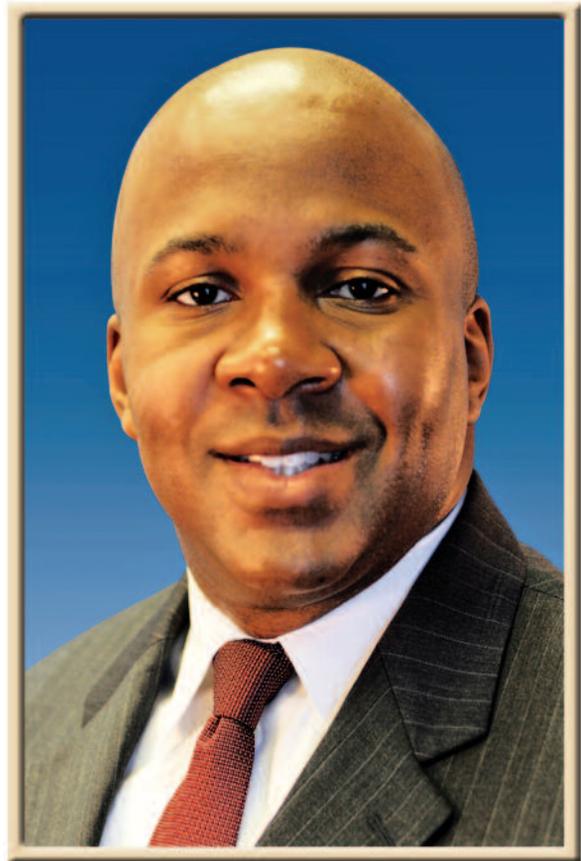




# QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES



**David Courreges**



**C.E. Rhodes**

The following interview with TYLA president-elect candidates **David Courreges** of Austin and **C.E. Rhodes** of Houston is included to educate young lawyers as they prepare to vote. Biographies were included in the March issue (p. 242) and are available on the State Bar website. Votes for TYLA president-elect and district directors can be cast via paper ballot or online from April 1 to May 2, 2011. Attorneys eligible to vote will be mailed an election packet that includes a paper ballot. The deadline to cast ballots is 5 p.m. CST on May 2, 2011.



## Why do you want to be president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association?

### COURREGES

I am proud to be a Texas young lawyer. I truly believe that I am a member of the finest association of professionals in the country. The mission of TYLA embodies the spirit of what it means to be a member of our community: leadership, respect for the law, and service. Whether assisting our fellow young lawyers, ensuring access to justice for citizens, or enhancing the education of our children, I am consistently amazed at the exceptional and vital contributions that our fellow young lawyers make to our community. It has been my pleasure to serve as TYLA vice president during the past year. I look forward to serving as TYLA president, where I will continue the TYLA tradition by working to develop new programs that will serve all segments of the young lawyer population, support community involvement, and foster new opportunities for education and mentorship.

### RHODES

Given my years of leadership in TYLA and diverse legal experience, I believe I am uniquely qualified to lead, and, more important, to serve and represent all of the young lawyers in Texas irrespective of their practice area and can help them tackle the issues facing us today. I have been on the TYLA Board of Directors since 2004 and served as chair in 2009-2010. During my tenure on the Board, I have had the opportunity to lead committees that have created projects, such as *Justice 101: The Client's Guide to Litigation*, *Office In a Flash*, and *They Had A Dream Too: Young Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement*. I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact these projects have had on our members and the public. I want to continue this tradition. In my practice, I have handled civil, criminal, transactional, and litigation matters. I have also worked both as outside and in-house counsel. I hope to utilize the skills and talents of young lawyers with diverse practice areas in the creation and implementation of future TYLA projects to better serve our members and the public.

## What, in your opinion, are the top three issues facing young lawyers in Texas and what role should TYLA play in addressing those issues?

### COURREGES

1. *The Budget*. The economy is the prevailing challenge, especially in light of our state's current budget difficulties. With a biennial deficit of \$4 billion, and a looming shortfall of \$27 billion, every young lawyer will be affected, particularly those facing budgetary reductions, hiring freezes, or worse. This is an issue that will touch the entire legal community. Dockets in all

courts may become even larger, basic services may take even longer to secure, and justice may be delayed in thousands of cases. We need to continue to address these issues by providing additional resources for all young lawyers, help raise awareness, and heighten community support. Every young lawyer should be our top priority.

2. *Community Involvement*. Young lawyers often develop a desire to become involved in their community, but do not necessarily know where to begin. It is imperative that we pass knowledge and skills onto one another in order for the integrity of our profession to flourish. Our law schools teach us how to be lawyers, but not necessarily how to be public servants. For that reason, mentorship is a very important part of the legal profession. This is the perfect time to develop public service mentorship opportunities for law students and new lawyers.

3. *The Positives and Negatives Associated with Technology*. Since I became a young lawyer, technology has allowed us to become more self-sufficient, reduce overhead costs, and increase availability and communication. At the same time, self-sufficiency is not always synonymous with efficiency. The resources that allow reduction of overhead are also available to potential and current clients, and office hours are now irrelevant when it comes to availability. We need to develop opportunities that will help maximize the potential that available technology provides while educating young lawyers to help minimize unintended consequences.

### RHODES

The top three issues are: 1) the economy, 2) stress, and 3) law school debt. The issues are closely intertwined.

*Economy*. Although it appears that the worst is behind us, the economy continues to be a challenge. There are more young lawyers looking for jobs than there are jobs. Left with few alternatives, more lawyers are starting their own practices. Many of these lawyers would not have done so but for the economy. TYLA should continue to provide practical resources and daily tools to those lawyers to help them start and maintain their practice. In addition, TYLA should work with TexasBarCLE and attorney recruiting services to identify and provide courses that will help young lawyers who are currently unemployed with the skills they need to hit the ground running when the market recovers.

*Stress*. The economy has placed tremendous stress on young lawyers — both those who are employed and those who are not employed. TYLA should provide young lawyers with the tools they need to identify the factors causing stress, to better understand the resulting physiological and mental effects, and to explore healthy ways to manage it.

*Law School Debt*. Law school debt has continued to rise over the years. There are many lawyers who have substantial debt and are struggling to make monthly loan payments as a result of the economy. TYLA should work with TexasBarCLE and Texas law schools to create programs that provide general



financial planning advice to young lawyers. In addition, TYLA should work with the Texas Access to Justice Commission and law schools to investigate and explore the viability of a private-public partnership to assist lawyers who choose a career in public interest to repay part of their student loans.

### Discuss the TYLA project or program in which you most enjoyed participating.

#### COURREGES

During my service on the TYLA Board of Directors, I developed a passion for bringing law-focused education projects to our schools. My very first TYLA project was to organize the first official Austin presentation of *They Had a Dream Too: Young Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement* at Bowie High School. Since then, I have organized and presented TYLA law-focused education projects to more than 10,000 Texas school children, teachers, and parents. This is due in large part to my favorite TYLA project, *Vote America! Honor the Fight, Exercise Your Right*, which chronicles the history of voting rights in the United States from the conception of the Constitution to the pres-

ent day. Though I have had the opportunity to assist in the creation and implementation of other TYLA projects, *Vote America!* is special because it helped encourage so many individuals to get involved in the election process and even vote for the first time. The month it was released, *Vote America!* was shown in every high school in Atlanta, Ga., and later to each high school senior and junior in Austin within the span of a single week.

#### RHODES

I have been fortunate to have been part of the creation, design, and implementation of many great projects over the years, so it is extremely tough to narrow it down to one. As chair, I was an adviser to the committee that created *R U Safe: Protecting Yourself in Cyber Space*. *R U Safe* is an award-winning DVD designed to educate children and their parents about online dangers and give them the tools needed to be safe online. It is one of my favorite projects because we all have family members and friends, both old and young, who can benefit from the DVD.

### How do you balance your personal life with your professional life?

#### COURREGES

Over the past year, my wonderful wife, Erin, and I celebrated our fifth anniversary and welcomed into the world our beautiful and happy daughter, McKenna. Professionally, I am also fortunate to work with my family at a firm with a unique tradition of service. My uncle, cousin, and I, along with the other members of the firm, proudly engage in volunteer activities and pro bono work on a regular basis. Since McKenna was born, the balance between my personal and professional lives has taken on even greater meaning. I now incorporate the perspective of a parent into everything that I do, ensuring that my actions are something that my daughter will be proud of.

I am very lucky to be married to a supportive wife who shares the same values and also my commitment to public service. Erin and I practice in the same field, which allows us a unique opportunity to support each other in our day-to-day activities with a viewpoint that not many share. We have always enjoyed volunteering together, spending our weekends participating in events such as the Settlement Home for Children Charity Garage Sale, Coats for Kids, and various opportunities through both TYLA and the Austin Young Lawyers Association.

#### RHODES

I get less sleep. I strongly believe that family takes priority over work. Birthdays and anniversaries only come once a year. I understand that my wife and I will share only so many "firsts" together. As often as possible, I try to plan ahead in order to allow us to share those special moments together. I may have to arrive to work early or stay late, but it is worth it every time. ☆

**ELECTION RESULTS**

The TYLA Board of Directors has elected the following officers for 2011–12:

**Alyssa J. Long**, chair-elect of the board;  
**Kristy Sims Piazza**, vice president;  
**Sarah Rogers**, secretary; and  
**Natasha L. Brooks**, treasurer.

**Alfonso Cabañas** will serve as chair of the board.

**LONG      PIAZZA      ROGERS      Brooks**

**CONGRATULATIONS!**