



2023-2024 STATE BAR OF TEXAS

SECTION REPORTS

Section reports are included in the July/August issue of the *Texas Bar Journal* to update Texas lawyers on State Bar section activities. Section membership and dues are voluntary. These reports do not necessarily reflect the position or official policy of the State Bar of Texas, which is formulated by the State Bar Board of Directors or by the membership through referendum. For more information or to join a section, go to texasbar.com/sections or call 512-427-1420.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PUBLIC LAW

Karen Watkins, Chair

The Administrative and Public Law Section continued its mission to educate and support those engaged in the practice of administrative law with its 18th annual Advanced Texas Administrative Law Seminar, co-sponsored by the University of Texas School of Law Continuing Legal Education on September 7-8, 2023. The 2024 seminar will take place September 17-18, with live and webcast options. The seminar will offer more than 12 hours of credit, including more than two hours in ethics. Check the UTCLE website for any updates. Since 1997, the section has also sponsored the annual Mack Kidd Administrative Law Moot Court Competition. The competition introduces Texas law school students to administrative law and provides experience in brief writing and oral argument before appellate court justices and experienced administrative law practitioners. In 2023, St. Mary's University School of Law won the competition in a championship round heard by Supreme Court of Texas Justices Jeff Boyd and Evan Young and 3rd Court of Appeals Justice Thomas A. Baker. The section also now offers a scholarship to defray the expenses of those taking and passing the Texas Board of Legal Specialization administrative law certification exam.

AFRICAN AMERICAN LAWYERS

Artessia "Tess" House, Chair

The African American Lawyers Section dedicated itself to enriching the legal practice with its 2023-2024 programming under the "Beyond Survival: Thriving in Law" theme. The Pathway to Law program, now in its second year, targeted the diversity gap within the legal profession by offering law school tours, a mock tort class taught by professor Neal Newman, and networking events. This initiative attracted over 180 participants, moving toward a more inclusive profession. The section's CLE sessions provided insights

into Texas constitutional amendments, church gun laws, judgment collections, legal service valuations, and the challenge of parenting while lawyering. The Broke Lawyer Workshop, livestreamed and led by seasoned managing partners, aimed at redefining lawyers' professional value. It covered topics such as service valuation, communication strategies, and innovative fee structures, focusing on ethical practices. The ninth annual summit, "Leaders in Law: Building Bridges from Courtrooms to Capitol," examined niche law practices, ethical funding, judicial campaigns, and in-depth legislative drafting. Alongside the Pathway to Law, this summit underscored AALS' commitment to professional development and diversity in the profession. The range of CLE topics the section addressed—from managing a small law firm to supporting unplaced children in Texas—highlights its dedication to fostering a thriving legal community.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Paul D. Clote, Chair

The Alternative Dispute Resolution Section exists to educate and inform lawyers and the public about mediation, arbitration, and other forms of alternative dispute resolution. The section remains an important resource for Texas ADR practitioners. The January 12, 2024, Advanced ADR seminar was held in person and by video. The 2024 program provided unique insights on the power of artificial intelligence in mediation, mediation and arbitration law updates, practical skills to elevate the practices of neutrals, and attorneys representing clients in ADR. The CLE program offered guidance for practitioners in a variety of civil cases, commercial litigation, family law, employment disputes, and commercial arbitration. The ADR Council selected Thomas J. Smith, of San Antonio, to receive the 2024 Justice Frank G. Evans Award, highlighting decades of his extraordinary achievements. The section complied

with all requirements of the State Bar's financial audit and promoted diverse membership of professionals in leadership positions on the ADR Council. Next year, the section will host its annual CLE program, work to finalize revisions to the section bylaws, improve its website, and promote enhanced relationships with law school ADR programs. The section enthusiastically welcomes anyone who desires to collaborate by improving and sharing ADR knowledge and skills.

ANIMAL LAW

Ashley Morgan, Chair

The Animal Law Section serves attorneys across a variety of practice areas. A few examples: Animal law intersects with criminal law (animal cruelty), family law (disputes over pets in divorce, protective orders covering companion animals, etc.), civil litigation (dog bite lawsuits, non-marital pet ownership disputes, veterinary malpractice, and contract disputes regarding animal sales, bailment/bailee agreements, and training), administrative law (regulation of veterinarians by the Texas Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, regulation of licensed breeders), civil liberties/civil rights (First Amendment issues relating to animal activism), and consumer law (Deceptive Trade Practices Act lawsuits involving breeders/pet stores). This past year, the section membership engaged in discussions about the scope of the section's mission. The section worked to provide CLEs to its members and amend its bylaws. The section continues to provide a Gaggle forum for its members to discuss animal-related caselaw and legislation and find referrals for cases. The section plans to engage more with law students and address the public need for legal services by providing more resources to help members integrate animal law into their practice. The section's officers and council members appreciate the opportunity to serve and enjoy being part of such an eclectic group of attorneys.

ANTITRUST AND BUSINESS LITIGATION

James Lloyd, Chair

The Antitrust and Business Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas serves Texas lawyers whose practices focus on antitrust or complex business litigation. The section sponsors seminars on topics of interest to antitrust and business litigation practitioners as well as antitrust compliance and counseling practitioners. At its annual meeting in June, the section elected a new chair, chair-elect, secretary-treasurer, and new council members to replace those with expiring terms, or those who wish to no longer serve on the section's council.

APPELLATE

Kirsten M. Castañeda, Chair

With members top of mind, the Appellate Section has produced in-person CLE programs across the state covering basic and advanced appellate issues, as well as the logistics of developing an appellate practice. The section also keeps current an online library, free to members, of recorded presentations on appellate issues, approved for CLE credit. The Criminal Affairs Committee worked diligently over the past year to strengthen ties to and support of appellate lawyers practicing criminal law. Likewise, the Government Appellate Lawyers Committee actively engaged with appellate lawyers in legal departments and courts, across the span of government work. And the Law School Committee continues to work with law schools across Texas to encourage the next generation of lawyers to consider an appellate practice. The section's long-running "Coffee with the Courts" series has continued to draw fulsome participation, thanks to the Bench/Bar Committee. This series allows lawyers to mingle and converse with court of appeals justices, staff attorneys, and staff in a collegial setting. And the Appellate Advocate Committee worked over the past year to revive the section's journal of useful articles and commentary on appellate matters. The first 2024 issue

has circulated—stay tuned for more issues to come.

ASIAN PACIFIC INTEREST

Saba Syed, Chair

The State Bar of Texas Asian Pacific Interest Section had an active year serving and promoting the interests of its members as a statewide umbrella organization for attorneys of Asian American heritage. This year, the section introduced the APIS In House Initiative to build a support system for APIS' robust in-house membership. On November 7, APIS hosted an informative CLE titled "Keeping Your House In Order—Advice from APA In-House Attorneys on Succeeding Within Your Organization." APIS also hosted its 26th annual APIS Conference April 12-13 in Austin. The conference offered CLE programming on topics ranging from intellectual property to real estate and showcased the wide breadth of knowledge from its membership. At the conference, APIS also recognized leaders in the Asian American community for their contributions to the legal community, mentorship, pro bono service, and rising legal stars. APIS was pleased to award Hope Shimabuku, of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's Regional Texas Office, the Justice David Wellington Chew Award, the highest honor awarded by APIS every year, recognizing the outstanding achievements, commitment, and leadership of a lawyer who has paved the way for the advancement of other Asian Pacific American attorneys.

AVIATION LAW

Kerry Adams, Chair

It has been a big year for the Aviation Law Section. The section is excited to announce that Texas-licensed attorneys can now apply for certification in aviation law with the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. You can find all the information on certification at tbls.org/specialtyarea/AV. The first exam was given in the fall and there are now 11 TBLS-certified aviation lawyers in the state of Texas. The section had a very successful CLE on March 1, 2024, at the PGA Omni in Frisco. The theme

was "Putting the Right Team Together" in an airplane transaction. Speakers included brokers, charter-management companies, litigation/expert support, plaintiff's lawyers, and Federal Aviation Administration lawyers. Chair Kerry Adams moderated topics including airplane crash litigation, dry leases, finding the right aircraft for your customer, unruly passengers on commercial flights, and navigating an inquiry from the FAA for pilots and other FAA enforcement issues as well as keeping up with the Pilot Records Database. Overall, it was a very informative and successful CLE. The board for next year was voted on at the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting on June 20, 2024, in Dallas, where the section also awarded its scholarship to a well-deserving law student.

BANKRUPTCY LAW

Sara M. Keith, Chair

The Bankruptcy Law Section had a fantastic year thanks to its over 1,200 members and generous sponsors. The section provided free CLE webinars on topics of interest to consumer and business professionals, including presentations on the restructuring/reconstruction of Ukraine in July 2023 and lawyer wellness during the holidays. BLS continues to sponsor the annual Elliott Cup Moot Court Competition for law students in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit footprint as well as a BLS scholarship for law students. In addition to supporting Texas pro bono bankruptcy clinics, in November 2023, BLS partnered with Lone Star Legal Aid and launched a Pro Bono Challenge with free online training and incentives for the approximately 30 pro bono bankruptcy case volunteers, available via the BLS website. In October 2023, the section organized a reception for the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges in Austin. Thanks to generous sponsors, excess donations resulted in approximately \$93,000 to the NCBJ's chosen charity. This year, the BLS has sponsored numerous regional conferences, including in-depth CLE and networking events. The section is

committed to providing quality resources to members and looks forward to seeing you at a program soon.

BUSINESS LAW

Schuyler “Rocky” Reidel, Chair

The State Bar of Texas Business Law Section has a broad reach into all aspects of commercial law in Texas. Through the involvement of its members and the leadership of its council and committee members, the section engages in robust discussion of the laws that affect business activity within our state. The section is also actively engaged in the review of the laws of other states, which, like Texas, may have a significant impact on commerce.

CHILD PROTECTION LAW

Mark Briggs, Chair

For 2023-2024, the section looked at demographics. While the majority of section members are from the Interstate 35 corridor, the section wanted to reach out to both rural and urban communities to determine practitioners’ and courts’ needs. The most recent breakfast at the section’s advanced course was for members of the judiciary to help identify areas where the practice could be improved. It became immediately apparent that courts in all communities were having difficulties recruiting and maintaining younger attorneys on their appointment wheels for both parents and children. The section partnered with the Texas Indigent Defense Commission and the Supreme Court of Texas Children’s Commission and made the first presentations to law students at Baylor Law School and Texas Tech University School of Law, hoping to interest them in working in this underserved area of law after graduation. The other law schools will be reached over the next year. Building on last year’s work, the section’s Appellate Committee partnered with the State Bar of Texas Appellate Section and the Children’s Commission to create continuing education courses focusing on expedited appeals unique to this area of law and courses for trial attorneys who may be interested in

handling their own appeals.

CIVIL LIBERTIES & CIVIL RIGHTS

Joshua Abrams, Chair

The Civil Liberties & Civil Rights Section continued its efforts to promote discussion regarding constitutional issues and civil liberties and civil rights, which are of ever-increasing importance in the nation. The section also continues to support and provide members with the *Texas Journal on Civil Liberties & Civil Rights*. Further, the section is pleased to announce that the 2024 recipient of the Patrick Wiseman Award for Civil Rights is Matthew J. Kolodoski, a partner in Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons in Dallas, who served for eight years as the course director for TexasBarCLE’s annual Bill of Rights Course. The section congratulates him and thanks him for all his hard work on behalf of all Texans!

COLLABORATIVE LAW

Anita Savage, Chair

This year marked significant progress for the Collaborative Law Section, culminating in the American Bar Association’s full endorsement of the Uniform Collaborative Law Act at its 2024 meeting. Locally, our state’s section played a pivotal role in advancing collaborative law through two key initiatives. The first, known as “The Road Show,” involves sending two to three professionals to smaller communities across Texas to deliver an engaging, hour-long CLE presentation to highlight the benefits of using the collaborative process to resolve their civil disputes. By empowering clients with control over their resolution process, the section aims for better outcomes that meet their needs more effectively. The second initiative focuses on educating the next generation of practitioners. Just as they learn about foundational legal concepts like the Uniform Commercial Code, the section is focused on ensuring that collaborative law is included in every law student’s education. This equips them with additional tools for their professional toolbox and promotes the widespread

adoption of collaborative practices. Finally, the section’s Innovations Team is nearing completion of its final report, which comprehensively outlines the alternative dispute resolution models available to Texans, with the goal of making access to justice more accessible, affordable, and appealing for all.

COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY

Reginald Hirsch, Chair

This year, the Computer & Technology Section continued to provide informative CLEs and information to its section members. The section held its 7th annual Technology and Justice for All CLE on December 1, 2023, at the Texas Law Center (offering 5.5 CLE hours). Speakers presented on a variety of topics that highlighted how computer and technology issues now permeate every area of the law, a boot camp for practicing attorneys, feature presentations dealing with a judicial perspective of AI, and ethical issues of use of AI by lawyers. The State Bar created the Taskforce for Responsible AI in the Law; former section chair John Browning serves as the chair of the task force and a number of council members are currently serving on the task force. The section continues to offer three free one-hour virtual CLE webinars each year. Two of these seminars have already taken place and a third is scheduled for April. The section continues to send representatives to the ABA TECHSHOW and provide video and summaries of their experiences. Finally, the section continues to offer its members its quarterly *Circuits* e-newsletter and invites its members to download its updated app, which provides access to current Texas statutes.

CONSTRUCTION LAW

Thomas Walthall, Chair

The Construction Law Section is healthy, with a large membership exceeding 2,700. The section is proud of its *Construction Law Journal*, which is in final editing at this writing in preparation for publishing the next issue. *Journal* articles are edited by section member volunteers on the *Journal’s* editorial board who devote

untold hours to their work. The section's caselaw update service, *The Change Order*, continues to publish as in the past. These materials are a real value to section members and provide focused, cutting-edge CLE in construction law. Section members contribute their time and energy to make these publications happen and to maintain their high quality. On March 7-8, the 37th annual Construction Law Conference CLE program in San Antonio was well attended with over 1,000 attendees from all over Texas and many from outside our state. The section's efforts are directed in large part to maintaining the high-quality publications and CLE programs benefiting its members.

CONSUMER AND COMMERCIAL LAW

R. Douglas Scott, Chair

This was a sad year for the Consumer and Commercial Law Section, as its chair, Jerry Jarzombek, unexpectedly died weeks into his chairmanship. Jarzombek was a tireless activist for the Texas consumer, and his passing is a great loss for this section and the practice of law in general. The annual Advanced Consumer and Commercial Law CLE course was held this past September, with a three-way tie for the Richard Alderman Award for Best Speaker going to Andy Sattler, Manny Newberger, and Richard Alderman, for which the award is named. The upcoming advanced CLE will be on September 12-13, 2024, in Austin. The section has also continued its Craig Jordan Writing Competition law school scholarship program, whose winner will be announced later this summer. The section's website is up and running, providing valuable information to the bar and general public about important consumer and commercial law issues. It can be accessed at txconsumerlawyers.org. Finally, section members continue to receive their acclaimed *Journal of Consumer and Commercial Law*, edited by Richard Alderman and published by the University of Houston Law Center; the Lexology news feed; and discounted attendance at section CLE programs.

CORPORATE COUNSEL

Toni Nguyen, Chair

The Corporate Counsel Section experienced a productive year, achieving many milestones. In September, the section launched its wildly successful free monthly CLE, "Corporate Counsel Power Hour," attracting thousands of attendees, including from outside Texas. Earlier this year, the section surpassed 5,000 members for the first time and continues to grow. It raised \$80,000 through Champions of Pro Bono sponsors; all funds raised support the section's grants program, awarded annually to Texas organizations providing pro bono legal services. This year, the section is awarding a combined \$60,000 to nine deserving organizations. For 2025, the section is on track to reach \$1 million in pro bono awards since beginning these efforts in 1997. Council members planned two annual CLE programs (co-hosted with the Business Law Section): the Annual Meeting CLE in June in Dallas and the Advanced In-House and In-House 101 CLE in August in San Antonio. The section hosted the "TechTok" mixer at the Annual Meeting jointly hosted with the Computer & Technology Section. For the first time, the section is collaborating with other sections to promote each other's events. Finally, this year, the section celebrated its 50th anniversary and 46 years of publishing the *Corporate Counsel Review*.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Cañas, Chair

The Criminal Justice Section had a productive year. In October, the governing council met in New Orleans to plan activities and member services for the year. Because of the section's commitment to improving criminal justice, it partnered with SMU Dedman School of Law, the Dallas Bar Association, and the Court of Criminal Appeals to hold two oral arguments in Dallas. In April 2024, the section presented two half-day CLEs for local attorneys in Dallas and Laredo. Topics included "Chat GPT Prompts for Busy Lawyers," "New Frontiers: Guns and Weed," and a "Court of Criminal

Appeals Update." For members, the section prepared two laminated survival guides: *Suppression Hearing Burdens of Proof Checklist* and *Lesser Included Offenses Checklist* and will be distributing more survival guides soon. This year the section continued presenting online one-hour "Lunch and Learns" free for section members. Also, the section provided scholarships for section members who might not otherwise be able to attend the Dawson Criminal Appeals, the Rusty Duncan, and the Advanced Criminal Law conferences. At the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting, the section presented a CLE track and will conduct its own annual meeting and elections at the Advanced Criminal Law Course in July.

ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORTS LAW

Gwen Seale, Chair

What a year it's been for the Entertainment and Sports Law Section. In November, the section held its 33rd annual CLE program, the Entertainment Law Institute and accompanying "101" program for entertainment and sports lawyers around the state. It was wonderful catching up with fellow members at the program and networking events. Make sure to save the date for the 2024 institute, which will be held November 20-22, 2024, at the AT&T Hotel and Conference Center in Austin. Over the past year, the section has made a concerted effort to incorporate more sports law programming for its members, through CLE topics at ELI and the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting, free online webinars, and working in partnership with the Indianapolis Bar Association to present the Racing Attorney Conference, featuring legal topics related to motorsports. Finally, the section held its first annual in-person CLE program and networking mixer during the South by Southwest season titled "Cheers to Trademarks" in association with the Austin Bar Association Entertainment and Sports Law Section, Texas Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts, and the U.S. Patent and Trademark

Office. Thanks to all the council members for their hard work and service to TESLAW this year.

ENVIRONMENTAL & NATURAL RESOURCES LAW

Erin E. Chancellor, Chair

The Environmental & Natural Resources Law Section had a great year fulfilling its mission of supporting environmental and natural resource lawyers and students in Texas. In August 2023, ENRLS held the 35th annual Texas Environmental Superconference with over 450 attendees. The 36th annual conference will be held August 1-2, 2024, in Austin—you won't want to miss it! ENRLS co-hosted the 25th annual Changing Face of Water Law Conference in February 2024 and held the third annual Texas Symposium on Climate Change and Energy Transition in April 2024. In December 2023, the first annual symposium was awarded the Local Bar Environment, Energy & Resources Program of the Year Award by the American Bar Association's Environment, Energy & Resources Section. ENRLS continues to partner with Texas law schools to host environmental law career seminars, holding multiple seminars across the state over the past year. The section also funded eight summer legal internships at different environmental and natural resource agencies across the state through its Professor Corwin W. Johnson Internship Program. The section recently released the *Texas Environmental Law Treatise* (2024 edition), and the eighth edition of *Essentials of Texas Water Resources* is due in summer 2024.

FAMILY LAW

Christopher K. Wrampelmeier, Chair

In 2023-2024, Family Law Section members went the extra mile fulfilling its mission “to promote the highest degree of professionalism, education, fellowship, and excellence in the practice of family law.” Members promoted pro bono services, including presenting six seminars outside the largest cities in which lawyers received free, high-quality CLE by taking two pro bono cases. In

response to requests, the section is suggesting effective ways to shrink the access to justice gap. It is initiating a two-year mentorship program to develop family law leaders while improving pro bono services. The section provides outstanding legal education through TexasBarCLE seminars it supports, the *Family Law Practice Manual* it edits, the legendary *Family Lawyer's Essential Toolkit* it includes with membership, and the outstanding publications it sells through the section's website, soon to be downloadable upon purchase. Through monthly e-blasts and its quarterly section report, the section kept members informed of recent appellate opinions and the proposals that would allow paraprofessionals and non-lawyer-owned entities. Each section report also includes articles with more CLE. Through the section report and the website, the section preserves and passes on its rich history. The section invites all to share in that history by becoming section members.

GENERAL PRACTICE, SOLO, AND SMALL FIRM

Julie Ezell-Perez, Chair

The General Practice, Solo, and Small Firm Section has been hard at work this year to bring new ideas and opportunities to its membership. This year, the section modernized by rewriting its bylaws, starting the reconstruction of its website, and learning about its membership. As a section not dedicated to a particular practice area but dedicated to solo and small firm lawyers around the state, it devoted time to studying the makeup of its membership. The section looked at the practice areas and other demographics of its members to determine how to better serve them. The section will use this information to develop a series of webinars aimed at providing resources to small firm and solo attorneys. The section hopes to create content aimed heavily at law practice management and wellness in the practice of law along with some content aimed toward the practice areas of its members. The

section has also been identifying other sections that also serve its membership and discussing ways to collaborate with them to serve all members together. The section is looking forward to great new things to come for its members and solo and small firm attorneys around the state.

GOVERNMENT LAW

Kim Mickelson, Chair

The Government Law Section provides resources, education, and services for its members, who represent governmental entities at all levels across Texas. The section sends e-blasts to members with caselaw updates and upcoming CLEs for government lawyers. The section is also continuing its work with the State Bar of Texas to establish legal specialization in local government law, recognizing this distinct practice area. The council held a Road Show CLE in McAllen in 2023 for local government lawyers in the Rio Grande Valley and has a draft schedule of three Road Show CLEs around the state for 2024. The annual Government Law 101 and Advanced Government Law courses will be held July 24-26, 2024, at the Hyatt Resort in San Antonio. A wide range of engaging speakers and useful presentations are planned, including foundational topics for new government lawyers, caselaw and legislative updates, and emerging issues for seasoned practitioners. The section will have its business meeting, and the Outstanding Government Lawyer and Rising Star awards will be presented there. If you are interested in working with the section, or have other ideas to serve government lawyers, please reach out, send an email on the website (txgovernmentlaw.org/contact), and come join!

HEALTH LAW

Nathaniel C. Kummerfeld, Chair

The State Bar of Texas Health Law Section is dedicated to supporting health law practitioners across the state in a variety of practice settings. The section's signature event continues to be the annual Texas Health Law Conference, co-sponsored by the Texas

Hospital Association, which offers two days of health law CLE to those interested in broadening their practice, maintaining their practice focus, or preparing for the specialization examination. This year's 37th annual conference will be held October 6-8, 2024, at the AT&T Hotel and Conference Center in Austin. The Health Law Section provides stipends to law students to attend the conference to encourage students to explore careers in health law. Members of the section write and evaluate the Texas Board of Legal Specialization's health law specialization examination and provide weekly e-newsletters that track proposed and adopted Texas rules and regulations. These updates are accessible on the section's website (texhealthlaw.org). This year, the section will continue to offer in-person educational and outreach programs to members. The section is eager to encourage and support membership. Please contact a member of the Health Law Council to get involved or to learn more about the section.

HISPANIC ISSUES

Angelica Hernandez, Chair

The Hispanic Issues Section continued its tradition of access to justice fundraising (approximately \$50,000) by hosting a statewide Zoom "LawTería" on September 14, 2023. Some participants held watch parties in El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio. Judicial "celebrity callers" included Appellate Judge Amparo Guerra (Houston), U.S. District Judge David A. Morales (Corpus Christi), Appellate Judge Denisse Garcia (Dallas), and Chief U.S. District Judge Alia Moses (Del Rio). CLE programming included the 70th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Hernandez v. Texas*, hosted on January 25, 2024, at St. Mary's University School of Law. Panelists included Chief Appellate Judge Dori Contreras (Corpus Christi), Appellate Judge Gina M. Benavides (Corpus Christi), and former Supreme Court of Texas Justice David M. Medina (Houston). The March 28 CLE with former El Paso mayor, lawyer, and author Raymond Caballero discussed the U.S.

Supreme Court case *Jencks v. United States*. The section recognized outstanding achievement of attorneys, judges, legislators, and organizations and presented awards at its annual meeting. At the annual meeting, HIS—the first affinity State Bar of Texas section—celebrated its 45th anniversary, inviting all past chairs and providing panel discussions on the legal history of the organization and its founders and members.

IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY LAW

Teresa Coles-Davila, Chair

The Immigration and Nationality Law Section has completed the updates to the Immigration Consequences of Criminal Convictions Chart resource for section members originally drafted in 2008 by Jodi Goodwin and Thomas Esparza. The chart can be found on the section's website at texasimmigrationandnationalitylaw.com. Log in with your bar number and password. The section council will appoint a committee yearly to oversee chart updates in collaboration with St. Mary's University School of Law Center for Legal and Social Justice. Please email suggested updates to texascrimmchart@gmail.com. The section provides free CLE to members through its monthly fourth Tuesday lunch CLE programs and spring and fall legal writing workshops. The section also provides a free crossover CLE with the Family Law Section in the spring and is in the planning stages for a crossover CLE with the Criminal Law Section in the fall. Over the past year, the section has collaborated with law schools and American Immigration Lawyers Association Texas for professional development and social events. The section continues to encourage and announce pro bono and low bono representation opportunities in collaboration with nonprofit organizations and community outreach efforts. Only those authorized by federal law are permitted to practice immigration law.

INSURANCE LAW

Robert Cunningham, Chair

The Insurance Law Section celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2023-

2024. The section is grateful for 25 years of leadership and member contributions that achieved the section's notable growth and successes. Mindful of this legacy, current officers and council, committee volunteers, and section sponsors continued to expand and improve programs established by the section's distinguished predecessors. Notable 2023-2024 achievements included the first Texas Board of Legal Specialization insurance law specialization exam, held in October. The section congratulates those newly certified for their recognized expertise. The new Young Lawyers Subcommittee provides support for section activities, working with the Publications and CLE committees on outreach to younger section members, including a free webinar on practical issues faced by young lawyers. Winners of the annual law school writing competition received scholarship funds, along with "best-in-class" as designated by insurance law faculty. Member benefits included: Networking happy hours around Texas, the preeminent *Journal of Texas Insurance Law*, bi-weekly *Right Off the Press*, expanded LinkedIn social media, a new online comprehensive overview seminar, the ever-popular annual Advanced Insurance Law Course & Casino Night, multiple webinars, a revamped website, and the section's first newsletter featuring prominent titans of Texas insurance law. Join in! Inquire to admin@insurancelawsection.org.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW

Devika Kornbacher, Chair

The Intellectual Property Law Section progressed the three pillars of its mission: educate, connect, and serve. The section moved from in-person advanced IP and IP litigation CLEs to online presentations covering timely topics such as tackling counterfeits, copyright and social justice, and the circuit split on the discovery rule (educate) with regionally hosted in-person networking receptions afterwards (connect). The reception during the International Trademark Association leadership meeting was a

great example of the synergies we discover when we come together. The section is working with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to bring intellectual property legal services to underserved communities, fulfilling its role in the IP ecosystem (serve). At the Annual Meeting CLE and luncheon in Dallas, the section announced the Inventor of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, and Fritz Lanham Trademark Award winners, along with several scholarship recipients. Special thanks to the IP Council and committee chairs who are examining whether the current committee structure can be improved to better serve members. This year, the section focused on evolving the section to meet the challenges and opportunities in IP law, as we find ourselves at the center of emerging technologies such as generative AI and quantum computing.

INTERNATIONAL LAW

Richard Muñoz, Chair

In keeping with its mission to bring an international perspective to the Texas bar, the International Law Section had three main initiatives this year, (1) Raise awareness for the Thomas H. Wilson Scholarship Human Rights Essay Contest, (2) Increase section membership, and (3) Increase online and social media presence. To that end, the ILS published Volume 4, No. 2 of its *International Newsletter* and awarded a \$1,500 scholarship to a deserving law student as part of the annual Human Rights Essay Contest. The award was presented at the section's annual institute May 16-17, 2024, in Houston. The 2024 annual institute provided in-person CLEs on topics such as the Corporate Transparency Act, global cybersecurity, international trade, and disputes. The second day of the institute had an international internship focus for law students and practicing lawyers. In addition, the section, along with the Hispanic National Bar Association, co-hosted a networking event, "Flavors of the World" in Austin. The ILS also upgraded its website to better serve its membership and archive the section's

content. To learn more about the section, go to ilstexas.org.

JUDICIAL

Hon. Rebeca Martinez, Chair

The Judicial Section continues to provide a forum to examine and discuss issues affecting the judiciary. A principal benefit to Judicial Section members is its Ethics Committee. Led by Judge Lee Gabriel, the committee responds to ethics questions from members who can receive opinions on an informal basis or, upon written request, a formal written advisory opinion. The Judicial Section also maintains a database of ethics opinions for use by its members. Chaired by Judge Kirsten Cohoon, the Membership Committee continues to increase membership across the state and welcomed new judges at the Annual Judicial Education Conference in September, the spring regional conferences, and the College for New Judges. With joint efforts led by IT/Website Committee Chair Victor Villarreal, a new membership brochure was created to help inform future members of the section's benefits and opportunities for involvement. During and between legislative sessions, the Legislative Committee, led by its chair, Judge Alfonso Charles, continues to monitor and keep members informed of new and proposed legislation affecting the judicial system, including efforts related to judicial compensation. The Judicial Section's 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to two honorees: Judge Sharon Keller and Judge David Evans.

JUSTICE COURTS

Scott H. Fournier, Chair

The Justice Courts Section maintained its mission of furthering the administration of justice in justice courts, providing a forum for the exchange of information on matters of practice and procedure in justice courts, and providing information and educational opportunities for its membership. The section cooperated closely with the State Bar of Texas and other professional organizations in

developing, supporting, and promoting legal and professional activities affecting justice courts. During the 2023-2024 term, the section continued to provide virtual one-hour lunchtime CLEs, including offering some ethics credit. Chair Scott H. Fournier attended the State Bar of Texas Council of Chairs meeting in February 2024. Fournier was pleased to reconnect with the section officers, directors, and members in person at the section's general membership meeting, CLE presentation, and reception at the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting in June. The section extends its sincere gratitude to its officers and directors for their outstanding contributions and efforts in helping make the 2023-2024 term a success.

JUVENILE LAW

Kim Hayes Dayton, Chair

In September 2023, the Juvenile Law Section hosted its first free online "Nuts and Bolts" and Legislative Update CLE event for its members. The section would like to thank the Texas Juvenile Justice Department for helping provide this benefit to section members. In February, over 300 attorneys, judges, and probation officers descended on Galveston for the 37th annual Texas Juvenile Law Conference. The conference again was designed to promote and improve all facets of the juvenile justice system. At the conference, Kaci Singer was recognized as the recipient of Robert O. Dawson Visionary Leadership Award for her dedication to the juvenile justice field.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW

Trang Tran, Chair

The Labor and Employment Law Section continued its mission to improve the practice of labor and employment law in Texas. In January 2024, the section hosted the Advanced Employment Law and Employment 101 seminar in Dallas. Every year, the section hosts the Labor and Employment Law Institute, a seminar at which a high-quality CLE program is

provided at discounted costs to section members. This year's institute will be held August 8-9, 2024, at the JW Marriot in San Antonio. Additionally, the section continues to improve its website (laborlaw.org) to add new jury verdicts and charges in a searchable format. The section also publishes a quarterly newsletter with the latest cases and legal developments relevant to labor and employment law practitioners. Finally, the section organized visits to law schools to engage in student outreach with the idea of getting more lawyers interested in the practice of employment law, and it also awarded grants to pro bono organizations focused on labor and employment matters. If you are not a section member and have any interest in labor and employment, consider joining today to get access to jury verdicts, labor and employment updates, discounted CLE, and more.

LAW STUDENT DIVISION

Caitlin McDuffee, Chair

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Law Student Division went above and beyond to increase Texas law students' access and knowledge about the State Bar resources available. Representatives from Texas law schools hosted various free programs for students at their respective schools including student outreach events, such as at UNT Dallas, whose representatives were on hand at the admitted students open house, and legal career-related panels, such as at South Texas College of Law Houston, which hosted a NASA speaker panel. For a \$15 annual membership fee, the Law Student Division provides many benefits to its student members, including exclusive scholarship opportunities, free membership in select State Bar of Texas sections, a monthly subscription to the *Texas Bar Journal*, member discounts, free registration for TexasBarCLE live seminars, and—new this year—a BetterHelp discount to give Texas law students access to mental health resources to support their professional performance. The

representatives have also revamped their membership T-shirt design and its Texas Young Lawyers Association's *TYLA At a Glance* guide to cater more to law students' needs.

LEGISLATIVE AND CAMPAIGN LAW

Linda Townsend, Chair

The Legislative and Campaign Law Section, founded in 2014, is the State Bar's newest section and continues to grow each year. The section comprises attorneys who work in and around the Legislature, state agencies, elections, and campaigns and those who are interested in those processes. In December, the section held an informative and successful CLE. Participants heard from the Texas Ethics Commission, a member of the Texas House of Representatives, the House speaker's general counsel, and many others. The section is grateful to all the speakers who participated in the CLE and shared their insights and knowledge with attendees. Now, the section is planning a spring CLE to provide election updates and discuss the upcoming legislative session. Recently, the section shepherded one of the nation's first-ever legislative and campaign law legal specialization areas into existence. Since implementation, 13 attorneys have become board certified, and many others are busy prepping and studying for the next round of exams. If you are interested in legislative or government processes, election law, campaign law, or any of the ethical issues that pop up in those areas, please consider joining the section. You can learn more by visiting legislativeandcampaignlaw.com.

LGBTQ+ LAW

Derek Mergele-Rust, Chair

After celebrating the 25th anniversary of the section in April 2023, the LGBTQ+ Law Section began the year by formally changing its name to the LGBTQ+ Law Section to more accurately convey to constituents the type of law that the section reports on and to align with the common abbreviation used around the country.

The board met in retreat in El Paso from September 14 to 17 and kicked off the section's statewide legislative update tour. The section hosted numerous Legislative Update CLEs around the state in West Texas, North Texas, East Texas, and Central Texas, updating attorneys and the community about bills passed during the 88th legislative session. The board also held its December meeting in Waco at Baylor Law School. The board was pleased to host a full day of CLE at the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting on June 21 in Dallas and hopes you enjoyed its presentations.

LITIGATION

Geoff Gannaway, Chair

The Litigation Section focused this year on connecting with members across the state. It partnered with local bar groups in Austin, Beaumont, El Paso, Fort Worth, Corpus Christi, Houston, McAllen, and San Antonio to provide quality CLE content, live and in person. In April, the section hosted a panel of jurors who had recently served in Harris County trials to share their experiences with lawyers, judges, and law students. The annual Litigation Update Institute took place in January in Austin, gathering some of the best speakers on topics important to members. In addition to in-person events, the section reached hundreds of members with each monthly online "Lunch n' Learn" CLE program, led by some of the most respected lawyers and judges in the state. The section honored the best of the profession by inducting Al Ellis and Judge L. Clifford Davis as Legal Legends, honoring Morgan Haenchen as Outstanding Young Litigator, and presenting the Luke Soules Award to Layne Kruse. The section's flagship publication, the *Advocate*, published cutting-edge content in three key areas: "When Practices Collide: Crossroads in Civil and Criminal Cases," "Alternative Dispute Resolution," and "The New Business Court in Texas." Members can learn more and keep up with the latest developments at litigationsection.com.

MILITARY AND VETERANS LAW*Kay Perry, Chair*

The Military and Veterans Law Section started the 2023-2024 year with the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting in Austin. One speaker discussed sweeping changes to the prosecution of major crimes in the military that took away the authority of a commander to decide whether a case goes to trial and gave that authority to special prosecutors' offices. The section also had a speaker on the legal issues of obtaining Veterans Administration benefits. Our fall meeting and CLE was held in Salado, where members heard from speakers about VA benefits, guardianships and special needs trusts, medical malpractice claims by military members, and national security law. The spring meeting, a Veterans Justice Clinic, was co-sponsored with the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, where several speakers educated attendees on issues impacting veterans, how to obtain government records, special veterans criminal courts, and VA-related matters. The section presented at the 2024 State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting, during which speakers discussed the litigation over state activities at the Mexico border, as well as successful litigation to overturn the convictions of Black soldiers who were convicted and executed in connection with the 1917 Houston Riot.

MUNICIPAL JUDGES*Hon. J. Elaine Marshall, Chair*

This past year, municipal courts around the state have been working on various changes that have been mandated, such as the Texas Youth Diversion and Early Intervention Act under House Bill 3186. This bill will assist municipal courts in identifying and assisting youth who are charged with offenses that are punishable by the imposition of a fine only from criminal adjudication. It gives the courts the ability to formalize programs to reduce recidivism and to recognize the need for mental health needs, substance use, developmental disabilities, and issues to enable the court to direct the youth to attend programs designed to redirect

them. This bill gives municipal court judges the ability to focus on the needs of the child and allows the court to refer the child to a service provider that will fit the child's needs. For many who have juvenile case managers and teen courts, these programs can be incorporated into the Youth Diversion Program. In addition, municipal courts were informed that on February 20, 2024, the Supreme Court of Texas issued Rule 7.1, the Court Confidentiality Policy, that must be written and adopted by municipal courts no later than May 1, 2024.

NATIVE AMERICAN LAW*Lisa Tatum, Chair*

The Native American Law Section strives to maintain awareness about the law and proposed legal changes impacting Native Americans. While the section does not recommend legislation, it provides educational background and context on relevant laws and monitors legislation to provide an end-of-session report to the section regarding such legislation.

OIL, GAS AND ENERGY RESOURCES LAW*Jonathan Baughman, Chair*

The Oil, Gas and Energy Resources Law Section, established in 1938, is the oldest section of the State Bar of Texas and has over 4,000 members. The section sponsors numerous CLE events on a regular basis in collaboration with the State Bar or the University of Texas, including the Advanced Oil & Gas Law Course; Oil & Gas Disputes; the Renewable Energy Law Institute; the Ernest E. Smith Oil, Gas, and Mineral Law Institute; and the Oil, Gas and Mineral Title Examination Course. Three times a year, the section publishes a journal of legal articles that also includes a recent caselaw update in each edition. OGERL also funds awards and internship opportunities for law students historically at four Texas state agencies: The Electric Reliability Council, the Public Utility Commission, the Railroad Commission, and the General Land Office. During each academic semester, OGERL grants scholarships to law students who achieve

the highest grade in each basic oil, gas, and energy law course at each Texas law school. Learn more about OGERL at oilgas.org.

PARALEGAL DIVISION*Joncilee H. Miller, President*

The Paralegal Division continued its purpose to enhance legal assistants' and paralegals' participation in the administration of justice, professional responsibility, and public service in cooperation with the legal profession. Since 1981, the division has grown with 12 districts throughout the state and 1,698 members. The division hosts one three-day CLE conference each year called the Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar. This year is the 25th anniversary of the creation of TAPS and the conference will be held October 2-4, 2024, in Denton. Up to 14 hours of CLE are offered in various areas of the law and ethics. The Paralegal Division's annual meeting will be held October 4, 2024. The division has a quarterly digital publication, the *Texas Paralegal Journal*, and a monthly digital e-newsletter, the *Paralegal Pulse*. Both publications offer informative articles, CLE opportunities, hot topics, benefits, and happenings in each district. The board of directors meets quarterly and works hard for the members, planning CLE events, creating new benefits, and continuing to increase professional development. The *Paralegal Ethics Handbook*, Texas Board of Legal Specialization Helpful Hints Study Guide, Mentor-Protégé Program, Job Bank, and E-Group offer great resources for paralegals. Please encourage the paralegals you work with to learn more at txpd.org.

POVERTY LAW*Cathryn Ibarra, Chair*

The Poverty Law Section remains dedicated to supporting its members who provide legal assistance to those who cannot afford it and expand access to justice to those who need it. As the justice gap widens, section membership strives to find ways to meet the civil legal needs of more than 5 million Texans who qualify for legal aid. The

section offers members free, monthly CLEs covering various legal areas affecting client communities, including housing, domestic violence and family law, public benefits, and more. At the section's 2023 Annual Meeting, the section celebrated exceptional attorneys who have made profound impacts on the lives of low-income clients. Veronica Jacobs received the Noble Lifetime Achievement Award for her commitment to serving low-income Texans and mentoring legal aid lawyers in Houston. Briana Stone was honored with the Impact Award for her tireless advocacy with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Texas Civil Rights Project, and most recently, the Texas Access to Justice Commission. Additionally, the section's presentation at the 2023 State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting underscored the dual benefits of pro se resources and forms in supporting the legal profession and providing essential services to the public.

PUBLIC UTILITY LAW

Lara Zent, Chair

The Public Utility Law Section serves all sectors of the utility law bar. Members include practitioners in electric, oil and gas, telecommunications, and water utility law. PULS provides opportunities for section members to interact, learn from each other, and keep abreast of developments in relevant laws, government regulations, and court decisions. Thanks to the efforts of PULS council members, the section hosted its in-person and virtual 2023 annual meeting and seminar. Presentations and panel discussions covered a wide range of topics, befitting a section with diverse areas of expertise. These topics included caselaw and legislative updates pertaining to all the utility sectors, large loads, and interconnection in the ERCOT region; a panel on electric utility resiliency; a Texas Railroad Commission activities update; and a Public Utility Commission of Texas rulemaking update. For 2024, the PULS council has planned two webinars, an in-person lunch and learn CLE event, two newsletters, and the 2024 annual

meeting and seminar. Recent years have been particularly busy for members, and the section looks forward to sharing and learning from members regarding the work being accomplished.

REAL ESTATE, PROBATE, AND TRUST LAW

Melissa J. Willms, Chair

The Real Estate, Probate, and Trust Law Section continues as the largest practice section of the State Bar of Texas, with volunteers striving to keep its members abreast of significant changes affecting real estate, probate, and trust law. REPTL provided members with comprehensive updates from the 2023 legislative session on changes in these areas and will provide updates for the 2025 session. The section continues to provide members with discounts on multiple TexasBarCLE events—discounts that exceed the cost of membership! Members have free access to an incredible members-only online CLE library maintained on REPTL's website and receive the quarterly *REPTL Reporter*, edited by Professor Gerry Beyer. REPTL honored two lawyers with the 2023 Distinguished Attorney Lifetime Achievement Awards—congratulations Mickey R. Davis (Probate) and Richard L. Spencer (Real Estate). REPTL's 2022-2023 Leadership Academy class graduated, and the next class is about to begin. The Leadership Academy encourages participation by young lawyers in REPTL's activities, involving them in section work and providing networking opportunities and mentoring for these future leaders. At its annual meeting in June, REPTL elected its chair-elect/secretary, treasurer, and new council members to carry on the good work. Please renew your membership or join anew!

SCHOOL LAW

Giana Ortiz, Chair

The School Law Section is dedicated to providing information related to legal issues arising in Texas public schools, junior colleges, and universities to a variety of education law-related practitioners. SLS

membership includes attorneys representing the interests of parents, students, employees and employee organizations, educational institutions and their governing bodies, and education-related agencies and associations. Section members benefit from being able to work collaboratively with each other for the benefit of Texas students. The SLS is proud of its recent initiative, School Law 101, which is a cross-disciplinary effort by the section to educate law schools and law students on the unique practice and myriad employment opportunities that exist in the world of education law. The SLS will host the 38th annual School Law Section Retreat July 19-20, 2024, at the Gaylord Texas Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine. This family friendly retreat is an excellent opportunity to receive high-quality CLE and get to know fellow school law practitioners in a non-adversarial setting. The section encourages all interested attorneys to join this outstanding group.

TAX

Robert Morris, Chair

The Tax Section continued to serve its members and the public through educational programs, government comment letters, law school outreach efforts, networking events, and pro bono service. In addition to its returning in-person popular programs, the section hosted its inaugural Renewable Energy Tax Conference in January, as well as two ethics presentations and networking receptions open to all its members. The section continued with its free webinars each month for members on recent developments and significant tax issues and partnered with the government to host a two-session CLE program on tax controversy. Section pro bono volunteers continued assisting pro se taxpayers across the country in tax court hearings and docket calls. Section members also visited each of the Texas law schools to introduce law students to the practice of tax law in addition to awarding scholarships to law students demonstrating an interest and

ability to practice tax law. The section also established a new Young Lawyers Committee for tax lawyers and students.

WOMEN AND THE LAW

Elizabeth Sandoval Cantu, Chair

The Women and the Law Section is proud to report a very productive 2023-2024 year. Chair Elizabeth Cantu commenced her chair year at the Annual Meeting in 2023 and presided over monthly meetings with the section's 19 committee members. The committee hosted several webinars throughout the year, including "Navigating IP Enforcement on Social Media," "Defending Energy on Trial," and "Parliamentary Procedure for Lawyers" and co-presented with the Corporate Counsel Section and its "Power Hour: Unraveling the Crypto-Web." WAL blasted two section newsletters with updates on legal issues and rulings, employment opportunities, and other law-related information. It

held its in-person meeting in November 2023 in San Antonio, which was hosted by St. Mary's University School of Law. WAL presented its second annual International Women's Day event and CLE, held in 12 cities across Texas along with a CLE on the "2024 Proposed Rules of Disciplinary Rule Amendments." The section also prepared for its annual meeting, where Natasha Martinez presided as the incoming chair and the section presented its CLE on "Artificial Intelligence and its Effect on the Law" held at 1:30 p.m. June 20, 2024, in Dallas, followed by its reception.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Matthew Lewis, Chair

The Workers' Compensation Section, along with the State Bar of Texas, put on a great CLE event at its annual Advanced Workers' Compensation Law Course. During the course, the Barbed Wire Award

was given to Daniel Morris, who is a past section chair and has been an advocate for injured workers for over 25 years. The Workers' Compensation commissioner, Jeff Nelson, addressed the section, announcing that the Texas Department of Insurance Division of Workers' Compensation would begin to study a move from assigning impairment ratings using the fourth edition of the *AMA Guides to The Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* to the sixth edition. This would represent a significant change in the practice area should it be adopted. Additionally, this year has seen modifications to the administrative dispute resolution process, specifically with the designated doctor program and the retirement of several longtime benefit review officers who will be missed. The next Advanced Workers' Compensation Law Course will be held August 22-23, 2024, in Austin. **TBJ**



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