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Fellow Members,

It has been a privilege to be serving as your President these past few months. As I've stated previously, I take this leadership role within the Paralegal Division with deep respect and sense of responsibility. My priority remains advocating for our profession and strengthening our organization. This is *our* organization, and together with the new Board of Directors, we will ensure our actions consistently reflect our commitment to the advancement of the Paralegal Division.

How will we achieve this?

We are dedicated to fulfilling the Paralegal Division's purpose which is to: *enhance members' participation in the administration of justice, professional responsibility, and public service in cooperation with the State Bar of Texas.* The Board of Directors and I are making this commitment a defining characteristic, and we are excited about the journey ahead with you during the **2025-2026** term.

To further this goal, this year's theme is "connecting" with our members. We are actively strengthening these connections through a variety of channels, including CLEs, networking events, mentoring opportunities, our eGroup platform, and job postings on the PD website. Our goal with every interaction is to foster meaningful professional connections and build thriving careers. Another key component of "connecting" is growing our membership. We invite each of you to reach out to a fellow paralegal who is not yet a PD member and encourage them to join our organization. As PD members, we know that being a member is more than just a number and visibility; it is about upholding integrity and ethics, building credibility, expanding your network, and actively participating in events to bridge the justice gap.

Ultimately, the entire Board and I are here to empower our members, both current and future, with the tools and information they need to advance their careers and build

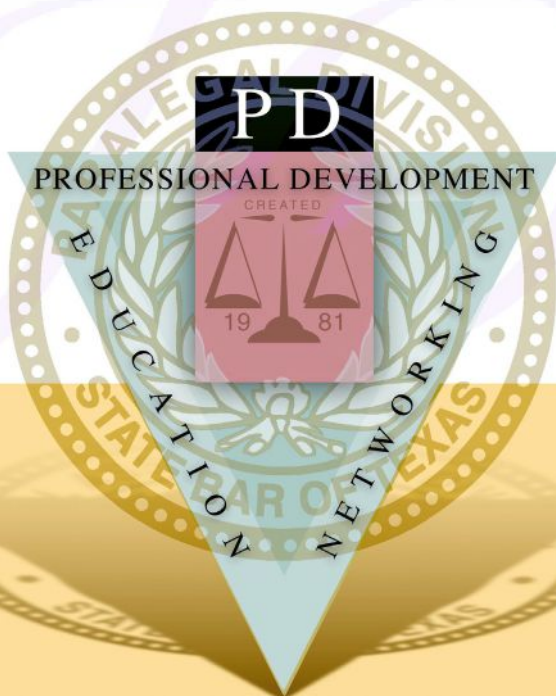


Pearl Garza

professional connections. I want to express my sincere gratitude to our dedicated Board of Directors and Committee Chairs, who are working tirelessly to represent and serve you. **Please do not hesitate to reach out to them or me with your ideas, suggestions, or questions.**

Pearl Garza,

*President - Paralegal Division,
State Bar of Texas*



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Editor's Note

Welcome Fall 2025!

It has been a minute since our last TPJ issue.

In this issue we will present the Paralegal Divisions Executive Board, District Directors, Committees, Ad-Hoc Committees and State Bar Appointments. We will also have some interesting legislative updates for 2025.

We would also like to thank all of the past representatives that volunteered their time and talents to make our Division one of the best around. The Paralegal Division truly appreciates you!

I have a question for you. What does it mean to be a paralegal in 2025? I cannot say that I have the answer to that question for everyone, but I can tell you what it means for me. I truly enjoy being a paralegal and love what I do. I am a corporate paralegal, and no two days look the same for me. One day I could be working on intellectual property matters, mergers and acquisitions, entity management matters, approving outside legal invoices, drafting reports for my attorneys, learning new technology and software programs and list goes on and on. However, I have not even touched on the best parts of my job. I appreciate the autonomy and working with a team of people that I really enjoy. I wake up every day and get to do what I love and that matters to me.

Stay tuned to future issues of the TPJ that will include:

- The results of 2025 Salary Survey
- TAPS 2025 Recap – Your Keys to CLE Live in San Antonio
- What does it look like to be a leader?
- Interesting AI articles

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and please let us know what you want to see in future editions of the TPJ.

Kerri Alexander,

TPJ Editor



Kerri Alexander



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Chicago, Illinois 60601
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Digital Publisher

RRD DigiMag

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Deadline for the Winter Issue is December 4, 2025.

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Texas Paralegal Journal © 2006 by the Paralegal Division, State Bar of Texas. Published quarterly in Texas by the Publications Committee of the Paralegal Division, P.O. Box 19163, Amarillo, Texas 79114. The Texas Paralegal Journal is a magazine published to provide information specifically for the members of the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas, as well as for members of the paralegal community in general, both in Texas and nationwide. Opinions expressed herein are solely those of the writer and not the Board of Directors or of the Division. Publication of any advertisement herein does not imply endorsement in any manner. None of the information contained herein is intended nor should it be construed as legal advice. Inclusion and editing of material submitted is at the discretion of the editor and the editorial subcommittee.



Texas Paralegal Journal (ISSN 10891633) is published four times a year in Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring for \$15 set aside from membership dues for a one-year subscription by the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas, P.O. Box 19163, Amarillo, TX 79114.



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DAY 2, APR 18, 2026: SORRENTO

Arrive in Rome, meet your ACIS Tour Manager and drive south to the delightful seaside town of Sorrento. Orange and lemon groves abound. (D)

DAY 3, APR 19, 2026: SORRENTO

Board a high-speed hydrofoil to cross the Bay of Naples to Capri, the Island of Dreams. Upon arriving on the island, take the funicular past subtropical gardens to the main square. There is time to wander through the narrow lanes and shop in the tiny artisan stores that line the square. Entrance to the Roman ruins of Emperor Tiberius's Villa Jovis is included. (B)

DAY 4, APR 20, 2026: SORRENTO

Today's adventure starts by exploring a working mozzarella farm and learning first-hand about how this creamy cheese is made, from ingredients to production to taste. A scenic drive then takes you along breathtaking coastline to Pompeii where a local guide provides commentary as you explore this town that was preserved under 23 feet of volcanic ash by the eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Return to Sorrento and enjoy an evening stroll around the charming Piazza Tasso. (B)

DAY 5, APR 21, 2026: ROME

We head first to Naples today and make a stop at the National Archaeological Museum where a local guide will take us on a tour of the trove of Italy's ancient treasures housed at this fine museum. Then dive into the many layers of history beneath our feet with a guided Naples Underground tour before heading north to Rome. (B,D)

DAY 6, APR 22, 2026: ROME

Rome is called "The Eternal City" because the ancient Romans believed that no matter what empires rose and fell, Rome would endure forever. Morning sightseeing introduces you to this ancient city. With a local guide, go inside the iconic and historic Colosseum (your timed reservation ensures no waiting in line) and learn the many stories of this nearly 2,000-year-old Roman landmark that's considered one of the architectural wonders of the ancient world. Then continue with your guide to the adjoining Roman Forum, the social, political and commercial hub of the Roman Empire. (B)

DAY 7, APR 23, 2026: ROME

Today's panoramic drive of the city is a great introduction to the many phases of Roman history. Our local expert accompanies you through the Vatican Museums, including the Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's Basilica. The best part is that these are timed entrances, meaning you'll breeze right by the long lines facing other tourists. *This afternoon you may choose an optional guided excursion to Ostia Antica to see its 4th century BC Roman ruins, previously buried under mud and sand until excavations at the beginning of the last century.* (B,D)

DAY 8, APR 24, 2026: ROME

Today why not visit the tranquil Borghese Gardens or the shops of Via Condotti? Climb each of the seven hills, or visit some of the majestic churches such as Santa Maria Maggiore. Be sure to sample the *gelato*. One of the best spots for that is Piazza Navona. (B)

DAY 9, APR 25, 2026: DEPARTURE

Depart for the USA.



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We are the first paralegal association which is a division of a state bar association. We strive to provide our members with excellent member benefits, networking through state-wide and local events, and social networking opportunities. We also work very hard to make our presence known throughout Texas with pro bono connections, involvement in many State Bar of Texas committees, and community involvement.

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The First 100 Days: **PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS OF PRESIDENT TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS ON IMMIGRATION**

By Sang M. Shin, Christian Triantaphyllis, and Kelly Cobb



Sang M. Shin



Christian Triantaphyllis



Kelly Cobb

Introduction

The first 100 days of President Trump's second term have been marked by a dramatic transformation of U.S. immigration policy. Through a series of sweeping executive orders, the administration has sought to fundamentally reshape the legal, procedural, and humanitarian landscape for foreign nationals, employers, and the legal community. These changes have not only intensified scrutiny and enforcement but have also triggered significant legal and political responses. This article provides a high-level analysis of how these executive orders are being implemented, the immediate and long-term impacts on key immigration programs, and the

evolving responses from the courts and Congress.

Heightened Scrutiny on Visa Applications and the "America First" Trade Policy

One of the most immediate effects of the new executive orders is the prospective imposition of heightened scrutiny on visa applications, particularly those related to employment. The "America First" Trade Policy, which directs a review and potential renegotiation of trade agreements, such as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement ("USMCA"), has had some initial impact on the adjudication of work visas. We believe scrutiny will continue to increase over the next year.

Executive Order 14161, "Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats," mandates the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") and the Department of State to implement stricter "enhanced vetting" for all visa applicants. This will likely result in an increase in administrative processing, with foreign nationals experiencing extended delays at U.S. consulates and embassies abroad. The backlog for visa appointments is growing, and in some cases, scheduling has been suspended for extended periods.

Applicants from countries designated as "high risk" are beginning to face intense scrutiny, regardless of their current nationality or citizenship.

During visa interviews, consular officers are now routinely inquiring about applicants' ties to these countries, and requiring additional security clearances. The inter-agency nature of the order is also leading to a rise in Requests for Evidence ("RFEs") and denials for filings made with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") and U.S. Customs and Border Protection ("CBP").

The "America First" Trade Policy is continuing to affect work visa categories, especially those tied to trade agreements. TN visa applicants under the USMCA are encountering more rigorous questioning and documentation requirements at consular interviews and ports of entry. Similarly, applicants for E-1 (treaty trader), E-2 (treaty investor), E-3 (specialty occupation workers from Australia), and H-1B1 (specialty occupation workers from Chile and Singapore) visas are also experiencing heightened scrutiny.

We have observed that many of our clients are experiencing increased uncertainty and delays in securing work authorization for foreign professionals. Many applicants are being asked to provide proof of how the individual and employer will better the economy and/or not displace U.S. workers. The cumulative effect could increase backlogs on the ability of U.S. businesses to attract and retain global talent. Immigration attorneys are advising clients to anticipate longer processing times, prepare for additional documentation requests, and consider alternative strategies for workforce planning.

Increase in Worksite Enforcement: I-9 Audits, Raids, and Worksite Visits

The administration's focus on enforcement extends well beyond the



visa application process. There has been a marked escalation in worksite enforcement activities and a renewed emphasis on employer compliance and the integrity of the employment verification process.

Employers across a range of industries are reporting a significant uptick in I-9 audits, unannounced raids, and worksite visits conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") and DHS. These enforcement actions are targeting both large and small employers. There is a particular focus on sectors that have traditionally relied on foreign labor, such as agriculture, hospitality, healthcare, and technology.

The audits are more comprehensive and aggressive than in previous years. Investigators are scrutinizing not only the accuracy of I-9 forms but also the underlying documentation and recordkeeping practices. Employers found to be out of compliance may face substantial fines, reputational

damage, and, in some cases, criminal prosecution.

Executive Order 14010, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," authorizes DHS to delegate enforcement authority to state and local law enforcement officials. This has led to increased collaboration between federal and local agencies, with more frequent inquiries into the immigration status of employees during routine law enforcement encounters. Employers are being advised to ensure that all employees have valid documentation readily available and to implement robust compliance programs to mitigate the risk of enforcement actions.

The heightened enforcement environment has prompted our clients to reevaluate their hiring and compliance practices. Many are investing in enhanced training for human resources personnel, conducting internal audits of I-9 records, and seeking legal counsel

to navigate the complex and evolving regulatory landscape. Attorneys are playing a critical role in advising clients on best practices, responding to government inquiries, and representing employers in enforcement proceedings.

Cancellation of Humanitarian Programs: TPS and Parole

The administration's executive orders have also targeted humanitarian programs, resulting in significant consequences for vulnerable populations and the communities that support them.

Executive Order 14159, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," directed DHS to limit designations of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and to curtail the issuance of Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) based on TPS. As a result, TPS for Venezuelans and other nationalities was rescinded. This initially left thousands of individuals who previously had protection from removal and work authorization in a state of uncertainty. On March 31, 2025, Judge Edward Chen, of the United States District Court of the Northern District of California, placed a hold on this cancellation, temporarily allowing for TPS to continue for Venezuelans.

EO 14159 also ended the CBP One and parole programs for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans. These programs had provided a lifeline for individuals fleeing violence, persecution, and instability in their home countries. The termination of these programs may close off important avenues for humanitarian relief and increase the risk of removal for those who previously benefited from parole.

The administration's actions have sent a clear signal that humanitarian relief implemented by the Biden administration is no longer a priority. The revocation of Biden-era executive orders related to civil immigration enforcement, migration and asylum seekers, reunification of families, and the resettlement of refugees has further narrowed the scope of available protections. Attorneys representing vulnerable populations are facing new challenges in advocating for clients and should closely monitor ongoing litigation and policy developments.

Mandatory Registration and Biometrics for Foreign Nationals

A significant new requirement introduced by the administration is the mandatory registration and collection of biometrics for all foreign nationals, regardless of their immigration status.

The executive orders direct DHS to implement a comprehensive registration system for foreign nationals. This includes the collection of fingerprints and other biometric data. This initiative is intended to enhance national security and improve the government's ability to track and monitor noncitizens within the United States.

The rollout of the biometric registration program has been accompanied by confusion and logistical challenges. Our office has observed an uptick in foreign nationals, particularly those in nonimmigrant categories who have not previously been subject to such requirements, being uncertain about the process and the implications for their status. Delays in scheduling biometric appointments and

processing applications will likely add to the uncertainty.

Employers are being advised to inform foreign national employees of the new requirements and to assist them in maintaining up-to-date documentation. Attorneys are counseling clients on the steps necessary to comply with the registration process and are preparing for potential increases in processing times and administrative burdens.

The expansion of biometric data collection has raised concerns about privacy and civil liberties. Advocacy organizations are questioning the scope and security of the data being collected, as well as the potential for misuse. Legal challenges may arise as the program is implemented and its impact becomes more clear.

Student Visa Cancellations and SEVIS Record Terminations

The administration's approach to student visas has shifted dramatically, with a wave of cancellations and terminations that have far-reaching implications for international students and educational institutions.

There has been a notable increase in the cancellation of F-1 student visas and the termination of SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) records. The reasons for these actions have expanded beyond traditional grounds. Reports indicate that students have lost status for activities, such as participation in pro-Palestinian demonstrations, minor criminal infractions, and other conduct, including receiving speeding tickets, that previously would not have triggered such severe consequences.

Based on our conversations with clients and the review of their history, it appears that the definition of "criminal conduct" to its maximum extent, making little distinction between serious and minor offenses. We have observed a heightened feeling of fear and uncertainty with international students concerned about the potential for status loss and removal based on relatively minor infractions.

Educational institutions are grappling with the implications of these changes, as the loss of international students can have significant academic, cultural, and financial consequences. Attorneys are advising students on their rights and options, assisting with reinstatement applications, and representing clients in removal proceedings. The legal community is also monitoring the potential for litigation challenging the administration's expansive interpretation of "criminal conduct."

The "Gold Card" Visa Proposal: Citizenship for a Fee

The administration has announced the introduction of a "Gold Card" visa program, offering a pathway to citizenship for individuals who pay a \$5 million fee or more to the United States government.

The "Gold Card" is designed to attract foreign capital by providing a fast-track to citizenship for high-net-worth individuals willing to make a substantial monetary contribution to the U.S. government. The program was initially touted as being ready for implementation within weeks of the announcement.

The implementation of the Gold Card visa program has stalled due to the need for congressional approval.

The legal framework for granting citizenship based on investment requires legislative action, and Congress has yet to take up the proposal. The legal community is watching closely to see whether the program will gain traction, particularly considering the administration's broader efforts to restrict other avenues of immigration.

The Gold Card visa proposal has generated interest among stakeholders who are involved in investment-based immigration. However, the uncertainty surrounding the program's implementation has created challenges for those seeking to take advantage of the new pathway. The legal community is advising clients to monitor developments closely and to consider alternative investment immigration options in the interim.

Judicial Responses: Courts Begin to Weigh In

The sweeping nature of the executive orders has prompted legal challenges, with federal courts beginning to issue rulings on the scope and application of the new policies.

One of the most high-profile legal challenges has involved Executive Order 14160, limiting birthright citizenship. On January 23, 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington issued a Temporary Restraining Order blocking the implementation of the order. Litigation is ongoing in multiple jurisdictions, with civil rights organizations, states, and cities challenging various aspects of the executive orders.

Despite the legal challenges, courts have generally continued to defer to the President's broad authority over

immigration. This deference is rooted in longstanding legal principles that recognize the executive branch's primary role in setting immigration policy. However, as litigation progresses, courts are beginning to grapple with the limits of executive authority and the potential for overreach.

Attorneys representing clients affected by the executive orders are closely monitoring judicial developments and adjusting their legal strategies accordingly. The evolving case law will play a critical role in shaping the future of immigration policy and the rights of foreign nationals.

Legislative Outlook: Industry Sectors Ramp Up Lobbying

The sweeping changes to immigration policy have galvanized industry groups, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders, who are ramping up lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill.

Sectors such as technology, healthcare, agriculture, and higher education, which rely heavily on foreign talent, are urging legislators to push back against the most restrictive measures and to protect access to critical visa programs. The economic impact of the new policies is becoming increasingly apparent, with employers reporting difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled workers.

While Congress has thus far been slow to act, the mounting pressure from business and civil society may force a legislative response. Lawmakers are being called upon to address the unintended consequences of the executive orders, to provide relief for affected individuals, and to ensure that the

U.S. remains competitive in the global economy.

Attorneys are playing a key role in advocating for legislative change, providing testimony before congressional committees, and working with industry groups to develop policy proposals. The legal community is also advising clients on how to engage in the legislative process and to make their voices heard.

Looking Ahead: Navigating an Uncertain Landscape

The first 100 days of President Trump's second term have brought a dramatic shift in U.S. immigration policy, with far-reaching consequences for foreign nationals, employers, and the legal community. Heightened scrutiny, increased enforcement, the rollback of humanitarian protections, and new registration requirements are creating a challenging environment that demands vigilance and adaptability.

Attorneys must stay abreast of rapid developments and be prepared to advise clients on a wide range of issues, from compliance and enforcement to litigation and legislative advocacy. Employers should review their hiring and compliance practices, invest in training and internal audits, and maintain open lines of communication with legal counsel.

The legal community has a critical role to play in advocating for fair and effective immigration policies, educating the public, and representing the interests of vulnerable populations. As the courts and Congress begin to respond, attorneys must be prepared to engage in policy debates and to defend the rights of their clients.

Sang M. Shin is a partner in Jackson Walker's Houston office, focusing on business immigration and compliance. He advises multinational corporations, startups, and individuals on a wide range of immigration matters, including employment-based visas, compliance strategies, and government investigations. Sang is recognized for his expertise in navigating complex immigration issues and for his commitment to client service.

Christian Triantaphyllis is a partner at Jackson Walker, where he leads the firm's investment immigration practice. He represents foreign investors, developers, and regional centers in EB-5 and other investment-based immigration matters, and is recognized for his expertise in complex cross-border transactions. Christian is a frequent speaker and author on investment immigration topics.

Kelly Cobb is a partner in Jackson Walker's Houston office, with a practice focused on labor and employment law, including immigration compliance, I-9 audits, and workplace investigations. She counsels employers on best practices and represents clients in government enforcement actions. Kelly is known for her practical approach to complex compliance issues and her dedication to client advocacy.

1. "The 287(g) Program enhances the safety and security of our nation's communities by allowing ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) to partner with state and local law enforcement agencies to identify and remove criminal aliens who are amenable to removal from the U.S." Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act, ICE's 287(g) Program, <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/287g> (last visited June 9, 2025).
2. Litigation-Related Update: Supreme Court stay of CHNV Preliminary Injunction, Release Date: June 6, 2025, <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/litigation-related-update-supreme-court-stay-of-chnv-preliminary-injunction> (last visited June 9, 2025); see also DHS Releases Statement on Major SCOTUS Victory for Trump Administration and the American People on Ending the CHNV Parole Program, Release Date: May 30, 2025, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/05/30/dhs-releases-statement-major-scotus-victory-trump-administration-and-american> (last visited June 9, 2025).
3. Ashley Mowreader, International Student Visas Revoked, Inside Higher Ed, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/global/international-students-us/2025/04/07/where-students-have-had-their-visas-revoked> (last visited June 9, 2025); see also NAFSA: Association of International Educators, NAFSA Releases Initial Analysis of Visa Revocations and other Actions Targeting International Students and Scholars, <https://www.nafsa.org/reports-of-actions-targeting-international-students> (last visited June 9, 2025).





Anne Chandler

our nation's immigration laws to expand Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authority over detention of noncitizens. The Act was named after a 22-year-old nursing student murdered by a Venezuelan migrant in Georgia in early 2024. Key changes to our laws resulting from the passage of the Laken Riley Act include:

- **Expanded Mandatory Detention:** For decades, ICE has had the authority to detain without bond noncitizens who are convicted of certain serious offenses. The Laken Riley Act significantly

judge. ICE has sole discretion to grant parole under Immigration and Nationality Act § 236(a)(2) and § 212(d)(5), a power significantly curtailed by recent Executive Orders.

Expanded State Power Under the Laken Riley Act

The Act also empowers **state attorney generals** with new legal authority:

- **Authority to Sue DHS:** If a state shows more than \$100 in harm, it may sue DHS for failing to detain noncitizens (Immigration and Nationality Act § 236(f)). In addition, states can sue to challenge ICE's use of discretion to release noncitizens from detention.
- **Override Federal Discretion:** States may challenge federal decisions to grant parole, release, or bond.
- **Visa Enforcement Authority:** States can sue the U.S. Department of State for not implementing visa restrictions required under federal law.

Sample Scenarios Where Detention Is Triggered Under the Laken Riley Act

- *Roy*, a DACA recipient from Mexico, is involved in a car accident where another driver is seriously injured. Roy is not at fault in the car accident but is cited for driving with an expired license. Because serious bodily injury occurred and he was cited for a criminal offense, ICE could detain him without bond.
- *Linda*, an undocumented mother from El Salvador, is cited for shoplifting after running out of a store with a gallon of milk while chasing her child. Although the incident is a Class C misdemeanor under Tex. Penal Code § 31.03(e)(1), her citation could still result in mandatory ICE detention.

The Laken Riley Act: WHAT ATTORNEYS SHOULD KNOW — REGARDLESS OF PRACTICE AREA

Introduction

The legal landscape for noncitizens in Texas is shifting rapidly. Attorneys across practice areas—including criminal defense, family law, employment, and beyond—should understand recent laws and proposed bills that increase the risk of detention and deportation for noncitizen clients. Federal policy shifts and state immigration priorities have dramatically expanded the reach of immigration enforcement in Texas.

What Is the Laken Riley Act?

Signed into law by President Trump on January 29, 2025, the **Laken Riley Act** (S. 5, 119th Cong.) amends

expands ICE's detention authority to include detaining noncitizens who are charged with, arrested for, convicted of, or who admit to specific offenses—including burglary, theft, larceny, shoplifting, assault on a law enforcement officer, or any offense involving death or serious bodily injury. Of note, the Laken Riley Act does not explicitly prohibit retroactive application.

- **No Bond:** Noncitizens subject to mandatory detention under the Immigration and Nationality Act § 236(c)(1)(E) are ineligible for bond hearings before an immigration

What All Attorneys Should Know—The Basics

- **Arrests=Risk:** Arrests, even without convictions, pose serious detention risks for noncitizens, especially non-Legal Permanent Residents. Under 8 C.F.R. § 236.1(c)(8), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has the authority to arrest and detain a noncitizen based on probable cause of removability, without requiring a criminal conviction. When a noncitizen is arrested by local or state law enforcement, ICE may issue an immigration detainer (Form I-247A), requesting that the agency notify ICE prior to the individual's release and continue custody for up to 48 hours beyond the scheduled release time. Even if charges are dismissed or the arrest does not lead to a conviction, the mere fact of an arrest can trigger ICE involvement and lead to detention and removal proceedings.
- **Expanded Enforcement Locations:** ICE may arrest individuals at municipal, criminal, and immigration courts, parole/probation offices, and at schools, churches, and hospitals.
- **Domestic Violence Cases Pose Specific Risk:** Though the Laken Riley Act defers to state law for offense definitions, ICE may independently interpret what constitutes "serious bodily injury" under the Immigration and Nationality Act § 236(c)(1) (E). Even clients arrested but not convicted—especially in domestic incidents where they were not the aggressor—may face long-term detention. Once ICE issues a detainer, it may take months or

years to evaluate the necessary facts to make a determination of whether an immigrant is eligible for release from detention pursuant to acts such as the Violence Against Women Act. 8 C.F.R. § 1003.19(a) grants immigration judges authority to conduct bond hearings, but excludes cases where the noncitizen is subject to mandatory detention under § 236(c) and the Laken Riley Act. This poses risks for noncitizens charged in domestic incidents, regardless of conviction.

- **Pre-Travel Risk Review:** Attorneys should review immigration, criminal history, and client involvement in political speech for all noncitizen clients prior to travel abroad, especially for male clients from Venezuela.

- **Citations Can Trigger Detention:** Even citations for petty theft or shoplifting can lead to ICE detention as ICE has broad discretion to arrest and detain noncitizens pending a decision on whether the individual should be removed from the United States.
- **Help Clients Mitigate Risk:** Help your noncitizen client prepare in the event they are detained or deported by law enforcement personnel. Guide your client to review the Texas Immigrant Alliance (TIA) bilingual kits and safety planning tools: texasimmigrantalliance.org. If your client is low-income, encourage your client to seek help from organizations like Houston Volunteer Lawyers to obtain documents, such as Powers of

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Attorney, that would allow others to protect your client's interests in case of detention.

Attorney Tips: Going Beyond the Basics

- **Conduct FOIA Reviews:** Run FOIA checks to clarify prior immigration decisions and avoid errors on future applications.
- **Watch for Misrepresentation Risks:** Ensure noncitizen clients avoid unintentional misrepresentations on governmental forms—misrepresentations could be used to justify detention.
- **Monitor Legal Challenges:** The law's lack of explicit protection against retroactive enforcement may be vulnerable to constitutional challenges.
- **If Your Client Is In Immigration Detention, Determine Bond Eligibility:** Be prepared to request a Joseph hearing to contest ICE's application of mandatory detention.
- **File Habeas Petitions:** When ICE misapplies the Laken Riley Act—especially retroactively or in cases involving minor offenses—file habeas corpus challenges under 28 U.S.C. § 2241.
- **If Handling Immigration Matters, Flag Inadmissibility Risks Early:** Identify and address all possible Immigration and Nationality Act § 212(a) inadmissibility grounds at the waiver or adjustment application stage.

Texas Case Study: SB 4 and SB 8

Recent Texas laws complement federal efforts:

- **SB 4, 88th Leg., 4th Spec. Sess. (Tex. 2023):** Creates new state crimes for Illegal Entry, Illegal

Reentry, and Refusal to Return to a Foreign Nation. The law would give powers to state law enforcement officers traditionally held by ICE officers and turn local judges into immigration judges who have the power to order deportations—a role traditionally reserved for federal courts and administrative immigration judges. The law is temporarily blocked and under review by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

- **SB 8, 89th Leg. (Tex. 2025) (pending):** Would require counties with more than 100,000 residents to enter into ICE 287(g) agreements, which deputize local law enforcement officers to perform certain federal immigration enforcement functions, such as identifying, processing, and in some cases, detaining noncitizens encountered during policing activities.

Jocelyn's Law (Federal Bill - Pending)

A separate federal bill, also called **Jocelyn's Law**, has been introduced in the U.S. House (H.R. ____, 119th Cong.) to expand mandatory ICE detention to any noncitizen arrested or convicted of theft. Though not yet enacted, the proposal reflects continued efforts to tie local criminal enforcement directly to federal immigration consequences.

A Larger Context: The Rise of State-Led Immigration Enforcement

These federal and state developments reflect a clear shift of immigration enforcement moving from a federal model to a hybrid federal-state enforcement. Texas exemplifies this transformation and is on the frontlines of immigration enforcement:

Texas Attorney General's unprecedented 287(g) agreement

signed in late **January 2025** with DHS. This agreement empowers the Texas Attorney General's civil investigators to perform immigration enforcement functions.

- **Civil Investigations of Nonprofits:** Texas Attorney General's office has launched civil probes into immigrant-serving nonprofits for alleged unlawful conduct, including allegations that nonprofits have violated federal criminal laws by transporting or harboring undocumented persons.
- **Prior Legislation: SB 4, 85th Leg. (Tex. 2017):** In 2017, Texas prohibited all local governments and law enforcement agencies from enacting policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities. Codified in Tex. Gov't Code § 752.053 and Tex. Loc. Gov't Code § 370.003. In Texas, local officials who refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities regarding detention requests can face criminal and civil penalties.

Final Thoughts

Legal status does not guarantee protection from detention. This was true before the Laken Riley Act was passed. However, the passage of the Laken Riley Act and the immigration policy priorities of our state and federal government should prompt all attorneys who serve noncitizen clients to follow some best practices:

- Inform your clients that legal status does not guarantee their protection from detention or deportation.

- Ensure clients are aware that arrests, citations, or even past criminal charges can lead to detention and deportation, especially for individuals who are not legal permanent residents.
 - Encourage your clients to be prepared to protect their children, their health, and their assets in the event they are detained or deported.
 - Educate your clients on their rights. Texas and federal actions related to immigration enforcement are increasingly coordinated, so noncitizens should be aware of their rights when interacting with local or state law enforcement personnel.
- In short, while the Laken Riley Act may have sparked headlines, it is one part of a **broader legal movement—with**

Texas at the forefront, of embedding immigration enforcement into local law enforcement and legal systems. Attorneys, regardless of whether they practice family law, employment, criminal defense, or probate law, must be ready to guide their clients through this rapidly changing terrain.

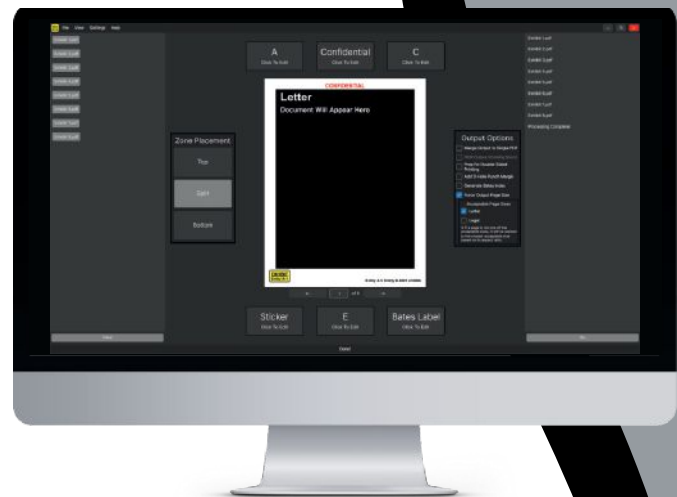
Anne Chandler is the executive director at Texas Immigration Law Council.

1. 8 C.F.R. § 236.1(c)(2024).
2. Id.
3. U.S. Immigration and Customs, Enforcement, Enforcement and Removal Operations, Protected Areas and Courthouse Arrests, <https://www.ice.gov/about-ice/enr/protected-areas> (last visited on June 5, 2025); see also Department of Homeland Security, Statement from a DHS Spokesperson on Directives Expanding Law Enforcement and Ending the Abuse of Humanitarian Parole, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/01/21/statement-dhs-spokesperson-directives-expanding-law-enforcement-and-ending-abuse> (last visited June 5, 2025).
4. 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)(2024).
5. A Joseph hearing is a special type of bond hearing, named after Matter of Joseph, 22 I&N Dec. 799 (BIA 1999), in which a noncitizen argues that mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c) does not apply.
6. See Order Granting Preliminary Injunction, Dkt. 42, Cause No. 1:24-cv-00008-DAE, in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas.



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EMINENT DOMAIN AND CONDEMNATION IN TEXAS

By Dan Gattis

Friday marks the second time the Court will consider the petition: The case was originally distributed for the Court's February 21 conference. The Court then instructed the New York state court to provide it with the record on appeal. That request has now been fulfilled, and the case is now set for its second conference.

Bowers' case was supported by a [brief](#) from the Cato Institute and George Mason University (Scalia Law School) Professor Ilya Somin and a [brief](#) from the Buckeye Institute. Cato and Somin write about the widespread confusion *Kelo* created in lower courts while the Buckeye Institute shined a light on the injustices of eminent domain and frequently failed promises of redevelopment.

The reaction against *Kelo* in 2005 was intense, sparking 45 states to change the law to prevent eminent domain from being used for private development. New York was among a handful of states that chose not to protect property owners.

Bryan Bowers and his business partner Mike Licata purchased property across the street from a new hospital in Utica, New York. The property was taken through eminent domain by the Oneida County Industrial Development Agency (OCIDA) and given to their potential competitors to be used for parking.

The power of eminent domain is found in the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which requires that property can only be taken for "public use" and with "just compensation." Historically, this power was intended to allow the government to acquire land for essential public projects such as roads, schools, and infrastructure.

However, in *Kelo*, the 5-4 majority held that creating jobs and increasing tax revenue was a "public use." The dissent countered that this broad definition of public use made the power of eminent domain practically unlimited. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote for the minority that "the government now has license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more."

While this marks the first time IJ has asked the Supreme Court to overrule *Kelo*, it has continued to defend property owners from eminent domain abuse where it arises. Currently, IJ is defending small business owners in [Missouri](#) from blight designations that would allow their city to take property and give it to private developers. In [Mississippi](#), IJ is defending homeowners from blight designations made in secret that cannot be challenged under state law. And in [Georgia](#), IJ is trying to stop a private railroad from taking land that has been in some families for generations.

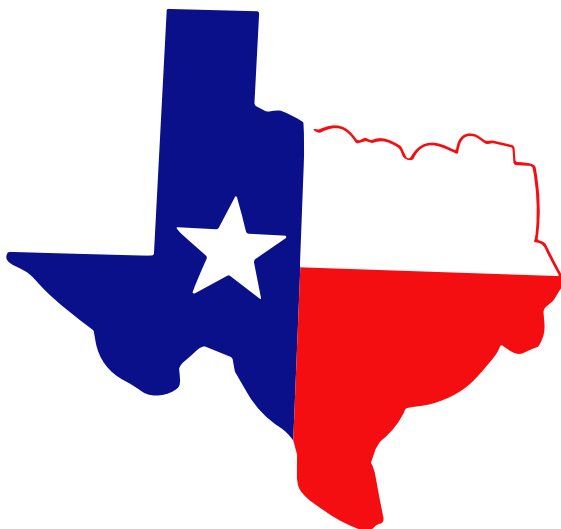
ARLINGTON, Va.—On Friday, March 21, the U.S. Supreme Court will consider whether to hear a case with the potential to overturn one of the most reviled decisions in recent decades: [Kelo v. New London](#). The Institute for Justice (IJ) [appealed](#) the case of Bryan Bowers, a New York landowner whose property was seized by a government agency to provide private parking for a nearby private office building.

"State legislatures, state high courts, and American voters amending their own state constitutions have all rejected *Kelo* because it is simply wrong to let the government take one person's property away in order to hand it to another private owner with more political power," said IJ Deputy Litigation Director Bob McNamara. "This case gives the Supreme Court the opportunity to say the same."

TEXAS PARALEGAL DAY

Did you know that the State Bar of Texas was the first bar association in the United States to create a separate division for paralegals? What was originally “the Legal Assistants Division” and is now “The Paralegal Division” of the State Bar of Texas (the “Division”) was created on October 23, 1981. The members of the division thought we were worth recognizing, so with their encouragement, on April 5, 1993, **Texas Senate Concurrent Resolution 69** was signed by the President of the Senate, Bob Bullock, and the Speaker of the House, Pete Laney, commending the Division and the legal assistants of the State of Texas, and resolving that the 73rd Legislature of the State of Texas had declared October 23 as Texas Legal Assistants Day.

Beginning in 2005, the **Texas House of Representatives** signed proclamations acknowledging **October 23rd as “Paralegal Day”** (as a result of the Paralegal Division’s formal name change), for one or two years at a time. However, on January 22, 2009, the Texas Senate issued **Proclamation No. 1144**, declaring **October 23 to be Texas Paralegal Day indefinitely**.





THE ETHICS OF USING GENERATIVE AI

By Ellen Lockwood

By now it seems everyone has heard of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the ability of certain AI programs to do our writing for us. Legal software has used AI for decades, but with limited capabilities. It is only recently that generative AI programs have become accessible to most people and received widespread coverage in the media.

Generative AI programs such as ChatGPT have been described as being able to write a student's paper, draft legal documents, including contracts and briefs, and, by some descriptions, make most writers obsolete. However, as with most recent technology, the hype and the reality are quite different. While generative AI programs may be convenient and even useful in some circumstances, there are many issues with using these programs in the legal field.

As with any other software, it is imperative to understand how each AI program processes data. For example, ChatGPT was trained on billions of bits of information, the vast majority from the internet. It then takes the prompt

you submit and responds with strings of text, based on the data on which it was training, that it guesses is the best answer. However, ChatGPT and other generative AI quite often gets information incorrect and sometimes generates false statements and assertions. There is even a term, "AI hallucinations," to refer to the tendency of generative AI programs to make statements that appear to be factual but have no basis in fact. The reason generative AI provides information that isn't always factual is because the programs aren't copying and spitting out information that was found on the internet. The software is just predicting lines of text based on the information on which it was trained.

Since attorneys (and therefore, paralegals) have a duty of competency, someone must ensure the accuracy of the output generated by AI software. Documents with factual errors and miscalculations are not only unacceptable, they also have the potential to cause real harm in a legal proceeding, as well as leave the attorney who files such a document vulnerable to sanctions and malpractice claims.

Generative AI also almost always includes biases. Depending upon the data on which the program was trained, these biases may include gender, age, race, culture, income, and any other potential bias. Users should be aware of this tendency and review any AI-generated text carefully to remove biases.

Other issues to consider are privilege and confidentiality. Before inputting personal, privileged, or sensitive data into generative AI programs, users should determine whether that information will truly be kept confidential. For example, ChatGPT's publisher reserves the right to have its staff review inputs for training purposes and safety monitoring. There is also the possibility that uploading personal or sensitive data could result in a violation of data protection laws or codes of conduct.

Plagiarism and copyright infringement are also common when using generative AI. Since the applications are trained on content from the Internet, usually without the authors' permission or even awareness, there is the potential for authors to object when their work is used without their knowledge or consent.

A few courts have determined that some AI programs have violated UPL laws. In one situation, a generative AI program was completing legal forms on behalf of individuals who were not represented by counsel.

Attorneys in other states have filed pleadings generated by AI that included cites to fictional case law. Obviously, the attorneys did not check the cites before filing those pleadings. These situations have caused judges in some jurisdictions to issue orders in response. For example, Judge Star of the Northern District of Texas has ordered the following:

All attorneys appearing before the Court must file on the docket a certificate attesting either that no portion of the filing was drafted by generative artificial intelligence (such as ChatGPT, Harvey.AI, or Google Bard) or that any language drafted by generative artificial intelligence was checked for accuracy, using print reporters or traditional legal databases, by a human being.

Some judges are requiring attorneys submit a disclosure if any portion of a filing was created using generative AI.

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure already addresses some of these issues:

FRCP 11(b)

b) Representations to Court. By presenting to the court (whether by signing, filing, submitting, or later advocating) a pleading, written motion, or other paper, an attorney or unrepresented party is certifying that to the best of the person's knowledge, information, and belief, formed after an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances:

(2) the claims, defenses, and other legal contentions therein are warranted by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law or the establishment of new law.

Obviously, someone must review any AI generated material to comply with this rule.

There are a few private AI software applications designed for the legal field such as the contract drafting tool by Henschman's and Casetext's Co-Counsel. These focus on security, protect confidentiality, and use appropriate and known data sources. These applications are generally safe to use, although they should be thoroughly vetted just as you would do with any software.

Recommendation: avoid use of most generative AI software for now, other than those programs specifically developed for the legal field. Other generative AI software is fraught with too many issues, and you will spend more time reviewing it for inaccuracies, AI hallucinations, biases, privilege and confidentiality

issues, plagiarism and copyright infringement to make it worth your while to use it.

Regulations and codes of conduct continue to struggle to keep up with advances in technology. Given the issues that use of generative AI programs may have on the legal field, we may expect case law, as well as new legislation and updates to codes to conduct, to be addressing these matters sooner rather than later.

Ellen Lockwood, ACP, RP, is the chair of the Professional Ethics Committee of the Paralegal Division and a past president of the Division. She is a frequent speaker on paralegal ethics and intellectual property and the lead author of the Division's Paralegal Ethics Handbook published by Thomson Reuters. She may be contacted at ethics@txpd.org.



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Board of Directors

ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

Submitted by President-Elect, Kim A. Goldberg, TBLS-BCP, Civil Trial Law

The PD Board of Directors met on Friday, February 28 and Saturday, March 1, 2025, in San Antonio, Texas.

2024-2025 Board of Directors and PD Coordinator

President – Alice Lineberry
President-Elect – Pearl Garza
District 1 – Kim Goldberg, TBLS-BCP
District 2 and Parliamentarian,
Heather Ulliman, TBLS-BCP
District 3 – Monty Mays – Absent
District 4 – Billy Hart
District 5 – Susi Boss
District 7 – Marnee Bolen, TBLS-BCP
District 10 and Secretary,
Marie Boleslawski, ACP
District 11 – Shannon “Shay” Mendez
Smith – Absent
District 12 – Jennifer Harris
District 14 and Treasurer,
Maria Sturdy
District 15 – Arturo Ortiz
District 16 – Guy McGunegle
Paralegal Division Coordinator –
Rhonda Brashears, CP, TBLS-BCP

Also in attendance were guests invited by the President:

Javan Johnson, ACP, TBLS-BCP
Becky Alldredge, District CLE Chair
Patti Giuliano, Past President and
Chair of the Membership Renewal
Spot Audit Ad Hoc Committee
Ellen Lockwood, ACP, RP
Melanie Langford, Elections
Committee Chair was not at the
meeting.

The Board of Directors was
presented an intensive ethics
overview by the Paralegal Division
Ethics Chair, Ellen Lockwood.

Each District Director and several
Committee Chairs provided the
Board an update of past and
upcoming events taking place in
each of their Districts and with their
Committees. The Board Advisors
also provided Liaison reports for
each of their assigned Committee/
Organizations, including the Artificial
Intelligence Committee.

The Treasurer, President-Elect and
Paralegal Division Coordinator also
provided their reports.

The Board also welcomed a guest
speaker, Judge Rosie Speedlin
Gonzalez, who discussed AI from a
personal and legal perspective.
The Board discussed some proposed
changes to the Paralegal Division
governing documents that will be
provided to the Board for review and
vote in September.

The Board Elected 2025-2026 Officers:

President-Elect – Kim Goldberg,
TBLS-BCP
Parliamentarian – Billy Hart
Treasurer – Maria Sturdy
Secretary – Marie Boleslawski, ACP
Pearl Garza will be installed as the 2025-
2026 President on June 20, 2025, along
with the Board Elected 2025-2026
Officers. Kim A. Goldberg, TBLS-
BCP, will be the 2026-2027 Paralegal
Division President.

Some upcoming dates to remember:

Membership: Renewals will begin May 1 and go through July 31, 2025.

Outgoing Board Meeting will be held on June 20, 2025, in San Antonio.

Incoming Board Meeting will be held on June 20-21, 2025, in San Antonio.

TAPS 2025 is in San Antonio – September 24-26, 2025, at The Westin San Antonio North – 9821 Colonnade Blvd, San Antonio, TX 78230 – Save the Date!

The Board received reports regarding the recent TAPS Planning Committee meeting and the plans for TAPS 2025.

Paralegal Pulse – The Paralegal Pulse is emailed out monthly. Please open and read them when you have a moment. The Pulse highlights upcoming CLE opportunities, The President's Gavel and the monthly opportunity to "Read and Win." Just read through the current issue of the Pulse and be the 19th person to correctly answer the question provided. The monthly winner will

receive a \$20 e-gift card to be emailed directly to them!

We are looking forward to a year of new and exciting events. Hope you will join us for all of them.



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OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Alice Lineberry

Having been a member of the Division since 1988, I was very humbled and honored for the opportunity to serve as your 2024-2025 President. The Paralegal Division is such a great organization, and I am proud to be a member and to provide a service to our members.

I am a Case Manager with the law firm of DLA Piper in Austin working in patent litigation. I have worked at DLA Piper for 24 years and am fortunate to work with attorneys who understand the importance of a paralegal's role on a case team, as well as the importance of being involved in the Paralegal Division. Huge thanks to the firm for supporting me during my role as President.

"Inspiring Leadership" was my theme this year. As President, one of my goals was to strive to be the best leader I could be. The Board was very fortunate to have Christine E. Reinhard, a member of the Steering Committee for the Bexar County Women's Bar Foundation LEAD Academy, speak to us at our incoming board meeting about leadership.

One of my goals was to help grow future leaders. The Board was encouraged to identify future leaders within their districts and to inspire our future leaders to begin their involvement in the Paralegal Division. As you know, board meetings are open to all members. I encouraged our directors to invite our future leaders to our board meetings, and I was delighted to see several of our members attend our board meetings throughout the year. I'm hoping to see some of their names show up as future board members.

We were fortunate to have such great leaders serving the Paralegal Division as directors, committee chairs, sub-chairs, and volunteers. We could not do all that we do without everyone's leadership and

dedication. The Directors who served during the 2024-2025 term are as follows:

Alice Lineberry, PLS, CP of Austin
President

Pearl Garza of San Antonio
President-Elect

Kim Goldberg,
TBLS-BCP of Houston
District 1 Director

Heather Ulliman, TBLS-BCP of Dallas
District 2 Director and Parliamentarian

Monty Mayes, TBLS-BCP of Fort Worth
District 3 Director

Billy Hart of College Station
District 4 Director

Susi Boss of San Antonio
District 5 Director

Marnee Bolen of Lubbock
District 7 Director

Marie Boleslawski,
ACP of The Woodlands
District 10 Director and Secretary

Shannon "Shay" Smith of Abilene
District 11 Director

Jennifer Harris, CP of Denton
District 12 Director

Maria Sturdy of Longview
District 14 Director and Treasurer

Arturo Ortiz of McAllen
District 15 Director

Guy McGunegle, CP of El Paso
District 16 Director

And, of course, we were very fortunate to have Rhonda Brashears, CP, TBLS-BCP, as our Paralegal Division Coordinator. As a long-time PD member and two-time past president, Rhonda has a wealth



Alice Lineberry

of knowledge and experience and a true passion and commitment for the Paralegal Division and the profession. We could not do it without her.

I am currently serving as the TAPS Chair. I hope that you are making plans to attend TAPS. It will be held in San Antonio, Texas from September 24-26, 2025. This is a great opportunity to network with paralegals from across the state, earn up to 13 hours of CLE, experience career advancement through education, and attend some fun socials, among other things. Registration is already open so go online to secure your spot at TAPS.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Paralegal Division President during the 2024-2025 year. It has been such a tremendous honor to serve as your President.

**"Inspiring Leadership"
was my theme this year.**

Alice Lineberry

MEET YOUR NEW 2025-2026 PARALEGAL DIVISION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President – Pearl Garza

Pearl Garza is a Litigation Manager Senior with United Services Automobile Association (USAA) in the Chief Legal Office, providing legal support on employment-related litigation matters. Prior to joining USAA in 2013, Pearl worked as an employment law paralegal at iHeartMedia/Clear Channel Communications in San Antonio. Pearl has over 20 years of experience in employment law litigation.

Pearl earned her Paralegal Certification from Palo Alto College and is currently pursuing a B.A. in Organizational Development at The University of Incarnate Word. Her dedication to the paralegal profession is evident in her leadership roles as the current President of the State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division and past President of the San Antonio Paralegal Association.

Outside of her professional life, Pearl enjoys spending time with her husband, Juan, and cheering on their son, Delmar, a St. Mary's University graduate with a passion for the culinary arts. She also enjoys participating in the Red Hat Society, playing bunco, bingo and board games, as well as outdoor activities like walking, fishing and camping.

Getting to know your Executive Board Questions:

What inspires Pearl?

During the week, Pearl is inspired mostly by caffeine and the fear of her inbox exploding. But seriously, as a



Pearl Garza

self-confessed workaholic glued to a computer screen most weekdays, she is truly inspired by the great outdoors! Pearl looks forward to experiencing the beauty of nature on the weekends.

If Pearl were not a paralegal, what career would she choose?

If Pearl were not a paralegal, she would be a college professor. She enjoys learning, teaching and mentoring others. It's the only other job she can think of where her attention to detail and borderline obsessive need to organize things would be considered a good thing. Plus, she'd get to wear a fancy robe on graduation day!

If Pearl had to sing karaoke, what song would she pick?

It's got to be "I Love Rock & Roll" by Joan Jett. We're talking full-on air guitar to make Joan herself either proud or slightly terrified (hey, a girl must rock out sometimes). Prepare to be rocked!

We asked Pearl to list three office supplies she couldn't live without.

Pearl's laptop – it's practically an extension of her brain at this point; two monitors because one is never enough when juggling deadlines; and an ergo mouse because her hand will go into full-blown rebellion without it.

President - Elect – Kim A. Goldberg, TBLS-BDP

Kim A. Goldberg a Senior Litigation Paralegal at Munsch Hardt law firm in Houston, Texas.

Kim's experience and areas of practice concentrate primarily in large and small, complex and simple, commercial litigation matter; including lender liability defense; securities; disputes involving financial institutions; contract claims; construction and employment law. She has participated in many trial and arbitrations in both state and federal courts in Connecticut, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Utah and Texas.

Between 2007 and 2011, Kim worked with a beginner start-up renewable energy company in the capacity as Vice President of Administration and Human Resources with overall responsibility for development and implementation for human resources and administration. In a short period of 36 months the company grew from 25 to 325 employees

expanding into 10 different regions among 5 states.

Getting to know your Executive Board Questions:

What inspires Kim?

Random acts of kindness, watching others overcome adversity and challenges, dedication and passion shown by people that truly love what they do; and always being open to expanding her knowledge and understanding that can open the door to new possibilities in her life.

If Kim were not a paralegal, what career would she choose?

If Kim were not a paralegal, she would be an attorney.

If Kim had to sing karaoke, what song would she pick?

Landslide by Stevie Nicks.



Kim A. Goldberg

We asked Kim to list three office supplies she couldn't live without.

Pink Post-It Notes, daily journal and extra fine blue pen.

Secretary – Marie Boleslawski, ACP



Marie Boleslawski

Marie received her NALA Certified Paralegal certification in 2009 and an Advanced Certified Paralegal certification in Business Organizations: Incorporated Entities in 2010.

Marie recently left the corporate world and is currently employed as a corporate freelance paralegal focusing on mergers and acquisitions, corporate, and entity management.

Prior to going freelance, Marie was the Paralegal Manager and Senior Paralegal from 2015 through 2024 for Howard Hughes Holdings Inc., a national commercial real estate development public corporation, where she managed the governance of over 300 special

purpose entities holding title to real estate assets across the nation, including Hawaii. Her responsibilities included formation and dissolution of corporate entities, electronic management of corporate records, preparation of formation documents and resolutions and parent and subsidiary organization charts. Marie also drafted real estate asset purchase related agreements and filings and repair and maintenance operating contracts for the real estate assets.

Prior to Howard Hughes, Marie was the Senior Corporate Paralegal from 2006 through 2015 for Hercules Offshore, Inc., an international shallow water drilling public corporation, where she also managed the governance of over 300 special purpose entities holding title to the drilling rigs. She managed the board of directors' portal and

meeting documents and scheduled and coordinated meetings and other functions for the board of directors. She also drafted executive employment agreements, confidentiality agreements, securities filings, and asset purchase agreements.

Marie is a Member and Director for District 10 of the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas where she also serves as Board Secretary.

Getting to know your Executive Board Questions:

What inspires Marie?

Marie is inspired by anyone that lives their

faith by following Jesus boldly without fear. Faith looks different for everyone because she believes we were uniquely knit together for a purpose before we were born.

If Marie were not a paralegal, what career would she choose?

If not a paralegal, Marie would be involved in music somehow. She thinks she would have loved teaching high school chemistry (to support herself), and choir and possibly drama, for the joy and fun of it and because everyone needs to learn to speak or sing in front of people; however, her class would have included a performance choir. More like musical

theater (but without the drama trauma!) and singing, writing and playing her guitar that she is learning to play. Marie believes it's never too late.

If Marie had to sing karaoke, what song would she pick?

Marie enjoys singing karaoke songs by Linda Rondstadt, Carly Simon, Bonnie Raitt, Crystal Gayle, Anne Murray, Carole King, Trisha Yearwood, Janis Ian and John Denver.

We asked Marie to list three office supplies she couldn't live without.

Marie's go-to office supplies are a stapler, 3-hole punch, and yellow highlighters.

Treasurer – Maria Sturdy

Maria Sturdy is a Paralegal working under the direction of Chris and Michelle Jones at Jones & Jones in Longview for the past 13 years. Jones & Jones specializes in Employment Law and Personal Injury. Before coming to Longview, Maria worked for Michael G. Carroll in Tyler.

Maria has been a member of the Paralegal Division since 2015 and has served as District 14 Director for the past three years. She is also the Treasurer for the Paralegal Division and has held that position since 2023.

She has been member of the Northeast Texas Association of Paralegals (NTAP) since 2013 and has served in a variety of roles over the years: President, 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary (currently) and Treasurer for the association. She is also a member of the Texas Bar College.

Maria graduated Magna Cum Laude with her Associate Degree in Applied Science with emphasis in Paralegal Studies from Tyler Junior College in 2009.

Maria and her husband have 5 children and 13 grandchildren and 1 great

grandson. Maria enjoys cooking, gardening, painting and camping.

Getting to know your Executive Board Questions:

What inspires Maria?

A challenge always brings inspiration to Maria. If she is told "you can't get this done in time or you probably can't do this," this is now a challenge and inspires her to do the best she can.

If Maria were not a paralegal, what career would she choose?

If Maria was not pursuing her paralegal career, she has dreams of several jobs doing a lot of different things, but her favorite would be to own a Nursery (plants not kids). She can't think of a better way to spend the day than watering and tending to plants and flowers.

If Maria had to sing karaoke, what song would she pick?

When it comes to karaoke, Maria would pick "Firework" by Katy Perry to be sung as it is a fun and inspiring song.



Maria Sturdy

We asked Maria to list three office supplies she couldn't live without.

Maria cannot live without her electric stapler, Post-It Notes, and highlighters.

Parliamentarian – Billy Hart

Billy Hart is the Senior Paralegal at West, Webb, Allbritton & Gentry, P.C. with over 32 years of paralegal experience with emphasis in civil litigation. Billy has been a member of the Paralegal Division since 2005 and a member of the Texas Bar College since 2014.

Billy received his paralegal certificate in 1991 from Concorde Career Institute in Houston and began working as a paralegal out of a passion for the law, helping others as well as providing for his family. To further his education, he returned to school and graduated from Texas A&M University in 2000 with a BS in Psychology.

Billy has served the Paralegal Division in various capacities since 2005. In 2023 Billy was elected to serve as the District 4 Director. Prior to being elected to District 4 Director Billy served on the membership and professional development committees sub-chair for District 4. In addition to working with

the Paralegal Division, Billy has served as an advisory Board member to the Blinn College Paralegal Program since 2013 to mentor students in the degree program to become Paralegals. Billy is also one of the founding members of the Brazos County Legal Professionals Association.

In addition to his work as a Paralegal, he volunteers for various community and youth soccer organizations. Billy is married to Dawn, and they have two adult children, Christina and Justin. In addition, they have three amazing grandchildren, Ryland, Lynnlee Jo and Carson.

Getting to know your Executive Board Questions:

What inspires Billy?

Growth of the paralegal profession and the importance it provides to clients brings inspiration to Billy.

If Billy were not a paralegal, what career would he choose?

Billy would be a police officer if not pursuing his paralegal career.



Billy Hart

If Billy had to sing karaoke, what song would he pick?

A few karaoke songs that Billy would pick include "Sweet Caroline" or "Friends in Low Places."

We asked Billy to list three office supplies he couldn't live without.

Three office supplies that Billy cannot live without are small binder clips, Post-It Notes, and highlighters.

PD Coordinator – Rhonda J. Brashears, CP, TBLS-BCP



Rhonda J. Brashears

Rhonda Brashears is a paralegal with the firm of Underwood Law Firm, P.C., Amarillo, Texas, and has been a paralegal for 32 years. She specializes in personal injury and civil trial defense law. She received her B.G.S. from West Texas A&M University in 1998, her Certified Paralegal designation from the National Association of Legal Assistants in 1996, and was board certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in Personal Injury Trial Law in 1998.

Rhonda has been a member of the Paralegal Division since 1990. She currently serves the Division as an Ambassador. In addition, she served as Director of District 7, 1996 until 2001, Secretary, 1999 to 2001, President Elect

in 2001 and 2007, and President of the Division in 2002 and 2008. She has also previously served as Chair of the On-Line CLE Committee, the TAPS Planning Committee, the Publications Committee and as Editor of the Texas Paralegal Journal, receiving the Outstanding Committee Chair of the Year as the Publications Chair 2006-2007.

Rhonda is a member of the Texas Panhandle Paralegal Association, where she has served as President, President-Elect, Treasurer and NALA Liaison.

Rhonda has been the Paralegal Division Coordinator since November of 2015.

Getting to know your Executive Board Questions:

What inspires Rhonda?

Putting others and the goal first! Rhonda is truly inspired by working toward a goal with people, who respect, support, motivate, and celebrate others. This is true in any situation she finds herself whether it be work, community, professional, friends or family. Rhonda believes when we treat others with respect and place the task at hand at the front end, we can always expect wonderful results.

If Rhonda were not a paralegal, what career would she choose?

Rhonda's dream job would be anything involving horses.

If Rhonda had to sing karaoke, what song would she pick?

Lyn' Eyes.

We asked Rhonda to list three office supplies she couldn't live without.

Coffee, Post-It Notes, and her to-do tablet.

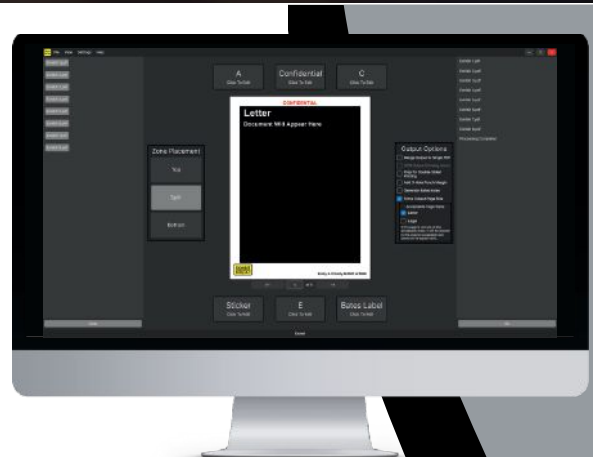


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PARALEGAL DIVISION, STATE BAR OF TEXAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025-2026



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RECOGNITION OF THE 2025-2026 COMMITTEE CHAIRS & AD-HOC COMMITTEE CHAIRS

COMMITTEES

Immediate Past President/Historian

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Annual Meeting Committee

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Continuing Education Committee - Online CLE

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Board Advisor: **Kimberly A. Goldberg**, TBLS-BCP, District 1

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Board Advisor: **Marnee Bolen**, TBLS-BCP Family Law, District 7

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Board Advisor: **Susi Boss**, District 5

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Board Advisor: **Jennifer Harris**, District 12

Professional Ethics Committee

Chair: **Ellen Lockwood**, ACP, RP

Board Advisor: **Letisia "Letty" Rodriguez**, TBLS, District 15

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Chair: **Kerri Alexander**

Board Advisor: **Maria Sturdy**, District 14

Publications Committee

Chair: **Kerri Alexander**

Board Advisor: **Susan Davis**, TBLS-BCP, District 3

TPJ Editor

Kerri Alexander

Board Advisor: **Susan Davis**, TBLS-BCP, District 3

TPJ Advertising

PD Coordinator: **Rhonda J. Brashears**, CP, TBLS-BCP

Procedures Manual Committee

Chair: **Kimberly A. Goldberg**, TBLS-BCP

AD-HOC COMMITTEES

Ambassador Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Alice Lineberry**, PLS, CP

Board Advisor: **Kimberly A. Goldberg**, TBLS-BCP; President-Elect, District 1

Artificial Intelligence Ad-Hoc Committee

Co-Chair: **Megan Goor**, TBLS

Co-Chair: **Ellen Lockwood**, ACP, RP

Board Advisor: **Marnee Bolen**, TBLS-BCP Family Law, District 7

E-Group Policy Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Michele E. Rayburn**, PLS, CP, TBLS

Board Advisor: **Pearl Garza**, President, District 5

Emeritus Membership Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Vacant**

Board Advisor: **Susi Boss**, District 5

Ethics Handbook Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Ellen Lockwood**, ACP, RP

Board Advisor: **Marie Boleslawski**, ACP, District 10

Governing Documents Review Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Javan Johnson**, ACP, TBLS

Board Advisor: **Pearl Garza**, District 5

In-House Paralegal Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Pam R. Horn**, TBLS

Board Advisor: **Jennifer Harris**, District 12

Leadership Development Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Joncilee H. Miller**, ACP

Board Advisor: **Marie Boleslawski**, ACP, District 10

Membership Renewal Spot Audit Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Sandra L. Kozero**

Board Advisor: **Billy Hart**, District 4

Mentor Program Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Priscilla J. Nash**

Board Advisor: **Shannon M. Smith**, District 11

Paralegal Pulse-E Newsletter Ad-Hoc

Co-Chair: **Javan Johnson**, ACP, TBLS

Co-Chair: **Vacant**

Board Advisor: **Maria Sturdy**, District 14

Pro Bono Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Julie Sherman**, TBLS

Board Advisor: **Marnee Bolen**, TBLS-BCP

Family Law, District 7

Standing Rules and Bylaws Committee

Chair: **Billy Hart**, District 4

Student Liaison Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Elaine Simons**, CP

Board Advisor: **Billy Hart**, District 4

Sustaining Member/Vendor Liaison

Chair: **Elaine Simons**, CP

Board Advisor: **Susan Davis**, TBLS-BCP,
District 3

**2025 Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar
(TAPS) Ad-Hoc Committee**

Chair: **Alice Lineberry**, PLS,CP,

Board Advisor: **Pearl Garza**, District 5

**2026 Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar
(TAPS) Ad-Hoc Committee**

Chair: **Pearl Garza**

Board Advisor: **Kimberly A. Goldberg**,
TBLS-BCP, District 1

**Texas Bar College Application Review
Ad-Hoc Committee**

Chair: **Megan Goor**, TBLS

Board Advisor: **Letisia "Letty" Rodriguez**,
TBLS, District 15

TBLS Helpful Hints Ad-Hoc Committee

Chair: **Javan Johnson**, ACP, TBLS

Board Advisor: **Amy S. Rainwater**,
TBLS, PHP, District 1



Leadership • Professionalism • Public Service**PARALEGAL DIVISION, STATE BAR OF TEXAS****MENTOR PROGRAM****Mission Statement**

To promote professionalism, foster ethical practices, and encourage personal and professional growth through mentorship and hands-on experience.

Vision Statement

To be a leading model of excellence in paralegal mentorship by forming an engaged and inclusive legal community where knowledge is shared, professional standards are elevated, and every paralegal is empowered to reach their full potential.

Program Benefits

- Gain insights from experienced paralegals
- Enhance legal knowledge and practical skills
- Build professional confidence and networks
- Receive guidance on career development

Mentor/Protégés Expectations**Mentor:**

Opportunities to share your guidance and general advice* regarding the paralegal profession, ethics, and substantive legal topics;

Encourage and promote the Division, and opportunities to participate in the Division; and

Invite Protégés to attend Division functions, and introduce Protégés to Division leadership, as well as some of the members.

Protégés:

Receive direction and support generally* on topics such as ethics, career advancement**, and professionalism; Access to valuable networking opportunities with other paralegals and the legal community through your mentor and others at state-wide and district Division events; and

Opportunities to learn more about the Division and Division activities, as well as opportunities to learn how to become more involved.

Mentor/Protégés Requirements

Mentors – Voting, active members in good standing, with at least seven (7) years of experience as a paralegal, are qualified to serve as Mentors. Mentors must complete the requisite application acknowledging Mentor has read and agrees to follow the Mentor Program Guidelines.

All Directors and Officers of the Division meeting the experience requirement are required to serve as Mentors, as well as encourage and promote the Mentor Program

Protégés -Protégé applicants must be a current Active, Associate or Student member in good standing with the Paralegal Division with three (3) years or less of experience as a paralegal or in a specific area or law. Protégés must complete the requisite application acknowledging Protégé has read and agrees to follow the Mentor Program Guidelines.

*Mentors are not to provide legal advice when discussing substantive legal issues, and will adhere strictly to ethical and confidentiality guidelines in not disclosing any information about pending cases or specific issues of law.

**Protégés should not expect that career counseling includes actual job placement, and are requested to exercise consideration and discretion regarding the use of the Mentor's time.

Contact Information

If you are interested in either obtaining a mentor or serving as a mentor, please read the Division Mentor Program Guidelines via the My Account link. You will also find the Mentor Request Form and Protégé Request Form there as well.

A Division with Vision... Empowering Paralegals!

THE MERIANNE GASTON AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEGAL SUPPORT*

The Merianne Gaston Award

This award recognizes a legal support professional whose conduct, commitment, and actions demonstrate extraordinary dedication to the legal profession. The award is named in honor of Merianne Gaston, who worked for over 30 years at the State Bar of Texas. She served the Texas Bar College from 2009 until her retirement in 2018, first as Managing Director and then as Executive Director. Merianne dedicated her entire career to promoting the importance of continuing legal education and improving the quality and content of the programing.

2025 Recipient

Rhonda J. Brashears,
CP, TBLS-BCP

Rhonda has worked as a Paralegal for 37 years, with 35 of those years at the Underwood Law Firm in Amarillo, Texas. She specializes in personal injury and civil trial defense law. She received her B.G.S. from West Texas A&M University in 1998, her Certified Paralegal designation from NALA-The Paralegal Association in 1996, and was Board Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in Personal Injury Trial Law in 1998.

Since starting her career as a paralegal, Rhonda has strived to further the paralegal profession. She became a member of the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas in 1990 and first served on the Board of Directors from 1997-2001; she was secretary for two of those years and she was President in 2002-2003 and again in 2008-2009. She was Publications Chair for *Texas Paralegal Journal* for four years and won

outstanding committee chair for that position; Online CLE chair for seven years; and served as Chair of the Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar "TAPS" for two years.

In November of 2015, Rhonda became coordinator of the Paralegal Division, serving the Board of Directors and the members in numerous capacities, including meeting planner for TAPS. She also still serves as an Ambassador to the Paralegal Division.

Rhonda was honored with the Paralegal Division Award of Excellence in 2023, which is the highest honor a member can receive.

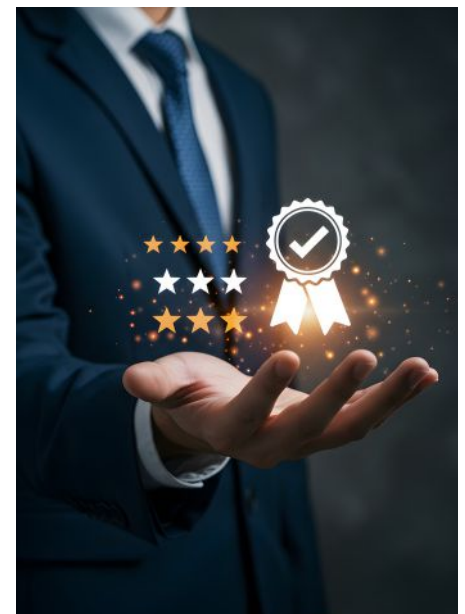
Rhonda is a member of the Texas Panhandle Paralegal Association, where she has served as President, President-Elect, Treasurer, and NALA Liaison. She is also a member of NALA-The Paralegal Association and an Amarillo Bar Association Paralegal Member.

*Reprinted with permission of the Texas Bar College.

FPO

Rhonda J. Brashears

In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family, two doodles, scrapbooking, quilting and traveling everywhere she can.





WHAT IS TBLS PARALEGAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

The Texas Board of Legal Specialization offers a Paralegal Certification Program for individuals who want to enhance their knowledge and skills in the legal field. TBLS Paralegal Certification Program is a valuable tool for paralegals who want to demonstrate their expertise and commitment to their profession.

TBLS Board Certification is a distinguished credential granted to paralegals showcasing exceptional expertise and commitment within their profession. It signifies a remarkable level of proficiency, achieved by meeting stringent standards set by authoritative bodies such as the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. This accolade highlights a paralegal's dedication to excellence and their capacity to provide exceptional legal support in diverse practice areas. With Board Certification, paralegals can elevate their careers, embrace broader opportunities, and profoundly contribute to the legal sector.

ABOUT TBLS

The Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) stands as an unparalleled foundation for Board Certified Attorneys and Paralegals, an achievement of unmatched distinction. Since its inception in 1974 under the Supreme Court of Texas, TBLS has been dedicated to advancing legal standards for the public interest. In 1994, TBLS extended its commitment to excellence into paralegal practice, becoming the nation's pioneer state-associated program to certify paralegals in specialized areas of law.

BENEFITS OF BECOMING A TBLS BOARD CERTIFIED PARALEGAL (TBLS-BCP)

Professional and personal achievement: Board certification is a significant accomplishment that demonstrates your dedication to the paralegal profession and your commitment to excellence. It can also lead to increased job satisfaction and personal fulfillment. The TBLS-BCP acronym credential demonstrates your earned specialized designation to the Texas legal community.

Expanded job opportunities and career paths: Board certification can open new job opportunities and career paths. You may be able to command a higher salary and take on more responsibility by specializing in a particular area of law.

Earned expertise: Board certification demonstrates that you have the knowledge, skills, and experience to be a highly effective paralegal. It can also help you stay up to date on the latest legal developments.

New network of certified paralegals: Board certification can help you connect with other certified paralegals who can provide you with support, advice, and referrals.

Accomplish higher level of credibility with employers, clients, and peers: Board certification can help you build credibility with employers, clients, and peers. It demonstrates that you are a highly qualified paralegal who is committed to providing high-quality legal services.

Increased earning potential: Board-certified paralegals earn more annually than their non-certified counterparts.

Personal satisfaction: Board certification is a challenging but rewarding process. It can give you a sense of accomplishment and boost your confidence in your abilities.

SPECIALTY AREAS

Board Certified Paralegals are specialists in eight distinct areas of Texas law. Explore each area to learn more about their focused knowledge and skills. (**Each specialty area will have a dropdown to reveal the summaries for each)

Bankruptcy

Protections and obligations of the bankruptcy code for individuals and businesses experiencing financial difficulty.

Civil Trial

Litigation involving contracts, businesses and business owners, negligence, creditors and debtors, fair debt collection, landlord and tenant, and deceptive trade practices act.

Criminal

Misdemeanor and felony crimes, arrest, detention, plea bargains, jury and non-jury trials (for individuals 17 years of age or older).

Estate Planning and Probate

Conserving and protecting property through wills and trusts, transferring property through gifts and wills, providing financial resources for minor children, probate proceedings, elder law issues and minimizing taxes on estates.

Family

Marriage, adoption, divorce, custody, support plus ownership of property acquired before and during marriage.

Oil, Gas and Mineral

Comprises law applicable to oil, gas and other minerals and interests in oil, gas and other minerals and to the acquisition, ownership, leasing, development, transfer, disposition and financing of these substances.

Personal Injury Trial

Litigation based on an individual's injury from automobile accidents, professional malpractice, defective products or negligence by another.

Real Estate

Purchase, sale, rental, and financing of residences, commercial buildings, and rural land.

PARALEGAL BOARD CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Application deadlines and applicable fees may be found in the [TBLS Fees & Application Schedule](#).
General Requirements for Certification:

1. Minimum of 5 years of paralegal work experience under the direct supervision of a licensed Texas attorney.
2. An assessment of the paralegal's experience and duties showing 50% of their time is devoted to the practice area.
3. 30 hours of CLE in the Certification specialty area.
4. Completion of a Baccalaureate or higher degree or completion of an accredited paralegal program or 2 additional years of paralegal work experience.

Click here to access the [Paralegal Certification Application](#) for more information.

QUESTIONS AND HELP

If you are a paralegal who is looking to advance your career, TBLS Board Certification is a valuable credential that can help you achieve your goals; visit www.tbls-bcp.org for more information.

For questions or assistance, contact Certification Analyst Molly Galvez

TBLS CERTIFIED PARALEGAL LIST

The Paralegal Division would like to recognize the members who have the honor and distinction of being Texas Board of Legal Specialization Certified Paralegals. We are proud to have so many of our members who claim this certification status.

Bankruptcy Law

ROBERT A. HEINLY
MARY C. SHILOH
JANET NOLLEY
BRENDA DURAN SOLARES
JACQUELINE BISHOP JONES

Civil Trial Law

**KAREN ARRINGTON
MICHELE M. BOERDER
CINDY DUNN
PAMELA R. HORN
JUANITA F. KOPP
CHERYL S. MORRIS
PAMELA C. NELSON
JULIE ANNE KARL
LINDA A. CARRETTE
JAVAN JOHNSON
MELISSA HEIN PARKER
PATRICIA LAMPTON
WENDY QUANDAH
**REBECCA SPAULDING
JOANNE K. DIXON
MELISSA BALMER
**KRISTINA KENNEDY
KATHLEEN BURIAN
**JACQUELINE M. SANDOVAL
**ERNESTO A. GONZALEZ
BRENDA K. PEARSON
KATHRYN MOORE
DEBRA RENE GRIFFITH
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**DIANE M. THOMAS
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**KELLY KING CORBIN

MARIELA E. CAWTHON
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CARRIE W. KING
**M. VICTORIA FERGUSON
AMY MELTON
AMY RAINWATER
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**JANET E. CHILDERS
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ROBERTA TAHERIVAND
JOHN WARREN
SHANNON MARIE BEARE
MARY PICKETT
**ARIEL AGUAYO
**ROSA REYES
PHILLIP A. WEBB
CAROL SMITH
ERIN LAHAN
MONICA HARRIS
KATARINA VANESSA ROME

APRIL KIMREY
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AMANDA MORRIS
AMANDA RODRIGUEZ
MORGAN D. RAINS-WALKER
ASHTON VICTORIA SHARP-LUCAS
LESLIE CHILDRESS

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NICOLE D. GONZALEZ
NICOLE GIEBER
MELISSA STEED
DEBORAH L. PEDERSON
LAYNE ACKER
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