

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

Misc. Docket No. 11-9046

ORDER CREATING UNIFORM FORMS TASK FORCE

The Texas Access to Justice Commission, in collaboration with the Office of Court Administration, the Texas Legal Services Center, and the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, hosted the Texas Forum on Self-Represented Litigants and the Courts in Dallas on April 8-9, 2010. Over 120 attendees, including members of the judiciary, legal services attorneys, court clerks and administrators, and law librarians participated.

Participants at the Forum considered the impact pro se litigants have on the court system and evaluated tools to enable the courts to help pro se litigants navigate the legal system and to improve court efficiencies. An issue that arose consistently throughout the Forum was the need for statewide standardized forms for pleadings frequently used by pro se litigants.

The legal system functions most effectively when each litigant is represented by an attorney. But there are currently insufficient resources to meet the continually growing demand for civil legal aid. As a result, an increasing number of litigants will appear in courts pro se because they cannot afford an attorney and are unable to secure representation from legal aid.

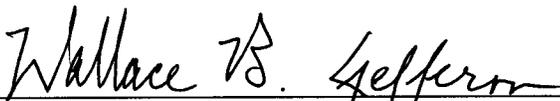
The Court is concerned about the accessibility of the court system to Texans who are unable to afford legal representation. After consultation with the State Bar of Texas and the Texas Access to Justice Commission, the Court agrees that developing pleading and order forms approved by the Court for statewide use would increase access to justice and reduce the strain on courts posed by pro se litigants.

Accordingly, it is **ORDERED** that:

1. The Supreme Court Uniform Forms Task Force is created to:
 - a. monitor local efforts to create, amend, or modify forms and incorporate local efforts within the Task Force's purview;
 - b. evaluate best practices for the creation and distribution of forms;
 - c. consult with and seek input from stakeholders including the Texas Access to Justice Commission, the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, and legal services providers;
 - d. draft an implementation plan that will identify legal areas that would benefit from the availability of uniform pleading and order forms and that will make the forms readily available;
 - e. develop proposed models of uniform pleading and order forms to be evaluated and approved by the Court for statewide use.
2. The members of the Task Force shall represent, at a minimum, the judiciary, the private bar, legal services attorneys, court clerks and administrators, and law librarians.
3. The following members are appointed:

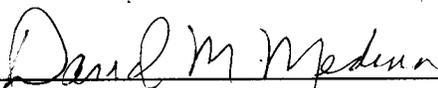
Stewart Gagnon, Houston	Steve Naylor, Fort Worth
Hon. Tracy Gilbert, Conroe	Lisa Rush, Austin
Hon. Diane M. Guariglia, Houston	Hon. Phylis J. Speedlin, San Antonio
Casey Kennedy, Austin	Ed Wells, Houston
Cristy Keul, Tyler	Sheri Woodfin, San Angelo
Hon. Marilea Lewis, Dallas	Michael Wyatt, El Paso
Karen Miller, Austin	
4. The Task Force will deliver minutes of its meetings to the Court and report to the Court by September 1, 2011, on progress made and challenges faced, efforts underway to develop forms throughout the state and steps taken to incorporate those efforts into the Task Force's charge, forms that have been completed, documents to be developed and a schedule for creation of those documents, and best practices for use with statewide forms.
5. Justice Hecht is designated the Court's liaison to the Task Force.

Dated: March 15, 2011


Wallace B. Jefferson, Chief Justice


Nathan L. Hecht, Justice

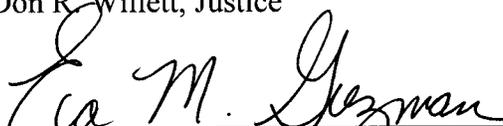

Dale Wainwright, Justice

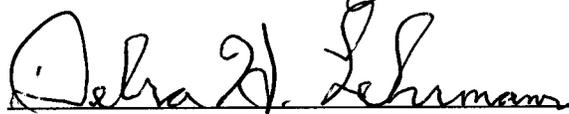

David M. Medina, Justice


Paul W. Green, Justice


Phil Johnson, Justice


Don R. Willett, Justice


Eva M. Guzman, Justice


Debra H. Lehrmann, Justice