



2024 - 2025

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A Letter from the President



Nick Pesina

As we wrap up another summer month, it's hard not to be inspired by the results of the Olympics—a time when athletes from around the globe exemplify dedication, perseverance, and, most importantly, the spirit of service. This month's theme, "service," is a powerful reminder of the role we play not just in our profession but in our broader communities.

Muhammad Ali once said, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." This quote captures the essence of why we do what we do as lawyers. Every case, whether private, pro bono, or "low bono" matter—is an opportunity to give back to the community, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring justice is accessible to all.

As the world watched the Olympic athletes push themselves to their limits, we should be reminded that service, like sportsmanship, requires dedication and a commitment to something

greater than ourselves. Just as Olympians strive for excellence in their sport, we must strive for excellence in our practice and our service to others. Whether through volunteer work, mentoring young attorneys, or advocating for the voiceless, each act of service is a step toward making society a better place.

Let us exemplify the Olympic spirit in our daily lives and practice, ensuring that our service is not just a duty but an outward expression by our legal profession.

As always, please let us know if there is anything the Smith County Bar Association can do to improve your experience.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our profession.

Sincerely,





You are invited to a
Groundbreaking Ceremony
for the Smith County Courthouse

THURSDAY

15

AUGUST

— ♦ at 9 a.m. ♦ —

Ceremony will be held on Spring Avenue behind the Courthouse.

Please park in the lot at 303 E. Ferguson Street
or Fair Plaza Parking Garage at 208 S. College Avenue

PRESS RELEASE ON PROPOSED NEW RULES TO LICENSE LEGAL PARAPROFESSIONALS

AUGUST 6, 2024

**CONTACT: AMY STARNES, 512.463.1441
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

AUSTIN — The Supreme Court of Texas issued preliminary rules allowing licensed paraprofessionals and court-access assistants to provide limited legal services that will help bridge the gap between the civil legal needs of low-income Texans and the resources currently available to fill those needs. The Court's order invites public comment on the proposed new and amended rules by November 1, 2024. The rules are expected to take effect on December 1, 2024.

The Court has for years championed efforts to combat the "justice gap" in Texas. Many Texans who qualify financially for legal assistance are unable to receive help due to resource and staffing constraints. The Legal Services Corporation, the nation's largest funder of civil legal aid programs, estimates that 92 percent of low-income Americans now have unmet civil legal needs, up from 90 percent in their last survey. These low-income individuals often find no option other than representing themselves in court.

The Court's proposed new and amended rules were developed in a nearly two-year process that began when the Court, through Justice Brett Busby, its liaison to the Texas Access to Justice Commission, asked the Commission to propose rule modifications that would allow qualified non-lawyers to provide limited legal services to low-income individuals. A working group formed by the Commission met five times during 2023, collecting input from various stakeholders and the public before producing a final report of recommendations to the Court in December 2023.

The new and amended rules allow individuals with certain qualifications to apply for licensure as legal paraprofessionals. Licensed paraprofessionals may represent low-income individuals facing certain problems in the areas of family law, estate planning and probate law, and consumer debt law, as well as in justice court cases. The rules also allow licensed court-access assistants sponsored by approved legal assistance organizations to represent low-income individuals in justice court.

Public comments may be submitted in writing to rulescomments@txcourts.gov before November 1, 2024. The full press release and court order can be found at www.txcourts.gov

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- These statistics mean there's a **chance it will be you and a certainty it will be someone you know**. Care for your colleagues and yourself.
- When you **see something, do something**. These issues can destroy lives and damage lawyers' reputations.
- Getting help for a friend or asking for help yourself **saves lives, futures, families, and practices**. Ignoring or doing nothing can cost a life.

1-800-343-8527 (TLAP)

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32%

of lawyers under 31 and
21% of all lawyers have a
DRINKING PROBLEM

28%

of lawyers face
DEPRESSION

19%

of lawyers experience
ANXIETY

11%

of lawyers have
experienced
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS



**TEXAS LAWYERS'
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Confidential. Respectful. Voluntary.

CONSTITUTION DAY 2024

Tuesday, September 17 | 10am
TYLER JUNIOR COLLEGE
Rogers Palmer Performing Arts Center

The Smith County Bar Foundation and Tyler Junior College proudly present David M. Gonzalez, as the 2024 Constitution Day guest speaker. In this pivotal period of our nation, join us in learning more about the Constitution and its continued impact on our society. Students and school groups are welcome!

FREE Limited Seating

Sponsorship opportunities available at
smithcountybar.com



David M. Gonzalez

Attorney & Adjunct
Professor,
University of Texas at Austin



Who's Who of the SCBA



Name: Alex Castetter, Lone Star Legal Aid

Birthplace: Rockford, Illinois

High School/College/Law School: Big Spring (TX) High School, UT Austin, Texas Tech School of Law

Significant other/kids/pets: Teresa Castetter and 2 sons - Noah (24) and Daniel (21), along with Mango, Lettuce & Panama (dogs) and Pina (chinchilla)

Favorite book: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Favorite hobbies: Playing basketball, watching sports, reading.

What is your area of practice? Poverty and Civil Rights law.

What's your favorite way to spend the day off? Spend time with my family and watch my son play college soccer.

Who is your hero? And why? Abraham Lincoln. I grew up in a town that hosted one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates (which resulted in the Freeport Doctrine!). I always admired his ability to deal with nearly impossible situations and (usually) do the right thing.

Coffee or tea? Coffee

What is your favorite quote? "If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice" (Neil Peart of Rush).

Describe yourself in three words: Committed, hard-working, reliable

Why should one become a member of the SCBA? To get to know the other members of the Smith County Bar better.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT PRO BONO WORK, BUT NOT SURE WHERE TO START? ONE OF THESE CASES MAY BE FOR YOU!

Case 23-1030762

Client is a 79 year old woman who helped support her son while he was trying to get on social security disability after an injury. He now receives same but client has many creditors resulting from the bills she could not pay, including at least one judgment against her. She does not own anything substantial but is interested in pursuing bankruptcy or at least getting advice regarding same.

Case 24-1050028

Client is a 68 year old woman who is disabled from Rhabdomyolosis. She cannot walk without assistance. She has numerous creditors and cannot pay her debts. She is seeking bankruptcy or advice regarding same.

Case 24-1049712

Client is a 67 year old woman with multiple health issues. She is unable to work. She is also caregiver to her elderly mother with dementia. She has numerous credit card, hospital and medical debts. She is seeking advice regarding bankruptcy.

Case 24-1068715

Client hired a trucking company to pier and beam home in Smith County. She paid \$1000 up front with \$2500 to be paid on delivery. The home was damaged and taken to the trucker's lot in Morris County. Client is seeking assistance for suit regarding damages/breach of contract regarding her home.

Contact Alex Castetter for more information!

903.595.4781, x1625

acastetter@lonestarlegal.org



AUGUST CLE

The New Smith County Courthouse - What's in it for Me?

presented by Judge Neil Franklin & Brandy Ziegler





Smith County Bar representatives met with State Bar President, Steve Benesh (blue jacket).

BAR LEADERS CONFERENCE HOUSTON

Every year, the State Bar of Texas invests in the leaders of our local bar chapters by providing an incredible workshop and breakout sessions covering a multitude of topics that impact our legal community. Thanks to our bar leaders for attending (Marisa Allen, Leigh Goodson, Madeline Porter Creech, and Nicholette Wilkerson, along with State Bar committee members, Christina Davis and Jim Huggler!



We had some winners at Casino Night!



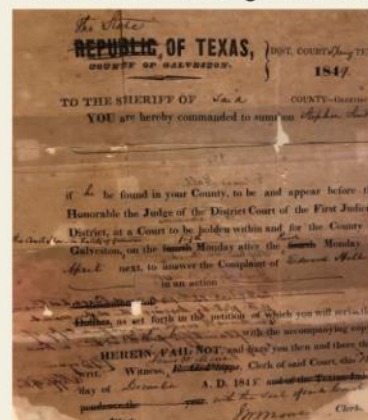
Jim really scored, winning 2 gift baskets filled with goodies from Amarillo and Waco.



Marisa Allen, Beth Filla, and Jim Huggler met with President-Elect, Santos Vargas (green shirt).



Christina also got in on the winning action!



From the State Bar Archives – summons notice from 1849.

Recycling was a thing back in the day!

AUGUST GATHERINGS



FAMILY LAW SECTION MEMBERS



THE UNIVERSITY *of*
TULSA

College of Law



THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA COLLEGE OF LAW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE IS THRILLED TO THE LAUNCHING OF A NEW PLATFORM FOR STUDENTS, ALUMNI, AND EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS, *PDO CONNECT* POWERED BY 12TWENTY!

NEW FEATURES ALLOW ALL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS TO:

- POST YOUR OWN JOBS TO OUR JOB BOARD.
- REGISTER FOR ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEWS (OCI) ONLINE AND MANAGE THINGS LIKE CANDIDATE INTERVIEW SELECTIONS ON YOUR OWN.
- SUPERVISE YOUR TU EXTERNS MORE EASILY BY COMPLETING EVALUATIONS ONLINE WITH JUST A FEW CLICKS.

OF COURSE, WE'RE STILL A FULL-SERVICE IN-PERSON OFFICE TOO, SO IF YOU'D RATHER INTERACT WITH US BY STOPPING BY, SENDING US AN EMAIL, OR CHATTING ON THE PHONE, WE'RE VERY HAPPY TO CONTINUE TO DO SO.

PLEASE EMAIL NATALIE-FROST@UTULSA.EDU TO SCHEDULE.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO USING THIS NEW TOOL TO HELP YOU IN ALL YOUR ENDEAVORS TO CONNECT WITH TU LAW!

SMU Dedman School of Law

OFFICE OF **CAREER SERVICES**
OUR FOCUS. YOUR SUCCESS.

**Join
us!**

RECRUITING PROGRAMS

October Recruiting Program
October 8 - 15, 2024

Register by September 6

Spring Recruiting Program
February 24 - March 5, 2025

Register by January 20

Questions?

Contact Beth Lee (beth@smu.edu) or Smitha Mathews (mathews@smu.edu)



Thank you for your continued participation with and support of the SCBA.

Visit
www.smithcountybar.com
 to renew your membership
 or join a section!

We now have auto renew!

Important SCB Dates

HAPPY HOUR!!

August 1, *True Vine on the Square*, 4:30-6:30p

Family Section Happy Hour

August 8, *Prime 102 Corner Bar*, 5-7p

Monthly CLE

August 9, *Willow Brook Country Club*, 12-1p

SCBF Board Meeting

August 14, *Genecov Room*, 12-1p

SCYLA Board Meeting

August 15, *Genecov Room*, 12-1p

Courthouse Groundbreaking Ceremony

August 15, *Spring Avenue*, 9a

SCBA Board Meeting

August 22, *Genecov Room*, 12-1p

Reminder -

Schools are back in session this month! Slow down in school zones!!



The SCBF is a 501/c/3, EIN 81-0585550

Mission Statement

Furthering justice and promoting the rule of law by providing resources and education to the community.

Interested in including the SCBF in your estate planning? Have non-cash assets and would like a charitable deduction? Give me a call - we can help!

beth@smithcountybar.com

[Click here if you would like to honor someone with a gift to the Foundation.](#)

Thanks to all for honoring your loved ones

Advertising

Interested in advertising in The Advocate?
 Call or email Beth to check out member rates and options!



Back to School time!



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