


2026 ROBERT O. DAWSON
CONFERENCE ON CRIMINAL APPEALS



May 20–22, 2026
AT&T Conference Center ▪ Austin, Texas
 Live Webcast May 20–22

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Times listed are in Central Time

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 20, 2026

Presiding Officer:

Hon. Bert Richardson, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

1:00 p.m. Registration Opens

Includes light refreshments.

1:50 p.m. Welcoming Remarks

2:00 p.m. 1.00 hr

Significant Decisions of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

Analyze significant decisions in the last year and what they mean for criminal law practitioners.

Hon. David C. Newell, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

3:00 p.m. .75 hr

Supreme Court Update

Catch up on the criminal cases decided in the last two years and preview those remaining on the docket.

Emily Johnson-Liu, Office of the State Prosecuting Attorney, Austin, TX
Britt Houston Lindsey, Taylor County District Attorney's Office, Abilene, TX

3:45 p.m. 15-Minute Break

4:00 p.m. .75 hr

Best Practices for an Uphill Battle: A Discussion Between Defense Attorneys

What works in criminal appeals? What doesn't? And what is worth doing anyway? Join speakers—defense attorneys, former judicial law clerks, and board-certification committee members—for a candid discussion on the realities and nuances of representing defendants in appellate courts.

Niles Illich, Palmer Perlstein, Dallas, TX
Brett Ordway, Ordway PLLC, Dallas, TX

4:45 p.m. .75 hr

The PDR Playbook: Techniques for Powerful Petitions

In *The PDR Playbook: Techniques for Powerful Petitions*, learn how to elevate your PDR practice using concrete strategies grounded in what actually moves the Court of Criminal Appeals. This session breaks down the essentials—from developing a clean narrative to drilling into the COA's error, conducting targeted research, and framing issues with maximum persuasive force—so your petitions stand out instead of getting lost in the "friv" stack. Leave with practical techniques and checklists for crafting focused, effective, and grant-worthy PDRs.

David L. Botsford, Botsford & Roark, Austin, TX
Stacey M. Soule, Office of the State Prosecuting Attorney, Austin, TX

5:30 p.m. Adjourn to Reception

THANK YOU TO OUR RECEPTION SPONSORS

Appellate Section,
State Bar of Texas

Criminal Justice Section,
State Bar of Texas

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Enjoy refreshments and a networking opportunity with colleagues and conference faculty.

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THURSDAY MORNING, MAY 21, 2026

Presiding Officer:

Hon. David C. Newell, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

8:15 a.m. Conference Room Opens

Includes continental breakfast.

8:45 a.m. .50 hr

Science Meets the Law: Article 11.073

CCP Article 11.073 has been described as an antidote to convictions based on 'junk science.' Examine whether that description is accurate and explore the inner workings of this trailblazing statute.

Paul Still, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

9:15 a.m. .75 hr

Future Issues with Regards to Forensic Sciences

This presentation provides a high-level overview of burgeoning forensic science issues in fields such as toolmark examinations, digital forensic analysis of cell phones beyond location data, and of course shaken baby syndrome. The presentation also covers the role of the Office of Capital and Forensic Writs in representing individuals whose convictions rests on flawed forensics.

Sarah Brandon, Office of Capital and Forensic Writs, Austin, TX

10:00 a.m. 15-Minute Break

10:15 a.m. .50 hr

11.07 Writs

Discuss the law of 11.07 habeas corpus with tips for writ practice at the Court of Criminal Appeals.

Lynda Hercules Charleson, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

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Call 512.475.6700 to register.

10:45 a.m. 1.00 hr

Writ Panel: An Interactive Walkthrough of the Process

An interactive conversation with appellate-court staff attorneys discussing how writs are processed at their respective courts, including the roles they play in writ decisions.

Moderator:

Lynda Hercules Charleson, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

Panelists:

Kelly Gatewood, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX
Luis Gonzalez, Thirteenth Court of Appeals, Edinburg, TX
Shelly Kristin Messerli, Fifth Court of Appeals, Dallas, TX

11:45 a.m. Pick Up Lunch

Included in registration.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON

Presiding Officer:

Hon. Bert Richardson, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

12:05 p.m. .75 hr

Research Tips and Tools

Learn about free research tools and resources available to you through the Texas State Law Library. Special attention devoted to statutory and legislative history, legal treatises, and legal periodicals.

Amy Small, Texas State Law Library, Austin, TX

12:50 p.m. 15-Minute Break

1:05 p.m. 1.00 hr

Persuasive Legal Writing

Legal writing persuades by meeting the reader's needs and helping the reader see the case from the client's point of view. Explore techniques legal writers can use to help their readers and their clients.

Kamela Bridges, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin, TX

2:05 p.m. .50 hr

States Appeals

The matters to consider before filing a State's appeals, as well as when and how to file one.

Jessica Caird, Harris County District Attorney's Office, Houston, TX

2:35 p.m. 10-Minute Break

2:45 p.m. 1.00 hr ethics

Ethical Responsibility in Learning How to Use Technology and AI in Appellate Practice

Discuss the ethical obligations of appellate attorneys impacted by the use of AI, as well as how appellate courts are beginning to use AI. From the duty of technological competence to the duty to supervise to the duty of candor to the tribunal (and much more), it is critical for appellate practitioners to understand AI's benefits and risks for their practice, and to know where the boundary lines are drawn. Also, hear about cutting-edge topics, including the ethical considerations surrounding the use of AI assistants to record and summarize client communications.

Hon. John G. Browning, Of Counsel, The Cole Law Firm, McKinney, Texas and Distinguished Jurist in Residence, Faulkner University School of Law, Plano, TX

3:45 p.m. 1.00 hr | .25 hr ethics

Court of Appeals Judicial Panel

Tips from behind the scenes with judges from three different Courts of Appeals. What judges really want to see and hear in your briefs and oral presentations.

Moderator:

Jay Brandon, San Antonio, TX

Panelists:

Hon. Kristin M. Guiney, First Court of Appeals, Houston, TX
Hon. Chari L. Kelly, Third Court of Appeals, Austin, TX
Hon. Clarissa Silva, 13th Court of Appeals, Corpus Christi, TX

4:45 p.m. Adjourn

FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 22, 2026

Presiding Officer:

Hon. David C. Newell, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, Austin, TX

8:30 a.m. Conference Room Opens

Includes continental breakfast.

9:00 a.m. .50 hr

Mandamus

Mandamus is an increasingly important tool for criminal practitioners in Texas state court. This discussion covers the fundamental law and procedure and highlights emerging trends in extraordinary writ practice.

Michael Staats Falkenberg, Harris County Public Defender's Office, Houston, TX

9:30 a.m. 1.00 hr

Discovery in Light of *Heath*

Explore the *Heath* opinion and its impact on trial and appellate practitioners. Address trial court pleadings, direct appeals, and mandamus related to discovery issues.

Robert Daniel, Law Office of Robert Daniel, Austin, TX

Victoria Ford Oblon, Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office, Fort Worth, TX

10:30 a.m. 15-Minute Break

10:45 a.m. .50 hr

Preservation of Error

Everything you need to know about preserving potential error at trial from jury selection to motions for new trial that will dramatically increase your chances of buying a winning lottery ticket on appeal. And, as a bonus, a checklist on error preservation for your trial notebook and an up-to-the-minute case law update.

Brian W. Wice, Attorney at Law, Houston, TX

11:15 a.m. 1.00 hr ethics

Appellate Ethics

A criminal appeal is rarely a fair fight. Learn rules and guidelines for maintaining your professional integrity, credibility, and morality in a high-conflict system.

Douglas R. Gladden, Harris County Public Defender's Office, Houston, TX

12:15 p.m. Adjourn

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This course has been approved for Minimum Continuing Legal Education credit by the State Bar of Texas Committee on MCLE in the amount of 13.25 hours, of which 2.25 credit hours will apply to legal ethics/professional responsibility credit. The University of Texas School of Law is a State Bar of California approved MCLE provider (#1944), and an Oklahoma Bar Association MCLE presumptively-approved provider (#169).

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13th Court of Appeals
Corpus Christi, TX

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Attorney at Law
Houston, TX

*Planning Committee member

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Online:

utcle.org/conferences/CR26/signup

Mail:

The University of Texas
School of Law
ATTN: CLE
727 E Dean Keeton St
Austin, TX 78705

Fax:

512.475.6876

Questions? 512.475.6700

If you have dietary requirements or would like to request accommodations under the ADA, please contact Customer Service at 512.475.6700 or service@utcle.org at least 10 days prior to the conference.

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Comprehensive Course Materials: Access course materials in "Your Briefcase" approximately 48 hours before the live event, and enjoy unlimited access to the final, complete course materials – downloadable PDFs of papers and slides.

Accredited eConference: Complimentary access to the eConference – with papers, slides, and video – accredited for one year in both TX and CA are available in "Your Briefcase" 6–8 weeks after the event.

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PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

CR26

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Firm _____

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Registrant's Email (required) _____

Assistant's Email (optional) _____
Invoices, confirmations, and receipts are emailed to these addresses.

EVENT REGISTRATION

Includes Electronic Course Binder Download (PDF) in "Your Briefcase." Special group registration rates available. Call 512.475.6700.

Live, In-Person Event Registration \$595 | \$695 after May 6

Live Webcast Registration \$695

Printed and Shipped Binder with Registration (Shipping Included) – Available for order through Friday, May 22, 2026

Please note that the printed binder will arrive 2–3 weeks after the conclusion of the live event. Delivery to P.O. boxes is not permitted. Binders will not be distributed on-site.

Printed and Shipped Course Binder \$102.84 (\$95*)

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Register for the in-person conference and add on the webcast format for attendance flexibility.

Webcast Add-on \$100

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AUSTIN

May 20–22, 2026

CONFERENCE LOCATION**AT&T Conference Center**

The University of Texas at Austin
1900 University Avenue
Austin, TX 78705
877.744.8822 (reservations)

Special Room Rate: \$204

good through April 19
reference "UT Criminal Appeals 2026"
(subject to availability)

Parking:

Please visit utcle.org/conferences/CR26
for daily and overnight rates

KEY DATES**May 6, 2026***Last day for regular registration rates***May 15, 2026***Last day for full refund cancellation***May 18, 2026***Last day for partial refund cancellation*

\$50 processing fee applied

May 20, 1:50 p.m., CT*Conference begins***May 22, 2026***Last day to order a printed and shipped course binder
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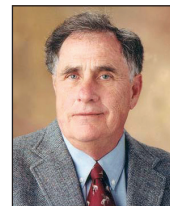
ROBERT O. DAWSON

The Conference on Criminal Appeals is named in honor of Robert O. Dawson, a beloved UT Law professor for 37 years, who passed away in 2005.

From 1974 through 1998, he served as the director of the Criminal Defense Clinic, where he and his co-supervisors worked with students on over 7,200 criminal defendants' cases. He also served as co-director of UT Law's Actual Innocence Clinic, a clinic teaching students how to screen and investigate claims from prison inmates that they are actually innocent of their convicted offense.

As a reformer and scholar, Professor Dawson wrote extensively on criminal and juvenile law and drafted much of the juvenile legislation enacted by the Texas legislature over the past 35 years.

He authored and co-authored many books, including *Texas Criminal Practice and Procedure*, *Texas Juvenile Law*, *Criminal Justice Administration*, and *The Juvenile Justice Process*.

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