



WILLIE MELTON LAW LIBRARY NEWS

VOL 32 NUM 5 | DECEMBER 2024

STAY IN THE LOOP WITH UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS!

AT A GLANCE

- What's going on at the Law Library!
- How you can access resources from your home or office!

HOURS

Mon	8 am - 5 pm
Tue	8 am - 5 pm
Wed	8 am - 5 pm
Thu	8 am - 5 pm
Fri	8 am - 5 pm
Sat	CLOSED
Sun	CLOSED

What's New

UPCOMING PROGRAMS



LONE STAR
LEGAL AID

- LAWYER IN THE LIBRARY -- hosted by Lone Star Legal Aid -- is EVERY MONDAY, from 8:30 am - 12:00 pm. [More Information Here](#) This service will NOT be available on December 23, December 30, or January 20.
- LAWYER IN THE LIBRARY -- hosted by the Earl Carl Institute is EVERY WEDNESDAY, from 8:30 am - 12:00 pm. [More Information Here](#) This service will NOT be available on December 18, December 25, January 1, or January 8.
- PRO SE BASICS is EVERY TUESDAY at 10 am - Learn about basic court procedures and resources.
- EXPRESS CLASSES are EVERY THURSDAY at 10 am - Learn basic legal technology.

UPDATES AND CLOSINGS

- The **Virtual Court Kiosk** -- through a grant by Texas Legal Services Center -- can be reserved for virtual court hearings in the mornings, from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, and in the afternoons, from 1:30 to 5:00 pm. [Reserve the Kiosk Here](#)
- The **Law Library** and the **Justice Center** will be CLOSED for CHRISTMAS (Tue, Dec 23 & 24) & for NEW YEAR'S DAY (Wed, Jan 1).

TEXAS
LEGAL
SERVICES
CENTER





UPDATED RESOURCES

- *Texas Criminal Lawyer's Handbook*, 2024 Edition
- *O'Connor's Texas Causes of Action*, 2024 Edition
- *Texas Drunk Driving Law*, 2024 Edition
- *Texas Practice Guide: Evidence*, 2024-25 Edition
- *O'Connor's Texas Business Organizations Handbook*, 2024 Edition

THIS MONTH IS TEXAS LEGISLATIVE LAW MONTH!

- We have lots of resources on this topic this month! Come check them out!

Past Program Recordings

ATTORNEY LECTURE SERIES

- **"Immigration,"** given by Attorney Eduardo Franco. See the replay [HERE](#).
- **"Voir Dire,"** given by Attorney Annie Scott. See the replay [HERE](#).

Online Resources

REMOTE DATABASES

- Lexis Nexis Digital Library - Collection of ebooks from publishers LexisNexis, Matthew Bender, and James Publishing.
- Gale Legal Forms Library - Collection of Civil Forms on various topics that can be used in Texas and Federal Courts.



[Sign up for an eCard here to access](#)

PRO SE HANDBOOK - FORMS AND INFORMATION

- General Civil and Family Law Forms and Information from Texas Law Help, Fort Bend County District and County Courts at Law, Fort Bend County District and County Clerks, the Fort Bend County Willie Melton Law Library, and other Texas Governmental Agencies. [Check it out here.](#)



Technology Corner, by Christine France

Access to Records

Are you looking for access to official public records, birth certificates, death certificates, or marriage records? Fort Bend County allows you to access these records online for your convenience at the link below:

<https://ccweb.co.fort-bend.tx.us/>

Official Public Records consist of all publicly accessible documents recorded by the County Clerk's Office and may include deeds, mortgage documents, easements, assumed name certificates (DBA), powers of attorney, bills of sale, and liens. This website allows individuals to obtain unofficial copies, as well as order certified copies.

In addition, marriage records and marriage applications can be accessed or submitted from the County Clerk's website. If you are looking for Birth or Death records, individuals can find these records through the site. However, if birth and death certificates are needed, individuals can order them online or mail through the link below:

<https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/government/departments/county-clerk/birth-death-marriage/birth-death-certificates>

If you need assistance, come see us at the Law Library!



Featured Resource, by Liane Lopez

Texas Rules of Evidence Handbook

The Fort Bend Willie Melton Law Library has added to its collection the 2025 edition of the *O'Connor's Texas Rules of Evidence Handbook*. The handbook provides in-depth commentary and substantive analysis on the Texas Rules of Evidence for both criminal and civil cases. It is a very useful resource to have at desk side for attorneys, judges, or law students familiarizing themselves with the Rules.

The commentary contains thousands of citations to rules, cases, and secondary sources. The handbook includes the complete text of Texas Rules of Evidence with the official notes and comments, thousands of citations to rules, cases, and secondary sources, and more than 1,000 pages explaining the Rules and comparison between Texas and Federal Rules of Evidence.

The book is written by seasoned expert practitioners Judge Jeff Brown and Reece Rondon. Judge Brown is currently serving as United States District Judge for Galveston Division of the Southern District of Texas.

Brown has served six years each as justice of the Supreme Court of Texas, justice for the 14th Court of Appeals, and judge for the 55th District Court.

Reece Brown is an Energy, Insurance, Commercial and Complex Dispute Trial Attorney at Hall Maines Lugin, P.C. He has been practicing law for more than 29 years and specializes in trying and arbitrating commercial litigation disputes, including coverage and subrogation litigation. Prior to joining Hall Maines Lugin, P.C, he served as a Texas district attorney for nine years, presiding over 125 jury trials.

The *O'Connor's Texas Rules of Evidence Handbook* is available as reference only at the Willie Melton Law Library. Copies of the material needed can be made for \$0.10 per page. For more information, please visit us at the Law Library.



Librarian Musings, by Jonathan Briggs

No One To Represent Them

Being an attorney is a challenging job. There is a lot at stake for your clients. It is a job that requires intellect and knowledge, organization and attention to detail, the ability to deal with conflict, multi-tasking, etc. It is the way to earn a living -- to make money to sustain yourself and your family, maintain your practice/law office, and prepare for the future. You have to service your current clients and think about getting new clients. There are a lot of interests to balance.

Being a pro se (self-represented) litigant in an ongoing civil or family law case or dealing with some other type of important legal matter is also very challenging. So many people are going it alone, without the benefit of counsel. Pro se family law parties are the biggest category of visitors we assist at the Law Library. To put some things in perspective: In 2019, there were 364,125 new family law cases filed in Texas; 40% of these were filed by self-represented parties;

39% were Title IV-D cases generally filed by the State with most respondents being pro se; and only 21% of family law cases were filed by attorneys. Those statistics are five years old, but I would wager that things have not changed much.

Each month in Fort Bend County, there are typically between 200 and 250 divorces filed in addition to the modifications, enforcements, original SAPCRs, etc.

The Fort Bend County library system, of which we are a branch, requires us to gather various statistics throughout the year. Our most recent door count (simply counting the number of people who come through the Law Library's doors) was conducted the week of September 30 through October 4, 2024. It counted 493 people -- roughly half of which were attorneys and the other half pro se visitors. Almost 50 ordinary people come to us every day for assistance with legal matters.

As of 2023, there are approximately 97,000 attorneys actively practicing in Texas (more than 111,000 attorneys licensed by Texas) and Texas has a population of 30.5 million. (*cont.*)



Librarian Musings, by Jonathan Briggs (*cont.*)

A defendant in a criminal case has their liberty and possibly life at stake. Under the U.S. and Texas Constitutions, they have the right to appointed counsel if they cannot afford one. Outside of some very narrow circumstances, there is no such right afforded to people in civil matters -- no general right to a family law attorney, a probate attorney, an attorney to take your civil case if you've been injured or wronged, or to defend you if you've been sued or are being evicted.

There are some of our visitors who are pro se because they want to be. They feel their legal matters are something they can handle. Sometimes they are probably right -- a truly agreed divorce with no children or property issues, a name change, an adult adoption -- but after that, the difficulty begins to rise exponentially. These folks are here trying so hard to handle on their own the most important things to them -- the status of their children, their home -- and they do not have a \$5,000 retainer nor can they afford \$200-\$300 an hour. So, they struggle on their own.

The legal aid groups try hard. They are here every week meeting with people. On a typical Monday morning, Lone Star Legal Aid meets with 20 or more people who start lining up the moment we open our doors. They can only assist a relative few.

This is where this seemingly unbridgeable divide is. Lawyers need to be compensated for their work and the average Texan can nowhere near afford it. I came here more than seven years ago and honestly it is getting worse. We stay very busy. The demand is increasing.

This is not a lecture or criticism of the legal profession because I do not know what to do either. The attorneys I know and who utilize the Law Library are a hard-working group of dedicated people. They are here right up to the closing bell. I just know I see it every day, people struggling to navigate the legal world, a world which attorneys spend years mastering. At least through our role as Law Library staff, we get to try and give these folks as much tangible help as we are allowed to do. (*cont.*)



Librarian Musings, by Jonathan Briggs (*cont.*)

The legal system is generally not a happy place. It deals with serious and life-changing issues governed by laws and rules but also just by circumstance or bad luck. I was helping a lady recently who was dealing with a situation involving one of her children and a difficult ex-husband. Another daughter asked her if her father was also “fighting for me?” She had to tell her “No.” These are real people with hearts and hopes -- all just wanting some happiness, security, and peace.

This is the time of year when our minds are halfway in another place. We are thinking about holiday preparations, parties, shopping, events, family time, food and drink, traditions, and matters of faith. It is also a time to think about the year that is coming to a close and the year ahead. I know January 2025 will soon come, work will ramp back up, and I hope that we in the Law Library, the legal community, the Courts, and everyone in the Justice Center do our best to serve the people and do our part to see that justice is done.

I wish you all a Happy Holidays and if there is ever anything I can do for you, please contact me at 281-341-3718 or jonathan.briggs@fortbend.lib.tx.us.