

Supreme Court Advisory Committee

December 2, 2022 - *Deep Thoughts*

Guest Speakers



Honorable Sharon Keller

Presiding Judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

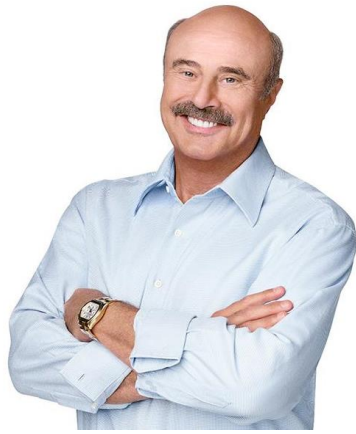
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Sharon Keller was first elected to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in 1994. She was elected Presiding Judge in 2000 and re-elected to that position in 2006. She is the first woman to have served on the Court. A native Texan, she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy from Rice University in 1975 and her Juris Doctor degree from Southern Methodist University School of Law in 1978.

Presiding Judge Keller is chairman of the Texas Indigent Defense Commission, and she is on the board of the Council of State Governments Justice Center. She is a Life Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation and a member of the Judicial Advisory Council to the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. By virtue of her office, she is vice-chair of the Texas Judicial Council. Her current term extends through December of 2024. In 2003 Presiding Judge Keller received the Distinguished Alumni Award for Judicial Service from the SMU Dedman School of Law.

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Dr. Phil McGraw

Founder of groundbreaking jury sciences firm, Courtroom Sciences, Inc. "CSI"; host of the syndicated television program "Dr. Phil"

In 1990 after obtaining his Masters Degree and Doctorate from the University of North Texas in clinical psychology, Phillip McGraw co-founded a groundbreaking trial science firm, Courtroom Sciences, Inc. (the original "CSI"). Located in Las Colinas, CSI's facilities feature replicas of both state and federal courtrooms. One of his first cases involved a claim that the Journal of the American Medical Society had defamed an author of a book about the Kennedy assassination. The author claimed that the wound in President Kennedy's neck was an entry, not exit, wound, and further that as a resident at Parkland Hospital he had been present in the trauma room and personally observed the wound. But the journal debunked the claim. McGraw helped prepare the JAMA witnesses for deposition and organized a mock trial. The case ultimately settled. Over the years CSI represented many Fortune 500 companies and McGraw worked alongside some of the top litigators in the world. CSI, based on sound scientific principles developed by McGraw, was one of the early trial consulting firms in what now has become an industry. In 1998 McGraw was asked to assist in a trial where Oprah Winfrey and her production company had been sued in Amarillo by several cattle feeders over a broadcast on mad cow disease. After Oprah and her company won the case McGraw began appearing on the Oprah Winfrey Show which led to his own program *Dr. Phil*. His work at CSI later inspired the CBS program "Bull" about a New York jury consulting firm. McGraw was the executive producer of the series and one of its script writers.

He is now one of the most well-known and trusted mental health professionals in the world, and hosts daytime TV's top-rated program, *Dr. Phil*. Now in its 21st season, this trailblazing and award-winning platform continues to provide the most comprehensive forum on mental health issues in the history of television. Dr. McGraw's unique ability to take complicated and technical information and make it accessible and understandable to the general public has distinguished him both among viewers and within his profession.

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Honorable Velva Price

District Clerk of Travis County

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Velva Price has been active in the civic and legal community in Travis County since arriving in Austin in 1983 to attend The University of Texas School of Law. Her community engagement has been the legacy of her parents' example that the only way to make the world better is to become involved. Velva was elected the first African-American woman to serve as President of the Austin Bar Association. She has also served as President of the Austin Black Lawyers Association, the Travis County Women Lawyers Association and Central Austin Democrats. Velva has been a precinct chair, Chair of the City of Austin Minority/Woman Business Advisory Committee and board member of the State Bar of Texas and Volunteer Legal Services. She also has served on the Texas Supreme Court Grievance Oversight Committee and Chair of the local Grievance Committee. She presently serves as Chair of the Travis County Civil Service Commission for Sheriff's Office Employees and sits on the boards/commissions of the Black Austin Democrats, City of Austin Ethics Commission and Austin Community Radio, Inc. dba KAZI 88.7 radio station. She is also a sustaining member of the Travis County Democratic Party.

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Honorable John Warren

District Clerk of Dallas County

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John Warren was elected as County Clerk for Dallas County and sworn in January 2007. Prior to his election as county clerk, he was employed with Dallas County for thirteen years and has served in various administrative capacities. From 1993 to 1997 he served as a court manager and administrator in the county courts at law. From 1998 through 2006 he served as a court administrator and systems administrator for the Dallas County Civil District Courts.

Elected to his fourth term as the Dallas County Clerk in 2018, he has an annual operations budget of 11 million dollars, 225 employees in nine (9) division of the clerk's office.

Mr. Warren serves on both the Texas Supreme Court's Judicial Committee for Information Technology (JCIT), and Supreme Court Advisory Committee. He is Chair of the Board of Directors for the Dallas Central Appraisal District, the National Association of Counties (NACo) Finance Committee, and Treasurer for the County and District Clerk's Association. He is an active member of the Texas Association of Counties Leadership Foundation, Property Records Industry Association (PRIA), and the International Association of Government Officials (iGO). He also serves as President of the Urban Records Alliance for the State of Texas (URA).

He graduated from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with a B.A. degree in Political Science.

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Honorable Sharena Gilliland

District Clerk of Parker County

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Sharena Gilliland was elected District Clerk in 2010. Before taking office, she practiced law focusing on civil litigation. Sharena received her law degree from Baylor University School of Law and her bachelor's degree from Oklahoma State University. In 2019 she was appointed to the Supreme Court Advisory Committee. An active member of the County & District Clerks' Assoc. of Texas, she is a frequent speaker at educational conferences and serves as a Regional Director. Sharena was a nominee for District Clerk of the Year in 2017 and 2019, and won District Clerk of the year in 2021. She and her husband, Chawn Gilliland, are involved in many local organizations, including their church and kids' school functions and activities.

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Senator Bryan Hughes

Texas Senator, District 1

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Bryan Hughes is serving his second term in the Texas Senate, representing 16 counties in beautiful East Texas.

Born and raised in East Texas, Bryan attended Tyler Junior College and the University of Texas at Tyler, becoming the first in his family to receive a Bachelor's degree. He went on to earn his law degree from Baylor University and obtained a prestigious clerkship with U.S. District Judge William Steger. Following his service to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, Bryan entered private law practice which he still maintains, helping families and businesses solve problems and deal with difficult challenges.

He has been honored as Baylor Young Lawyer of the Year and Outstanding Alumnus of both Tyler Junior College and the University of Texas at Tyler. For his service in the Legislature, Senator Hughes has received the Taxpayer Champion Award, Defender of the American Dream award, and the Horizon Award from Texas Right to Life. Mothers Against Drunk Driving has honored him as their Legislator of the Year, and the American Conservative Union consistently has given him their highest rating.

Senator Hughes serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on State Affairs and as a member of the Education, Jurisprudence, Natural Resource & Economic Development, Nominations, and Redistricting Committees.

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Representative Jeff Leach

Texas House of Representatives, District 67
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State Representative Jeff Leach proudly serves the citizens of House District 67, consisting of portions of Plano, Allen, Richardson and Dallas in Collin County. Now serving in his fifth term, Representative Leach has consistently proven himself to be a committed conservative and effective leader in the Texas Capitol and has worked tirelessly to ensure that Texas remains strong for future generations.

For the 87th Legislative Session, Representative Leach was appointed by Speaker Dade Phelan to serve a second-term as Chairman of the of the House Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence. Additionally, he was selected to serve on the House Committee on Juvenile Justice and Family Issues. During his first term as Chairman of the major House committee with oversight over the Texas justice system, Jeff worked to improve our state's judiciary and advance sound reforms to civil practice and procedure. Specifically, he successfully authored legislation giving Texas judges a much-needed pay raise without raising legislator pensions, bolstered our state's judiciary with the creation of 17 new courts across the state – including two in Collin County – and implemented various reforms to improve access to courts and consolidate court fees to promote fairness and transparency.

Over the years, Jeff has worked diligently to tackle our state's skyrocketing property taxes while making historic investments in and reforms to public education. In 2019, he authored and passed the landmark legislation giving way to "Proposition 4" - the constitutional amendment banning the imposition of a state income tax on individuals. Jeff has also worked tirelessly to advance legislation to safeguard religious freedom, protect innocent life, guard free speech rights, advocate for victims of sexual abuse and assault, fully eliminate the rape kit backlog in Texas, support our law enforcement and attack the heinous crime of human trafficking, adopt significant school safety reforms, and advance smart, free-market policies to ensure that the Texas economy remains robust.

Born and raised in Plano, Representative Leach graduated from Plano Senior High before attending Baylor University. He earned his law degree from Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law, and currently practices at the law firm of Gray Reed & McGraw LLP in Dallas. Named a "Rising Star" by Texas Super Lawyer, Jeff specializes in complex commercial and civil litigation, construction law and real estate. Most recently, Representative Leach was named as a "Friend of the Judiciary" by the State Bar of Texas and was recognized as a "2019 Legislator of the Year" by the Texas Civil Justice League. J

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James P. Sullivan

General Counsel to Governor Greg Abbott

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James Sullivan has served as Deputy General Counsel to the Governor, as Assistant Solicitor General of Texas, and as a law clerk to Judge Thomas B. Griffith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, in addition to stints as an adjunct professor at George Mason University and an appellate litigator in private practice. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School, where he was Articles Editor of the Harvard Law Review, and of Rice University.

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Jason Bloom, M.A.

Founder & President, Bloom Strategic Consulting, Inc.

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Jason Bloom is a jury consultant and is President of Bloom Strategic Consulting, Inc. As an expert in the psychology of jury decision-making and its strategic implications, he provides clients with jury selection consultation, witness communications training, and mock jury studies. Jason has been a jury consultant since 1997, based in Dallas, TX since receiving a graduate degree in Forensic Psychology.

He has conducted over 300 mock jury studies and assisted with over 150 jury selections in Federal and State Courts nationwide.

In addition to running mock jury studies and picking juries, Jason enjoys training witnesses and lawyers in the art of courtroom communications in an effort to create success stories for his clients.

Mr. Bloom believes that jury verdicts are no accident, and that how the jury feels about the parties matters. His CLE presentation is developed from over 25 years of studying jury decision-making, coupled with the courtroom strategies and tactics employed by trial lawyers across the country, in both big and small cases.

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Roxanna Asgarian

Law & Courts Reporter, The Texas Tribune

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The law and courts reporter for the Texas Tribune. Previously, she covered the child welfare and criminal justice systems as an independent reporter in Houston. Her first book, “We Were Once A Family: Love, Death, and Child Removal in America,” a deeply reported story of a murder-suicide that claimed the lives of six children and a searing indictment of the American foster care system, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in March 2023. A native of Las Vegas, Nevada, Roxanna got her bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Texas at Austin and her master’s degree from the Craig Newmark School of Journalism at the City University of New York. Roxanna is based in Dallas.

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David McCraw

Vice President and Deputy General Counsel, The New York Times

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McCraw has worked at the Times since 2002. He’s the lead litigation attorney for the paper's fight for freedom of information, defending it against libel suits, and providing legal counsel to the reporters breaking the biggest stories of the year. In short: if you've read a controversial story in the paper since the Bush administration, it went across his desk first. From Chelsea Manning's leaks to Trump's tax returns, McCraw is at the center of the paper's decisions about what news is fit to print.

Author of *Truth in Our Times: Inside the Fight for Press Freedom in the Age of Alternative Facts* an inside account of the legal battles that shaped The Times’s coverage of Donald Trump, national security, Harvey Weinstein, and the rise of political partisanship in America.

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Kelley Shannon

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Executive Director of the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas, where she promotes open government and the First Amendment. She is a veteran Texas journalist who has covered politics, state government and regional stories for more than two decades. Shannon covered the Texas Legislature for The Dallas Morning News and spent a distinguished career with the Associated Press in San Antonio, Dallas and Austin, reporting major stories including the Branch Davidian standoff, George W. Bush's presidential elections and the San Antonio Spurs pro basketball team. Shannon was the Austin supervisory correspondent for the AP from 2000-2010, covering Gov. Rick Perry and five legislative Sessions. Shannon then launched a niche news company, and freelanced stories for use by newspapers and television websites across the state. She also conducted two Texas-based open government investigations as a freelance reporter for the Center for Public Integrity.

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Paula Hannaford-Agor

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Paula joined the Research Division of the National Center in May 1993. In this capacity, she regularly conducts research and provides technical assistance and education to courts and court personnel on the topics of jury system management and trial procedure; civil litigation; and complex and mass tort litigation.

She has authored or contributed to numerous books and articles on the American jury including *Eliminating Shadows and Ghosts: Findings from a Study of Inclusiveness, Representativeness, and Record Accuracy in Master Jury Lists and Juror Source Lists in Three States* (NCSC 2022), *Jury Trial Innovations* (2d ed. 2006), *The Promise and Challenges of Jury System Technology* (NCSC 2003), and *Managing Notorious Trials* (1998). She is faculty for the ICM courses *Jury System Management* and *Promise and Challenges of Jury System Technology*. As adjunct faculty at William & Mary Law School, she teaches a seminar on the American jury.

Ms. Hannaford-Agor received the 2001 NCSC Staff Award for Excellence. In 1995, she received her law degree from William & Mary Law School and a Master's degree in Public Policy from the Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy of the College of William and Mary.

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