



Jimmy Blacklock takes the oath of office to become a Supreme Court of Texas justice in 2018.

Justice Jimmy Blacklock Appointed 28th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas

Gov. Greg Abbott appointed Jimmy Blacklock as chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas on January 6, and appointed James P. Sullivan as the court's

Place 2 justice, filling Blacklock's previous spot, according to a press release. Blacklock becomes the court's 28th chief justice, replacing former Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht, who retired at the end of December following a 36-year tenure on the state's highest bench. Hecht was elected to the Supreme Court of Texas seven times in total, beginning in 1988. He first became chief justice in 2014 and was reelected to the position in 2020. Abbott administered the oath of office to Blacklock in a private ceremony on January 7, according to a press release. "I am grateful to Gov. Abbott for this appointment and for his leadership of our great state," Blacklock said in a press release. "Chief Justice Hecht leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of service to the court and to the people of Texas. I join all my colleagues in thanking him and honoring him for his wisdom and his leadership over the years. The Supreme Court of Texas belongs to the people of Texas, not to the judges or the lawyers. Our job at the court is to apply the law fairly and impartially to every case that comes before us. My colleagues and I are committed to defending the rule of law and to preserving our Texas and United States Constitutions. I look forward to helping the court continue to pursue equal justice under the law for all Texans." Blacklock, a Houston native, has served on the Supreme Court of Texas since January 2018. He honed his legal skills serving as a clerk for Judge Jerry Smith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit and practiced civil litigation and appeals in private practice in Houston and Austin, according to a press release. Before he served as Abbott's general counsel, Blacklock spent six years in the Texas Attorney General's Office. Sullivan, of Austin, has served as Abbott's general counsel since November 2021. Previously, he spent time as deputy general counsel to the governor, assistant solicitor general of Texas, and as a law clerk to Judge Thomas B. Griffith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, in addition to stints as an adjunct professor at George Mason University and an appellate litigator in private practice, according to a press release.

UH LAW CENTER RECEIVES \$100,000 DONATION FROM BEYGOOD FOUNDATION

The University of Houston Law Center received a \$100,000 donation from the BeyGOOD Foundation, founded by music icon and Houston native Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, to support its Criminal Justice Clinic, according to a press release. The funds will ensure the Criminal Justice Clinic, one of nine in-house clinics at UH Law Center, has a full-time faculty and director, allowing more students to enroll in and benefit from the program. In addition, it will enhance the

clinic's community outreach efforts that educate and assist the underserved communities neighboring the university. Knowles-Carter, one of the most-decorated artists in Grammy history, launched BeyGOOD in 2013 on a mission to support organizations, institutions, and people in transforming their communities into places of well-being, economic prosperity, generosity, and justice. For more information about UH Law Center, go to law.uh.edu.

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR PRO BONO AWARDS

The State Bar of Texas Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters Committee and the State Bar of Texas Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters Committee are seeking nominations for their annual awards. The Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters Committee Pro Bono Excellence Awards include the Frank J. Scurlock Award, the J. Chrys Dougherty Legal Services Award, the Judge Merrill Hartman Pro Bono Judge Award, the Pro Bono Award, the Pro Bono Coordinator Award, the W. Frank Newton Award, and the Pro Bono Support Staff Award. The Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters Committee Indigent Defense Awards include the Warren Burnett Award and the Michael K. Moore Award for Excellence in Research or Writing in the Area of Indigent Criminal Defense. Nominations are due by 5 p.m. on February 21, and recipients will be notified in May. Attorney nominees must be in good standing with the State Bar. Award nomination forms are available at texasbar.com/probonoawards. For more information about these awards, contact the Legal Access Department at 512-427-1855 or by email at probono@texasbar.com.

WACO ATTORNEYS RECEIVE 2024 ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The Baylor Law Veterans Clinic honored Waco attorneys Krupali Patel and Jessenia Ruiz with the 2024 Advocate of the Year awards at a Waco-McLennan County Bar Association luncheon on November 8, according to a press release. The award recognizes dedicated lawyers who serve Central Texas veterans and their families with free legal services via the clinic each year. Ruiz, founder of the Law Office of Jessenia Ruiz, has devoted volunteer time for the last several years to assisting with family law issues at the monthly legal advice clinics at Heart of Texas Veterans One Stop, according to a press release. Patel, an associate of Sheehy Lovelace & Mayfield, has helped in recent years to probate wills for the surviving spouses of veterans on a pro bono basis, according to a press release.

TEXAS TECH LAW RECEIVES \$10,000 GRANT FROM TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION

Texas Tech University School of Law received a \$10,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation to support its Caprock Regional Public Defender Office and Clinic, according to *Texas Tech Now*. The grant will fund the Connect Caprock Initiative, which provides laptops for rural jails in the clinic's 12-county coverage area. Law students will use these laptops to help indigent defendants gain remote legal access and timely representation. The clinic serves as a practical training ground where law students manage criminal cases from start to finish for indigent defendants facing felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile charges. For more information about Texas Tech Law, go to depts.ttu.edu/law. **TBJ**