

Gov. Greg Abbott Swears in Texas' New Business Court Judges

Gov. Greg Abbott swore in the newly appointed judges to the Texas Business Court on September 19 at Texas A&M University School of Law in Fort Worth. Created during the 88th legislative session with the enactment of House Bill 19, each Business Court division will provide a mechanism for businesses to resolve complex commercial disputes in Texas. “Last year, I worked with the Texas Legislature to pass a law creating the first-ever Texas business courts, along with a centralized court of appeals, to resolve public law disputes and constitutional challenges that impact Texas businesses across our state,” Abbott said in a press release. “Today, I am proud to swear in the first judges to the Texas business courts. These experienced individuals will serve to ensure that Texas businesses will have a sophisticated and efficient process to resolve their disputes. I look forward to seeing the positive impact these courts will provide for a bigger, better Texas for generations to come.” The governor swore in Andrea Bouressa and William “Bill” Whitehill to the 1st Business Court Division in Dallas, Melissa Andrews and Patrick K. Sweeten to the 3rd Business Court Division in Austin, Marialyn Barnard and Stacy Sharp to the 4th Business Court Division in San Antonio, Jerry Bullard and Brian Stagner to the 8th Business Court Division in Fort Worth, and Sofia Adrogué and Grant Dorfman to the 11th Business Court Division in Houston. For more information about the Texas Business Court, go to txcourts.gov/about-texas-courts/business-court/.

STATE BAR OF TEXAS ACCEPTING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR 2025-2026 STANDING COMMITTEES

The State Bar of Texas is accepting expressions of interest to serve on committees for the upcoming bar year, which begins June 1, 2025. The survey form to express interest is available at texasbar.com/committeeform and is due December 1. Information provided will be submitted to the president-elect for consideration. Standing committees are established by the board of directors, and members are appointed by the president-elect to consider matters of interest to the bar membership, update professional materials, recommend changes to policies and procedures, and study legal issues affecting the legal profession and the public. For the list of committees and their roles, go to texasbar.com/committees.

FREE MEMBER BENEFIT FASTCASE UPGRADES PLATFORM TO VLEX FASTCASE

Fastcase, the legal research platform available to you as a State Bar of Texas member benefit, has been upgraded to vLex Fastcase, a new legal intelligence and research platform. vLex Fastcase includes everything you have access to now, plus unique features to enhance your productivity and provide you with greater insights into legal matters. Starting November 12, sign into Fastcase as you normally would through the State Bar of Texas website. You will then be given the option to access the upgraded platform, vLex Fastcase. For more information, go to texasbar.com/benefits and select vLex Fastcase from the menu.

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER RECEIVES \$1.25 MILLION GIFT FOR MEDIATION CLINIC

The University of Houston Law Center received a \$1.25 million gift from Alan F. Levin, a UHLC alumnus, and his wife, Diane Levin, for the endowment of a mediation clinic to build upon and enhance mediation training for students, according to a press release. The mediation clinic is one of 13 specialized clinics at the UHLC that provides trained student mediators to the justice courts in Harris County. The clinic and the reception area for all UHLC clinics will be named in the Levins' honor. “This very generous gift will be transformative in supercharging our already excellent mediation programming,” UHLC Dean Leonard Baynes said in a press release. “Together, the Levins and the UHLC will shepherd the next generation of legal mediators in the city of Houston, the state of Texas and the nation.” Alan Levin is a 1969 graduate of UHLC and was a classmate of the law building's namesake, John M. O'Quinn, with both serving on the *Houston Law Review's* editorial board.

HISPANIC ISSUES SECTION AND TEXAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION HOST LAWTERÍA 2024

The State Bar of Texas Hispanic Issues Section and the Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) hosted their fifth annual LAWtería, benefiting TAJF legal aid efforts throughout Texas, on September 24. The game night was hosted by State Bar of Texas Past President Sylvia Borunda Firth and included “callers” Texas Sen. Judith Zaffirini; Justice Robbie Partida-Kipness, of the 5th Court of Appeals in Dallas; Justice Gisela D. Triana, of the 3rd Court of Appeals in Austin; and Justice Lori I. Valenzuela, of the 4th Court of Appeals in San Antonio. Special guests included Supreme Court of Texas Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht, Supreme Court of Texas Justice Brett Busby, 444th District Court of Cameron County Judge David Sanchez, and attorneys Dan Sanchez, Armando Lopez, Ruben Medina, and Patrick Gabaldon. For more information about the section, go to texashispanicissuessection.com. For more information about the TAJF, go to teajf.org.

NORTH CAROLINA SEEKING OUT-OF-STATE LAWYERS TO HELP VICTIMS OF HELENE

Out-of-state lawyers can temporarily register with the North Carolina State Bar to provide pro bono legal services to victims of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene, following an order by the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The court approved the North Carolina State Bar's temporary rule amendment on October 1. The temporary rule, expiring in January 2025, allows lawyers licensed in other states but not in North Carolina to register with the North Carolina State Bar and begin immediately providing pro bono legal services through a legal services organization to indigent residents of North Carolina who are victims of Helene without first obtaining approval from the State Bar Council. Lawyers interested in providing pro bono services under the order can fill out the registration form (go to www.ncbar.gov/media/730811/hurricane-helene-temporary-pro-bono-form.pdf) and return it to the North Carolina State Bar using the instructions provided. Hurricane Helene made landfall on the Florida Gulf Coast as a Category 4 storm on September 26 and caused significant impacts across a large portion of the southeastern United States, particularly the southern Appalachians, according to the National Weather Service. **TBJ**