity, vision and leadership."

Stearns' appointment as chair will coincide closely with Gunster shareholder Tanner being sworn in as the Florida Bar president at the Annual Florida Bar Convention in June.

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.

*Update: This article has been updated with comment from Stearns.*