

A Transgender Perspective on Transgender People

**Friday, April 5, 2024
3:45 – 5:00 PM**



Issues regarding transgender individuals, especially transgender youth, have dominated both the headlines and legislative calendars for the past several years. Unfortunately, the voices of actual transgender people are often ignored, allowing the public discourse to be dominated by misconceptions and polemics on all sides.

The purpose of this presentation is to educate NAWJ members about transgender people, including transgender youth, and their families. The panelist will discuss how the current debates are impacting transgender people and their families in Texas and throughout the country. Panelists include a transgender former legislator and teacher, a therapist whose practice focuses on transgender people and their families, and a community organizer who meets with transgender people and their families in the community. The moderator is an openly transgender judge who has worked with the transgender community for decades and frequently teaches about law and the transgender community.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn about the lived experiences of transgender individuals.
2. Gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex issues regarding transgender people.
3. Learn about the impact of actions taken regarding transgender people on their family and friends.
4. Identify challenges faced by transgender individuals and their families due to legislative actions.

Speakers:

Hon. Stephanie Byers (Ret.)



Stephanie Byers received the National Educator of the Year from GLSEN in 2018. In 2019, Stephanie retired from a 32 year career in public education. In 2020 she made US History as the first transgender, Native American ever elected to a state legislature in the United States. Stephanie served in the Kansas House of Representatives in 2021 and 2022. A late in life transitioner, Stephanie began living as her authentic self in 2014. Since that time she has become a frequent panelist and presenter on transgender issues in politics, healthcare, education, and general transgender 101 discussions. She was part of the featured panel for the White House Virtual

Pride Celebration in 2021.

In 2023, Stephanie and her wife, Lori Haas, moved from Kansas to San Antonio to help with aging parents.

Lori Haas, MSFT, LCMFT

Hon. Victoria Kolakowski



Judge Victoria Kolakowski became the first openly transgender trial court judge of general jurisdiction when she was elected in Alameda County, California in 2010.

Before becoming a trial court judge, she was an attorney for twenty-one years in Louisiana and California, serving as a sole practitioner, attorney in a small patent boutique firm, patent and licensing counsel for a publicly-traded company, patent and general counsel of a second publicly-traded company, a senior government utility regulatory attorney, and an

administrative law judge (ALJ) for two different California agencies.

Judge Kolakowski joined NAWJ as an ALJ member in 2006. She has served on several committees, including as co-chair of Fairness and Access in 2017 and Diversity and Inclusion in 2022.

She is passionate about ensuring and expanding access to justice, particularly for those with limited resources. She serves on the Judicial Council of California's Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness and is the California Council of Churches' appointee to the California Access to Justice Commission.

Judge Kolakowski is a former president of the International Association of LGBTQ+ Judges (2015-2017), and she has spoken widely on LGBT issues, especially transgender legal issues, to audiences around the world. She is a leading educator for the judiciary on transgender issues and is an adjunct professor of law at the University of San Francisco School of Law, where she teaches a seminar on the intersection of equality rights and religious freedom.

She is especially proud to have been honored as a *Pioneer in the Law* by the California Women Lawyers in 2014 and to have been named the 2019 California Legislative Women's Caucus' *Woman of the Year - 18th Assembly District*.

Sofia Sepulveda



Sofia is the Community Engagement and Advocacy manager at Equality Texas, a first generation Mexican American Trans-Woman, She has been organizing in San Antonio for the past 9 years on Healthcare and Environmental Justice, she is the lead organizer for the Healthcare for All march in San Antonio, co-founder of Trans Power San Antonio, as well as organized the Women's March in San Antonio for the last 4 years. She was recognized as one of the 25 influential women who run San Antonio in 2019 for her work in healthcare. In 2021 alongside amazing activists and organizers in Texas she helped to pass legislation that extended Medicaid for new mothers from 2 to 6 months. She also sits in the board of Healthcare-Now, Transgender Education Network of Texas, Unfiltered Wings, and Community Advisory Board for Centro Med in San Antonio.