

LGBTQ+ LAW SECTION

State Bar of Texas

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LGBTQ+ Law Section

2025–2026 Issue 1



2025–2026 SECTION OFFICERS

CHAIR

Hon. Charles A. Spain

VICE-CHAIR

Gary N. Schumann

SECRETARY

R. Elliott Beck

TREASURER

Shelly L. Skeen

COMMUNICATIONS

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Terms Expiring 2026

At-Large Position 1

Callie C. Butcher

At-Large Position 2

Hon. Beau A. Miller

At-Large Position 3

Samuel M. Hodges

At-Large Position 4

Karri L. Bertrand

PAST CHAIR

Brian P. Klosterboer
(2022–2023) ex officio

BOARD ADVISORS

Forrest L. Huddleston
Kristina N. Kastl

lgbtqpluslawtx.org

Updates & Annual Meeting

Currently in our 28th year, the LGBTQ+ Law Section continues to be the LGBTQ+ law resource for the State Bar of Texas, serving all lawyers, judges, law students, and paralegals who have an interest in laws that pertain to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons, as well as persons living with HIV.

This newsletter, highlights the work done by our Section officers and council members and honors recent recipients of the Judge Norman W. Black Award. We also encourage you to use one of our member benefits, access to *LGBT Law Notes*.

Our next newsletter will have more information on our 2026 annual CLE, and membership meeting on June 12, 2026 as a part of the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting in Houston, June 11–12, 2026, at the Marriott Marquis, Pride networking receptions on both Thursday, June 11 and Friday, June 12, and the nominating committee's proposed slate for the 2026–2027 officers and council members.

Registration is open online: <https://www.texasbar.com/annualmeeting>



2026–2027 Section Membership Dues

Please renew your LGBTQ+ Law Section membership (still just \$20) when paying your State Bar dues. The deadline is June 30, 2026, and you can pay at <https://www.texasbar.com>.

Section member benefits include:

- Access to *LGBT Law Notes*, the oldest continuously published law journal dedicated to scholarship on legal developments specific to LGBTQ+ and HIV issues
- Discounted membership to The National LGBTQ+ Bar Association
- Discounts to all Section sponsored State Bar of Texas CLE programs, including co-sponsored TexasBarCLE webcasts
- Access to the LGBTQ+ Law Section listserv
- Networking at our annual meeting reception and other Section events

Section members may access the quarterly journal *LGBT Law Notes* through the Members Only page of the Section website:

<https://lgbtqpluslawtx.org/members-only>

The Members Only password was sent in the email containing this newsletter.

Please reach out to Sam Hodges at sam.lgbtqlawtx@gmail.com if you are having trouble accessing the Members Only page.

Article Submissions

The LGBTQ+ Law Section publishes articles written by practitioners, law students, and others on a variety law topics. Please submit articles for consideration in Word or similar format, or direct any questions about potential article topics, to the Communications Director.



Justice Charles A. Spain (Ret.) presenting the Judge Norman W. Black Award to past chair Eduardo Juárez at the 2025 LGBTQ+ Legal Issues in Changing Times CLE last December

CHAIR'S REPORT

Thank you for being a member of the LGBTQ+ Law Section of the State Bar of Texas. We are the first such section of a mandatory bar association in the United States. Never forget that.

We all know we live in extraordinary times, both for us as lawyers and for the clients we serve. We have solemnly sworn an oath to support the Constitutions of the United States and of this state. We must give both our clients and ourselves hope in the fundamental fairness of our legal system.

It isn't easy. It never has been.

The State Bar of Texas rejected our proposed section in 1996; no section had ever before been rejected. The late Judge Norman W. Black told us to keep fighting. We did and were victorious in 1998. That “Never give up! Never surrender!” spirit is in our Section's bones.

Your 2025–2026 Section council members are fighters, working to strengthen the Section, expanding its outreach, and preparing it for the future. I am so proud of them and what they are doing in trying times.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

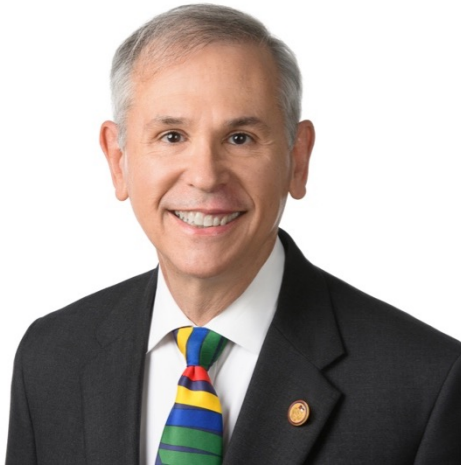
Charles A. Spain

2025–2026 Chair

Justice, Court of Appeals for the Fourteenth District of Texas
(Ret.)



2025–2026 Section Council



CHAIR
Hon. Charles A. Spain



VICE-CHAIR
Gary N. Schumann



SECRETARY
R. Elliott Beck



TREASURER
Shelly L. Skeen



COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
Penny R. Robe



Callie C. Butcher, At-Large Position 1
(2024–2026)



Hon. Beau A. Miller, At-Large Position 2
(2024–2026)



Samuel M. Hodges, At-Large Position 3
(2026)



Karri L. Bertrand, At-Large Position 4
(2026)



Brian P. Klosterboer, Past Chair
(2022–2023) ex officio



Forrest L. Huddleston, Board Advisor



Kristina N. Kastl, Alternate Board Advisor

2025–2026 Accomplishments

The new council has been hard at work getting things done, including a lot of updating and modernizing the Section's operations.

First, the Section worked to sponsor and co-sponsor two CLE programs at the Texas Law Center in Austin:

- LGBTQ+ Legal Issues in Changing Times—December 18, 2025 and
- Bill of Rights 2026: Litigating the Constitution—May 8, 2026

We are also offering a full day of CLE programming has been planned during for the State Bar Annual Meeting in Houston on June 12, 2026.

Second, the Section remains committed to maintaining a visible statewide presence by participating in State Bar events supporting attorneys interested in establishing or revitalizing local LGBTQ+ affinity bars throughout Texas.

Third, we acquired a new domain and updated the Section website, transitioning to the name adopted in 2023 during our 25th anniversary year: LGBTQ+ Law Section. Our new website, <https://lgbtqpluslawtx.org>, reflects the modern identity and mission of the Section.

Fourth, we negotiated access for our members to *LGBT Law Notes*, available in the Members Only area of the website.

Fifth, we recognized people with the Judge Norman W. Black Award for the years 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Finally, we have redesigned our Section logo and acquired new membership pins and other items reflecting the Section's 2023 name change.

Judge Norman W. Black Award

The Judge Norman W. Black Award is given by the LGBTQ+ Law Section of the State Bar of Texas in memory of United States District Judge Norman W. Black to a past or present member of the State Bar of Texas for significant contributions to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV law. The award is the highest honor presented by the LGBTQ+ Law Section of the State Bar of Texas and is presented in memory of United States District Judge Norman W. Black, who courageously supported the creation of the Section.



Judge Black (1931–1997) was nominated by President Carter, served on the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas from 1979 to 1997, and served as chief judge from 1992 to 1996.

Judge Black publicly criticized the State Bar Board of Directors following the Board's 1996 vote denying the original petition to create a Gay and Lesbian Issues Section. His principled leadership and outspoken defense of equality inspired the founders of the Section to continue their efforts.

Beginning in 2000, the Section has presented the Judge Norman W. Black Award annually to past or present members of the State Bar of Texas for significant contributions to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV law. Due in part to the COVID pandemic, no awards were made in 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025. As part of the Section's ongoing efforts to preserve and honor the history of LGBTQ+ legal advocacy in Texas, the current council undertook efforts to identify distinguished individuals whose contributions merited recognition but had not been previously recognized. The council is proud to recognize these deserving recipients and ensure their contributions to the profession and community are appropriately honored and remembered.

JUDGE NORMAN W. BLACK AWARD RECIPIENTS



2021 Judge Norman W. Black Award Recipients



Chief Judge Orlando L. Garcia,
United States District
Court for the Western District
of Texas (San Antonio) (*De
Leon v. Perry*)



Presiding Judge Barbara E. Hartle,
City of Houston Municipal Courts
(retired) (*Galveston*) (first out
lesbian Texas Constitution
article V judge; service to
the Section)

2023 Judge Norman W. Black Award Recipients



Wm. Richard Thompson II,
(Dallas) (service to the
Section; Chair 2003–2004)



J. Patrick Wiseman (posthumous),
(Austin) (*Gay Student Services
v. Texas A&M University* and
Morales v. State; leader in the
Individual Rights and Responsibilities
Section of the State Bar of Texas who
encouraged the creation of what
became the LGBTQ+ Law Section)

2024 Judge Norman W. Black Award Recipients



Debra E. Hunt (posthumous),
(Houston) (LGBTQ+ Law
pioneer)



Arabia Vargas, (San Antonio)
(LGBTQ+ Law pioneer;
same-sex adoptions)

2025 Judge Norman W. Black Award Recipients



Justice Diane M. Henson,
Court of Appeals for the
Third District of Texas
(former) (Austin) (*Texas
Disciplinary Code of
Professional Conduct
Rule 5.08(a)*, see *57 Tex.
B.J.* 429 (1994))



Eduardo Juárez, (San Antonio)
(service to the Section;
chair 2010–2011; 2016
National LGBTQ+ Bar
Association)

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting and will circulate additional registration and itinerary information in the coming weeks. For questions about the Section, or how you can become more involved, please email Sam Hodges at sam.lgbtqlawtx@gmail.com.

Thank you for your membership!

Penny R. Robe

Communications Director 2025–2026
LGBTQ+ Law Section
State Bar of Texas



The LGBTQ+ Law Section is a great way to network and. Members receive *LGBT Law Notes*, the Newsletter, access to the LGBTQ+ Law Section listserv, and invites to Section events. Plus, the LGBTQ+ Law Section is always looking for those who want to be involved and become Section leaders.

To join go to www.texasbar.com, click on “About Texas Bar,” “Sections and Divisions,” and “Sections” or call the State Bar Sections Department at (800) 204-2222