



# TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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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

February 20, 2015  
10:00 a.m.

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

#### COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

On February 20, 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. Carlos Amaral, Information Services Group, Inc., Plano*  
*Hon. Gary Bellair, Presiding Judge, Ransom Canyon Municipal Court*  
*Hon. Bill Boyce, Justice, 14th Court of Appeals, Houston*  
*Hon. Russell B. Casey, Justice of the Peace, Pct. 3, Place 1, Tarrant County*  
*Hon. Scott Jenkins, Judge, 53rd District Court, Travis County*  
*Hon. Valencia Nash, Justice of the Peace Pct. 1, Place 2, Dallas County*  
*Hon. Linda Rodriguez, Judge, County Court at Law No. 2, Hays County, Retired*  
*Hon. Polly Jackson Spencer, Judge, Probate Court #1, Bexar County*

Members attending by phone were Judge Kelly Moore, Judge Glenn Phillips, Chief Justice Sherry Radack, 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, Mr. Richard Battle, Chancellor Robert Duncan, Mr. Rick Figueroa, Ms. Allyson Ho, Ms. Ashley Johnson, Mr. Hank Nuss, and Senator Royce West.

Chief Justice Hecht welcomed new member Representative John Smithee, Chairman, House Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence. Representative Smithee replaced outgoing member Representative Tryon Lewis.

## **MINUTES**

With a quorum present, Chief Justice Hecht called for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. Minutes were voted upon. After vote, the [November 14, 2014](#) meeting minutes were adopted.

## **REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS**

### **Update regarding Tech for Justice Hackathon**

Mr. Slayton provided information regarding the [Tech for Justice Hackathon](#).

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

Jim Bethke, Executive Director, Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) reported on [HB 48](#) and [SB 81](#), both relating to the creation of a commission to review convictions after exoneration and to prevent wrongful convictions.

Next, Wesley Shackelford, Deputy Director/Special Counsel, TIDC, reported on [SB 260](#), relating to caseloads for attorneys who are appointed to represent indigent defendants in criminal cases, [SB 316](#), relating to the prioritization of certain available legal defense services when appointing representation for an indigent defendant in a criminal case, [HB 1346](#), relating to the representation of certain indigent applicants for a writ of habeas corpus, and [SB 544](#), relating to reimbursement for the costs of legal services provided to an indigent defendant in a criminal case.

Presiding Judge Sharon Keller reported that the commission would hold a grant application training seminar.

Edwin Colfax, Grant Program Manager, TIDC, reported on the Client Choice Pilot Project, noting that the Justice Management Institute has been contracted to write an impact assessment after the program ends in about a year.

Judge Keller reported on publications issued since the Council last met, including the Commission's Annual and Expenditure Report for FY 2014.

Mr. Bethke followed with a report on the findings of the state's first criminal defense weighted caseload study that have been published. The report, [Guidelines for Indigent Defense Caseloads](#), is posted on the commission's website.

### **Presentation of Guardianship Study Findings**

Scott Griffith, Director for Research and Court Services, OCA, presented the guardianship study findings: [Texas Guardianship Cases: Improving Court Processes and Monitoring Practices in Texas Courts](#). He also discussed the recently released report [Asset Forfeiture in Texas: DPS and](#)

County Interactions. Both are posted on the OCA website. He acknowledged Judge Spencer and Aurora Zamora, Court Services Consultant, OCA, for their respective work on these reports.

**Report of the FY 14 Statistical Information for the Texas Courts**

Mr. Slayton provided the Council with highlights of the FY 2014 Annual Statistical Report for the Texas Courts.

**Legislative Update**

Mr. Slayton reviewed the status of current legislative resolutions.

**New Business**

Judge Rodriguez expressed appreciation for the OCA, TIDC, and related participants.

**Next Meeting**

Chief Justice Hecht announced that the next meeting of the Council will be held on June 12, 2015.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:55 a.m.

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Nathan L. Hecht  
Chair