



*Former State Bar of  
Texas President  
Richard Pena Named  
National Conference  
of Bar Presidents  
2024 Fellow*

Austin attorney and former State Bar of Texas President Richard Pena was named the National

Conference of Bar Presidents 2024 Fellow, according to a press release. Pena, who served as State Bar of Texas president from 1998 to 1999, is the second Texas-based attorney to receive the award. The late James B. Sales, who served as State Bar of Texas president from 1988 to 1989 and who passed away in February 2023, was named the NCBP Fellow in 2007. Pena, president and CEO of the Law Offices of Richard Pena, has embodied excellence in the legal profession for decades. He made history as the first Hispanic and minority president of the Austin Bar Association in 1990 and the State Bar of Texas, is a trailblazer in the Hispanic legal community, a trusted mentor to many, and has consistently provided the organized bar with stellar leadership and service. Following his tenures as president of the Austin Bar Association and the State Bar of Texas, Pena continued serving the legal community as president of the American Bar Foundation, completing multiple terms as a member of the American Bar Association House of Delegates, serving on multiple committees within the American Bar Association, and actively engaging with several other legal organizations. For more information about the NCBP, go to [ncbp.org](http://ncbp.org).

**BILL MATEJA TO SERVE AS  
DALLAS BAR ASSOCIATION  
PRESIDENT**

Bill Mateja, a partner in Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton in Dallas, was inaugurated as the 115th president of the Dallas Bar Association, or DBA, on January 20, according to a press release. Mateja, whose practice focuses on white-collar defense and corporate investigations, has been on the DBA Board of Directors for many years and has also served on a variety of DBA committees and sections. He is a past president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association. Other officers serving on the board include Vicki Blanton (president-elect), of AT&T; Jonathan Childers (first vice president), of Lynn Pinker Hurst & Schwegmann; Sarah Rogers (second vice president), of Thompson Coe; Chelsea Hilliard (secretary/treasurer), of McGuireWoods, and Cheryl Camin Murray (immediate past president), of Katten Muchin Rosenman. For more information about the DBA, go to [dallasbar.org](http://dallasbar.org).



Photo courtesy of the Dallas Bar Association

**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. For more information about these awards, contact the Legal Access Department at 512-427-1855 or by email at [probono@texasbar.com](mailto:probono@texasbar.com).

**TEXAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION  
TAKES ACTION ON WORKING GROUP REPORT**

The Texas Access to Justice Commission met December 15 to consider the report from the commission's Access to Legal Services Working Group. After accepting public comment and discussion among the commissioners, the commission voted to approve the following recommendations from the working group's report:

- Authorize Supreme Court of Texas-licensed (1) paraprofessionals to represent and assist low-income Texans with certain matters in certain areas of the law and (2) Community Justice Workers to provide limited-scope representation in justice court cases, under the supervision of an attorney working for a legal aid entity or other nonprofit entity. ("Low income" is defined as at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines as determined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.)
- Create rules, qualifications, licensing, and disciplinary infrastructure within the Judicial Branch Certification Commission to ensure paraprofessionals have the necessary training, skill, and oversight to deliver quality services while protecting the public.

The Access to Justice Commission voted against the working group's other proposal, which would create a pilot program, regulated and overseen by the Judicial Branch Certification Commission and the Supreme Court, that permits non-attorney ownership under an exception to Texas Disciplinary Rule of Professional Conduct 5.04 for entities that demonstrate a business model that provides services to low-income Texans and includes infrastructure to protect clients and ensure attorney independence. The full report of the commission's working group is available at [texasatj.org/december-2023-texas-access-justice-commission-meeting](http://texasatj.org/december-2023-texas-access-justice-commission-meeting), along with all the working group's past meeting agendas, materials, and videos. Video from the December 15 commission meeting can be viewed on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDpE69EaABE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDpE69EaABE). To submit comments on these issues, please email [suggestions@texasatj.org](mailto:suggestions@texasatj.org). **TBJ**