

TEXAS LAWBOOK FOUNDATION 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

By Mark Curriden and Natalie Posgate of *The Texas Lawbook*,
Toyota Managing Counsel Derek Lipscombe and
SPCA of Texas CEO Chris Luna

The legal community in Texas is facing some huge issues in 2024 that require significant thought, in-depth research, strong leadership and an open discussion. There is the immigrant crisis on the border and how state, local and federal governments and the courts are handling it — or not handling it. Diversity and inclusion efforts have never been more important, more complicated or more controversial. Legal aid for the poor is at a critical stage, as veterans, single mothers, tenants and the elderly face significant perils without the assistance of lawyers.

The need for a full-time reporter and writer covering pro bono, public service and diversity in the Texas legal profession has never been greater.



Natalie Posgate's first 15 months as *The Texas Lawbook's* pro bono, public service and diversity writer has been a wonderful success.

But we need your urgent help to continue.

The Texas Lawbook Foundation received crucial funding last year from Kirkland & Ellis and its diversity and inclusion initiative. The Lawbook Foundation board is incredibly thankful for Kirkland's financial support.

Other law firms were extremely generous in their donations, including Vinson & Elkins, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and Sidley Austin.

General counsel from PepsiCo Foods, CenterPoint Energy, Pioneer Natural Resources, Flowserve, Nexstar Media Group and Forterra also made significant contributions. A full list of supporters can be found at **TexasLawbookFoundation.org**.

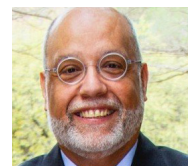
In addition, the Association of Corporate Counsel's DFW and Houston chapters have been incredibly supportive of the foundation and Posgate through partnerships with *The Texas Lawbook*. There are more details on Posgate's articles on ACC members and general counsel below.

To keep the great work going, we need your financial support. We ask you to consider making a tax-deductible donation to the foundation in supporting Posgate's work.

Donations can be made online at **texaslawbookfoundation.org/give-now**

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SPCA of Texas CEO Chris Luna,
co-chair of The Texas Lawbook
Foundation Board



Texas Lawbook foundation
Pro Bono, Public Service and Diversity



Mark Berg and Barry Thomas are both committed to public service and told their story to Posgate.

“NATALIE IS PROVIDING A VOICE TO THOSE WHO NEED ASSISTANCE AND SHOWCASING THE OUTSTANDING WORK THAT LAW FIRMS AND ATTORNEYS IN TEXAS ARE DOING TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITIES THEY WORK IN.”

**Toyota Managing Counsel
Derek Lipscombe**, member of the
Texas Lawbook Foundation board



The Texas Lawbook Foundation launched in October 2022 with the sole purpose of hiring a full-time reporter/writer to cover pro bono, public service and diversity in the legal profession. The foundation received IRS approval for nonprofit 501(c)(3) status in January 2022.

The creation of the foundation was part of *The Texas Lawbook's* 10th anniversary plans. *The Lawbook* is an online newspaper that covers the business lawyers and business law in Texas. The publication has more than 15,000 paid subscribers, including more than 2,800 corporate in-house counsel.

Lawbook founder Mark Curriden created a foundation board of directors that included then-T-Mobile Vice President/Legal Affairs Chris Luna, Toyota Managing Counsel Derek Lipscombe, Pattern Energy Senior Counsel Lauren Haller, Mattress Firm Deputy General Counsel Daria Russell and recently retired Vinson & Elkins senior partner Harry Reasoner, who served for more than a decade as chair of the Texas Access to Justice Commission.

Curriden and the foundation board hired Posgate, who had served as a founding *Lawbook* staffer for a decade — including several years as lead litigation writer — to be the full-time pro bono, public service and diversity writer. Posgate has a true heart for helping those in need. Plus, she is an excellent reporter and writer. Every Friday, she publishes her P.S. (public service) column, which highlights charitable work by lawyers and their legal departments and law firms.

In addition, Posgate writes in-depth features that spotlight notable pro bono and diversity efforts led by members of the Texas legal community and articles on current events impacting the world of pro bono work and DEI in Texas.

Because Posgate's compensation is paid fully by the Foundation, all of her articles are outside The Texas Lawbook payroll and free for anyone to read.

Just a quick review of the articles Posgate has authored during the past 15 months are a testament to her dedication to the work that needs to be done:

'I Can Have a More Peaceful Life': Sidley Helps Sexual Assault Survivor Secure VA Benefits

It was the actions of a series of men in the 1970s and 1980s that derailed the rest of Rachel Faili's life, even almost ending it. It was the decision by a group of Sidley Austin lawyers to take action and represent this Houston veteran pro bono that helped her move forward from decades of the severe post-traumatic stress disorder that has haunted her since her military service. This is the story of both events, the bridge between them and how a lawyer's skills can be used to truly make a difference in the lives of those who suffer.

Mark Berg & Barry Thomas: Improving Lives Across Texas

Barry Thomas and Mark Berg have many things in common. They're both M&A lawyers by training. They've both handled multibillion-dollar deals in the oil patch together as high-ranking colleagues at Pioneer Natural Resources. Beyond their professional accolades, they're both committed to public service. Berg has helped Dallas CASA significantly grow in order to achieve its goal of serving every abused and neglected child in need on the Dallas County child welfare docket. And Thomas volunteers his free time serving as general counsel of the Permian Strategic Partnership, a coalition of 20 oil and gas companies committed to improving the roads, workforce, healthcare, schools and housing of the rural West Texas and New Mexico communities that the Permian Basin encompasses.

Four Texas GCs: 'The Why for [DEI] is Especially Important'

Four Texas-based general counsel – Justin Johnson of Jacobs, Monica Karuturi of CenterPoint Energy, Aparna Dave of the Texas Dow Employees Credit Union and Clay Allen of the Houston Rockets – kicked off the 31st Annual Texas Minority Counsel Program conference discussing the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion to them personally and how it comes into strategic play at their organizations. The four GCs also talked about their preferences and dislikes about law firm business development efforts.

When it Comes to Diversity & Inclusion, HPE 'Just Gets It'

Over the last several years, general counsel Rishi Varma and associate general counsel Jude Andre have implemented a number of diversity initiatives at Hewlett Packard Enterprise, whose corporate legal department is known for its innovation, welcoming culture and commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal profession. The result has been a more engaged workforce around DEI issues and recognition by the Association of Corporate Counsel's Houston Chapter and *The Texas Lawbook*. They have named HPE – with Varma and Andre at the helm – as finalists for the 2023 Houston Corporate Counsel Award for Achievement in Diversity and Inclusion award.

Baker Hughes' Amy Blumrosen Fights For 'Equity, Equality and Inclusion for All'

Amy Blumrosen is a jack of all trades, both in her litigation work in Baker Hughes' legal department and in her work to improve diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal industry. She chairs the legal and compliance department's DEI council at the company and outside of work has advocated for the LGBTQ community through her work with Lambda Legal, the Texas Minority Council Forum and more. She also fights inequities through volunteer work at the Houston Food Bank, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and more. All her efforts have landed her recognition by the Association of Corporate Counsel's Houston Chapter and *The Texas Lawbook* as a finalist for the 2023 Houston Corporate Counsel Achievement in Diversity and Inclusion award.

Weil, Innocence Project & Dallas DA Obtain Exoneration for Innocent Man

A team of lawyers from Weil, Gotshal & Manges, the Innocence Project and the conviction integrity division of Dallas' district attorney office obtained the exoneration and actual innocence finding of a man after he served 26 years in prison and, upon his parole, was required to register as a sex offender. Posgate provides the background of the case and a Q&A with lead Weil partner Paul Genender.

Here are some numbers from Posgate's first 15 months on the beat:

115

The number of articles that Posgate has published in *The Lawbook* on the new beat.

32

The number of articles that Posgate published on DEI.

26

The number of articles that Posgate published on pro bono.

57

The number of P.S. columns that Posgate published.

167

The number of law firms quoted or cited by Posgate in articles.

489

The number of lawyers Posgate has quoted or cited in her stories.

6

The number of profiles that Posgate has authored for the 2022 and 2023 DFW and Houston Corporate Counsel Awards for Achievement in Pro Bono and Public Service and Achievement in Diversity and Inclusion. The finalists that Posgate has profiled include GM Innovation Counsel Juli Greenberg, Pioneer Natural Resources Executive Vice President Mark Berg and Senior Counsel Barry Thomas, Baker Hughes global litigation counsel Amy Blumrosen, Hewlett Packard Enterprise then-GC Rishi Varma and Associate GC Jude Andre, Nexstar Media Group GC Rachel Morgan and Toyota Managing Counsel Kelly Chen.

NOTE: Through Jan. 31, 2024

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or comments. And please consider making a donation to the Texas Lawbook Foundation.

Texas Lawbook foundation

Pro Bono, Public Service and Diversity



Amy Blumrosen fights inequities and Posgate told her story.



Posgate, Laina Hammond and Wendie Childress



Tyrone Day (center) with his wife, Teri Day (left center), and the Weil legal team. From left to right: Paul Genender, Jenae Ward and Nathan White.