



From the corner: The Spirit of San Jacinto



Last week we celebrated San Jacinto Day, a day set aside to remember the determination and sacrifice of those who fought for Texas independence. The Battle of San Jacinto was fought on April 21, 1836. The Texian army consisted of approximately 900 men under the command of General Sam Houston. The Mexican army consisted of approximately 1,300 men under the command of Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna.

The Battle began when the Texans, advancing under cries of "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" attacked the Mexican encampment at San Jacinto in east Harris County. Eighteen minutes later the battle was over with the Texian army prevailing decisively. The Battle of San Jacinto led to Texas independence from Mexico and opened the door for the westward expansion of the United States.

Against all odds and with a sense of greater purpose, the individuals who would become Texas heroes fought a battle against superior forces. They relied on their resourcefulness and executed a strategy that changed the course of history. Their determination saw them through to victory. County Attorney Mike Driscoll had these attributes in mind when he chose the San Jacinto Monument as part of the seal of the Harris County Attorney's Office. When we see the office seal we can remember to strive for the same strength and determination as we work together to accomplish much on behalf of the people of Harris County and Texas.- Vince

Happy Anniversary!

Thank you for your service to the public:

Orelia Arvie	1 year	Sally Almdarez	13 years
Teresa Key	9 years	Randy Smidt	14 years
Susan Fillion	12 years	Maria Escobar	16 years
		Scott Hilsher	17 years

All in a day's work

Hospital District gets case dismissed

A U.S. Magistrate Judge dismissed a law suit filed by a Harris County Hospital District employee who claimed her shift was changed upon returning from medical leave and as a result she began experiencing physical and mental complications from the disruption of her daily routine and sleep cycle. The court said Congress did not abrogate the Texas' sovereign immunity against private suits for damages under the FMLA's self-care provision. The case is *Honglinh Huynh v. Harris Health*. Assistant County Attorney Sara Thomas was the lead attorney.

County employee drops retaliation claim

A Harris County employee who claimed he was overlooked for promotion because he had previously filed an EEOC complaint dropped his lawsuit after his attorney read the County's 17 page motion for summary judgment with six affidavits and 40 separate exhibits. Senior Assistant County Attorney Barbara Callistien, with the assistance of Diana Pacheco, established that the plaintiff could not show a causal link to support his claim of retaliation. In fact, the screening committee that reviewed the applicants for the position were not aware at the time of their review that the applicant had filed the EEOC complaint. The case is *Ronald Smith v. Harris County*.

ACAs Ride in MS 150



Assistant County Attorneys, Lela Nicholl and Jennifer Fox, took part in the 30th Annual BP MS 150 on April 12-13. After months of training, these two biked from Houston to Austin to raise funds and awareness for multiple sclerosis.

Compliance collects for unreported inventories



Randy Smidt

After our Office obtained a judgment against Dominon Karz for failing to file its monthly tax statements, constables seized 13 automobiles from the dealer to satisfy the \$61,000 judgment. Our Office files suits to collect penalties against dealers who fail to report their inventories to the tax office. The Compliance Practice Group collected more than \$370,000 last year. Group Manager Randy Smidt was the lead attorney on this case with assistance from paralegals Rosa Rodriguez, Juan Alarcon and Luisa Bolivar.



Rosa Rodriguez

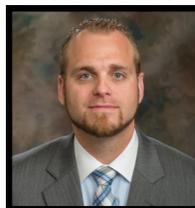


Juan Alarcon



Luisa Bolivar

Connect 5 Five questions for Jorey Herrscher



Jorey Herrscher is an Assistant County Attorney in the Litigation group. He has been with our Office since 2012.

What book would you recommend? *No Angel: My Harrowing Undercover Journey to the Inner Circle of the Hells Angels* by Jay Dobbys.

What was your favorite song in High School? *Wind of Change* by Scorpions.

What's your favorite hobby? *Traveling and trying new foods.*

Where do you call home? *Wherever my wife and kids are.*

Describe yourself in one word? *Raconteur*



WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE HARRIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, BOTH LAWYERS AND NON-LAWYERS, ADHERE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ETHICS AS WE SERVE THE PEOPLE OF HARRIS COUNTY AND STRIVE TO BE THE BEST PUBLIC LAW FIRM IN THE UNITED STATES.

Useful Links

- County Attorney [SharePoint](#)
- County Attorney [Policy Manual](#)
- County Personnel [Regulations](#)
- County Attorney [Website](#)
- Payroll Reports & Benefits [Online](#)
- County Attorney [Directory](#)



Our work, our relationships, our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time.

— Susan Scott

Coming Attractions

The Texas District and County Attorneys Association will host a Civil Law Seminar May 28-30 at the San Luis Resort in Galveston. 12 MCLE hours, with 4 hours of ethics.



More information is available on the [TDCAA website](#).

New Staff Join HCAO Ranks



Lauren Hudson

Lauren Hudson has been appointed Assistant County Attorney to work in the Environment and Infrastructure Practice Group. Lauren has a passion for the environment. She attended Tulane University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies and coupled a certificate of specialization in environmental law with her law degree. Most recently, Lauren served as a law clerk for Judge Patricia Kerrigan in the 190th District Court. Prior to that Lauren worked as a contract attorney in American Airline's Antitrust Division to assist with the

American and US Airways merger. Lauren is an avid runner and participated in the Aramco Houston Half Marathon in 2013 and 2014, raising funds for the [Parish School](#).

Jacqueline Terrell has joined our office as an Executive Assistant. Jacqueline comes to us from The Hall Law Firm, where her responsibilities ranged from docket management and drafting motions to legal research and client billing. Jacqueline is extremely involved in the community and enjoys doing what she can to help others. In fact, her motivation for joining our team is rooted in our mission to serve Harris County.



Jacqueline Terrell

Kathy Guenther has (re)joined our Office as Accounts Payable Specialist. Kathy has a long history with the County Attorney's Office, starting in 1984 when she worked in the mailroom. Her career with the County took her far and wide — Precinct 4 Commissioners Office mostly, with a brief stop in Precinct 2, before heading back to where it all began. Kathy has a passion for scrap-booking and believes there's no better view than the one you get from the back of a motorcycle.



Kathy Guenther



WestlawNext CLE demos new way to research

Westlaw Account Manager, Jennifer Koithan, presented "Introduction to Research on WestlawNext" on April 23. Attendees learned how to use the new results display, sort and filter results, and share results using the new foldering functionality.

HCAO Fan Mail

Our Office received unsolicited letters of appreciation in recent weeks that we wanted to share. These letters come from residents, County employees, and patrons who were so impressed by individuals from our Office that they took time to write us.

Here's one from a County employee:

Recently, the County and I were sued for a county-vehicle automobile accident that did not occur. In the grand scheme of the work that we do, it was a minor problem. Nevertheless, because it affected me personally, ... the legal action was quite distressing. That legal action has since been non-suited by the party that filed the lawsuit. I wanted to let you know how well Victoria Jimenez, and Cedric Loeb, handled this matter. They were reassuring and professional.

Here's one concerning our work on nuisance abatement in the Sharpstown and International Management Districts:

... I also wanted to add that bringing in ... the County Attorney[s] to work on the abatement angle for problem properties were brilliant ideas ... and I believe will continue to pay big dividends in the future.

Another one from a Brownwood resident trying to get copies from another county department::

Sara Nouri (Law Library) was very courteous and interested in doing what she could to help me. She went ... on her own time to check on this for me. She gave me the telephone number and location ..., saving me a lot of time in trying to find this myself. My attorney in Brownwood had been trying ... to get these documents on my behalf, but with no luck. Thanks to Sara, I was able to get exactly what I needed in a little over an hour.

And finally, from a lawyer who needed legal research at the Law Library:

The customer service was impeccable, beginning with the first person I encountered (the lady at the service desk). The young people at the copy station were knowledgeable, courteous and efficient. Kudos to you and your staff. Keep up the EXCELLENT work.