



**ABOVE:** Vicki D. Blanton. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DALLAS BAR ASSOCIATION

## *Vicki D. Blanton to Serve as 2025 Dallas Bar Association President*

The Dallas Bar Association (DBA) hosted the inauguration of its 116th president, Vicki D. Blanton, on January 25 at the Omni Dallas Hotel. Blanton, assistant vice president and senior legal counsel

for AT&T Inc., has been on the DBA Board of Directors for many years and has served on a variety of DBA committees and sections, according to a press release. She is a past chair of the J.L. Turner Legal Association Foundation Board and a past co-chair of the Equal Access to Justice campaign, which raises funds for the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program. After earning her Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin, Blanton received her J.D. from Southern Methodist University School of Law in 1991. For more information about the DBA, go to [dallasbar.org](http://dallasbar.org).

### **ABA HISPANIC COMMISSION ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL IMPACTO AWARD**

Betty Balli Torres, executive director of the Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TJAF), and civil rights attorney Danny Ortega are the 2025 recipients of the inaugural Impacto Award, sponsored by the American Bar Association Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities. The award was presented January 31 at the Diversity Awards Reception during the ABA Midyear Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, according to a press release. The Impacto Award honors an individual or organization that has impacted efforts to remove the legal, socio-economic, linguistic, and other barriers to justice and civic engagement facing Latinos in the U.S. As executive director of the TAJF, Torres has worked to remove barriers faced by the Hispanic community and other vulnerable populations in the state. Under her leadership, the foundation grants tens of millions of dollars each year to approximately 35 legal aid organizations across Texas to provide basic civil legal services to low-income families as well as crime victims, veterans, those experiencing homelessness, and sexual assault survivors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Torres collaborated with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to secure more than \$40 million in emergency funding to prevent evictions for Texans impacted by the crisis, according to a press release. For more information about the ABA, go to [americanbar.org](http://americanbar.org). For more information about the TAJF, go to [teajf.org](http://teajf.org).

### **REYNALDO ANAYA VALENCIA NAMED PRESIDENT AND DEAN OF SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE OF LAW HOUSTON**

Reynaldo “Rey” Anaya Valencia has been named president and

dean of South Texas College of Law Houston, according to a press release. Valencia will assume his new role in July 2025.

Interim President and Dean Jeff Rensberger will continue to lead the law school through the spring academic semester and work to ensure a smooth transition to Valencia in the summer.

“I greatly appreciate the mission and values at South Texas Law and the law school’s strong tradition of excellence and community culture,” Valencia said in a press release. “My life is a testament to the power and impact of a formal education as the first in my family to go to college and to earn a law degree. I am deeply humbled and honored to be the first Hispanic and the first person of color appointed to this position.” A Harvard Law School graduate who earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s degree in sociology from Stanford University, Valencia has led Capital University Law School as dean and professor of law since 2020, according to a press release. He previously served as associate dean for finance and administration and as a faculty member at the University of North Texas at Dallas College of Law. He joined the faculty at St. Mary’s University School of Law in 1995 as an associate professor, earning tenure in 1999 and promotion to the rank of full professor. Valencia served as a White House fellow in the Office of the Chief of Staff from 1999 to 2000, working on race, civil rights, immigration, and Hispanic education issues. For more information on STCL Houston, go to [stcl.edu](http://stcl.edu).

### **TEXAS YOUNG LAWYERS ASSOCIATION RECEIVES \$45,000 GRANT FROM TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION**

The Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA) received a \$45,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation to create a website aimed at educating prospective law students on the law school process from start to finish, according to a press release. Expected to launch this spring, the website will break down barriers faced by nontraditional and first-time law students by providing practical information on all aspects of legal education in videos and texts featuring experts from law schools across the state, according to a press release. Topics will include the law school application process, pre-admissions tests (e.g., the LSAT), financing costs, first semester challenges, the Socratic method law professors use for teaching, extracurriculars, bar exam prep, and legal careers. For more information about TYLA and its educational websites, go to [tyla.org/resources/general-public/](http://tyla.org/resources/general-public/).

### **SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE OF LAW HOUSTON WINS NATIONAL BRIEF WRITING AWARD FOR SIXTH TIME**

South Texas College of Law Houston’s team of three recent graduates won the 2024 Scribes Brief-Writing Award by the American Society of Legal Writers, according to a press release. This marks the sixth time STCL Houston has won the award. The winning team was composed of Joshua Fojtik (’23), of Hicks Thomas in Houston; Madelyn Chidester (’24), of Brown Sims in Houston; and Armon Mehrinfar (’24), of Serpe Andrews in Houston. The Scribes Brief-Writing Award, established in 1996, represents excellence in legal writing among law students nationwide. The selection process is rigorous, including only briefs that have won best brief awards nationally. Submissions are evaluated by a panel of professors, judges, and practicing attorneys, with the top 15 to 20 briefs advancing to the Brief Writing Award Committee for final selection. **TBJ**