



2025 - 2026

Association

President
Marisa Allen
VP/ President-elect
Mishae Boren
Secretary
Meme Thomas
Treasurer
Emily Brown Gaenzle

Directors 2024 - 26
Amy Blalock
Monique Hammond
Hon. Reeve Jackson
Linda Le Jones
Archer Ramey
Nathan Thauwald

Directors 2025 - 27
Fritz Hager
Eric Kolder
Sara McElroy
Kristina Ross
Morgan Wood

Ex-Officio
Nick Pesina

Foundation

President
Matt Rowan
VP/ President-elect
Leigh Hunt Goodson
Secretary
Blake Thompson
Treasurer
Will Courington

Directors 2023 - 26
Hon. Debby Gunter
Gary Traylor
Alan Wharton

Directors 2024 - 27
Hon. Nicole Mitchell
Danny Noteware
Micah John Tarry
Hon. James Worthen

Directors 2025 - 28
Christina Davis
LaRhonda Hamilton
Staton Lottmann
Matt Millsagle
Annie Northcutt
Yaziri Orrostieta
Andy Stinson
Betty Young

Ex-Officio
Mandy Nelson

Letter from the SCBA President



Marisa

"The Greatest Gift"

There's something about December mornings with kids. The house smells like cinnamon rolls before anyone's even awake. Little feet tiptoe down the hallway at 5:47 a.m.

because the calendar says eighteen more days until Christmas, and that's basically tomorrow. Wrapping paper's torn on the corner of one box because somebody had to peek. The magic's in the air, and you can't help but smile.

That feeling of something precious being given is what I think about when I read about December 15, 1791. That's the day Virginia became the eleventh state to ratify the Bill of Rights, making it law. The Founders wrapped up our freedoms like presents and said, "Here. These are yours. Merry Christmas, America."

But getting to that day took a fight. George Mason refused to sign the Constitution because the original document lacked a Bill of Rights. Patrick Henry opposed ratification for the same reason. They both feared the new federal government would have too much power and that citizens' rights could be violated without a Bill of Rights. These men weren't being difficult. They'd lived through British soldiers searching their homes and arresting people for speaking out. They knew what happened when government had too much power. Madison listened and drafted 19 amendments. The House and Senate whittled these down, and the states debated for months until Virginia became the crucial state to ratify ten of the amendments.

Freedom to speak your mind at

Thanksgiving when your uncle says something crazy. Freedom to worship without government breathing down our necks. The right to a jury trial in civil cases, not just criminal. Protection from searches without good cause. These weren't abstract theories. They were the Founders saying, "We remember what tyranny felt like, and never again."

Every one of those rights needs lawyers to defend it. Somebody's got to stand up in court and argue that speech is protected, even when it's unpopular. Somebody's got to show up for the client who can't afford a lawyer. That's us. That's literally our job description.

The Bill of Rights isn't like those toys that say "batteries included." It's more like "assembly required, constant maintenance recommended, and lawyer needed for actual operation."

When you take your oath, you swear to uphold the Constitution. All of it. Most days that oath gets buried under deadlines and difficult clients. But every time you invoke the Fifth Amendment, demand a jury trial in a civil case under the Seventh Amendment, or argue for due process, you're keeping the promise of December 15, 1791.

This Christmas, when you're watching kids tear through wrapping paper at 6 a.m. or singing slightly off-key carols, remember that the best gifts aren't things we unwrap. The best gifts require something from us: gratitude, vigilance, and faithfulness. And like presents we give our kids, they're only valuable if somebody takes care of them.

Merry Christmas, y'all.



THE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS OF THE
SMITH COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION &
SMITH COUNTY YOUNG LAWYERS
INVITE YOU, A GUEST AND STAFF TO THE ANNUAL

HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

DECEMBER 12, 2025 | 5-8

ARCADIA BUILDING
III W. FERGUSON
(MARTIN WALKER LAW FIRM)

WE CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO AN
EVENING OF COMPLIMENTARY
HORS D'OEUVRES, SPIRITS,
WINE, AND BEER.

Valet parking will be available.
Additionally, Tyler Valet will be
running free shuttles from all of
the parking garages!

SCYLA is on a mission to spread love and
cheer! Please bring a children's book to add
to courthouse bookshelves.

Thank you to Our Amazing
SPONSORS

TITLE SPONSOR

Clark - Von Plonski - Anderson

FESTIVE SPONSOR

IMS Legal Strategies

PLATINUM

Allen & Thauwald, PC

Biggs & Greenslade, PC

Carroll Maloney Henry & Nelson, PLLC

Mann Tindel Thompson Law Group

GOLD

Boren & Mims, PLLC

Derryberry Zips, PLLC

Griffith Law Office, PC

Hommel Law Firm, PC

Perdue Brandon Fielder Collins & Mott, LLP

Pesina Law Firm

Ramey & Flock PC

Wilson Elser

SILVER

Hammond Law Firm, PLLC

Rollings Wood & Pace

Sinclair Law Office, PC

Starr Schoenbrun & Comte PLLC

Tarry Title

BRONZE

Deborah Race Law

Hon. Sam Griffith

In-kind donation from *Smile on Three LLC*

Maxine Darst Flatt

In Memoriam



Maxine Darst Flatt, age 95, passed away November 7, after a short illness. Maxine was a true trail-blazer and ferocious advocate for justice. Newly married and with 2 young babies, she commuted from Terrell to Commerce to earn a college degree. In 1972, she was accepted into the Texas Bar Association's Independent Law Office Study Program and in 1976, become the first woman in Kaufman County licensed to practice law. In 1981, she was appointed Terrell Municipal Judge and was elected Kaufman County Judge two years later—the first woman to hold the office. She served for 16 years, becoming one of the longest-serving judges in county history.

Throughout her career, Judge Darst was deeply involved in civic and professional organizations, leading and serving with the North and East Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association, the Women and the Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, the Kaufman County Bar Association, the Texas Association of Counties, and many local community groups. After her husband's death in 1988, she retired in 1998. In 2000, she married longtime friend Douglas Flatt and moved to Tyler, where she embraced a new chapter filled with travel, community service, and board leadership with organizations including the SCBA, East Texas Symphony, Tyler Sister Cities, UT Tyler Development Board, and the East Texas A&M University Foundation. We are grateful for the incredible legacy and life of Maxine Darst Flatt!

Make plans to attend the

Investiture Announcement

for the

Honorable Michael Davis



Monday
February 2, 2026
10a - 12p

Hollytree Country Club

6700 Hollytree Drive
Tyler, Texas

NOVEMBER CLE

Thanks, DA Jacob Putman, for such an intriguing presentation on on the FCIC. If you missed being there in person, send an email to ed@smithcountybar.com for a recording!





Thinking about becoming a Judge?
Take a step towards that goal at the
2026 High School Mock Trial
competitions!
Saturday, January 31, 2026



While volunteering at High School Mock Trial competitions doesn't necessarily advance one's career to the judiciary, it probably won't hurt your career, either!!!

We need volunteers to help judge and score each competition. Sessions are approximately 2 hours each. The event will be held at the Smith County Courthouse; first competition begins at 8 am.
Email Beth for more details!
beth@smithcountybar.com

2025-26 SCBA MEMBERSHIP

HELP US FILL THE PAGE - INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN!

Adams, Craig
Ainsworth, Jennifer
Alexander, Jon
Alleman, Mick
Allen, Adam
Allen, Marisa
Anderson, Ben
Anderson, Billy
Anderson, Roger
Arroyo, Belinda
Arscott, Cristy

Baker, Joel
Balfour, Joseph
Barkley, Alicia
Beall, Tab
Beam, Joe
Bell, Patrick
Berry, John
Biggs, Kenneth
Birdsong, Lindsey
Black, Dennis
Blalock, Amy
Bonner, Ben
Boren, Mishae
Boyd, Paul
Boynton, Gaye
Bracken, Jr., Ashley
Brantley, Stafford
Bretzke, Karen
Brown, Alan
Brown, Tom
Brownlee, Kevin
Buckner, Alesha
Bufe, John
Bunt, Robert
Burton, CJ
Bush, David

Camp, Carrie
Campbell, Bradley
Carian, Delia
Carroll, Marcus
Carroll, Jr., Otis
Castetter, Alex
Christie, Carey-
Clark, Collen
Cook, Randall
Cool, Lily
Coplan, Patricia
Cornelius, Jr., Bill
Correa, Lee
Cothern, Don
Cotten, Jeffrey
Courington, Will
Coward, Tammy
Cozby, Mary Ann
Cozby, Raymond
Craft, Brian
Craig, James
Crawford, Jennifer
Crozier, Levi

Dacus, Deron
Dacus, Shannon
Daughtrey, Amy
Davidson, Don
Davis, Christina
Davis, Hon. Leonard
Davis, Hon. Michael
Davis, Robert
Davis, Stafford
Deen, Jennifer
Derryberry, Daryl
DeVasto, Hon. Diane
Dickeson, Kearby

Dickey, Heath
Dillon, Candice
Dobbs, David
Dollahite, Keith
Dowdy, Alicia
Drott, Earl
Drott, Kyle
Drott, Natalie
Dutton, Kevin

Early, April
Echols, Jim
Embry, Jeff
Eskelson, Randy
Estrada, Edward
Evans, III, Jim

Farahnak, Dustin
Ferrier, Kevin
Filla, Beth
Findlay, Eric
Flowers, Celia
Fraser, Gregory
Friedson, Tyler
Frost, David

Gaenzle, Emily
Gazette, Mike
Gibbins, Daniel
Good, Terri
Goodson, Leigh
Goodwin, Grant
Grant, Ryan
Gray, Julie
Greenslade, John
Griffith, Rachael
Griffith, Hon. Sam
Griffith-Beard, Stephanie
Guerro, Jacob
Gunter, Hon. Debby
Guthrie, Hon. Judith
Guy, Steven

Hager, Fritz
Hager, Sarina
Hall, Carrie
Hamilton, LaRhonda
Hammond, Monique
Hardy, John C.
Hardy, John M.
Harrison, Brett
Hassett, Shaun
Hayes, Kevin
Healy, Sean
Heaton, Hon. Taylor
Heck, Jeff
Hedrick, James
Heindel, Diane
Henry, David
Henry, Diana
Hill, Wesley
Hindman, Robert
Hogan, Mike
Holloway, Mary Jo
Hommel, Jr., Bill
Hoyle, Hon. Brian
Hudson, David
Huggler, Jim
Hughes, Karen
Hughes, Logan
Hussey, Margaret
Hyatt, Jonathan

Iglesias, David
Ischy, Ashley
Isenberg, Cecilia

Jackson, Alan
Jackson, Gary
Jackson, Hon. Reeve
Jones, Linda
Jones, Mike
Jordan, Kyle

Karr, McKellar
Kean, Steven
Keeland, Chase
Kelley, Pat
Kenner, Traci
Kent, Jarad
Killough, J. Scott
Kimmel, Greg
Kingham, Austin
Knight, Grace
Knowles, Jim
Kolder, Eric
Kolder, Mary
Kummerfield, Ha
Kummerfield, Nathaniel

Lackey, Jr., Walter
Lambeth, Jim
Landers, Gary
Lemons, Bill
Lindley, Justin
Locker, Ryan
Lottmann, Richard
Lottmann, Staton
Love, Hon. John

Maloney, Collin
Martin, Reid
Maynard, Hon. Sara
McArthur, Patrick
McCullough, Hon. Amy
McDonald, Hugh
McElroy, John
McElroy, Sara
McFarlin, Holly
McNally, Michael
Metcalf, Vance
Mikkelsen, Emil
Milam, Matthew
Millsagle, Matt
Mims, Bobby
Minton, John
Mitchell, Hon. Nicole
Morrison, John
Mundo, Yuri
Muralidhar, Sravanesh
Myers, Sara

Navarro, Andy
Nelson, Kyle
Nelson, Mandy
Noble, Jim
Northcutt, Annie
Noteware, Danny
Nutt, Haley

Orrostieta, Yaziri

Pace, John Roddy
Parker, Bill
Parker, Chad
Parker, Weldon
Parrish, Jason
Patteson, Richard
Patterson, Mike
Patton, Emily
Payne, John
Perkins, James I.
Pesina, Nick
Pigg, Alan
Porter, Greg
Porter, Leigh
Porter, Madeline
Pulpan, Colleen
Prather, Clint
Proctor, Coleman
Pullum, Deborah

Race, Deborah
Ramey, Archer
Richardson, Brian
Ritcheson, Doug
Ritcheson, Scott
Roark, Woodrow
Roberts, Bruce
Roberts, Justin
Roberts, Karen
Roberts, Randy
Robertson, Jr., Jim
Rollings, Brian
Ross, Kristina
Roosth, Sam
Rowan, Matt
Russell, Hon. Kerry

Salinas, Melannie
Sanders, Alan
Schoenbrun, Ron
Searcy, Hon. Joshua
Senkyr, Kristen
Shelton, William
Simpson, Tim
Sinclair, Beau
Sirrianni, Casey
Sirrianni, Kasey
Skeen, Jr., Hon. Jack
Sloan, Virginia
Slyter, Amanda
Smith, Greg
Smith, Nolan
Smithson, Jon
Soares, Marcio
Sorrells, Ryan
Spitzer, Steve
Stewart, Reann
Steuer, Bryan
Stiffler, Krystina
Stinson, Andrew
Stutes, Ronald
Sutton, Angela

Tarry, Micah John
Thames, Glenn
Tharpe, Dallas
Thauwald, Nathan
Thomas, John
Thomas, Meme
Thompson, Blake
Thigpen, Joe
Tindel, Andy
Traylor, Gary
Trube, John
Turner, Joseph

Underwood, Travis

VanDeventer, James
Vincent, Lance
Volberding, Wes
Volker, Richard

Waits, Valita
Walker, III, John
Watkins, Katryna
Whalen, James
Wharton, Alan
White, Hon. Clay
Whitehurst, Bill
Whitehurst, Bob
Whitehurst, Diane
Wilkerson, Nicholette
Williams, Jim
Willis, Bryan
Wood, Jeff
Wood, Morgan
Worthen, Hon. James
Wulf, Cheryl

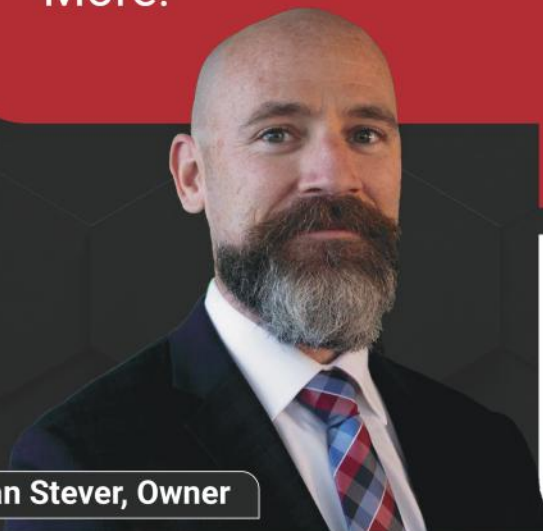
Yarbrough, Trey
Yeager, Ruth
Young, Betty

best/EP

Supporting attorneys in trial for more than 20 years

**Trial presentation obstacles
are our expertise**

- ◆ In-Trial Evidence Presentation & Consulting
- ◆ Trial Equipment & Technology Rental
- ◆ Deposition Synch & Clip Editing
- ◆ Mock Trials, Mediations & Arbitrations
- ◆ PowerPoints, Timelines & More.



Bryan Stever, Owner

Click Here



www.best-ep.com



903-221-9727



bstever@best-ep.com



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

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

Important SCB Dates

SCBF Board Meeting

December 11, *People's Petroleum Bldg.*, 12 - 1p

SCYLA Board Meeting

December 18, *Genecov Room*, 12 - 1p

SCBA Board Meeting

December 4, *Genecov Room*, 12 - 1p

Holiday Extravaganza! December 12

SCBA Office Closed

December 24-29

January 1, 2026



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!



The Advocate is published monthly by
 the Smith County Bar Association
 P.O. Box 7248, Tyler, TX 75711-7248