

35th Annual Conference on State and Federal Appeals

June 12-13, 2025 • The Otis Hotel Austin • Austin, TX

June 12-13, 2025 • Live Webcast

Thursday Morning, June 12, 2025

Presiding Officer:

Hon. Daryl L. Moore, Ahmad Zavitsanos & Mensing PLLC - Houston, TX

8:00 am In Austin Only	Registration Opens Includes continental breakfast.
8:50 am	Welcoming Remarks
9:00 am 0.50 hr	89th Legislature: What Just Happened and How it Affects Your Practice and the Courts A recap of selected bills that passed and some that didn't during the legislative session. Hon. Jerry D. Bullard, Texas Business Court, Eighth Division - Fort Worth, TX Sen. Nathan Johnson, Texas State Senate, District 16 - Dallas, TX
9:30 am 0.50 hr	Supreme Court of Texas by the Numbers What do the Court's numbers from the last term tell us about your client's chances. Don Cruse, Law Office of Don Cruse - Austin, TX
10:00 am 0.50 hr	Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure: Amendments Past and Future Focus on recent changes to the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure and address potential rule amendments recommended by appellate practitioners. Hon. Tracy Christopher, Fourteenth Court of Appeals - Houston, TX Jennie Knapp, Underwood Law Firm, P.C. - Amarillo, TX
10:30 am	15-Minute Break
10:45 am 0.75 hr	Fifteenth Court of Appeals Panel After almost a year of operation, what do you need to know about practice in the Fifteenth Court of Appeals? What kinds of issues are being decided by this Court? Where does it stand on the scope of its jurisdiction? Answers to all of these questions and more from the three sitting Justices of the Fifteenth Court of Appeals! Moderator: Anne M. Johnson, Tillotson Johnson & Patton - Dallas, TX Panelists: Hon. Scott A. Brister, Fifteenth Court of Appeals - Austin, TX Hon. Scott K. Field, Fifteenth Court of Appeals - Austin, TX Hon. April Farris, Fifteenth Court of Appeals - Austin, TX

11:30 am 0.50 hr	<p><i>Horton</i>: Charge Practice Now and Where It’s Going</p> <p>Discuss whether <i>Horton</i> renews previously settled questions on best practices for granulating questions in a jury charge and identify some open questions on where <i>Horton</i> might go.</p> <p>Hon. David M. Gunn, First Court of Appeals - Houston, TX Cody Vaughn, Jackson Walker LLP - Austin, TX</p>
12:00 pm In Austin Only	<p>Pick Up Lunch (in Austin)</p> <p>Included in registration.</p>

Thursday Afternoon, June 12, 2025

Presiding Officer:

Jane M. N. Webre, Scott Douglass & McConnico LLP - Austin, TX

LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

12:30 pm 0.75 hr ethics	<p>Ethics Game Show</p> <p>Watch shameless appellate practitioners try to outgame each other as they answer ethics questions savvy practitioners need to know.</p> <p>Moderator: Hon. Tanya Garrison, 157th District Court - Houston, TX Panelists: Hon. Daryl L. Moore, Ahmad Zavitsanos & Mensing PLLC - Houston, TX Alan York, Reed Smith LLP - Houston, TX</p>
1:15 pm	15-Minute Break
1:30 pm 0.50 hr	<p>Using the State Law Library</p> <p>Learn about various books and research sources (online and in-person) that can assist appellate practitioners in preparing to write briefs and argue cases. Audience participation and recommendations for “essential reads” is encouraged.</p> <p>Amy Small, Texas State Law Library - Austin, TX</p>
2:00 pm 0.75 hr	<p>Supreme Court of Texas Panel</p> <p>Hear a candid conversation among the Justices about what is new at the Court, the state of the docket, and ways practitioners can improve their chances of securing discretionary review for their clients.</p> <p>Moderator: Connie H. Pfeiffer, Yetter Coleman LLP - Houston, TX Hon. Jimmy Blacklock, The Supreme Court of Texas - Austin, TX Hon. Jane N. Bland, The Supreme Court of Texas - Austin, TX Hon. James P. Sullivan, The Supreme Court of Texas - Austin, TX</p>
2:45 pm	15-Minute Break

3:00 pm 1.00 hr	Supreme Court of Texas Update Explore recent opinions issued by the Court in the current term. Hon. Jeff Boyd, The Supreme Court of Texas - Austin, TX Kurt Kuhn, Kuhn Hobbs PLLC - Austin, TX
4:00 pm 0.50 hr ethics	Overcoming the Existential Crisis of Being An Appellate Lawyer Because many factors control the outcome of an appeal—most unrelated to the performance of the advocate—appellate lawyers should try to avoid the crushing weight of responsibility for a favorable outcome. Yet for our clients, a favorable outcome is the only thing that matters. How do we simultaneously serve our clients’ needs and our own mental and emotional health? Kevin Dubose, Alexander Dubose & Jefferson LLP - Houston, TX
4:30 pm 0.50 hr ethics	Ethics: Following the Letter and the Spirit of the Rules Following the letter of the Disciplinary Rules helps Texas lawyers avoid misconduct findings in grievances. But that is only the beginning of a lawyer’s professional responsibilities to clients. Explore how we can maximize our professionalism by following not only the letter of the disciplinary rules, but their spirit as well. Scott Rothenberg, Law Offices of Scott Rothenberg - Bellaire, TX
5:00 pm	Adjourn
In Austin Only	Networking Reception (in Austin from 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.) Join us for drinks and hors d'oeuvres with program faculty and attendees.

Friday Morning, June 13, 2025

Presiding Officer:

Kirsten Castañeda, Alexander Dubose & Jefferson LLP - Dallas, TX

8:00 am In Austin Only	Conference Room Opens Includes continental breakfast.
9:00 am 0.50 hr 0.25 hr ethics	Effective Strategies for Selecting Your Appellate Point Cover what appellate practitioners should consider when selecting points of error on appeal. From standards of review to public policy, this presentation will help you select the most persuasive points for your appellate brief. Mia Lorick, Troutman Pepper Locke - Houston, TX
9:30 am 0.50 hr	Secrets of a Successful Reply Brief How to craft a powerful reply brief that gets to the point, tackles key arguments head-on, and keeps the reader engaged—without redundancy or wasted words. Robert B. Gilbreath, Hawkins Parnell & Young LLP - Dallas, TX

10:00 am 0.75 hr	Interpreting Texas A discussion on recent developments in statutory and constitutional interpretation. Hon. J. Brett Busby, The Supreme Court of Texas - Austin, TX Jason R. LaFond, Scott Douglass & McConnico LLP - Austin, TX
10:45 am	15-Minute Break
11:00 am 0.50 hr	Temporary Relief in Appellate Courts In 2024, the Supreme Court of Texas provided significant new guidance on the standard for granting temporary relief in appellate courts. Hear an overview and update on the standards and bases for temporary and emergency relief in appellate courts. Grant Martinez, Yetter Coleman LLP - Houston, TX Co-Author: Lily Hann, Yetter Coleman LLP - Houston, TX
11:30 am 0.50 hr	Lightning Round Topics: Appellate Practice and Procedure 10 things to keep in mind when bringing an appeal or original proceeding. Anthony T. Golz, Cokinos Young - Houston, TX
12:00 pm In Austin Only	Pick Up Lunch (in Austin) Included in registration.

Friday Afternoon, June 13, 2025

Presiding Officer:

Marie Jamison, Wright Close & Barger, LLP - Houston, TX

LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

12:30 pm 0.75 hr	District Court Judges Panel A discussion of how district court judges feel about having appellate counsel at trial. And, how appellate counsel can be most beneficial at certain stages of the trial. Moderator: Jessica Z. Barger, Wright Close & Barger, LLP - Houston, TX Panelists: Hon. Beau A. Miller, 190th District Court - Houston, TX Hon. Anna Perez, 41st District Court - El Paso, TX Hon. Staci Williams, 101st District Court - Dallas, TX
1:15 pm	15-Minute Break

1:30 pm 0.50 hr	<p><i>Loper Bright</i>, the End of <i>Chevron</i> Deference, and What’s Next for APA Challenges</p> <p>The U.S. Supreme Court has overturned <i>Chevron</i> deference. What’s next for challenges to new federal regulations, the authority of federal agencies, and the role of the judiciary?</p> <p>Fermeen F. Fazal, Senior Counsel - Houston, TX Travis Wussow, Jackson Walker LLP - Austin, TX</p>
2:00 pm 0.50 hr	<p>U.S. Supreme Court Update</p> <p>An overview of major decisions and trends from the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2024-2025 term.</p> <p>Erin Glenn Busby, The University of Texas School of Law - Austin, TX</p>
2:30 pm 0.50 hr	<p>U.S. Fifth Circuit Update</p> <p>This presentation covers the most interesting cases about civil litigation from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in the past year.</p> <p>Antonio X. Milton, Ahmad Zavitsanos & Mensing PLLC - Houston, TX</p>
3:00 pm	Adjourn