



# TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

205 WEST 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET, SUITE 600 • TOM C. CLARK BUILDING • (512) 463-1625 • FAX (512) 936-2423  
P. O. BOX 12066 • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2066

CHAIR:

HON. NATHAN L. HECHT  
Chief Justice, Supreme Court

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

David Slayton

VICE CHAIR:

HON. SHARON KELLER  
Presiding Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals

## TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF MEETING

**June 12, 2015**  
**10:00 a.m.**

**SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS**  
**Supreme Court Building**  
**201 W. 14th Street, Room 104**  
**Austin, Texas**

### COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

On June 12, 2015, Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht called the meeting<sup>1</sup> of the [Texas Judicial Council](#) ("Council") to order at approximately 10:00 a.m. in the courtroom of the [Supreme Court of Texas](#) ("SCOT") in Austin, Texas.

The following members of the Council were present:

*Hon. Nathan L. Hecht, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Texas*  
*Hon. Sharon Keller, Presiding Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals*  
*Mr. Richard Battle, Key Trak, College Station*  
*Hon. Gary Bellair, Presiding Judge, Ransom Canyon Municipal Court*  
*Hon. Bill Boyce, Justice, 14th Court of Appeals, Houston*  
*Mr. Rick Figueroa, UBS Advisory & Brokerage Services, Houston*  
*Hon. Scott Jenkins, Judge, 53rd District Court, Travis County*  
*Hon. Kelly Moore, Judge, 121st Judicial District, Terry & Yoakum*  
*Hon. Valencia Nash, Justice of the Peace Pct. 1, Place 2, Dallas County*  
*Hon. Sherry Radack, Chief Justice, 1st Court of Appeals, Houston*  
*Hon. Linda Rodriguez, Judge, County Court at Law No. 2, Hays County, Retired*  
*Hon. Polly Jackson Spencer, Senior Probate Judge, Bexar County*

Members attending by phone were Ms. Allyson Ho, Ms. Ashley Johnson, and Representative John Smithee.

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<sup>1</sup> The meeting may be viewed on the State Bar of Texas website <http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/TSCSearch2.asp>

Members not in attendance were Representative Roberto Alonzo, Carlos Amaral, Judge Russ Casey, Chancellor Robert Duncan, Mr. Hank Nuss, Judge Glenn Phillips, and Senator Royce West.

Chief Justice Hecht noted Chancellor Duncan's resignation from the Council. He also recognized Representative Smithee's work for the Council during the legislative session.

## **MINUTES**

Without objection, the [February 20, 2015](#) meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

## **REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS**

### **Texas Indigent Defense Commission Report**

Judge Keller noted the Commission recently a grant award from the Governor's Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of \$100,000 to develop a model mentoring program for court appointed attorneys. Additionally, the Conference Committee approved funding for the Lubbock-based Regional Public Defender Office for Capital Cases (RPDO); the capital public defender services in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties for the biennium; and additional funding towards closing the Fair Defense Act funding gap. The Conference Committee report also includes an expansion of the funding for innocence projects to include law schools at Texas A&M University and the University of North Texas, in addition to the University of Texas, University of Houston, Texas Tech University, and Texas Southern University.

She discussed the Timothy Cole Exoneration Review Commission, created under [HB 48](#). Judge Keller then recognized Jim Bethke, Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) Executive Director, for being selected by the Steering Committee of the International Criminal Justice Consortium to serve on its newly formed Team of Experts that will study the International Criminal Court's Legal Aid System at the Hague.

Mr. Bethke reported a successful session and thanked the Council for its support. He highlighted events in national legislative news and noted that Bexar County will implement an innovative program providing public defenders to mentally ill defendants at the very earliest stage of a case in order to advocate for appropriate defendants to be diverted to in-patient or out-patient programs instead of remaining in jail.

He also announced that the Public Policy Institute issued a report, [Evaluation of the Texas Innocence Projects](#).

### **Legislative Update**

David Slayton provided the legislative update including [Judicial Council Resolutions](#), appropriations and [other bills](#) affecting the Judiciary.

Chief Justice Hecht recognized the extraordinary work of Mr. Slayton during the session.

### **Report on Problem-Solving Court Best Practices**

Anissa Johnson, OCA Problem-Solving Court Coordinator, reported on the recommendations made by the Specialty Courts Advisory Council in 2013 related to Best Practice Standards developed by the National Drug Court Association.

**Report on Judicial Civics and Education Center**

Megan LaVoie presented a video of the proposed Judicial Civics Education Center and responded to questions from Council.

**Report on Pretrial Justice Initiatives**

Mr. Slayton reported on the [Pretrial Justice Initiatives](#).

**New Business**

Chief Justice Hecht made appointments to a Criminal Justice Committee to study Pretrial Justice Initiatives. Members are: Judge Keller, Senator West, Judge Jenkins, Judge Casey and Mr. Amaral, with Judge Moore appointed to Chair. The Committee will be charged with assessing the impact of pretrial criminal justice statutes and policies in Texas to determine if there are ways in which Texas courts can enhance public safety and social outcomes when making pretrial confinement decisions. The Committee will identify judicial policies or initiatives that could be enacted to further those goals.

Next, Mr. Slayton discussed potential modifications to the Judicial Council monthly reporting requirements. Mr. Slayton reported on the extensive use of OCA's statistical data. The last change occurred in 2010 after a four-year study. Since then, a number of legislative changes and new data needs have created a need for changes in reporting. OCA received funding to build a new reporting database. The Council will be asked to review plans for updating those requirements at its next meeting.

**Next Meeting**

Chief Justice Hecht announced that the next meeting of the Council will be held on September 18, 2015.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:30 a.m.

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Nathan L. Hecht  
Chair