



State Bar of Texas President Steve Benesh (left) and Texas Young Lawyers Association President Hisham Masri speak at the State Bar of Texas Local Bar Leaders Conference. PHOTOS BY ERIC QUITUGUA

## *Emerging AI Trends, Increasing Engagement Highlight State Bar of Texas Local Bar Leaders Conference*

Over 200 attorneys convened in July in Houston for two days of sessions focused on local bar engagement, leadership styles, access to justice, and impacts of artificial intelligence on local bars during the annual Local Bar Leaders Conference. Thursday's opening luncheon featured Supreme Court of Texas Justice Evan A. Young and nationally recognized leadership expert Elizabeth Derrico, who offered attendees practical tips on how to strengthen the leadership core of large and small local bar associations. State Bar of Texas President Steve Benesh and Texas Young Lawyers Association President Hisham Masri addressed attendees during Friday's breakfast. Alex Shahrestani, managing partner in Promise Legal, delivered a keynote luncheon presentation focused on simplifying, understanding, and implementing AI systems in local bar operations. To conclude the afternoon, State Bar of Texas Digital Content Specialist Geoffrey Hinkson and State Bar of Texas Public Affairs Director Rebecca Johnson co-led a session titled "Local Bars—Is Your Communication Strategy Up to Date?" Hinkson and Johnson highlighted effective strategies and tips for using social media and engaging local media outlets. The conference is hosted by the State Bar of Texas, Texas Young Lawyers Association, and Texas Access to Justice Commission.

### **SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS ISSUES ORDER ON 2024 RULES REFERENDUM**

The Supreme Court of Texas has issued final approval and adoption of amendments to Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct 1.08, 1.09, 3.09, 4.03, 5.01, and 5.05; of new Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct 1.10 and 1.18; and of new Texas Rule of Disciplinary Procedure 13.05. The rules are effective October 1, 2024. Regarding the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, the court also adopted new and amended interpretive comments, certain renumbering amendments, and amendments to the "Terminology" section, effective October 1, 2024. The court rejected proposed new or amended Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct 1.00, 8.05, and 8.06. The proposed amendments were approved in April 2024 by the State Bar of Texas membership as part of the 2024 rules referendum. To read the full court order, go to [txcourts.gov/media/1459056/249054.pdf](https://txcourts.gov/media/1459056/249054.pdf).

### **SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS ORDER PRELIMINARILY APPROVES RULES GOVERNING LICENSED LEGAL PARAPROFESSIONALS, COURT-ACCESS ASSISTANTS**

The Supreme Court of Texas issued an order on August 6 preliminarily approving rules governing licensed legal paraprofessionals and licensed court-access assistants and inviting public comments. The court's new and amended rules would allow licensed paraprofessionals to represent low-income individuals facing certain issues in the areas of family law, estate planning and probate law, and consumer debt law, as well as in justice court cases. The rules also would allow licensed court-access assistants sponsored by approved legal assistance organizations to represent low-income individuals in justice court. Comments to the court should be submitted in writing to [rulescomments@txcourts.gov](mailto:rulescomments@txcourts.gov) by November 1. The State Bar of Texas Board of Directors was expected to consider providing comments on the proposed rules as requested by the court at its meeting on September 27 in Lubbock.

### **SAN ANTONIO BAR ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2024-2025**

The San Antonio Bar Association announced its board of directors for the 2024-2025 term. The directors were elected by membership and were formally sworn in at the SABA Annual Member Luncheon on August 22 at the Double Height Courtroom in the Bexar County Courthouse in San Antonio, according to a press release. The 2024-2025 board is as follows: President Patricia "Patty" Rouse Vargas, of Davis & Santos; President-elect Nick Guinn, of Gunn, Lee & Cave; Secretary Emma Cano, of Jefferson Cano; Treasurer Jaime Vasquez, of Chamberlain, Hrdlicka, White, Williams and Aughtry; Immediate Past President Steve Chiscano, of Gonazlez Chiscano Angulo Kasson; and directors Kacy Cigarroa, of Dykema; Melissa Morales Fletcher, of the Morales Firm; Elizabeth "Liz" Provencio, of the city of San Antonio; Krishna Reddy, of Meritz|Reddy; Jorge Herrera, of the Herrera Law Firm; Abel Martinez, of HEB; Cynthia Orr, of Goldstein & Orr; and Kristal Thomson, of Langley & Banack. For more information about SABA, go to [sabar.org](https://sabar.org).

### **ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW WIN AT THE 2023-2024 ABA COMPETITIONS**

St. Mary's University School of Law and Texas Tech University School of Law were named the 2023-2024 Competitions Co-Champions by the American Bar Association. Champions are recognized by the ABA for earning the most total points in the Law Student Division's Arbitration Competition, Negotiation Competition, Client Counseling Competition, Representation in Mediation Competition, and National Appellate Advocacy Competition. St. Mary's is the first school to claim regional titles in all five ABA competitions in the same year. Its teams' wins include one National Championship, three Regional Championships, two Regional Finalists, and one Regional Semifinalist. With its win at the Representation in Mediation Competition this year, Texas Tech became the first law school to claim national championships in all five ABA competitions. For the full results and for more information about the 2023-2024 ABA competitions, go to [americanbar.org](https://americanbar.org). **TBJ**