



**CHAIR:**  
The Honorable Sharon Keller  
Presiding Judge, Court of Criminal  
Appeals

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS:**  
Honorable Sharon Keller  
Honorable Nathan Hecht  
Honorable John Whitmire  
Honorable Brandon Creighton  
Honorable Nicole Collier  
Honorable Andrew Murr  
Honorable Sherry Radack  
Honorable Vivian Torres

**MEMBERS APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR:**  
Mr. Alex Bunin  
Honorable Richard Evans  
Mr. Gonzalo Rios  
Honorable Missy Medary  
Honorable Chris Hill

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**  
Geoffrey Burkhart

## Report from the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) for the June 28, 2019 Texas Judicial Council Meeting

Here is a brief report on TIDC’s recent work. If you would like additional information, please contact **Executive Director Geoff Burkhart**: (512) 936-6999 or [gburkhart@tidc.texas.gov](mailto:gburkhart@tidc.texas.gov).

### TIDC Board and Committee Meetings

The TIDC [Full Board](#) met March 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss TIDC’s legislative request, the current and upcoming grant cycle, and TIDC’s policy and fiscal monitoring program. This meeting marked Chair **Nicole Collier’s** and Judge **Chris Hill’s** first meeting as board members.



TIDC’s [Grants and Reporting Committee](#) met June 5<sup>th</sup> to

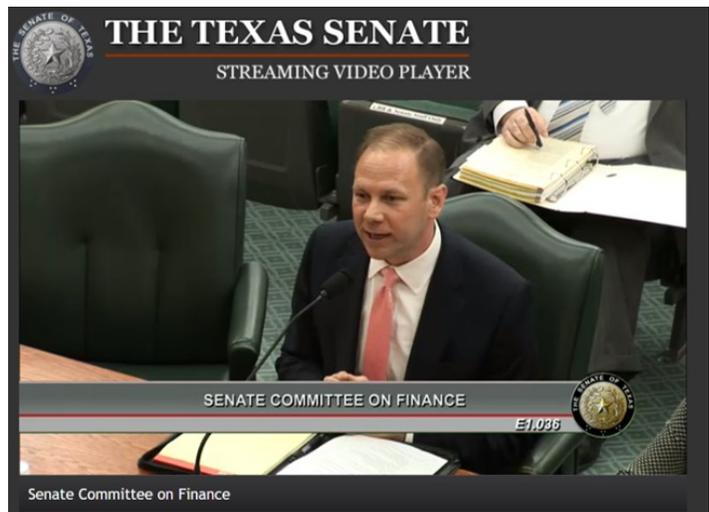
discuss the Formula Grant program, the upcoming Improvement Grant cycle, and extraordinary grant requests. The TIDC [Full Board](#) met again on June 6<sup>th</sup> to review the G&R Committee recommendations and to discuss the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature and the Policy-Fiscal Monitoring program. This meeting marked **Gonzalo Rios Jr.’s** first meeting as a board member.



### 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature

The Legislature increased TIDC funding and passed a bill requiring prioritization of public defender offices. TIDC is working to invest additional funds in improvements to indigent defense systems across the State.

- **Claire Buetow** was invited to testify before the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee by Chair and TIDC Board Member **Nicole Collier** on February 11<sup>th</sup>.
- On March 7<sup>th</sup>, **Scott Ehlers** was invited to testify on Texas's Mental Health Defender programs at the [House County Affairs Committee](#) hearing.
- On April 8<sup>th</sup>, **Wesley Shackelford** testified as a resource witness on [HB](#)



[2973](#), dealing with payments by defendants for legal services provided to them on appointed criminal cases. He was also available as a resource witness on [HB 1456](#) and [HB 1457](#), both related to providing representation to arrestees at magistration.

- On April 11<sup>th</sup>, TIDC board member **Alex Bunin** testified in front of the Senate Nominations Committee regarding his appointment to the TIDC Board. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, the full Senate confirmed his [reappointment](#).
- On April 15<sup>th</sup>, Wesley was available as a resource witness on [HB 3539](#) at the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.
- On April 24<sup>th</sup>, Wesley was available as a resource witness on [SB 583](#) and [SB 1649](#) at the Senate

Criminal Justice Committee.



- On May 1, the full Senate [confirmed Judge Evans, Judge Hill, Judge Medary, and Gonzalo Rios](#) to TIDC's board.

- Scott Ehlers was available as a resource witness on [SB 815](#) at the Senate Criminal Justice Committee meeting on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### *Staff Update*

In addition to its normal monitoring, grants administration, and data collection, TIDC staff has been involved in the following:

- **Joel Lieurance** and **Scott Ehlers** hosted the [Central Texas Indigent Defense Coordinator Workshop](#) in Waco on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

- On March 18<sup>th</sup>, TIDC celebrated Gideon Day. *Gideon v. Wainwright* secured the right to counsel for millions of Americans. This was the 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that decision. TIDC made a [short video](#) commemorating the landmark decision.

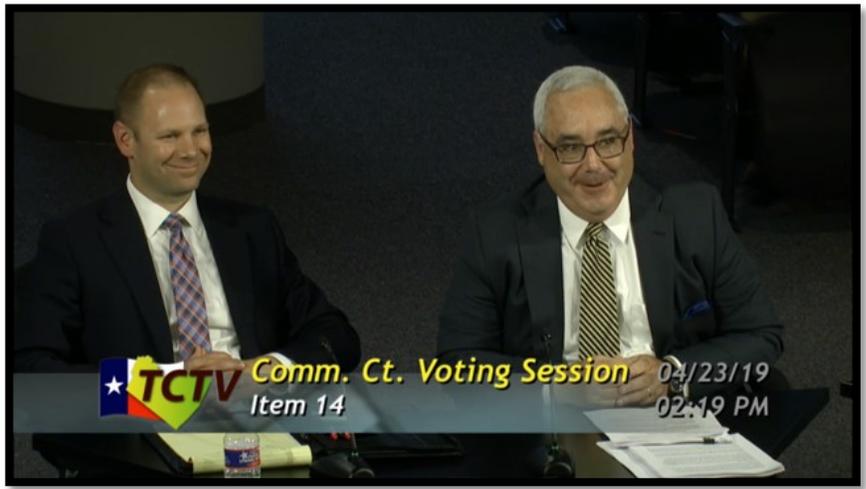


- **Geoff Burkhart** traveled to Kentucky on March 30<sup>th</sup> to attend the National Association for Public Defense's (NAPD) Steering Committee meeting.
- **Scott Ehlers** met with judges and court administrators in Harris County regarding building a managed assigned counsel system on April 12<sup>th</sup>.
- On April 15<sup>th</sup>, **Geoff Burkhart** spoke at the Carver Library forum on creating a Travis County Public Defender's Office.



- **Geoff Burkhart** and **Edwin Colfax** traveled to Willacy County to meet with District Judge Cordova and Willacy County Judge Guerra in late April.
- On April 18<sup>th</sup> **Geoff Burkhart** moderated a roundtable discussion on Indigent Defense at the University of Texas School of Law.

- On April 30<sup>th</sup>, **Alex Bunin** and **Geoff Burkhart** testified at the [Travis County Commissioners Court](#) meeting. TIDC's testimony is under agenda item #14.



- On May 7<sup>th</sup>, **Geoff Burkhart** and **Edwin Colfax** testified at the Travis County Commissioners Court meeting.

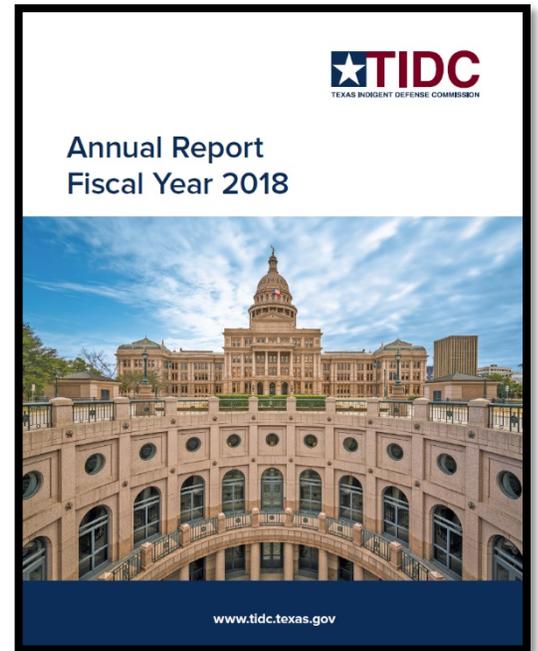
- On June 11<sup>th</sup>, TIDC held the second meeting of the Texas Chief Defenders, bringing together chief public defenders and managed assigned counsel system directors from across the state.
- The following day, TIDC hosted the kickoff meeting for its statewide [Future Indigent Defense Leaders](#) training and mentorship program. The FIDL program will send 25 mentees to Gideon's Promise public defender training and pair them with a local mentor and regional hub to support them as they begin taking court appointments.
- TIDC staff has conducted policy or fiscal monitoring in Goliad, Fort Bend, Waller, Jefferson, and Jim Wells Counties. TIDC has offered technical assistance to Victoria, Brooks, and Duval Counties.
- TIDC staff has published final fiscal monitoring reports for [Parker County](#), [Kendall County](#), [Duval County](#), and [Lee County](#).
- TIDC staff have attended several presentations and training sessions, including the Center for Access to Justice's [State of the South Conference](#), Texas Association of Counties (TAC) training for county judges, the Craig Washington & Rodney Ellis Criminal Law Seminar at the Thurgood Marshall School of Law, the Hays County Criminal Justice Reform Summit in San Marcos,



Medina County Day at the Texas Capitol, Texas Public Policy Foundation's [Bail Reform: The Balance of Liberty and Public Safety](#), the [SAMHSA's GAINS Center's](#) Competency to Stand Trial/Competency Restoration Learning Collaborative, and the Texas Association of Pretrial Services 2019 Conference, [TCDLA's Rusty Duncan Advanced Criminal Law Course](#).

## ***Recent Publications***

TIDC released the [FY18 Annual Report](#) on the agency's activities and accomplishments last year. In FY18, TIDC awarded \$23.3 million in Formula Grants, \$8.1 million in Improvement grants, and \$600,000 to innocence projects. We collected Indigent Defense Expenditure Reports (IDERS) from 254 counties and conducted policy or fiscal monitoring in 26 of those counties. TIDC also streamlined its complaint process, released 3 major publications, and trained over 1,000 judges, lawyers, magistrates, and elected officials.



## ***Indigent Defense in the Media***

[In search of the best 'yes' for indigent defense](#) (February)

[Travis County could miss out on millions in clash over indigent defense fixes](#) (February)

[Denton County wants state to fund court-appointed attorneys](#) (February)

[For Harris County, more prosecutors means more justice \[Opinion\]](#) (February)

[Indigent defense work group gets new chance to find common ground](#) (March)

[Can prosecutors and public defenders team up to produce fairer justice?](#) (March)

[Right to counsel turns poor defendants into plaintiffs](#) (March)

[A welcome study of indigent defense here](#) (March)

[Travis Co. closer to creating public defender's office](#) (March)

[Travis County Revisits Creating Public Defender's Office](#) (April)

[Travis County work group presents proposal for new public defender's office](#) (April)

[Lubbock Private Defenders Office's successful indigent defense influences other Texas counties](#) (April)

[In search of greater justice with a Travis County public defender's office](#) (May)

[Proposed legislation would give Texas public defenders priority in capital murder cases](#) (May)

[Travis County is Getting A Public Defender Office](#) (May)

[The push for a public defenders office in Travis County signals problems with the system](#) (May)