

**DENISE SCOFIELD**

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Co-Chairs Laura Gibson and Chad Baruch  
SBOT Nominations and Elections Subcommittee

Re: Statement of Interest to Serve as President of the State Bar of Texas

Dear Co-Chairs Gibson and Baruch and Subcommittee Members:

Thank you for inviting me to submit a letter expressing my interest in being nominated as a candidate for President-elect of the State Bar of Texas.

Service to the legal community has been the highlight of my 32 years of law practice. While I love being a lawyer and have had the good fortune to work on some really interesting disputes at several great firms, the opportunities to serve have brought me the greatest joy and satisfaction-whether that be serving in elected or appointed leadership positions, taking on significant pro bono work, or mentoring younger lawyers. I've attached my resume which lists some of these activities. The timing is right in my career and family life to continue that service by taking on the responsibility of leading our bar.

I've worked hard over my career to make meaningful connections with lawyers across all walks of life, big firm, small firm, solos, plaintiff, defense, legal aid, in-house, government, rural, urban, and young and old. I get that it doesn't matter what kind of practice one has or where, the bottom line is that being a lawyer is hard. Hard mentally, hard physically. I think having leaders of our profession who readily recognize that fact is crucial to providing the support our profession needs so badly. I've been able to make meaningful connections at least in part because I've faced a number of the same kinds of challenges that so many other lawyers have faced. I've practiced at big, medium, and small firms and did a short stint in-house. I understand the pressures of bringing in clients, servicing them, and then collecting in order to keep the lights on. I received fee invoices during my in-house assignment and had to explain the value-add to the business. I understand juggling too much work and the significant stress of not having enough. I understand the pride of a big win for a client and the profound disappointment when you fall short. I get what it's like to have life-threatening health challenges along the way. My husband is a plaintiff's lawyer who has experienced his own share of professional and personal ups and downs. We raised three children who now are young professionals and who fully appreciate what it takes to work hard but put family first. Empathy comes naturally to me in the context of the practice of law and leadership.

From a geographic standpoint, my practice is one that frequently puts me in courts across the state. During many years, I've spent more time working in the Permian Basin, Galveston

County, Bexar County, Fort Bend County, Dallas, and places in between than I have in Houston. I've formed relationships—and friendships—with lawyers in all of those places, and those lawyers have enriched my own perspective on Texas legal practice and our bar.

From my years of bar work and relationships with lawyers across the state, I have a strong understanding of many of the issues faced by the State Bar, some new, others old. Our most recent leaders have calmed the waters and for that we are fortunate. Our future leaders should continue to steady the sea by focusing on the common issues that unite us, including topics such as artificial intelligence and wellness.

The transformational advances in technology may very well present the most significant issue for our bar and its members in the years ahead. Like the internet generally and electronic research platforms specifically, artificial intelligence has the potential to bring revolutionary change to what we do and how we do it. Our bar should be at the forefront of studying and recommending best practices for its use in both transactional and litigation practices. Can we harness the positive attributes and protect against the dangers? Can we utilize AI to increase the delivery of legal services to the disadvantaged? How can our members manage risk and comply with the canons of ethics? And how can we protect against the displacement of members of our bar? Engaging our sections in the discussion and consulting with technology experts who “see ahead” is key. Taking the lead on these issues would provide a valuable service to our members.

The health and well-being of Texas lawyers is another issue that touches us all. My first mentor committed suicide. Depression, addiction, and suicide continue to plague our profession, and the recognition of that and the support of our members in crisis should be at the forefront of what we do and who we are. We have tremendous programs for lawyers who are in troubled times; we also have a wonderful grassroots contingent of lawyers working on prevention and support. The State Bar should continue to support programming aimed at stress management and wellness through all stages of practice.

The State Bar of Texas is a source of pride for me. It is operated by highly professional, dedicated, and well-intentioned staff and volunteers whose mission is to serve lawyers across the state. I think we do it better than anyone anywhere else, and it would be a privilege and an honor to steward our bar through the years ahead.

All the best,



Denise Scofield

# Denise Scofield

Partner in Houston and Dallas

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**Denise Scofield is an experienced first chair trial lawyer providing trusted guidance to clients who face serious business problems. She uses her extensive knowledge of the energy and petrochemical industries to help her clients determine the best outcome possible and to execute a plan to deliver it. She is especially skilled at protecting her clients at the earliest stages of a crisis. By understanding what her clients will consider to be a win, Denise crafts a courtroom strategy with that result in mind.**

## Services

Litigation, Oil & Gas Litigation, Environmental, Complex Commercial Litigation, Environmental Litigation & Enforcement, Energy Industry Investigations & Litigation, International Arbitration, Class Actions, Privacy & Data Security

## Sectors

Energy & Infrastructure, Technology, New Media & Telecommunications, Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices

## Admissions

Texas

## Education

Southern Methodist University, JD, 1992  
Vanderbilt University, BA, 1989

Head of the Litigation Practice for the Houston office, Denise represents clients in commercial, environmental, and mass tort disputes. With her deep understanding of the energy and petrochemical industries and the pressures they face, she is consulted by clients in all facets of those industries. She has experience on both sides of the docket and is adept at working with her clients to determine whether aggressive litigation or guided resolution is in their best interest.

Denise brings a unique perspective to each dispute, having worked in-house to assist a major oil and gas client with the integration of a significant amount of litigation after a large acquisition. She subsequently co-managed an oilfield services client's large portfolio of litigation matters for many years, serving as lead counsel on cases involving commercial, environmental, mass and toxic tort, products and premises liability, and trade secret allegations pending in courts across the country. In addition, Denise has held national and regional coordinating counsel roles for clients facing environmental and mass tort litigation, often leading large teams to accomplish her clients' goals. Because of these experiences, she understands the bottom-line impact of litigation on her clients and is mindful of those financial implications by developing realistic cost estimates to ensure there are no surprises.

Denise has secured significant wins in cases critical to her clients, both through trial and motion practice and appeal. She successfully tried Phase One of the Deepwater Horizon litigation on behalf of an oilfield services client, winning her client's dismissal at the close of the plaintiffs' case. She recently defeated a mass tort case involving hexavalent chromium brought to national attention by Erin Brockovich. And she won a take-nothing judgment in a matter involving sophisticated deepwater well equipment that had industry-wide implications. Her

creativity and special awareness of indemnity provisions and non-monetary settlement options that can bring a case to a less costly resolution frequently result in favorable outcomes for her clients outside of the courtroom.

## Experience

Denise's recent significant cases follow.

- Representing an **oilfield services company** in an indemnity dispute pending in Oklahoma federal court involving over US\$100M
- Representing an **American multinational conglomerate** in a matter seeking pre-suit discovery in Galveston, Texas against a mass tort plaintiffs' lawyer for use in investigating potential fraud
- Defeated a US\$275M breach of contract action brought by a major oil and gas operator against a **global oilfield equipment manufacturer** after two-week-long federal bench trial. The high-stakes case for the client had significant implications for the oil and gas industry. The Fifth Circuit upheld the win at the trial court level. Denise was twice recognized for her work on this matter by Am Law as a "Litigator of the Week" Runner-Up.
- Defeated a global insurance provider's petition for pre-suit discovery against a **valve manufacturer** in connection with an explosion at a plastics plant in south Texas involving US\$65M in insured losses and prevented the client from being sued
- Prevailed in a federal court action to set aside a US\$1.4B default judgment secured by a privately owned energy company against a **prominent foreign national** who had not been properly served with process
- Represented an **oilfield services company** in a hexavalent chromium contamination lawsuit brought by Midland, Texas residents after Erin Brockovich made allegations against the client on a national morning news program. Also represented the client in connection with the investigations led by the Environmental Protection Agency and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Secured the complete dismissal of the lawsuit when Texas' Eastland Court of Appeals issued mandamus relief and exonerated the client at the regulatory level.
- Representing the **former owner of a sand mine** located in rural Wisconsin in the defense of environmental and toxic tort claims
- For defendant, negotiated favorable resolution of a mass tort case involving a 20-day uncontrolled blowout of a gas well in South Texas, from which plaintiffs alleged there was a discharge of toxic hydrocarbons and carcinogenic gases that produced an environmental hazard damaging thousands of acres of property, surrounding waterways, livestock, and the plaintiffs' health

## Pro Bono

In a landmark case that included a four-week federal court trial, two Fifth Circuit rulings, and an eight-page statement from the U.S. Supreme Court, Denise was part of a team that secured the United States' first permanent injunction requiring a prison to provide robust COVID-19 protections—including testing all inmates on a weekly basis—for a geriatric prison in Texas, earning the team a 2020 *National Law Journal* "Trailblazer Award for Crisis Leadership."

## Honors & Awards

- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Litigation – Environmental, 2022–2023
- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Oil and Gas Law, 2022–2023
- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Commercial Litigation, 2023
- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions – Defendants, 2023
- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Personal Injury Litigation – Defendants, 2023
- "Leading Lawyer," *The Legal 500 US*, General Commercial Disputes, 2021–2023

- “Key Lawyer,” *The Legal 500 US*, Product Liability, Mass Tort, and Class Action – Defense: Toxic Tort, 2021–2023
- “Key Lawyer,” *The Legal 500 US*, Energy Litigation: Oil and Gas, 2021, 2023
- Listed, *Lawdragon*, “500 Leading Environmental Lawyers,” 2023
- Listed, *Lawdragon*, “500 Leading Energy Lawyers,” 2023
- Named “Best Mentor” by *Texas Lawyer’s Texas Legal Awards*, 2022
- Listed, *Lawdragon*, “500 Leading Environmental and Energy Lawyers,” 2021
- Listed, *Texas Super Lawyers* (2005, 2007–2018)
- Listed, “Rising Stars,” *Texas Super Lawyers* (2004–2005)
- “Outstanding Young Lawyer of Texas,” 2003
- “Outstanding Young Lawyer of Houston,” 2003
- “Five Outstanding Young Texans,” Texas Jaycees, 2004

## Activities

- Past-President, Houston Bar Association
- Director, Texas Access to Justice Foundation
- Past Chair and Trustee, Houston Bar Foundation
- Director, Houston Urban Debate League
- Past Director, State Bar of Texas
- Past President, Houston Young Lawyers Association
- Past Chair, Houston Young Lawyers Foundation
- Charter Fellow, Houston Young Lawyers Association
- Life Fellow, Houston Bar Foundation
- Fellow, Texas Bar Foundation

## Publications & Speaking Engagements

### Speaking Engagements

- “Crisis Management and Emergency Response: Best Practices in the Energy industry,” The Texas Journal of Oil, Gas, and Energy Law Symposium, Feb. 2023
- “The Past, Present and Future of Women in the Law,” Houston Bar Association Seminar, April 2021