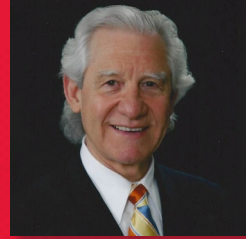




**The Honorable Frances Bourliot (J.D. '07)**  
Fourteenth Court of Appeals, 2019-2024



**The Honorable Vanessa D. Gilmore (J.D. '81)**  
United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, 1994-2022



**The Honorable Raul A. Gonzalez (J.D. '66)**  
Supreme Court of Texas, 1984-1998



**The Honorable Evelyn V. Keyes (J.D. '87)**  
First Court of Appeals, 2002-2020



**The Honorable James F. Kovach (J.D. '91)**  
Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 2, 2018-Present



**The Honorable Juan F. Vasquez (J.D. '77)**  
United States Tax Court, 1995-Present

## UH LAW JUDICIAL PIONEERS HERITAGE CELEBRATION

Join us to celebrate UH Law Center judicial pioneers and discover how their journeys continue to shape and influence today's legal landscape.

**Friday, September 26, 2025**

4:00-6:00 PM Central | Program

In Person and via Zoom

*Approved for 2.0 hours of Texas MCLE credit*

**Reception and Dedication of the Judicial Wall immediately following**

**John M. O'Quinn Law Building**

Danny M. Sheena Courtroom  
4170 Martin Luther King Blvd  
Houston, TX 77204-6060



# Agenda

**4:00-4:10 PM**

## **Welcome Remarks**

**Leonard M. Baynes**

Dean, Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz

Cullen Distinguished Chair

Professor of Law

University of Houston Law Center

**4:10-5:30 PM**

## **A Conversation with UH Law Center Judicial Pioneers Moderated by Dean Leonard M. Baynes**

**The Honorable Frances Bourliot (J.D. '07)**

Fourteenth Court of Appeals, 2019-2024

**The Honorable Vanessa D. Gilmore (J.D. '81)**

United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas,  
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United States Tax Court, 1995-Present

**5:30 PM**

## **Closing Remarks**

**Daniella Landers**

2025-2026 President

Houston Bar Association

**6:00 PM**

## **Reception and Dedication of the Judicial Wall**

# BIOGRAPHIES



## **LEONARD M. BAYNES**

*Dean, Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen  
Distinguished Chair, and Professor of Law  
University of Houston Law Center*

Leonard M. Baynes, currently the longest serving law dean in Texas, made history in 2014 with his appointment as the first dean of African descent at the University of Houston Law Center.

During his deanship, the UH Law Center's admission credentials have steadily increased – the median LSAT score climbed from 159 to 163 and the median GPA grew from 3.47 to 3.79, with over 20% of the students in the 2025 entering class from first-generation college backgrounds and more than 83% from first-generation law school backgrounds.

Under Dean Baynes's leadership, the Law Center completed the \$93 million world-class John M. O'Quinn Law Building in 2022 and expanded pathways to legal education through innovative programs including the 3-3 Program with UH Honors College, the UH Law Express Program, and the award-winning Pre-Law Pipeline Programs, which prepare first generation, economically challenged students for the competitive law school admissions process.

A prolific scholar, Dean Baynes co-authored the casebook "Telecommunications Law: Convergence and Competition" and has published over 25 law review articles and book chapters. He has received numerous honors, including recognition as one of the nation's 100 most influential lawyers of color, the Paul Robeson Award from his alma mater Columbia Law School, and the Clyde Ferguson Award from the Association of American Law Schools. He is serving a three-year term on the AALS' Executive Committee.

# BIOGRAPHIES



## **THE HONORABLE FRANCES BOURLIOT (J.D. '07)**

*Fourteenth Court of Appeals, 2019-2024*

Sworn in on January 1, 2019, Frances Bourliot was the first Asian-American woman and first public defender elected to the Fourteenth Court of Appeals.

Justice Bourliot began her legal career as a staff attorney with the Texas Defender Service and the Texas Innocence Network, representing indigent prisoners and death row inmates. After that she worked in the Harris County Public Defender's Office, representing defendants—including juveniles—who could not afford to hire an attorney. She was also an Adjunct Faculty Member at the University of Houston Law Center for several years, overseeing the Death Penalty Clinic and co-teaching Innocence Investigations. She then joined the Appellate Division of the Harris County Public Defender's Office when it opened in 2011 and continued to work as an Assistant Public Defender in the appellate, mental health, and felony trial divisions until 2017 when she started her own practice. She joined a plaintiff's law firm in 2018 and represented clients in personal injury, medical malpractice, and appellate matters. Justice Bourliot has taught CLEs on Batson challenges, jury charge issues, mitigation, and mental health related topics.

Justice Bourliot received her J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center and a Bachelor of Arts from Tufts University. She is a proud mother of a teenager who keeps her busy with sports and high school.

# BIOGRAPHIES



**THE HONORABLE VANESSA D. GILMORE (J.D. '81)**  
*United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas,  
1994-2022*

In 1994 when Judge Vanessa Diane Gilmore was sworn in, she became the youngest sitting federal judge in the nation. Raised in Silver Spring, Maryland, she was also the youngest member of her freshman class at her alma mater, Hampton University in Virginia. Gilmore decided to undertake a career in law after she represented herself and won a minor civil lawsuit.

She graduated from the University of Houston Law Center and began a 13-year tenure as a civil trial attorney at a Houston law firm where she also served as counsel to the Harris County Democratic Party. Gilmore also became an active member of the Houston civic community. Her civic activities outside of the courtroom brought her to the attention of Governor Ann Richards who appointed Gilmore to the Texas Department of Commerce Policy Board.

Gilmore was nominated to the federal bench by President Bill Clinton and became the first University of Houston graduate to be appointed to the federal bench. During her tenure, she issued important decisions on voting rights, intellectual property, products liability, securities fraud, energy and utilities, insurance and environmental law. She handled significant matters including the trial of the Enron Broadband case, the building of the Galveston cruise ship terminal and the voting rights case involving the redistricting of the Harris County Commissioner's Court.

Gilmore is the author of four books and is the recipient of numerous civic awards for community service. She serves on the boards of Texas Children's Hospital, DePelchin Children's Center, the Kinder Institute for Urban Research and the Houston Fund for Social Justice and Economic Equity, on the board of visitors for MD Anderson Cancer Center and on the Contemporary Arts Committee of the Museum of Fine Arts Houston.

After nearly 28 years as a federal judge, she retired in 2022 and is currently of counsel to the Roberts Markland law firm and also works as a mediator/arbitrator with JAMS. She also owns a tearoom appropriately called - Tea With Judge V.

# BIOGRAPHIES



## **THE HONORABLE RAUL A. GONZALEZ (J.D. '66)**

*Supreme Court of Texas, 1984-1998*

Raul A. Gonzalez graduated from the University of Houston Law Center in 1966. He was the first Hispanic person on the Texas Supreme Court and the first Hispanic person to win a statewide office. He is the only judge in Texas to have been appointed to the appellate courts by governors of different political parties: William "Bill" Clements, Republican, to the 13th Court of Appeals, and Mark White, Democrat, to the Texas Supreme Court.

Justice Gonzalez retired as a Justice of the Texas Supreme Court after 14 years of service on that court. He served as a Justice on the Texas 13th Court of Appeals, and Presiding Judge of Texas 103rd District Court, for a total of 20 years in the judiciary. Prior to his judicial service, Justice Gonzalez gained a wide variety of experience in several practice areas of law, as an Assistant United States Attorney and in private practice.

On completing his judicial service, he joined the Appellate Section of Locke Liddell & Sapp. In addition to his long service on Texas Courts, deciding a myriad of complex civil matters, Justice Gonzalez's experience as a neutral arbitrator has involved decisions on matters ranging from disputes over oil and gas royalties, franchise agreements, construction and purchase contracts, stock purchase agreements, fraud and accounting malpractice. In addition, Justice Gonzalez has served in a number of consulting/testifying expert witness engagements on standards of professional conduct and professional liability.

# BIOGRAPHIES



## THE HONORABLE EVELYN V. KEYES (J.D. '87)

*First Court of Appeals, 2002-2020*

Justice Evelyn Keyes retired from 18 years on the Texas Court of Appeals, First District, at the end of 2020 but continues to teach at Rice University. She teaches philosophy of law and constitutional law in the Philosophy Department and Intellectual Foundations of American Law in the Politics, Law and Social Thought Program and

finally in the Master of Liberal Studies Program through December 2025. She earlier co-founded the undergraduate judicial practicum at Rice. Justice Keyes has remained active on the Collaborative Council of the Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH) and the Texas Business Law Foundation Work Force on Specialty Business Courts.

Justice Keyes continues to pursue passions developed during her preparation for and service on the state appellate bench—(1) a developing project with JCMH to rationalize, synthesize and standardize procedures in Texas's Mental Health Courts to cure problems of comprehensiveness and continuity of care of the mentally ill and developmentally disabled and to improve the qualifications, selection, and on-going training of mental health specialty judges; and (2) an interest in impressing upon young people, lawyers, leaders, and educators the urgent need to restore the classical humanities to prominence in the undergraduate curriculum, while maintaining strength in the sciences. The aim is to ensure that students and leaders in all fields acquire the skills and the substantive knowledge necessary to know and to apply to today's world the great insights and ideas in art, history, literature, and philosophy, as well as in theoretical and applied science.

Justice Keyes prepared for her career with a B.A. in English and French at Sophie Newcomb College and junior year abroad in Paris, earning an M.A. and Ph.D. in English at the University of Texas, where she married and soon began a family. She subsequently studied philosophy at Rice, earning an M.A. and Ph.D. in philosophy, before entering law school at UHLC. After earning her law degree, she practiced complex civil litigation as an associate and then partner with a Houston litigation boutique until she left private practice to serve as a Special Assistant Attorney General to John Cornyn before her appointment to the bench by Governor Rick Perry, where she was re-elected four times.

Justice Keyes has served on and chaired local, state, and national legal committees and boards, often dealing with rules and ethics, has authored over 1400 signed opinions, and has published papers on law and moral and legal philosophy. She has been an active member of the American Law Institute since 2005, serving on projects designed to further its mission of rationing, synthesizing, and modernizing model laws.

Justice Keyes and her husband David have four adult children and seven grandchildren. She particularly enjoys early music, hymns, and blues, family vacations, and adventure travel.

# BIOGRAPHIES



## **THE HONORABLE JAMES F. KOVACH (J.D. '91)**

*Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 2, 2018-Present*

James F. Kovach graduated from Kingwood High School in 1983. He then attended The University of Texas in Austin and received his B.B.A. in marketing in 1986, and he graduated from the University of Houston Law School in 1991 with his Doctorate of Jurisprudence.

Judge Kovach was elected to his first term on the bench in November 2018 and he was sworn into office on January 1, 2019. He was re-elected in 2022. His colleagues unanimously elected him to be the Administrative Judge for the Harris County Civil Courts at Law in 2019, and he was re-elected to a second term in 2020.

Judge Kovach serves on the Board of Directors for the Dispute Resolution Center section of the Houston Bar Association. He is a leader in advocating for Early Dispute Resolution (EDR) because he recommends that parties try to resolve their controversies early in the legal process to try to avoid the expenses of protracted litigation.

Judge Kovach is proud to be the first openly gay judge in the Harris County Civil Courts at Law. He has been with his husband, Ben Montalbano, since 1999 and they finally married in 2016. They enjoy spending time on Lake Livingston with their SPCA rescue dog, Roxie.

# BIOGRAPHIES



## **DANIELLA LANDERS**

*2025-2026 President*

*Houston Bar Association*

Daniella Landers is the 2025-2026 President of the Houston Bar Association (HBA). She has served on the HBA Board of Directors as first vice president, secretary, and for two terms as director. She has also served as vice chair of the Houston Bar Foundation, chair of the Dispute Resolution Center, president of the Houston Lawyer Referral Service, and chair of Houston Volunteer Lawyers. Additionally, she has co-chaired several HBA committees, including Communities In Schools, Law & the Media, AIDS Outreach, Judicial Polls, Membership, Lawyers for Literacy, CLE, Lawyers Against Waste (now Lawyers for a Beautiful Houston), Gender Fairness, and Minority Opportunities in the Legal Profession (now Diversity, Equity and Inclusion).

Landers has been dedicated to the legal profession and greater Houston community through her service to several professional and community organizations, including the Houston Lawyers Association, Women in Energy Network Houston Chapter, the Institute for Energy Law, the National Bar Association, the Center for Women in Law, the HAY Center Foundation, the Fort Bend County Chapter of the Links Inc., the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., the Continentals Houston Chapter, and as a longtime member of the Houston Bar Association and Life Fellow of the Houston Bar Foundation.

As an attorney with over 25 years' experience, Landers has represented energy, chemical, commercial and industrial clients on a broad range of environmental, health & safety and land use issues, with a focus on dispute resolution, risk mitigation, regulatory compliance, ESG and sustainability, and transactional matters (mergers, sales, acquisitions, joint ventures). She has also served as an adjunct professor at South Texas College of Law and the University of Houston Law Center. Landers is a prolific speaker and writer on environmental, energy and litigation issues.

# BIOGRAPHIES



## **THE HONORABLE JUAN F. VASQUEZ (J.D. '77)**

*United States Tax Court, 1995-Present*

Juan F. Vasquez is a judge of the United States Tax Court. He attended Fox Tech High School and San Antonio Junior College and received his B.B.A. in Accounting from the University of Texas at Austin in 1972. He worked for two years as an accountant at Coopers and Lybrand (now PWC). He attended his first year of law school at the State

University of New York in Buffalo. He finished his J.D. at the University of Houston Law Center in 1977, followed by an LL.M. in Taxation from New York University Law School in 1978.

After serving as a trial attorney for the Internal Revenue Service, Judge Vasquez became a partner in the law firm of Leighton, Hood and Vasquez, and had a private practice as a tax lawyer in San Antonio.

Judge Vasquez was appointed by President Clinton as Judge, United States Tax Court, in 1995. He was reappointed by President Obama in 2011, for a term ending in 2026.

We are honored to recognize University of Houston Law Center alumni judges, past and present, as well as visiting jurists in residence on a digital judicial wall located on the first floor of the Law Center. The recognition of the members of the judiciary is an ongoing project made possible by your submissions. To learn more about the wall or to submit information, scan the QR code for the Judicial Wall.



[law.uh.edu/judges/](http://law.uh.edu/judges/)



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LAW CENTER

The University of Houston Law Center is part of a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university and an EEO institution.