



Chief/Chef's Message

By: Chief Judge Jacob A. Brown

As case filings pick up and that trend seems poised to continue, the Court continues to look for ways to handle case filings efficiently. If you have an idea for a proposed change or a local rule that will help meet this goal, please let me or Judge Vaughan, Chair of our Local Rules Committee, know.

As for other events, thanks to Judge Delano, I recently entered an Administrative Order for **Student Loan Discharge Adversary Proceedings** with a portal to upload documents for settlement review somewhat akin to our existing mortgage modification procedures. Thank you, Judge Delano. More details on that portal process will be forthcoming. In the meantime, *Administrative Order Prescribing Available Procedures in Adversary Proceedings Filed Under 11 U.S.C. § 523(a)(8) to Determine the Dischargeability of Student Loans Held by the Department of Education*, Admin. Order FLMB-2026-4, is available on the Court's Administrative Orders page at <https://pacer.flmb.uscourts.gov/administrativeorders/search.asp>.

Another item worth noting is a new **Judicial Settlement Conference Protocol**. Lawyers seeking to have one of us appointed as a judicial settlement officer should approach the presiding judge in their case to make the request. The Court will employ the following criteria for deciding whether or not to ask one of our colleagues to serve as a judicial settlement officer: (1) parties' ability to pay for a private practice mediator, (2) whether the matter was already mediated by a private practice mediator and it failed, and (3) whether there are truly unusual circumstances in the matter that warrant a judicial settlement officer instead of a private practice mediator. We are developing an administrative order to encompass this protocol along with a Districtwide form order of appointment. That should be entered in the months ahead.

I also want to remind the consumer debtor bar we have a new **Mandatory Form Motion to Extend the Automatic Stay** on our website at: <https://www.flmb.uscourts.gov/proguide/documents.asp?ID=106>. Thanks to those

consumer debtor lawyers using the new form. For people who are not familiar with or not using it, please begin using it.

Service of Process - I know I am preaching to the choir with those reading this article, but we have had several recent incidents where hearing notices or orders scheduling hearings are not properly served by the responsible lawyer. This is not good, and we are looking at ways to make sure these notices and orders are properly served. To ensure this is happening we need your help. For those serving notices and orders, please make sure there is prompt and complete service of any hearing notice or order you are responsible to serve. This is very important as there are due process concerns, and failure to correctly serve creates issues that take a lot of time to fix or require hearings to be cancelled or rescheduled. If you are in a case and you see that a notice or order has not been properly served, please let either the serving lawyer know or contact the Clerk's office.

Other items of note:

- We are really looking forward to **Judge Williamson's Portrait Ceremony** on Wednesday, November 4, 2026, at the Sam M. Gibbons U.S. Courthouse in Tampa, with a reception to follow at the Tampa River Center. **The Judge Michael G. Williamson View from the Florida Bankruptcy Bench** program will be held the following day, Thursday, November 5, 2026, at USF Health CAMLS.
- Judge Caryl E. Delano has announced she will retire in 2027 and will seek a recall position. The Eleventh Circuit has posted to fill the position is in the process of selecting a new judge.
- The Federal Judiciary has embarked on challenges to the Government Services Administration's ongoing poor management of courthouse facilities. The Middle District of Florida has more than its fair share of problems at its courthouse sites that have resulted in unexpected and forced courthouse closures and many other ongoing issues with our facilities. There are serious ongoing issues at all four Middle District courthouses used by the Bankruptcy Court. If you see an issue at any of our four courthouse locations, please let our Clerk of Court, José Rodriguez, know so he can ensure it is reported.

So, I jokingly included Chef in the title and wanted to share that I enjoy cooking. I am holding back on the last season of *The Bear* at the moment and enjoy watching cooking shows and learning new ways to cook. I hardly ever use a recipe and work from various principles instead. One of my favorite things to do is to cook fish I catch, including a sea trout ceviche.

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While I am not one for a recipe, here is my process:

1. Fresh sea trout sliced very thin.
2. Top with fresh squeezed lime juice, a thinly sliced sweet onion, some sea salt, and a little fresh ground pepper.
3. Mix together.
4. Top with freshly sliced bell pepper or fruit.
5. Garnish perhaps with something with a little kick.
6. Refrigerate for an hour and serve with chips or crackers.



Never had a complaint! Next time, I will touch on grilling whole fish. Bon Appetit!

I close by saying it remains a true honor to serve the Court and the Bar as Chief Judge of this great Court. Thank you.