

Jerry Alexander, Steve Benesh Recommended as State Bar President-elect Candidates

The State Bar of Texas Board of Directors Nominations & Elections Subcommittee voted to recommend the nomination of Jerry Alexander, of Dallas, and Steve Benesh, of Austin, as candidates for 2023-2024 State Bar president-elect. If the board approves their nominations, Alexander and Benesh would appear on the ballot in April 2023 along with any certified petition candidates. Potential petition candidates could begin collecting signatures on September 1, 2022, and have until March 1, 2023, to submit their nominating petitions to the State Bar for certification. This year, the subcommittee considered candidates from any county in the state, in compliance with State Bar rules. The Nominations & Elections Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the State Bar board co-chaired by Immediate Past President Sylvia Borunda Firth and Immediate Past Board of Directors Chair Santos Vargas.

HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION PRESENTS 2022 DIVERSITY AWARDS

The Houston Bar Association presented its Diversity Awards to recognize outstanding law firms and individuals for their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the legal profession and greater Houston community during the HBA's 24th Annual Summer Associate Luncheon on July 21 in Houston. The recipients of the 2022 HBA Diversity Awards are Frost Brown Todd; Greenberg Traurig; Roland Garcia, shareholder in Greenberg Traurig; and Marcus Esther, of the Law Office of Marcus Esther. The awards were created in 2019 to recognize outstanding achievements and dedication by law offices, legal departments, and individuals in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession. Recipients are chosen by a committee made up of representatives from the HBA Gender Fairness Committee; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee; and LGBTQ+ Committee. For more information about the HBA, go to hba.org.

ANNE-MARIE RÁBAGO AND JOE LAWSON AMONG 2022 FASTCASE 50 WINNERS

This year's Fastcase 50 award winners include two from the Texas legal world. Attorney Anne-Marie Rábago and law library director Joe Lawson are among those honored as "the law's smartest, most courageous innovators, techies, visionaries, [and] leaders." Rábago is the founder and principal of Modern Juris, a program designed to provide tools and training to help lawyers and legal professionals to build sustainable businesses. Prior to this, she was the director of the State Bar of Texas-sponsored Texas Opportunity & Justice Incubator. The incubator program also fosters self-sustaining lawyers with an emphasis on closing the access to justice gap. Through her leadership, TOJI became one of the largest legal incubators in the country. Lawson is the director of the Harris County Robert W. Hainsworth Law Library. Under his direction, the library has increasingly looked to technology to make legal information even more equitable. Lawson engineered the Synchronous Touchless Assistive Node, or STAN, a device composed of a TV screen, printer, and CPU stationed in the library lobby. Run by one library staff member, STAN is used to assist patrons through a virtual meeting. For more information about the 2022 Fastcase 50 award winners, go to fastcase.com.

TYLER THEATER COULD BE TORN DOWN FOR NEW SMITH COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The nearly 100-year-old Arcadia Theater, currently housed at 121 N. Big Spring St. in Tyler and the present home of the Martin Walker Law Firm office, could soon be just a memory. On November 8, residents of Smith County will hold a bond election to approve the construction of a new county courthouse and parking garage—a project that has been in the works for over 20 years, according to the *Tyler Morning Telegraph*. If approved, the downtown city block containing the Arcadia Theater will be demolished, giving way to a more spacious courthouse. The new courthouse would address longstanding safety and spacing issues plaguing the current courthouse that was built in 1955 and has become overcrowded.



ABOVE: Renovated Arcadia Theater. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTIN WALKER

Opened on October 15, 1925, the 585-seat theater showed its first talking motion picture on February 13, 1929, according to the *Tyler Morning Telegraph*. The theater closed its doors for film showing in 1992. Martin Walker founding partners Reid Martin and Jack Walker purchased the building housing the theater in February 2013 and began renovations. During the remodeling, the firm found several original theater trinkets, including a film cannister and fragments of the original projector. The stage was converted into a glass-enclosed conference room, with the back wall featuring a scene from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The reassembled projector and a pair of original theater seats are now situated in the main office area facing the conference room. The office also features a mezzanine level, which was added during the renovation, and a local curated art gallery that is rotated quarterly. Walker said the firm has molded the office into a popular social gathering spot in Tyler.

"We've kind of created a venue out of it and we have a lot of functions here," Walker told the *Texas Bar Journal*. "All of the bar parties are here, and then we have local charitable organizations that have events here." With the bond election approaching, Walker said he would be sad to see the theater go but he recognizes the value of a new county courthouse. "We're sad to lose it, but understandably, for the fact that we need a new Smith County Courthouse, for sure. It is definitely outdated." **TBJ**