

MEDIA ADVISORY

From the Office of Judge Barbara Hervey, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

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Contact: 512-463-1575, Rose Cardona, Briefing Attorney to Judge Barbara Hervey

On behalf of the Court of Criminal Appeals, Judge Barbara Hervey officially announces the establishment of the Texas Criminal Justice Integrity Unit: “This is a call to action to address the growing concerns with our criminal justice system. Although we applaud all previous studies and dialogue, it is now time to act and move for reform. While more government does not necessarily mean better government, reflection and willingness to improve does respond to the needs of our system and our citizens.”

The Court will continue to work closely with Governor Rick Perry, Senator Rodney Ellis, the innocence projects/clinics, and all parties affected by the criminal justice system, including currently incarcerated individuals who may have been wrongfully convicted. Some of the issues to be addressed by the Texas Criminal Justice Integrity Unit will include:

- Improving the quality of defense counsel available for indigent defendants.
- Implementing procedures to improve eyewitness identification.
- Making recommendations to eliminate improper interrogations and to protect against false confessions.
- Reforming the standards for collection, preservation, and storage of evidence.
- Improving crime lab reliability.
- Improving attorney practices and accountability.
- Adequately compensating the wrongfully convicted.
- Implementing writ training.
- Establishing local, “home rule” protocol for the prevention of wrongful convictions

The Texas Criminal Justice Integrity Unit intends to focus on the strengths and the weaknesses within the Texas criminal justice system. It is not a forum for any particular group, nor does it embrace the plan of one particular political party. The present “unit” includes:

- Judge Barbara Hervey, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
- Senator Rodney Ellis, Texas Senate
- Mary Anne Wiley, Deputy General Counsel to Governor Rick Perry
- Bill Allison, Clinical Professor of Law/Director, UT Criminal Defense Clinic
- Pat Johnson, Director, Texas DPS Crime Lab
- James McLaughlin, General Counsel/Executive Director, Texas Police Chief’s Association
- Craig Watkins, District Attorney, Dallas
- Jaime Esparza, District Attorney, El Paso
- Jim McReynolds, Texas House of Representatives
- Gary Udashen, Criminal Defense Attorney, Dallas
- Judge Sid Harle, District Judge, San Antonio
- Jim Bethke, Director, Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense