

CLIENT ALERT

About Face! Florida Supreme Court Adopts *Daubert* Standard— Seven Months After Rejecting It

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In a surprise reversal, the Florida Supreme Court last week adopted the state legislature's 2017 "*Daubert* amendments," replacing *Frye* with *Daubert* as the test for admissibility of expert testimony in the state's trial courts.¹ The decision comes just seven months after the court rejected the *Daubert* amendments as unconstitutional in *DeLisle v. Crane Co.*² The switch is effective immediately.

When we wrote in our [October 22, 2018 client alert](#) that "the debate [in Florida] has come to an apparent end with the decision in *DeLisle*,"³ little did we know how much the word "apparent" would matter. *DeLisle* was the "proper case or controversy" the Court had insisted was necessary to address the constitutional concerns it had raised about *Daubert* in a 2017 *per curiam* order.⁴ *DeLisle* held that the *Daubert* amendments were procedural, not substantive; as such, they could be enacted only by the Court itself.⁵ The Court declined to do so. "With our decision today," said the Court, "we reaffirm that *Frye*, not *Daubert*, is the appropriate test in Florida courts."⁶

But in its May 23 decision, the Court adopted, "according to its exclusive rulemaking authority,"⁷ the very same amendments it had rejected last October. Now, said the Court, "the 'grave constitutional concerns' raised by those who oppose the amendments to the Code appear unfounded[.]"⁸ Briefly addressing the merits of the two admissibility standards, the Court added that "the *Daubert* amendments remedy deficiencies of the *Frye* standard," "will create consistency between the state and federal courts," and will "help lessen forum shopping."⁹

What changed in seven months? The composition of the Court. Since *DeLisle*, three of the judges in the 4-3 majority have retired. "Without now readdressing the correctness of this Court's ruling in *DeLisle*...,"¹⁰ the three dissenters joined two new judges to form the majority in the May 23 *per curiam* order.

Have we reached the end of the long and winding road to *Daubert* in Florida? Perhaps. But the Court left an opening once more: "[W]e do not decide, in this rules case, the constitutional or other substantive concerns that have been raised about the amendments. Those issues must be left for a proper case or controversy."¹¹

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