



NAWJ District 11

From the Director's Desk

It's been years since I have drafted a newsletter! In this short one, I wanted to introduce myself and tell you about some goings on as we all get ready to welcome the new year—hopefully with the end of a pandemic and a return to our courtrooms!

About me: I have been the judge of the 120th District Court since January 2007, served as Administrative District Judge from 2014-2018, have been involved in numerous State Bar of Texas activities where I currently serve as treasurer for the Hispanic Issues Section Council and am council member for the Women in the Law Section and Judicial Section. I have also been a judicial advisor to Texas Women Lawyers for many years. Most recently I am honored to have been on faculty for the Texas Center for the Judiciary's 2019 and 2020 College For New Judges.

I was born and raised in El Paso and aside from college and law school, I am proud to call this small big city my home. My oldest son, Michael, is a prosecutor for Ft. Bend County; my daughter, Melina, is working on a Master's degree and holds her BA from St. John's University (Queens) and the baby, Dillon, is graduating from high school this year having had, in my opinion, the worst senior year ever.

I am looking forward to a great year as your District Director. Together, I know that we can build our District, support each other and serve our communities.

Meet Your District 11 State Chairs

The State Chairs Committee provides support for district governance. District 11 includes Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. The goal is to have representation from all areas of each state and all levels of court. More help is needed.

Arkansas: Stacey Zimmerman

Texas: Eva M. Guzman (Supreme Court)
Ronique Robinson (Harris; municipal)
Julie Countiss (Harris/appellate)
Lesley Briones (Harris)
Gina Benavides (Coastal Areas/appellate)
Leticia Hinojosa (Coastal Areas/appellate)
Sarah Clark (rural)
D'Metria Benson (Dallas)
Antonia Arteaga (San Antonio)
Jan Morrow (JPs)

District 11 Needs **YOU**:
OKLAHOMA
Tarrant
West Texas (not EP)



UPCOMING EVENTS

SUPREME WOMEN: A QUARTET OF JUSTICES MAKING TEXAS HISTORY THUR, JAN. 21, 2021 @ NOON CST Meet the four women Justices now serving on the Texas Supreme Court. The Justices will share their stories and impart advice and guidance for all judges. Their historic service on the Texas's highest court comes at a time when the judiciary has had to meet the challenge of keeping the courts operating and continuing to administer justice. This webinar seeks to begin 2021 with inspiration and motivation for the continuing challenges. **Mark your calendars.**

COLOR OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

District 11 has co-chairs in Austin, Houston, Coastal Areas and El Paso planning COJ Programs in their cities for Spring 2021. Please email me at masalas@epcounty.com so that I can put you in touch with the judges on these committees.

NAWJ 43rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN NASHVILLE, TN

October 6th through the 10th, 2021. Details coming your way soon.



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Volume 1 Issue 2

December 2020

HISPANAS HACEN HISTORIA / LATINAS MAKE HISTORY

CONTRIBUTED BY JUDGE LESLEY BRIONES

Univision recently featured several Houston-area Latina judges on its national “Despierta America” (“Good Morning America”) program. In its segment, “Hispanas Hacen Historia,” Univision highlighted the Latina judges known as—“Las Super Seis” (“The Super Six”), who recently won their elections in Harris County.

Even though Harris County has over 2 million Latinos, which make up approximately 45% of the population, Latinos are substantially underrepresented on the bench in Harris County. For example, even after the recent November 2020 election, only 4 of 30 civil judges in Harris County are Latinos. Further, there are no federal judges in Harris County who are Latino, and there are no Latinos on the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. While more work is needed, Univision highlighted the historic progress made with the election of these Latinas. With the election of Associate Municipal Judge Amparo Guerra and Veronica Rivas-Molloy, for instance, Texas’ 1st Court of Appeals will now have Latino representation, which it has not had for years.

Univision asked each judge/judge-elect to share their backgrounds, highlight the importance of having a diverse bench, and give advice to youth on the importance of dreaming big and working hard. The Super Six featured on “Despierta America” include: Judge Julia Maldonado (507th District Court), Judge Lesley Briones (Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 4), Associate Municipal Judge/Justice-Elect Amparo Guerra (1st Court of Appeals, Place 5), Justice-Elect Veronica Rivas-Molloy (1st Court of Appeals, Place 3), Judge-Elect Natalia ‘Nata’ Cornelio (351st District Court), and Judge-Elect Ana Martinez (179th District Court).

NOTE: Judge Jo Ann Delgado—Justice of the Peace, Precinct 2, Place 1—Judge Delgado was featured in the background screen/pictures of “Despierta America,” yet did not appear and is not considered part of the “Super Seis.” She made history as the first Latina to hold the office of Harris County Justice of the Peace when she was elected in January 2001.

KUDOS

Judge **Darlene Byrne**, 126th District Court, elected Chief Judge of the Third Court of Appeals.

Judge **Brandy Mueller**, former District 11 Director, serves as secretary of the NAWJ Board.

Judge **Karen Sage**, former District 11 Director, serves as Chair of NAWJ Special Projects.

Judge **Maya Guerra Gamble** and Justice **Julie Countiss** serve on the NAWJ Membership Committee.

Congrats to Chief Justice **Dori Contreras**, 13th Court of Appeals, now serving on the executive committee of the Council of Chief Judges for the State Courts of Appeal (CCJSCA) and as Chair of its membership committee.

Congratulations to New Judges!

Almost 90 new judges from around Texas participated in the first (I hope last) virtual College for New Judges on December 7-8, 2020. All judges are encouraged to join NAWJ!

<https://www.nawj.org/join>

