

Diana Gomez Sworn in as First Latina President of Houston Bar Association



Above: Houston Bar Association Past President Christopher V. Popov presents the gavel to 2023-2024 President Diana Gomez during the HBA's annual dinner on May 11 in Houston. Photo by Deborah Wallace, Barfield Photography

Diana Gomez was sworn in as the 2023-2024 president of the Houston Bar Association, or HBA, during the HBA's annual dinner on May 11. She is the sixth woman and the first Latina to hold this office in the HBA's 153-year history, according to a press release. Gomez succeeds Past President Christopher V. Popov, of Vinson & Elkins. Gomez, a shareholder in Chamberlain, Hrdlicka, White, Williams & Aughtry in Houston, focuses on complex labor and employment disputes and is a trial attorney with extensive experience in civil lawsuits in state and federal courts. "I am honored to serve as HBA president," said Gomez in a press release. "As lawyers, we have the privilege to serve our community, our profession, and talented young minds. This year, we plan to focus on attorney engagement and increasing access to justice with initiatives like the HBA's first-ever multi-practice bench bar conference and installing L.A.W. (Legal Access Workspace) pods to bring our downtown law library services to our county at-large." Gomez has served as the HBA's employment attorney and has served on its board of directors since 2014. She has chaired numerous HBA committees, including the Law and the Media Committee, the HBA Dispute Resolution Committee, the Houston Lawyer Referral Service, and the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee. For more information on the Houston Bar Association, go to hba.org.

ST. MARY'S LAW RECEIVES TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION GRANT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWSHIPS

St. Mary's University School of Law's pro bono efforts were bolstered by aid from the Texas Bar Foundation. A \$15,000 grant will support six law students who work in unpaid positions with legal service providers for low-income clients and government agencies. "Without the fellowship, I would not have been able to complete my summer placement," St. Mary's Law student Leslie Espiricueta said in a press release. "As a first-generation student from a low-income background, pursuing my passions is a luxury I am usually unable to afford. The fellowship let me do something I loved during the summer without having to worry about how I was going to pay my rent or eat for the week." In 2021, St. Mary's Law students recorded more than 13,300 pro bono and community service hours. Several of the students spend their summers working with nonprofits or government agencies. Funding from the Texas Bar Foundation will support students and encourage and promote legal assistance to poor and disadvantaged people while also enhancing the ethical and professional practice of law.

SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS APPROVES FORMS THAT HELP TEXANS CREATE THEIR OWN WILLS

The Supreme Court of Texas debuted new forms that allow individuals representing themselves to create a will. The forms are the result of a change in state law passed by the 84th Texas Legislature and signed by the governor and assist a person who is single, married, widowed, or divorced and those with or without children in creating a basic will. The forms are available in English and bilingual English and Spanish versions. The forms were given preliminary approval by the court in September and disseminated for public comment. After receiving and analyzing the comments, the court granted formal approval finalizing the forms on May 5. The forms can be found at www.txcourts.gov/forms.

ADVOCATES FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION TO EXPAND IN FORT WORTH WITH GRANT FROM TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION

The Texas Bar Foundation, or TBF, awarded a \$34,485 grant to Dallas-based Advocates for Community Transformation, or ACT, to increase its casework capacity in Fort Worth, according to a press release. This grant, the largest ACT has received from the TBF, will help ACT hire a community advocate, essential for the development of casework. Community advocates educate residents about their rights, explain ACT's free legal services, and build partnerships with community organizations and leaders, police, and other local nonprofits. ACT and its clients partner with volunteer attorneys from Dallas-Fort Worth law firms to bring peace and safety to neighborhoods.

VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES OF CENTRAL TEXAS RECEIVES GRANT FROM TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION

Volunteer Legal Services of Central Texas, or VLS, received a \$20,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, one of the nation's largest charitably funded bar foundations, to continue its work of providing pro bono legal services to low-income survivors of domestic violence. With this grant, VLS will assist those affected by domestic violence, aiming to empower them to end violent relationships, begin the process of divorce, and establish custody and child-support orders to protect their children.

AUSTIN BAR ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES PODCAST ON IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

The Austin Bar Association was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation to start a podcast dedicated to highlighting the value of diversity in leadership positions in the Austin legal community, according to a press release. The podcast, titled *Council of Firsts*, is another step toward making the Austin Bar Association a more inclusive and equitable organization. The podcast premiered on April 18 and featured Velva Price, the Austin Bar Association's first African American female president, who currently serves as district clerk for Travis County. The podcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, and wherever you get podcasts. **TBJ**