



HONORING THE PAST - EMBRACING THE FUTURE

Top row, from left to right: Adelfa Callejo – First female Hispanic practitioner in Dallas; Alberto Gonzales – First Hispanic US Attorney General (2005-2007); Gustavo C. Garcia – Together with Carlos Cadena, first Hispanic Attorney to argue before U.S. Supreme Court in the landmark case Hernández v. Texas (1954); Richard Peña – First Hispanic to serve as State Bar President of Texas (1998-1999); Justice Eva Guzman – First Hispanic Woman on Texas Supreme Court (2009-present); Bottom row, from left to right: Justice Raul A. Gonzalez, Jr., – First Hispanic appointed or elected to statewide office in Texas; first Hispanic on Texas Supreme Court (1984-1998); SBOT President J. Chrys Dougherty with founding members/leaders of the Concerns of the Spanish Speaking Community Section: James W. Ray, Jr., J. Manuel Banales, Hon. Reynaldo G. Garza and Frank Herrera (1980); Linda Reyna Yañez – Appointed by Gov. Ann Richards in 1993, the first Hispanic woman to serve on an appeals court in the history of the State of Texas and the first woman to serve on the 13th Court of Appeals; Carlos Cadena – Together with Gustavo C. Garcia, the first Hispanic attorney to argue before U.S. Supreme Court in the landmark case Hernández v. Texas (1954).

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Message from the Chair



Judge Maria Salas Mendoza

The year has truly flown by. I hope you've had a great 2024! As we enter a new year, I am wishing everyone peace and hope for a productive and lucrative 2025. I am grateful to continue in service to you, the Bar, and our community.

Thank you to our CLE committee who put together a wonderful seminar on the proposed rules regarding Paraprofessionals and Court Assistants.

Although the proposal is undergoing further study, this was a very helpful program that explained the process resulting in the proposals. Thank you to Kennon Wooten and Betty Balli Torres for being so flexible and for accommodating the quick turnaround. Remember that all Section CLEs are available on the website—free to members. Also, if you want further information about the working group that developed the proposed rules, see Access to Legal Services Working Group | Texas Access to Justice Commission.

We have another education program pending rescheduling: Pioneer of Mexican-American Civil Rights: Alonso S. Perales. Professor Cynthia Orozco has written a wonderful book on this trailblazer and we are hoping to bring you that program in January.

IMPORTANT: The Council is recommending a name change to our Section. Born in 1979, the "Concerns of the Spanish Speaking Community" became the "Hispanic Issues Section" during the 1991-92 Bar year. The proposal is to change the Section's name

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to the Hispanic Lawyers Section. I encourage you to view the 45th Anniversary Video under the 'history' link on our website. The Section has grown and developed in many ways. Through the video you will be reminded of our efforts over the years by some incredible leaders and public servants. Having been a member of the Section since 1997, I have seen the Section through very active years and some not quite so active. Regardless, our goals and programs remain largely the same and that is not changing. We will still provide practical education and benefits for our members; we remain committed to scholarships for law students; and we will continue to raise issues that affect our community within the purview of our mission as Hispanic lawyers and members of this Section of the State Bar of Texas.

The name change cannot occur without the members' approval. A special meeting of the section was approved by the Council and held on December 11th. I am

grateful for the many members and section leaders who joined to share their thoughts and make their positions heard. Following a thoughtful discussion a vote was held and the section approved a proposed name change to 'Hispanic Lawyers Section.' I will now move the process forward through the State Bar and will continue to provide updates as they occur.

I will begin the new year as Chief of the 8th Court of Appeals, grateful for my work with the members of this Section and Council and looking forward to new challenges in both areas.

Wishing you the very best during the holidays! However you celebrate, I am hoping you are taking some time off before 2025, that you are surrounded by people who make your life full and happy, and that we begin the new year in robust spirit, fueled to serve our clients, constituents, and communities.

PARAPROFESSIONAL RULES DELAYED INDEFINITELY

By Gloria Leal, Government Affairs and Consultant

The Supreme Court of Texas issued an order delaying the expected effective date of proposed rules governing licensed legal paraprofessionals and licensed court-access assistants. The effective date of December 1, 2024, has been delayed pending further order of the court to consider comments received during the public comment period.

It is anticipated that the Texas Legislature will act on the issue during the upcoming legislative session. As part of its interim charges, The House Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence Committee took invited and public testimony on the merits of paraprofessionals providing limited legal services to low-income Texans. The proposed rules would allow individuals with certain qualifications to apply for licensure as legal paraprofessionals. Acting under the supervision of attorneys, legal paraprofessionals could provide legal services in the areas of family law, estate planning and probate law and consumer debt law, as well as in justice court. Various stakeholders, including non-profit organizations, bar associations, attorneys and others, testified regarding the rules.

A copy of the proposed rules can be found at the following link
<https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1458990/249050.pdf>.

HIS encourages the submission of items for future newsletters.
These can be sent to Elma Garcia at egarcia@texasbar.com.

PREVIEW OF THE 89TH, 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

By Gloria Leal, Government Affairs and Consultant



TEXAS HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM CHARGES

During the period between legislative sessions, referred to as the interim, all standing committees are assigned general and specific charges generally reflecting the priorities of the leadership of each chamber. Committees are charged with monitoring the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and overseeing the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the previous (88th) Legislature. In addition, committees are charged with conducting oversight of associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of legislation passed. Most committees are also assigned specific Interim Charges to investigate and make recommendations for proposed legislation. During the interim, both House and Senate Committees held hearings where invited and public testimony was taken on the charges and related matters.

The following is a partial list with abbreviated descriptions of 2004 Interim Charges. For a complete list, visit the Texas Legislature Online at <https://capitol.texas.gov/>.

HOUSE INTERIM CHARGES Issued by Speaker Dade Phelan, May 2024

House Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence Committee, Chair Jeff Leach (R-Collin)

Two hearings held during the Fall of 2024 to review:

- HB 19, relating to the creation of a specialty (business) trial court to hear certain cases; authorizing fees
- HB 841, relating to certain statistics and related information gathered by the Texas Judicial Council
- HB 2384, relating to court administration and judicial qualifications.

The Committee took testimony on:

- Judicial Compensation
- Paraprofessionals Providing Limited Legal Services
- Use and Misuse of the Texas Citizens Participation Act (TCPA)
- Civil Nondisclosure Agreements in Child Sexual Abuse Settlements.

Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence, Chair Joe Moody (D-El Paso)

The committee is charged with reviewing:

- H.B. 17, relating to official misconduct by and removal of prosecuting attorneys
- Protecting Survivors Against Crimes of Abusers in human trafficking and domestic violence.

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Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety, Chair Ryan Guillen (R-Rio Grande City)

The committee is charged with reviewing:

- S.B. 602, relating to the law enforcement authority of federal border patrol agents
- Firearm Purchasing Fees - reducing or eliminating the fees
- Consider Use of Less-Lethal Devices in Law Enforcement.

Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues, Chair Harold Dutton (D-Houston)

The committee is charged with:

- Examining “Best Interest of Child” definition in Family Law cases
- Reviewing Juvenile Justice System Outcomes.

State Affairs, Chair Todd Hunter (R-Corpus Christi)

The committee is charged with:

- Securing the Border: review operation of Operation Lone Star to prevent criminal activity.

SENATE INTERIM CHARGES

Issued by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick

Border Security Committee, Chair Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury)

The committee is charged with:

- Securing the Texas-Mexico Border: Examine the impact of transnational organized, criminal activity on commerce, fuel theft and make recommendations
- Operation Lone Star, Make recommendations relating to
 - S.B. 602, relating to the law enforcement authority of federal border patrol agents
 - S.B. 1133, relating to compensation to landowners for property damage caused by certain criminal activities.

Business and Industry Committee, Chair M.D., Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown)

Artificial Intelligence:

The committee is charged with:

- Evaluating the implications of AI adoption across the public and private sectors
- Making recommendations for a regulatory framework for AI development
- Proposing changes to state law to protect the Texas radio, television, music, and film industries against unauthorized use by AI
- Monitoring the findings of the Texas Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council.

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Criminal Justice Committee

The committee is charged with:

- Stopping Child Predator and use of deep-fake technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to harm or exploit children
- Bail Reform - Examine role of “charitable bail organizations” in bond payments for defendants and impact on court appearance
 - Reviewing S.B. 1004 creating the criminal offense of tampering with an electronic monitoring device and to certain consequences.

State Affairs Committee

The committee is charged with:

- **Maintaining Election Security:** Identify threats to Texas’s election integrity, including those from “Big Tech” and foreign entities. Evaluate current laws that prohibit political subdivisions and public-school districts from using government resources for illegal electioneering.

Upcoming HIS Events

January 9:

HIS In-Person Council Meeting
El Paso

January 10:

Eighth Court of Appeals Investiture of Chief Justice Maria Salas Mendoza
El Paso County Courthouse
10:30 (MT)

February 12:

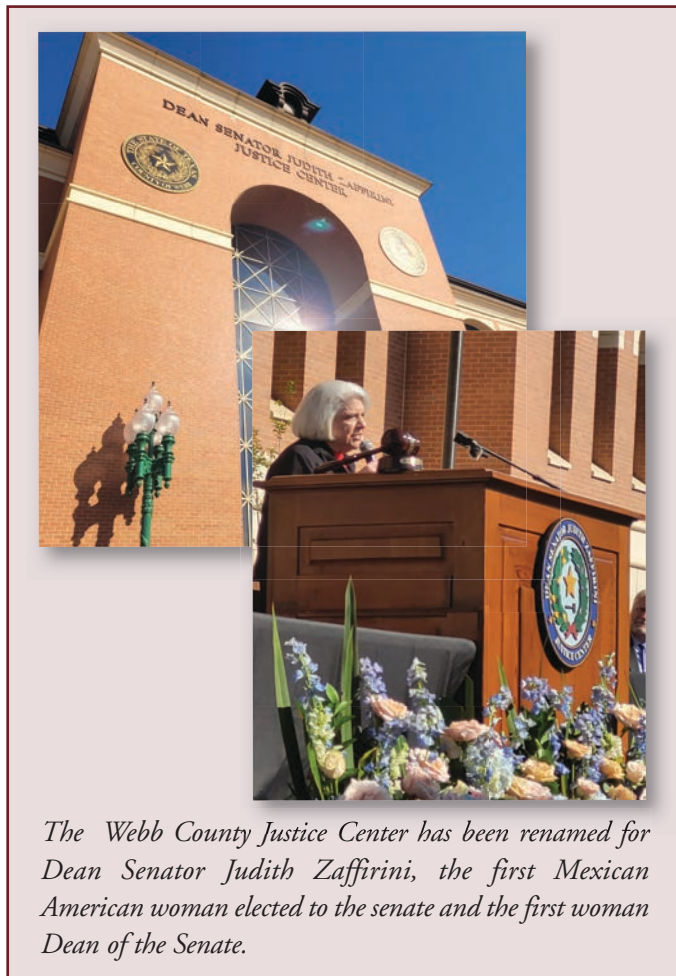
HIS Virtual Council Meeting
11:30 (MT)

Noteworthy Events and Happenings:



LAWtería 2024

The Hispanic Issues Section and the Texas Access to Justice Foundation thank the sponsors and participants of LAWtería 2024 for raising a record-setting **\$70,349**. These funds will be used to support the civil justice needs of the low-income Hispanic community. It was a fun evening celebrating our Hispanic heritage and honoring the legacy of our Hispanic "firsts" in Texas. The event featured distinguished guest callers: Dean Judith Zaffirini, Justice Robbie Partida-Kipness, Justice Gisela Triana, and Justice Lori Valenzuela. Former State Bar President Sylvia Borunda Firth hosted the event, which also featured a video address from Texas Supreme Court Justice Brett Busby and a piano performance of "Texas, Our Texas" by special guest Chief Justice Nathan Hecht.



The Webb County Justice Center has been renamed for Dean Senator Judith Zaffirini, the first Mexican American woman elected to the senate and the first woman Dean of the Senate.

Member Recruitment

This year the section is prioritizing member recruitment in order to grow the membership and broaden the section's reach.

In October, section member Gloria Leal attended the Hispanic Bar Association of Austin's annual Hispanic Heritage Luncheon, which supports scholarships that enable Hispanic college students to become lawyers. Leal spoke at the luncheon highlighting the importance of the section's work and encouraging participants to join the section.

HIS Council Member Elma Garcia hosted an information table at the State Bar's Annual Texas Minority Council Program held in Austin in October. The TMCP is held annually and is the premier client development, networking, and CLE event for attorneys in Texas. Its mission is to increase opportunities for diverse attorneys who provide legal services to corporate and governmental entities and to expose organizations to the legal talent of diverse attorneys in Texas. At the conference Garcia shared information about section benefits – including networking, and CLE – encouraging attendees to join the section.

