727 East Dean Keeton Street
Austin, Texas 78705

Texas Law Magazine

Texas Law Magazine

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF LAW

FALL 2025

DARREN WALKER'S AMERICAN DREAM

FORGET WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT LAW SCHOOL RANKINGS

POWER PLAYERS

Meet the lawyers fueling an abundant energy future.

DISCOVERY \ **PROOF**

The big blue has sustained human connection and commerce for millennia. Today, 80% of the global trade of goods is carried by sea. Energy, raw materials, food supplies, and consumer goods—everything from avocados to Zambonis—circumnavigate the globe buoyed by the rules, principles, and conventions that make up maritime law. No one knows more on the subject than world-renowned expert **Professor Michael Sturley**, who last year became the first American to deliver the prestigious Berlingieri Lecture at the Comité Maritime International in Gothenburg, Sweden. Smooth sailing!

GETTY IMAGES

Texas Law Magazine

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Fall 2025, Volume 2, Issue 2

ON THE COVER
Illustration by DAMONXART

Docket

30 Blockchain Frontier

Is the law ready for the internet's next era? We hope so. *by Tomas Weber*

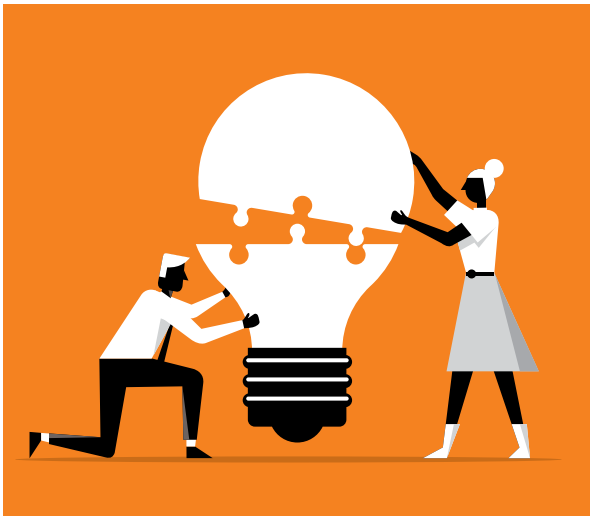
art by BRATISLAV MILENKOVIĆ

FEATURES

OPENING STATEMENTS

CLOSING ARGUMENTS

SORBETTO/ISTOCK



The Network Effect

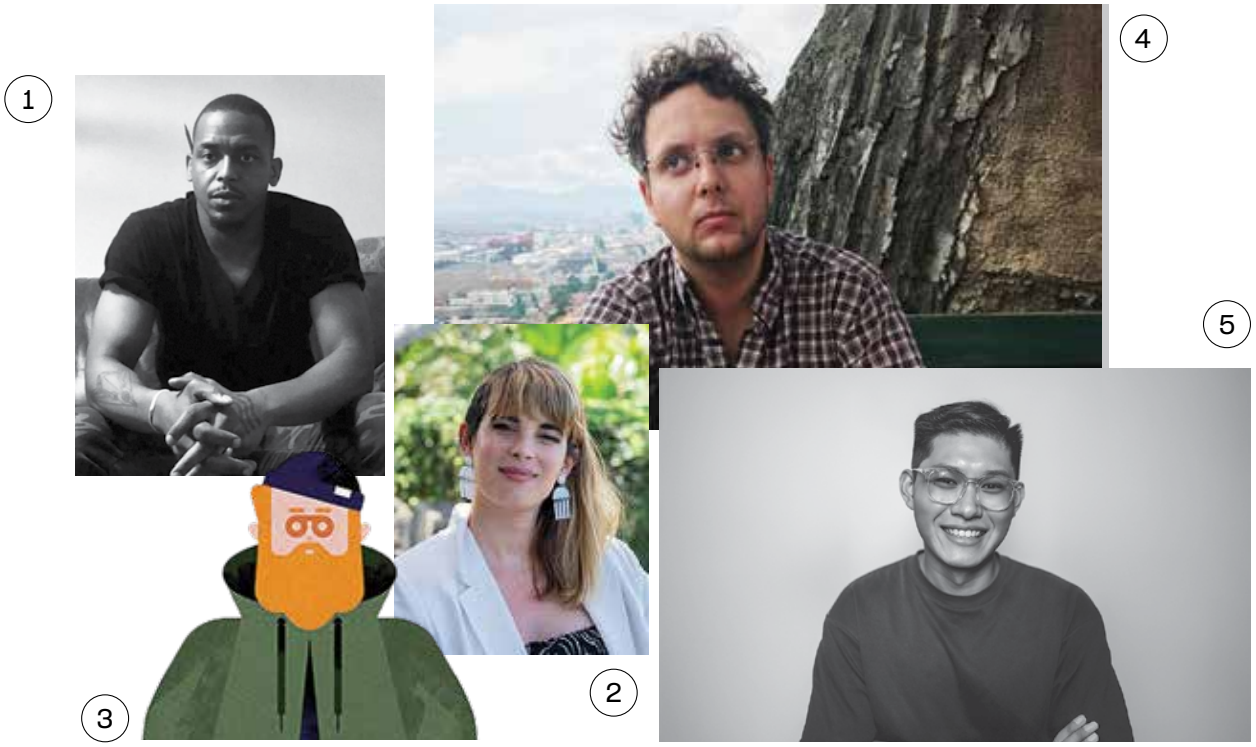
It is often said that the pioneering legal historian F.W. Maitland coined the phrase "the law is a seamless web." He didn't actually write that (he was expressing a similar sentiment, but it was about history), but the phrase is famous nonetheless, and for good reason: At its best, the law provides a massively interconnected set of frameworks that are, collectively, fundamental for a society to flourish.

Lawyers, of course, are essential to building and sustaining these often-hidden structures. That's on full display in this issue of *Texas Law Magazine*. As you turn the pages, you'll encounter powerful illustrations of how those networks are created and sustained, and inspiring examples of our graduates leading the way. Energy is a prime example. When you read about the remarkable history of the *Texas Journal of Oil, Gas and Energy Law,* and the ways in which their thousands of alumni are shaping the future of how energy is found, created, and distributed, you'll see that impact. So, too, with our exploration of the complications of Web 3.0 and the challenges of mapping a new frontier in the digital domain.

I'm grateful and proud that our extended Texas Law community—especially you holding this magazine in your hands—understands both the responsibility and the opportunity of building the networks upon which all of us depend, and that the whole Texas Law community will continue playing such a key role in the future.

Hook 'em,

BOBBY CHESNEY
Dean, The University of Texas School of Law



1

Trevor DAVIS

"Beacon of Hope," p. 5

Trevor Davis is a collage artist, graphic designer, art director, and educator living and working in New York. He creates mixed media collages using painting and hand-drawn elements, and his work has appeared in *The Atlantic, The New York Times, Mother Jones,* and *Travel + Leisure,* among others.

2

Ruby FRESSON

"Hearsay," p. 40

Ruby Fresson, a UK-based illustrator, creates timeless drawings inspired by early 20th-century comics. Her bright and bold compositions are hand drawn and digitally colored. Her work has appeared in *The Guardian, The New York Times, History Today, The New Yorker, The Sunday Times, Wired,* and *GQ Magazine.*

3

Bratislav MILENKOVIĆ

"Blockchain Frontier," p. 30

Bratislav Milenković is an illustrator with a studio in the heart of Belgrade, Serbia, which he shares with his dog, Vito. His work, which is intricate and mechanically detailed, yet playful, has been commissioned by global brands and publications such as Apple, Nike, Google, *Wired, The New York Times, The Guardian,* and *Forbes.*

4

Tomas WEBER

"Blockchain Frontier," p. 30

London-based Tomas Weber writes magazine features on technology, AI, science, and law. A freelance writer who also has a law degree, Weber's articles have appeared in *The Economist's 1843 Magazine, The New York Times Magazine, Rolling Stone, Smithsonian Magazine, Wired,* and several university magazines.

5

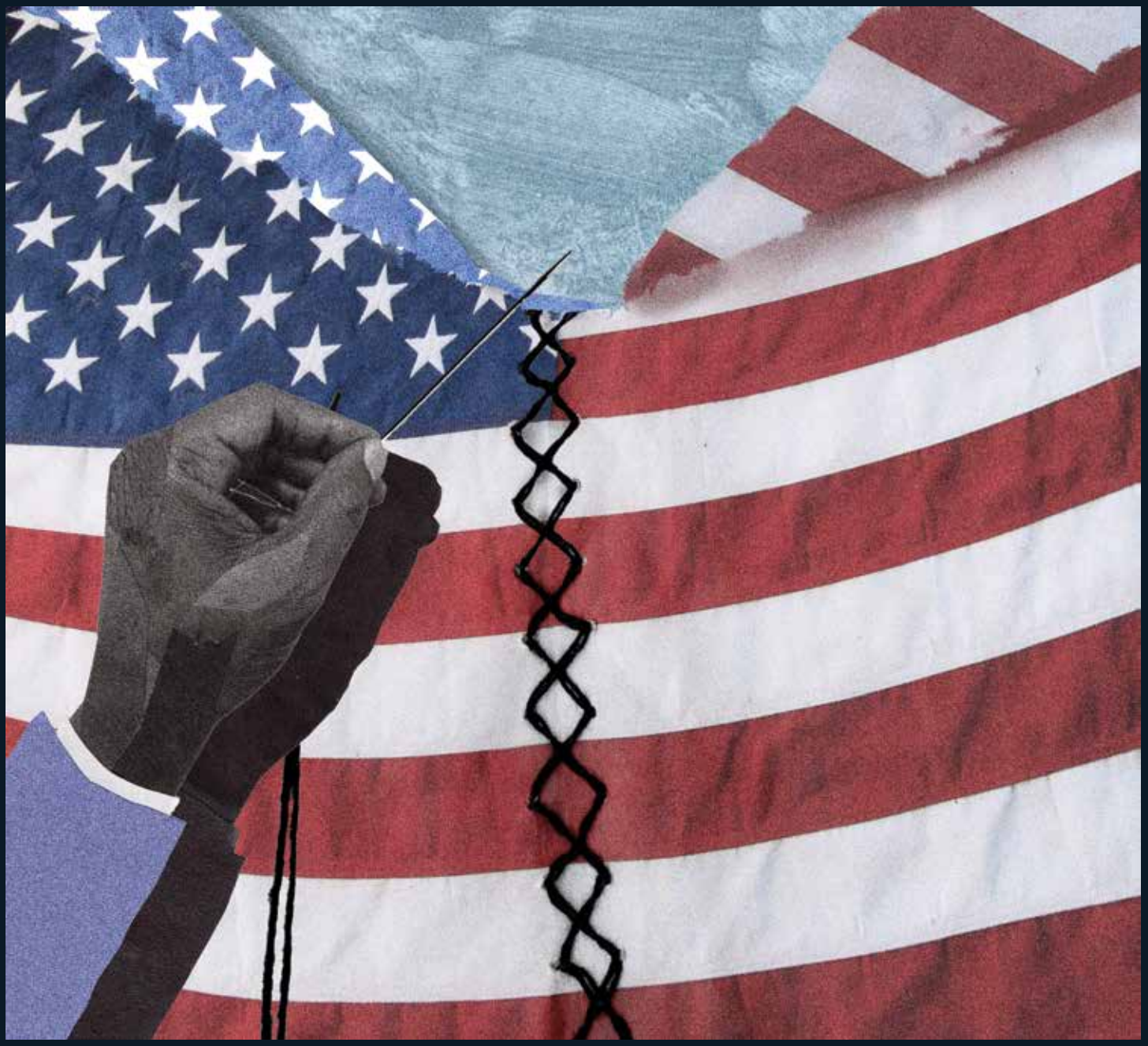
Damon HSIEH

"Power Players," p. 16

Damon Hsieh, known as DAMONXART, is a Taiwanese digital artist whose work captures the dynamism of light and color. Taking inspiration from the natural world, Damon's work reflects the beauty and grace of abstract or large-scale concepts like energy, the cosmos, and infinity through bold, bright, color-filled gradients.

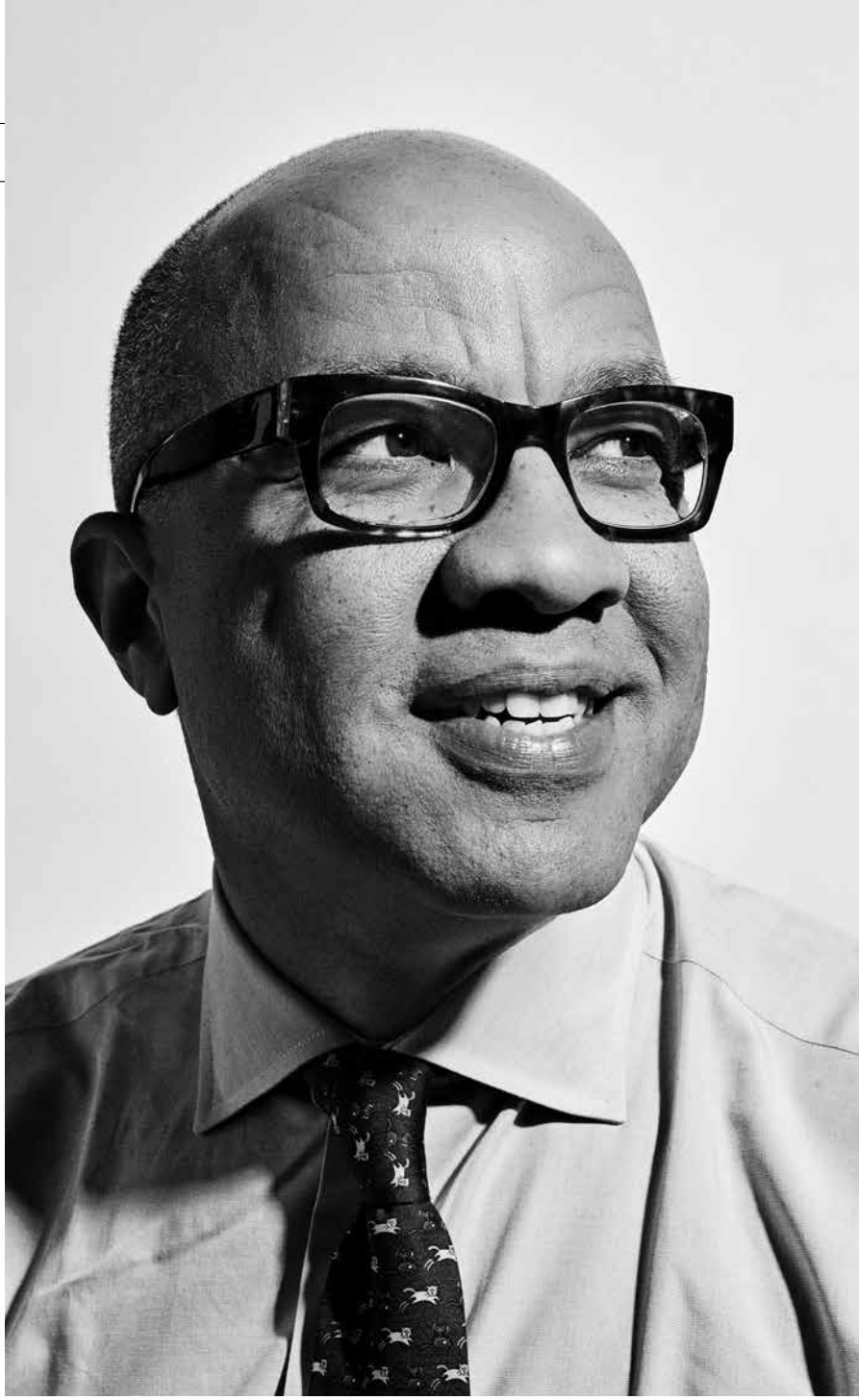
COURTESY OF CONTRIBUTORS

opening
statements



Darren Walker '86 is banking on a vision of American unity. "Hope," he argues, "is the oxygen of democracy." We need more. **NEXT PAGE**

art by TREVOR DAVIS



Beacon of Hope

Darren Walker '86 believes in the America that believed in him.

No one would ever call him naïve. Growing up poor and Black in the 1960s in East Texas would cure him of that. Add countless moments of discrimination and biased encounters—including being mistaken for a waiter at elegant events—and Darren Walker '86 is as clear-eyed and sober a realist as there is. And yet, there is something compellingly hopeful in the man. His life and his life's work tell a quintessentially American story. Rags to riches, underestimated to wildly successful, on the margins of society to seated among the world's powerful.

As he steps down this October after 12 years as president of the Ford Foundation—one of the world's largest and most influential philanthropic entities—Walker captures that hopefulness in his new book, *The Idea of America: Reflections on Inequality, Democracy, and the Values We Share*. As his writings unfold, it's clear Walker doesn't think his own story is unique. His success out of poverty could be—he argues must be—the rule, not the exception.

"It's easy for privileged people like me to believe in America, because the economic system has worked for us," he says. "Inequality is really the opposite of hope. It makes people feel like systems are rigged against them, and therefore they become less optimistic about their future and their

BY MICHAEL BLANDING

GUERIN BLASK

children's future." When people feel hopeless, Walker adds, "[t]hey will trade off their rights and liberties because they become convinced that rational responses are no longer sufficient to deal with the situation as they see it."

To bring the point home, Walker argues that "hope is the oxygen of democracy."

The economic system worked for him because his own journey was, as he says, "defined by the idea of public investment in human potential." Born to a single mother in rural Louisiana, Walker moved to and grew up in Liberty County near Beaumont, Texas. His mother enrolled him in the first class of the federal poverty-reduction program Head Start in 1965. Later, a federal Pell Grant sent him to UT. "I was able to get on the upward mobility escalator because I lived in a country that believed in the dreams of little boys and girls living in shotgun houses," he says, contrasting his experience with other family members in the Deep South who ended up impoverished or incarcerated, "[n]ot because they were less talented, but because the system failed them."

Arriving at the Forty Acres in the late 1970s, Walker felt like he'd succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. "It was like going to Paris in April. It was the most magical place," he says. He threw himself into leadership positions in clubs and academics, becoming one of the first Black students admitted to the prestigious Friar Society. At a reception for the Friars at the Bauer House, Walker extended his hand to one of the hosts. "She said, 'I'll have a gin and tonic,'" he recalls. Walker didn't blink, explaining that he was not a waiter but an honored guest. "She was mortified, and we ended up having a lovely conversation," he adds graciously.

"It allowed me to develop an armor—and part of that armor was a sense of kindness and grace that helped me not get thrown off my game." After all, for every time he was looked down upon, Walker notes, he was also met with "enormous generosity and support from people on my journey who were championing me."

After earning his undergraduate degree in 1982 in government and speech communication, Walker enrolled in The University of Texas School of Law, later describing it as "the best, hardest experience of my life" in a 2016 commencement address. "I came to understand the power of the law and how much of the way we construct our systems, our economy, and our social dynamics is defined by lawyers."

"THE IDEA OF AMERICA HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONTESTED. THAT IS WHY WE NEED VOICES THAT OFFER UP THE VERY BEST IDEA OF AMERICA."

Never wanting to be poor again, Walker practiced law with a white-shoe firm in New York City before joining the capital markets division of UBS, putting two sisters through college along the way. He began volunteering at a school in Harlem called the Children's Storefront, where he was shocked—and compelled—by the contrast between the blight of that neighborhood and his own. So, he moved to Harlem. "I went from a doorman building to crack vials on the stoop, with no supermarket, no services," he says. "The things I took for granted didn't exist in Harlem."

In 1995, he left UBS to work with the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC), where he used his legal and finance skills to help bring the first supermarket and more than 1,000 units of affordable housing to Harlem. "I understood project finance. It's just that now the clients were not rich institutions, the clients were poor people."

Walker moved seamlessly through Big Law, Wall Street, Harlem, ADC, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, matching his own success with helping others. "He is absolutely fearless," says Del Williams '85, a close friend, former classmate, and general counsel at Hillwood, a Perot Company, in Dallas. His gentle demeanor, Williams continues, belies a quick ability to size up a situation and act with conviction. "He is not wringing his hands or paralyzed by the moment," Williams says. "Darren makes it look easy."

Honoring Walker—and reflecting Walker's sense that opportunity belongs to everyone—Williams, Diana Howard '85, Dan Routman '85, and others funded an undergraduate scholarship program at UT Austin. "Though he is extraordinary, he will be the first to tell you he didn't get where he is by himself—he got there because of other people," says Howard. The Darren Walker Scholars program fills a critical gap for low-income students, covering living expenses not included in Pell Grant awards. Started in 2022, there are now 15 Walker Scholars, with the first cohort graduating next year. "The idea is to help create other Darren Walkers," Howard says.

Turning to his own future, Walker will preside over the board of the National Art Gallery and join the board of the Obama Foundation. It's not lost on Walker that this year has seen dramatic changes in the country—including cuts in public investment that are at odds with his life's work. Though sobered by the current moment of history, Walker is emphatic in his patriotism.

"I will always be bullish on America, and my belief in this country and its potential is unwavering," says Walker. "That does not mean that on any given day I'm not appalled at some of the things I see." He adds, "[t]he idea of America has always been contested. That is why we need voices that offer up the very best idea of America. I believe the vast majority of Americans believe in goodness and kindness. I believe that most Americans want a positive, hopeful nation that continues to be a beacon in the world.

"For that to happen," Walker concludes, "we can't give up on America."

BY
TEXAS LAW
MAGAZINE STAFF

Hank for President

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A WELL-RUN CAMPAIGN WITH A CHARISMATIC CANDIDATE. THE 1982 STUDENT GOVERNMENT ELECTION PROVED TO BE ABSOLUTELY UNREAL.

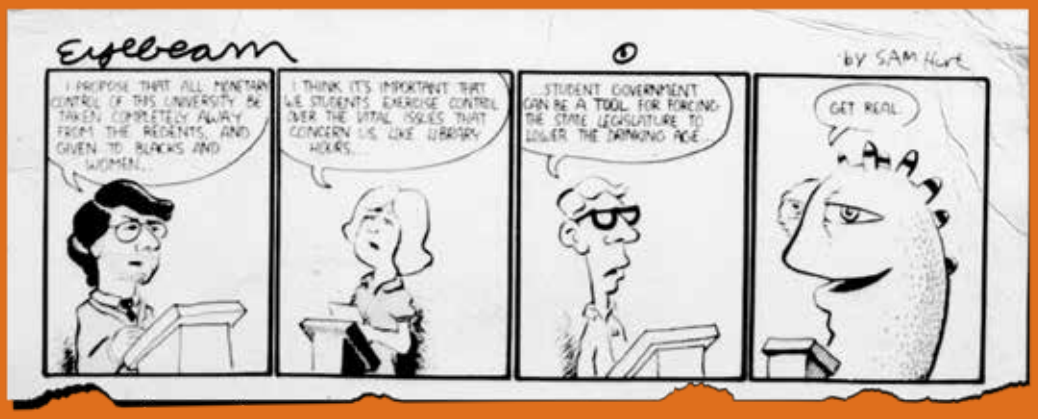
"He's the perfect candidate for the illusion of student government. He's vague on the issues. You can see right through his bulls*@%— and practically everything else." ¶ That's Steve Patterson '84 speaking with *The Daily Texan* in October 1982 as campaign manager for candidate Hank T. (the) Hallucination. Hank, a write-in candidate in the 1982 campaign for UT Austin Student Government President, handily won the election. Unfortunately, he could not take office because, well, he was a hallucination in a comic strip. ¶ Hank sprung to life in the mind of Eyebeam, the title character in the eponymous comic inked by Sam Hurt '83 for *The Daily Texan* beginning in 1978. Eyebeam was wildly popular on campus and later gained a broader audience through its national syndication. ¶ Paul Begala '90, the future political strategist and consultant, secured the presidency of Student Government in a runoff (sans Hank). As for winning the Hank votes? Begala promised to build a statue of the imaginary Hank on the West Mall. It's still there to this day.

THE WRITE-IN

Hank's presidential aspirations were spurred on as a write-in candidate. He won with over 3,000 votes, more than the other candidates combined.

Candidacy Announcement, 1982

Get Real Campaign, 1982



Victory Speech, 1982

By the time **Sam Hurt** started law school, Eyebeam was a daily strip in *The Texan*. Hank ran for president in Hurt's 3L year.

SAM HURT

Coerced Debt
Tackling financial abuse.

Survivors of intimate partner violence may escape injury only to find themselves scarred by financial ruin.

That's due to a widespread and often unseen form of abuse known as coerced debt, an often dire financial situation in which "the abusive partner incurs debt in the survivor's name using fraud, duress, or manipulation," explains Texas Law Professor Angela Littwin. Littwin first coined the term "coerced debt" in a 2012 law review article, but her work on the topic is more than academic. Her groundbreaking research has led to changes in Texas law and is prompting greater awareness in federal bankruptcy systems.

How could somebody end up with debt in their name without their knowledge or consent?

"Coercive control," explains Littwin. "One partner is essentially trying to undermine the other partner's free will by controlling every aspect of their life," Littwin says.

With coerced debt, an abuser might take out a loan, mortgage, or credit card in a partner's name, force a partner to pay for something they don't want or max out credit lines, or even steal money from them so they have no choice but to take out loans.

"Once survivors find out about the debt, their credit score may already be wrecked," says Littwin. With credit scores forming the basis for securing employment, housing, and basic utility services, "[i]n other words, exactly what someone needs if they would like to leave a relationship and start over on their own," notes Littwin, coerced debt can be a barrier in seeking safety. Littwin's work is chipping away at the mountain of coerced debt that so many find daunting. She, along with colleagues at Michigan State University, recently completed a five-year study—the first-ever large, federally funded study of its kind—examining coerced debt among women in Texas and Michigan.

The findings? Among the study participants, 17.9% had coerced debt, with unauthorized credit cards accounting for nearly half of that debt. Women with coerced debt had lower estimated credit scores compared to women without coerced debt. The study also found that neither divorce nor traditional debtor-creditor laws provide legal relief from coerced debt.

Thanks to Littwin's research, that's beginning to change.

This June, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed House Bill 4238, a bill on which Littwin testified three times. "With the new law, if somebody has a court order stating that her coerced debts were created via identity theft, creditors must stop collections on those debts," notes Littwin. While the new law has some exclusions, "the law is, nevertheless, very important," Littwin says. "The Texas Coalition on Coerced Debt had been trying for a few sessions to get a law passed, so this law is a tremendous step forward."

Federal bankruptcy protections for coerced debt are not yet as forthcoming. As the U.S. Supreme Court noted in *Bartenwerfer v. Buckley* (2022), involving a husband's fraud, "innocent people are sometimes held liable for fraud they did not personally commit, and, if they declare bankruptcy, §523(a)(2)(A) bars discharge of that debt."

For bankruptcy purposes, Littwin argues, there are two fraud victims—the abused partner and the creditor. If she's right, just maybe survivors of financial abuse could one day find relief in bankruptcy court, too.

art by IBRAHIM RAYINTAKATH

Hiring Up
Ten new faculty raise the bar.

Texas Law welcomes a record number of new faculty for the 2025–26 academic year. The 10 new teachers and scholars bring impressive credentials, vast experience, and wide-ranging expertise to the intellectual life of the school.

"Our world-class faculty is getting even bigger and better this year," says Dean Bobby Chesney. "We're adding to our depth, range, and excellence in timely and important areas of the law. This is fantastic for everybody—especially our students."

Among the newest faculty members, six are joining the research faculty, including four senior scholars and two early-career rising stars; two are lecturers, one from the adjunct ranks and one a former visiting instructor; and two are academic fellows.

"This is an incredible variety of talents," says Melissa Wasserman, Texas Law's associate dean for research. "Each one is doing important work that will enrich our learning and research environment."

Meet the newest brilliant legal minds whose teaching and work are shaping the ever-evolving legal landscape of the 21st century here at Texas Law.

LAUREN TANNER BRADLEY

LECTURER

For Lauren Tanner Bradley '08, Townes Hall is familiar territory. She is a proud alumna, Order of the Coif, who served as notes editor of the Texas Law Review. "My experience as a student at Texas Law profoundly influenced my legal career, and I'm looking forward to paying it forward to the next generation," says Bradley.

Bradley, who stepped in last spring as an adjunct to teach an advanced writing course, returns this fall as a full-time lecturer with the David J. Beck Center for Legal Research, Writing and Appellate Advocacy. A former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas and the Eastern District of Kentucky, Bradley also clerked for the Honorable William Garwood in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

She earned her bachelor's degree from Harvard University, where she was a varsity softball player and was an All-American Scholar-Athlete.

AVIHAY DORFMAN

PROFESSOR

Avihay Dorfman joins the faculty from Tel Aviv University, relocating more than 11,000 miles to do so. Dorfman researches and teaches on the theoretical foundations of law, including private law, the private/public distinction, and theories of political legitimation. A prolific author, Dorfman published two books in 2024: a legal theory book, *Reclaiming the Public*, and a book he co-authored, *Relational Justice: A Theory of Private Law*.

DORFMAN IS EAGER TO HELP BUILD OUT A PRIVATE LAW THEORY PROGRAM AT THE LAW SCHOOL.

In making the international move, Dorfman is eager to help build out a Private Law theory program at the law school, and especially is looking forward to "the opportunity to join and contribute to an intellectually vibrant community of highly engaged scholars."

Dorfman, who earned both a JSD

art by PADDY MILLS

and an LLM from Yale Law School and has his BA and LLB from Haifa University in Israel, clerked for the Honorable Aharon Barak, then the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Israel.

KEVIN FRAZIER

AI INNOVATION AND LAW FELLOW

Kevin Frazier leads Texas Law's AI Innovation and Law Program, a new initiative serving as a focal point for the growing array of AI-related activities at Texas Law, while also contributing to the national dialogue around AI.

His research explores the intersection of emerging technology, consumer protection, and individual liberty. His articles have appeared in academic journals and popular outlets such as the *Regulatory Review, Reason,* and *Lawfare,* where he serves as a senior editor and co-hosts Texas Law's AI podcast, "Scaling Laws."

Frazier previously taught at St. Thomas University's Benjamin L. Crump College of Law and for the past two years was a senior researcher at the Institute for Law & AI, a think tank in Boston, MA.

"If you're in Austin, then you're committed to progress and innovation," Frazier says. "It presents us all with a meaningful chance to make a real difference in shaping the future of Austin, Texas, the U.S., and beyond."

He has a JD from the UC Berkeley School of Law, an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School, and a BS from the University of Oregon.

PAUL GUGLIUZZA

PROFESSOR

Paul Gugliuzza is an award-winning scholar and teacher in the fields of civil procedure, federal courts, and intellectual property law. He is slated to teach Introduction to Intellectual Property, Patent Law, and a law and technology colloquium.

Gugliuzza comes to the Lone Star State after teaching at Temple University School of Law and Boston University's law school—where he received the Dean's Award in recognition of his teaching—and the University of Florida's Levin College of Law.

"TEXAS LAW IS A POWERHOUSE SCHOOL AT A TOP-FLIGHT UNIVERSITY IN AN AMAZING CITY."

In addition to being a frequently published author and contributor to national publications, Gugliuzza has testified before both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, and his scholarship has been cited in over 20 judicial opinions.

He specifically is excited to "teach some Lawhorns," says Gugliuzza. "Texas Law is a powerhouse school at a top-flight university in an amazing city. The faculty is among the most highly respected in the entire country, particularly in my field of intellectual property law."

Gugliuzza graduated from Tulane University School of Law, then clerked for Judge Ronald M. Gould on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Although he did his undergraduate work at the University of Oklahoma, Gugliuzza is quick to note that he much prefers burnt orange over crimson.

CHRISTOPHER KULANDER

SENIOR LECTURER

Christopher Kulander, a prominent expert in oil and gas law, joins Texas Law not only as a senior lecturer, but also serving as academic director with the university's Kay Bailey Hutchison Energy Center. He is a co-author with the recently-retired and much-admired Professor Owen L. Anderson of the casebook, *Cases on Minerals and Oil and Gas Law*.

A former geophysicist, Kulander spent a decade as professor at the South Texas College of Law Houston, where he also served as director of the school's Oil & Gas Law Institute. He is an international lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University in Lithuania, as well. Kulander effuses with excitement about joining Texas Law. "To borrow an expression from

baseball, the faculty here is a veritable 'Murderers' Row' of powerhouse academics," says Kulander. "To be a part of that juggernaut is both daunting and exhilarating."

In addition to energy law, Kulander has written and published on land use control, American Indian law, geology, and petroleum seismology. He received his JD from the University of Oklahoma, his PhD in geophysics from Texas A&M University, and both a BS and MS in geology from Wright State University.

PRACHI MEHTA

ACADEMIC FELLOW

Prachi Mehta is the first fellow appointed to Texas Law's recently launched Academic Fellowships program, supporting emerging scholars who aspire to join the legal academy as tenure-track faculty members. As an academic fellow and visiting lecturer, Mehta will be developing a patents-focused research agenda and will teach a seminar on patent and drug law.

"Texas Law is an extraordinary law school," says Mehta. "With its visionary faculty, collegial environment, and deep investment in both student and faculty success, it is truly the best place to study the law."

From 2016 to 2017, Mehta clerked for Magistrate Judge K. Nicole Mitchell of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas in Tyler and practiced at Winston & Strawn in Chicago both before and after her clerkship. She later worked as a litigation associate at firms in Redwood City, California, and opened her own practice in 2022.

Mehta earned her BA from UCLA and JD from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign College of Law.

AARON NIELSON

PROFESSOR

Aaron Nielson joins the research faculty following a two-year commitment as the solicitor general for the state of Texas. Nielson previously taught as adjunct faculty at Texas Law and—prior to his term as solicitor general—at BYU Law. Through both law practice and academic pursuits, Nielson has honed his scholarship and teaching in administrative law, civil procedure, and federal courts.

"I'M EXCITED TO WORK WITH TEXAS LAW STUDENTS. THEY ARE A GREAT GROUP."

Expanding our faculty roster of former U.S. Supreme Court clerks, Nielson clerked for Justice Samuel Alito, as well as for Judge Janice Rogers Brown of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and Judge Jerry E. Smith of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

"I'm excited to work with Texas Law students. As Solicitor General of Texas, I had the opportunity to teach and employ its students as interns," says Nielson. "They are a great group."

Nielson received his JD from Harvard Law School and an LLM from the University of Cambridge, where he focused his studies on the institutions that regulate global competition and commerce. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania, majoring in economics and political science.

RACHEL REBOUCHÉ

PROFESSOR

A leading scholar in reproductive health law and family law, Rachel Rebouché comes to Texas Law after four years as the dean of the Temple University Beasley School of Law. Previously, she was the associate dean for research there, as well as a faculty fellow at Temple's Center for Public Health Law Research.

Rebouché has authored and edited multiple books, articles, and essays, including casebooks on family law. She served as a co-investigator on two grant-funded research projects related to reproductive health, one housed at the Emory University

art by PADDY MILLS

Rollins School of Public Health and another funded by the World Health Organization.

Rebouché received her JD from Harvard Law School, an LLM from Queen's University, Belfast, and a BA from Trinity University. Prior to law school, she worked as a researcher for the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Centre at Queen's University. After law school, Rebouché clerked for Justice Kate O'Regan on the Constitutional Court of South Africa and practiced law in Washington, D.C.

SUSAN YORKE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Susan Yorke studies the interplay between procedure and appellate decision-making. Her research looks at how courts interpret and use precedent, as well as the ways in which court procedure and methodology impact judicial opinions and institutional integrity.

Yorke, who will be teaching Torts this year, joins Texas Law after having served as a lecturer at Stanford University Law School and at Berkeley Law.

"The talented and kind student body and exceptional faculty drew me to Texas Law," explains Yorke. "My sense is that the school fosters achievement at the highest levels among both students and professors, while at the same time maintaining a collaborative and welcoming atmosphere." And she notes, "the great tacos around town didn't hurt either!"

Yorke earned her JD from Columbia Law School, her MPA from Princeton University, and her BA from Williams College. Upon graduating law school, Yorke served as court counsel to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Palau and clerked for Judges Susan P. Graber and Edward Leavy of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

ALEXANDER ZHANG

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Alexander Zhang is a historian of law, politics, and culture in the United States as well as a theorist of legislation, statutory interpretation, and race. He will be teaching classes on legislation and statutory interpretation, contracts for 1Ls, and a seminar on Asian Americans and the law.

"I was excited about the opportunity to build Texas Law into a national leader in the field of legislation, to serve students who are often deeply eager to engage with state legal communities, and to be surrounded by faculty colleagues full of generosity and courage," he says.

Zhang, who earned a JD from Yale Law School, served as a law clerk to Chief Judge David J. Barron of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. He has a MPhil in history, BA and MA in American Studies, and currently is a PhD candidate in history at Yale.

ZACK EWING

NEW TEXAS LAW GRADUATES ARGUE AND WIN CASE AT FIFTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS

Just three weeks after graduating, Gabrielle Olubanke Howells '25 and Lizeth Badillo Garcia '25 stood in the John Minor Wisdom United States Court of Appeals in New Orleans—not as observers, but as advocates arguing before the Fifth Circuit. ¶ Their place at counsel's table was secured by Kirkland & Ellis litigation partner Zack Ewing, who together with the Richard & Ginni Mithoff Pro Bono Program, proposed a novel arrangement: the students would take on pro bono an appeals case and, if granted, serve as oral advocates under Ewing's supervision. The Fifth Circuit agreed and assigned the case of Stephon Eric James, an elderly person incarcerated in Louisiana claiming a violation of his constitution rights based on inadequate medical care. ¶ The two spent eight months mastering the record and convoluted legal issues—while also managing classwork, clinical obligations, and journal commitments. And on June 5, 2025, Howells and Badillo Garcia, each argued on behalf of a man who had never had an attorney. ¶ "Their first real, substantive experience is standing five feet away from three circuit judges and handling a litany of rigorous questions about the case," Ewing says. "And they just performed phenomenally." ¶ Howells and Badilla Garcia hoped the court would reverse and remand to give their client a chance to file an amended complaint, this time with attorney representation. ¶ On August 29, 2025, the Fifth Circuit did just that.

Gabrielle Olubanke Howells (left) and Lizeth Badillo Garcia (right) outside the John Minor Wisdom U.S. Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

Taming the Monster

A longer-term perspective on the administrative state.

In 2017, Steve Bannon announced that the Trump Administration would seek "the deconstruction of the administrative state." Since then, the U.S. Supreme Court—now with three Justices nominated by President Trump—has revisited how courts review the work of agencies, as well as the relationship between the President and those agencies. Many wonder where all of this is headed. In fact, we sometimes hear criticisms such as the following, which ran in *Slate* a couple of years back: "Do you think that securities fraud, consumer scams, environmental crimes, labor violations, and a ton of other misdeeds should be efficiently and consistently penalized? Then you are out of luck[.]"

What is happening is complicated. True, the Supreme Court has issued significant decisions, but not nearly as significant as some wish or others fear. Close review reveals that the administrative state is being tamed, not destroyed. Nor is this new; time and again in our nation's history, as the federal government changes, so do judicial doctrines.

Professor **Aaron Nielson** holds the Charles I. Francis Professorship in Law. Professor Nielson focuses his research on administrative law, federal litigation, and the separation of powers.

Administrative law has always been a work in progress. Because the federal government has grown enormously powerful over the past two centuries, the Supreme Court has taken steps to ensure that federal agencies stay within constitutional and statutory bounds.

On one hand, even a glance at the Constitution shows it is not easy to make law. Not only must Congress operate within enumerated powers, but federal lawmaking requires both houses of Congress—with members from far-flung places who are selected at different times and through different means—to agree, and generally for the President to agree, too. This effectively creates a supermajority requirement.

On the other hand, the Constitution also empowers Congress to create "department[s]" to assist the President (in whom all "executive Power" is vested). Since 1789, Congress has created agencies to serve important functions.

During the New Deal, scholars like James Landis—dean of Harvard Law School, chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, presidential advisor, and an intellectual father of the administrative state—argued that expert agencies confronting modern problems need robust authority and that traditional separation-of-powers notions should fall away. Yet as then-Professor Elena Kagan later observed, "[w]hereas the questions of what and how to regulate seemed to Landis matters of fact and science, they appeared to his detractors, ever more numerous as time passed, to involve value choices and political judgment, thus throwing into question the legitimacy of bureaucratic power." The result of this conflict of visions—some wanting fewer restrictions on what agencies do, others wanting more—was the grand compromise of the 1940s: federal agencies largely retained broad power, but Congress imposed more procedural requirements through the Administrative Procedure Act.

The fight driving the 1940s compromise has not gone away and probably never will. Federal agencies do many

good things. But power corrupts, and if agencies are not kept accountable, their very "expertise, the strength of modern government"—quoting *Burlington Truck Lines v. United States*, a Supreme Court case from 1962—may "become a monster which rules with no practical limits on its discretion."

One of the defining characteristics of government today is that presidents use regulatory power for political ends.

art by RICARDO TOMÁS

This cuts across party lines and creates zigzagging national policy that makes longterm investment difficult and exacerbates political tensions. Candidates for the White House make big promises that Congress, often sharply divided, rejects. Rather than accepting defeat, the Executive Branch sometimes seeks to repurpose old statutes.

For example, President Biden—just weeks after Congress refused to enact a $15 minimum wage—used a 1949 statute enacted to streamline procurement to impose that very wage requirement on government contractors. Upon retaking office, President Trump rescinded Biden's executive order with one of his own. The already extraordinary stakes of presidential elections become even greater when major policies change depending on who wins the race for the White House.

"NO ONE SHOULD BE STARTLED THAT TODAY'S POLITICS CAN'T ALWAYS BE POURED INTO OLD LAWS."

Nor is President Biden's experience an outlier. After Congress switched parties in 2014, for example, President Obama used regulatory power in what the *Washington Post* contemporaneously described as "an executive style of governing that aims to sidestep Congress more often," especially for immigration and environmental law. For his part, President George W. Bush tried to use regulation to ban physician-assisted suicide. Many of President Trump's critics accuse him of acting similarly. Of course, not every use of old statutes is unlawful (unsurprisingly, statutory interpretation can be hard), but no one should be startled that today's politics can't always be poured into old laws.

It is against this backdrop that the Court was acting in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* (2024) when it tossed aside *Chevron* deference, the doctrine under which courts (sometimes) deferred to agency interpretations of ambiguous statutes rather than reach their own independent judgments of what the law means.

Loper Bright has prompted much teeth-gnashing, but it shouldn't. A survey of federal judges published in 2018 concluded that most were "not fans of *Chevron*" and "[t]he judges expressing skepticism regarding *Chevron* divide equally among liberals and conservatives." Furthermore, *Loper Bright* does not shut down regulation. Instead, agencies will have to hew more closely to the words enacted by Congress, thus reducing their ability to fish around for ambiguities in old laws to pursue policies that Congress has not authorized.

Another line of cases empowers the President to fire heads of so-called "independent" agencies, i.e., Executive Branch agencies that by statute are independent of the President. The Court was initially skeptical of such independence, but beginning in 1935 reversed course—thus enabling what some call the "headless fourth branch of government." Today's Court has a different view, reasoning that the President should control his own branch.

In 2020, the Supreme Court appointed me to defend the constitutionality of an independent agency (the Federal Housing Finance Agency) after the Department of Justice refused to do so. I did my best to fulfill the assignment, but it is plain that the Court now rejects that agencies can exercise power without even the President being able to control it. As the Court sees it, meaningful presidential control is a liberty-protecting check on unelected agency officials. Soon after that decision, President Biden fired the head of the Social Security Administration CONTINUED ON PAGE 51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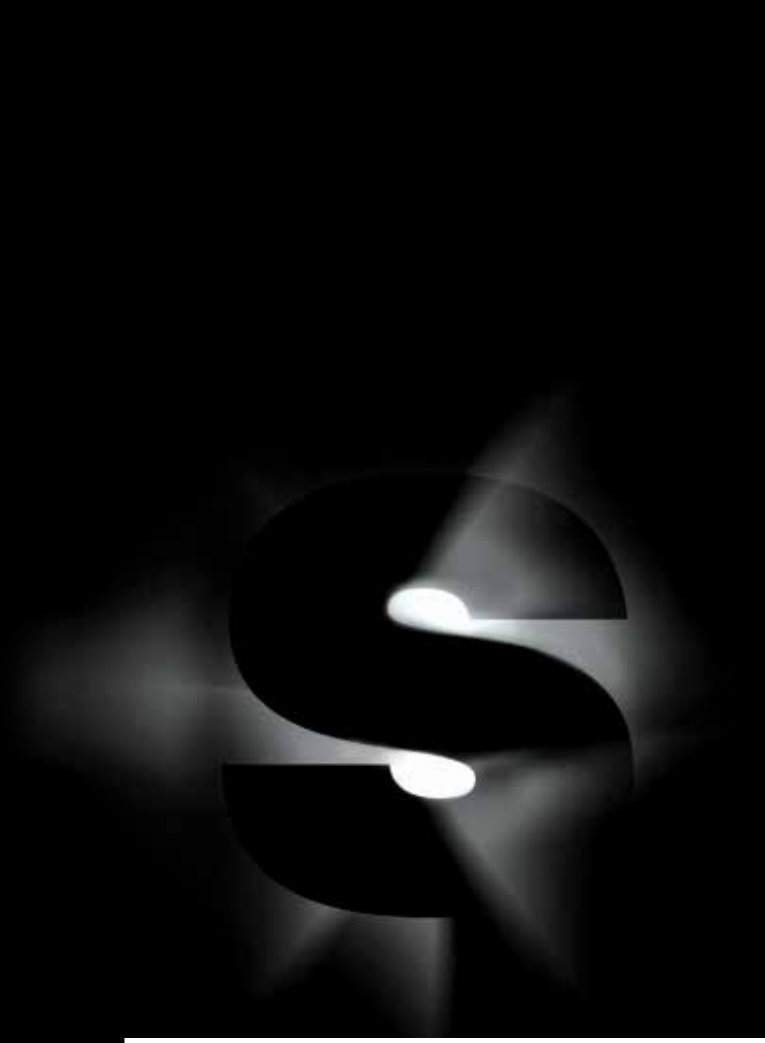
PLAYERS

Meet the lawyers fueling
an abundant energy future.

BY LIZ ANDERSON HILTON + LOREN STEFFY



STAND ANYWHERE IN TEXAS AND YOU'RE NEVER FAR FROM A REMINDER OF HOW THE MODERN WORLD IS POWERED.

Pumpjacks and turbines, pipelines and refineries, reactors and gas stations, substations and transmission lines—these industrial sculptures dot our horizons, linking oil fields to trading floors, wind farms to family businesses, power plants to homes, fueling the aspirations of our global economies.

But behind the energy hardscape lies something just as essential and far less visible: a legal architecture, a foundation of contracts, permits, easements, regulations, joint ventures, royalty arrangements, and financing structures—the legal framework that makes energy possible.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to Nicholas Franklin and Brandon Seale for their research and reporting on the history of TJOGEL.

No turbine spins, no pipeline flows, no gigawatt of power courses toward an AI data center, much less powers your smartphone or heats your home, without a robust legal infrastructure.

In an increasingly electrified and digitized global economy, energy law isn't a specialty—it's a cornerstone of civilization. And at Texas Law, the now 20-year-old Texas Journal of Oil, Gas, and Energy Law (TJOGEL) has emerged as the proving ground for the legal minds that will define this century's energy future.

VISIONARIES

When it comes to energy, Texans are preternaturally optimistic.

Born during one the most economically devastating oil busts in Texas history, Nicholas Franklin '07 and Brandon Seale '08 had good reason to pursue careers in anything *other than* energy. Franklin's family relocated from Booker, Texas—just three miles south of the Oklahoma border—to Amarillo in the 1980s when oil prices hit rock bottom and decimated his hometown's economy. Seale's family made their way from Abilene to San Antonio in 1987 as jobless rates in Texas, particularly in the Permian Basin, exceeded 10%.

But both Franklin and Seale understood something of the essence of energy. "It's the universal currency," says Seale.

"People forget that Texas suffered double-digit unemployment for almost a decade following the oil price collapse of the 1980s. Despite all that, when it came time for me to get a job, I was drawn back to the fundamental nobility of the energy business—the idea of producing something that *everybody* needs and uses."

For Franklin, "No one from my county had graduated from law school since the 1980s. I expected to return to the panhandle, partly because I knew there was a shortage of attorneys, and the most successful practices seemed to be those specializing in oil and gas law." Perhaps more pragmatic than Seale's philosophical sense of energy, Franklin and Seale share the innate entrepreneurial spirit that's made Texas a global energy leader.

art by DAMONXART

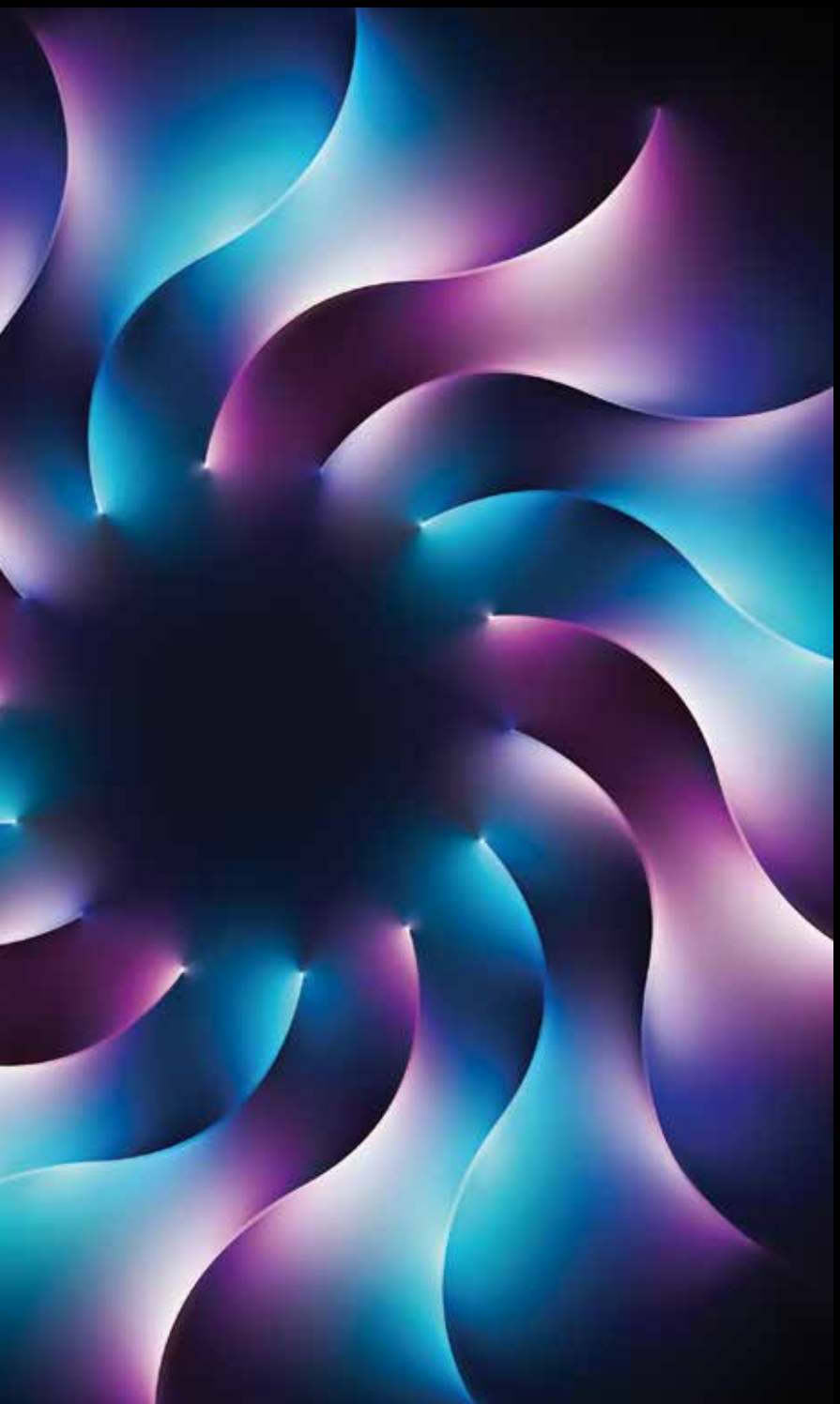
That spirit took off in the early 20th century and, not surprisingly, Texas Law faculty were leading the way.

PERFECT LEGALITY

A decade before Santa Rita No. 1 hit on May 28, 1923, a gusher that began to flow oil wealth into the university's Permanent University Fund, Texas Law Professor George C. Butte (later dean) had begun teaching oil and gas law, with the first mention listed in a 1914 course catalogue. By 1919, Butte was drafting the earliest model contracts, chasing what he called "perfect legality," "clearness of meaning," and "fairness to both landowner and oil operator."

In a move that foresaw the growth of an entire industry, and that recognized the complex relationships and responsibilities with wealth beneath the land, Butte began Texas Law's ascendency in energy law.

By 2004, the law school had a century-deep pedigree in energy law thanks in no small part to the stature of Professor Emeritus Ernest E. Smith III—*the* giant of oil and gas law who taught thousands of students and authored the leading treatises in the field over six decades. Smith, who had grown up the son of a rancher in the South Texas town of Gonzales, had a landowner's appreciation for the complexities inherent in energy law.



MORE THAN A JOURNAL

And yet, for all that history, Texas Law lacked one thing: a student-run energy law journal. That changed in 2005 when a group of enterprising 1Ls—more self-described "misfits" than polished journal aspirants—created one from scratch.

The prospect of a new journal was daunting. The law school already had 12 journals, many struggling financially. Dean Bill Powers, who would become university president the following year, was skeptical. He memorably told Seale that most new journal efforts were "like drag racing and teenage sex: short-lived and vastly over-hyped."

Undeterred, Seale and Franklin, along with Cynthia Martinez '07 and Amy Maxwell '07 began modestly: an energy law society. But when 50 students showed up to a meeting where 15 were expected, the group realized the interest was there—it just needed structure.

Martinez, who had a passion for extending energy law beyond oil and gas to renewables, secured the endorsement of Professor Smith, the Rex G. Baker Centennial Chair in Natural Resources Law. Smith's credibility opened doors that would have otherwise been shut. "You have Professor Smith onboard? Yes? Then we are on board," was the oft-repeated response from lawyers and firms, other law schools, and members of state government.

Additionally, they knew how to raise money. Maxwell had a politician's Rolodex and fundraising sense to match. She secured an initial $6,000 from "a couple of good old guys from Kilgore, Texas," she reports, and eventually lined up $30,000 in annual funding.

With Smith's endorsement and funding in hand, TJOGEL launched with what Franklin describes as "catalytic bigness"— build big or lose everything. In April 2006, they printed 4,000 copies of their first issue, making it the second-largest distribution of any law journal behind only Harvard Law Review. The gamble paid off.

A TALENT PIPELINE

Today, TJOGEL functions less like a traditional law review and more like a legal talent pipeline fueling one of the world's most critical industries.

If the 1980-90s oil bust had left a generational gap of legal talent, TJOGEL began filling the need for lawyers fluent in both the business and regulatory complexities of energy development. They serve as general counsels for major energy companies, partners leading renewable energy practice groups at top firms, regulatory officials shaping state and federal policy, and executives building the infrastructure that powers modern life. TJOGEL alumni aren't just practicing energy law—they're defining it.

Seale, editor-in-chief of Volume 2, went on to help develop the Nueva Era pipeline—200 miles of 30-inch steel connecting Texas to Monterrey, Mexico. The project required attorneys from four cities across two countries. At the center sat Seale, managing what he calls "air traffic control" for a permitting and regulatory process that Mexico had never before attempted. Today, the pipeline delivers enough natural gas to power three million homes in Mexico.

Becky Diffen '09, Volume 4 editor-in-chief and an adjunct professor at Texas Law, co-authored in TJOGEL's pages the definitive article on wind law while still a student. That 2009 article became the foundation for *Texas Wind Law,* later expanded to *Wind and Solar Law,* now the go-to academic text in the field.

"Texas has been at the forefront," Diffen says, sitting in her office overlooking an Austin skyline increasingly punctuated by renewable energy company logos. "We were the first state with a real renewable portfolio standard. But to build that out, you needed the CREZ transmission lines," she notes about the $7 billion network of power lines that opened West Texas wind to urban markets.

CREZ, short for Competitive Renewable Energy Zones, reflects "years of work at the Public Utility Commission, just as I was coming out of law school," explains Diffen, work that required translating oil and gas legal concepts to an entirely new energy resource. Can landowners sever a wind estate like mineral rights? How do trespass laws apply to turbulence? What happens when the wind stops blowing across your neighbor's property and onto yours?

"It's different from oil and gas," Diffen notes, "but the real property foundations definitely evolved out of Texas O&G law."

While Diffen was pioneering renewable law, Martinez—Managing Editor Volume 1—was building the companies themselves. She spent two decades scaling multiple renewable energy companies, most recently serving as general counsel for Total Renewable Energies. Her specialty: the multi-billion-dollar offshore wind projects that require decade-long partnerships between private developers and federal agencies.

"The challenge of new energy sources is that you're writing the playbook as you go," Martinez says. "Lawyers aren't just risk mitigators—we're engineers of the possible. Our job is to create structures that make the finance, technology, and regulation line up for safe and abundant energy." That creative mindset—what Martinez calls "the Department of How"—echoes the scrappy origins of TJOGEL itself.

> "THE MOST SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORLD STILL MOVES AT THE SPEED OF PERMITS. THE COMPANIES THAT LEARN TO NAVIGATE THIS REALITY FIRST WILL DEFINE THE FUTURE OF AI."

| THE COLLISION OF AI AND ENERGY |

Given the first quarter of this century, that Department-of-How thinking is going to be in high demand. The U.S. Energy Information Administration projects global electricity demand could increase by about one-third to three-quarters by 2050, far outpacing the world's ability to meet that demand.

One driver in the developed world, though certainly not the only one, is AI. "We are manufacturing intelligence, and just like manufacturing cars requires steel mills and manufacturing airplanes requires aluminum smelters, manufacturing intelligence requires enormous amounts of energy," says Franklin, the panhandle lawyer who now directs AI initiatives for Meta.

The exponential pace of artificial intelligence—and its power-hungry data centers—is on a collision course with the geologic pace of energy infrastructure. The bottlenecks are not technical brilliance or capital markets. The constraint will be the same one that has defined every major energy project for the past century: the legal and regulatory framework that determines what gets built where, when, and how.

This is where the tech world discovers what energy companies have known for generations: the most sophisticated technology in the world still moves at the speed of permits. The companies that learn to navigate this reality first will define the future of AI.

This inflection point arrives precisely when TJOGEL's network effects reach critical mass. Twenty years of alumni placement means legal energy expertise now resides across the country in major law firms, regulatory agencies, and corporate boardrooms. They have been navigating that temporal mismatch of fast-moving business and the constraints of regulation for two decades and now find themselves positioned at the center of the most important technological transition of their careers.

If past experience is any guide, TJOGEL alumni will be drawing on the precedents of those who came before, thinking in analogies about the new challenges facing them, and trailblazing the solutions for that future.

"This is just the beginning," says Franklin. TJOGEL and Texas Law are not just producing energy lawyers. These lawyers will shape the legal infrastructure of America's energy future. These are the architects powering the vast possibilities of tomorrow.

PART

II

STAR POWER

LIMITLESS ENERGY IN A POWER-HUNGRY WORLD.

BY LOREN STEFFY

BEFORE HE graduated in 1992, Eric Drummond had one area of law he knew he wanted to avoid: administrative law. Drummond chuckles as he considers the irony of how life worked out. "I've had a 30-year career in complex administrative law," he said. Today, that background is helping him guide fusion energy advancements through to commercialization, a Herculean and complex effort. If successful, the teams Drummond invests in, shepherds, and builds may just solve one of this century's most pressing needs: abundant energy.

As global energy needs grow, the hunt for abundant energy that is cheap, reliable, and clean remains urgent. Current sources—from fossil fuels to renewables—check two or three of the boxes; none comes close to checking all four. But there's one that might.

Nuclear fusion—replicating the sun's reaction by forcing atoms together to throw off heat in the process—just might be the energy solution we've long been seeking. And for Drummond, an entrepreneur, investor, and founder of Innovation Corridor, a technology acceleration platform, he's betting on cutting-edge technology to meet the practical demands of commercializing fusion.

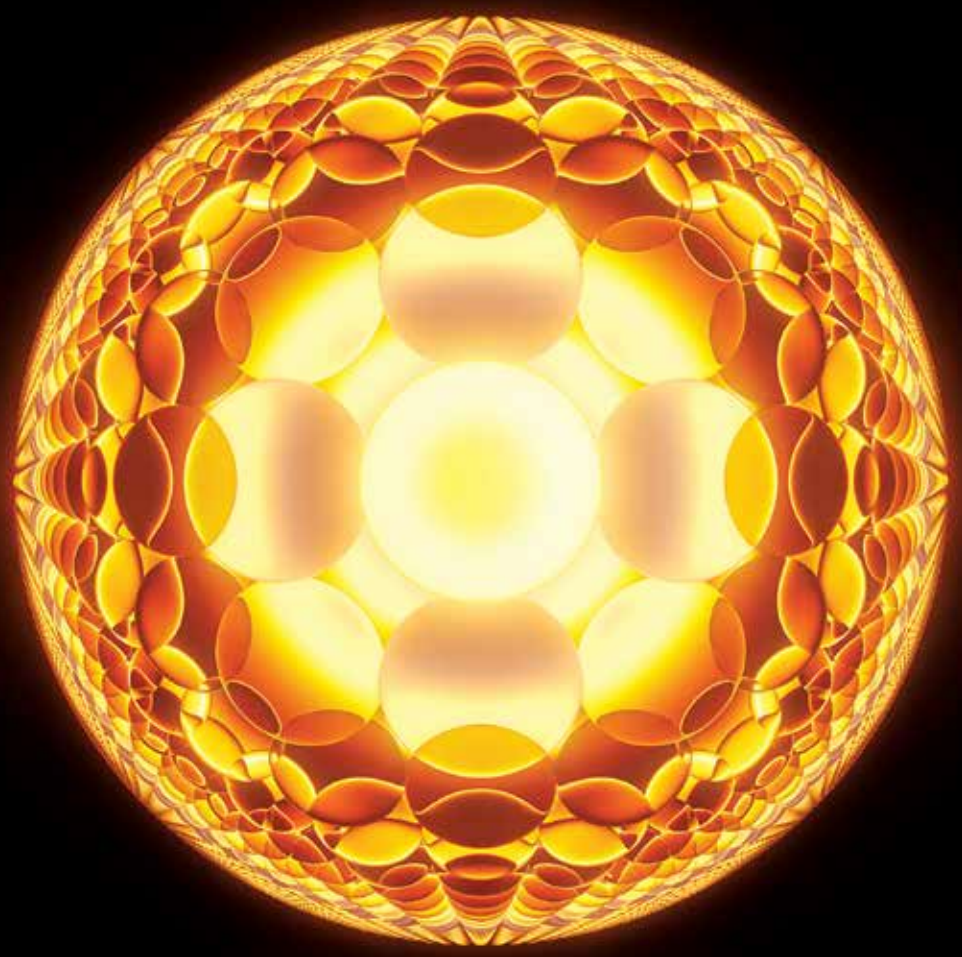
Fresh out of Texas Law, Drummond joined an Austin law firm and was thrown into a career-defining project: the merger of two electric utility holding companies that became the largest public utility holding company in the United States. The deal encompassed four states, complex financing, and nuclear energy. The skills Drummond developed navigating that deal—understanding regulatory frameworks, coordinating diverse interests, and managing complex financing structures—are the same ones he's using to see fusion technology through its commercialization phase.

ENERGY GAIN

Fusion energy has long been more science experiment than practical technology. But after decades of dashed hopes and perpetual delay, "[t]he scientific hurdles have been met," Drummond contends. "We're now at the point where it's beyond just the research."

Today's commercial nuclear plants all rely on fission—splitting atoms apart to generate heat, which in turn boils water to make steam that powers turbines and generates electricity. By comparison, fusion reactions can produce as much as four times more energy than fission.

But recreating the sun's reaction on Earth requires even higher temperatures than the sun itself—as much as 100 million degrees Celsius. At this extreme heat, atoms become ionized, creating the plasma of charged particles moving at high speeds necessary for fusion. Maintaining plasma stability at such high temperatures is difficult. CONTINUED ON PAGE 52




THAT THEY MAY TRULY A
IMPARTIALLY ADMINISTER JU

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

HOW ONE LAW SCHOOL CUTS THROUGH THE RANKINGS NOISE TO FOCUS ON BETTER MEASURES OF SUCCESS.

by CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS
art by KLAWE RZECZY

IN 1906

a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania named James McKeen Cattell published *American Men of Science,* a compendium of biographical sketches of thousands of scientists (including two women, despite the title), assessing their productivity, quality of research, and home institution. The more scientists in Cattell's book a school could claim, the better the school was by his analysis.

It was the first effort to rank higher education institutions.

Cattell was a complicated fellow. A longtime editor of *Science* magazine, he was the first psychology professor in the United States and is credited with being an early force in turning it into an accepted field in American academia. He was also obsessive about intelligence, devising ways to allegedly measure it, an all-consuming pursuit that informed his desire to rate other scientists and the places where they taught. (Most accounts say that Cattell was, like many of his contemporaries in the discipline, a eugenicist with disturbing views on genetics that we rightly dismiss today.)

His true legacy, however, is the idea that colleges and universities can and should be judged and ranked.

That task was taken up in 1924 by the president of Miami University in Ohio, Raymond Hughes, who produced *A Study of Graduate Schools of America,* in which he surveyed academics reviewing themselves and their peers. A decade later, the American Council on Education released their own evaluation of graduate programs, asserting a methodology based exclusively on faculty reputation. Various groups had their own methods of measuring schools and scholars throughout the postwar era, refining not what was measured—faculty reputation—so much as *how* it was measured, namely through increasingly sophisticated and lengthy surveys.

And then came *U.S. News & World Report.*

A great law school is about the people and programs as much as the classroom experience. Rankings still have found no way to measure that.

A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME

In 1983, the Washington, D.C.-based weekly news magazine, in competition for readers with *Time* and *Newsweek,* waded into the college marketplace by creating a consumer-friendly guide for high school students and their parents. If the early-20th-century rankings were the result of smart people deciding who was smartest, *U.S. News* found a way to monetize that pursuit.

Their initial methodology was simple—*U.S. News* just asked college presidents to name the "best" institutions, rather than surveying all academics or adding other variables into the mix. The premise that reputation was the best indicator of quality persisted.

The publication was a smashing success. Providing an accessible listing of schools, compiled through an easy-to-understand formula and aimed at consumers rather than academics, *U.S. News* unleashed a tsunami of interest. As the first American publisher to enter the rankings space, they established themselves as the dominant player in what is now a multibillion-dollar industry.

By 1987, the *U.S. News* rankings were so successful that they published a standalone issue. That same year, the publication expanded their rankings to include graduate and professional schools. The law school ranking, based again on reputational assessments from a small group, included just 20 schools. Harvard and Yale were tied for #1, while Texas Law was #11, sandwiched by the University of Pennsylvania and Duke.

Success—and the ad revenue that went with it—soon spurred innovation. To keep the rankings fresh, and to try to live up to their insistence that the rankings were simply a *Consumer Reports*-style effort to capture the quality and competitive advantages of different schools, *U.S. News* decided to expand their rankings formula into a numbers game.

MOVING BEYOND REPUTATION

The magazine's revised approach for law schools, much like with universities, combined reputational surveys with a host of new data-focused metrics. Some, like the LSAT and GPA credentials of the entering class, could be described as measures of eliteness, much like the incumbent surveys. Others, such as bar passage rates and employment percentages, focused on baseline consumer-protection considerations. And still others, particularly a nebulous measure known as "expenditure per student," seemed to many to be inexplicable on either ground.

The exact formula evolves. Most recently, *U.S. News* sharply downgraded the weight of all the "eliteness" measures in favor of a dominant role for the formula's consumer-protection variables. One constant, though, is the hold the rankings have on the minds of law school applicants, alumni, and employers—and hence administrators.

GOODHART'S LAW

Not surprisingly, schools have responded to these incentives by looking to maximize their rankings. That was a tall order when the rankings depended solely on reputation, which rarely changed from year to year. Schools could only experiment with long-term strategies, especially involving recruitment of prestigious faculty.

WHEN A MEASURE BECOMES A TARGET, IT CEASES TO BE A GOOD MEASURE

The emergence of data-based objective measures opened different possibilities. Schools could attempt to goose their ranking—and displace higher-ranked schools—on a yearly basis through more controllable strategies, such as admitting fewer students, thereby raising LSAT and GPA credentials.

Unintended consequences of keeping score are the subject of Goodhart's Law, the principle articulated by British economist Charles Goodhart, who observed that, "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure." Though Goodhart was writing about monetary policy, the principle explains how people alter behavior to optimize for a metric, rather than for the underlying goal the metric is supposed to represent.

Such behavior isn't always bad. Being compelled to account for bar passage rates, for example, has spurred law schools to do a better job preparing graduates for the exam.

Still, it's easy to see how quickly an institution might lose sight of what's truly important amidst rankings pressures. It's a fundamental challenge of ranking schools of any kind, and of higher education leaders in guiding their institutional strategic engagement with the rankings process.

With the perils of Goodhart's Law in mind, what's a school to do?

WHAT REALLY MATTERS

On a given day, if you ask Dean Bobby Chesney if he's thinking about the law school's ranking, he'll give you his honest answer: No.

It's not that he doesn't care. "Of course, I want Texas Law to have a ranking that reflects how amazing it is," says Chesney. And the school's ranking has risen of late, reaching #14 out of nearly 200 law schools in 2025.

"But no one should be captivated by the rankings in the first place," Chesney continues. "The things that matter most aren't even part of the methodology. The quality of the jobs graduates get? Not part of it. Clerkships? Not part of it. Loan repayment assistance? Culture? Alumni engagement? Cost of attendance and total debt at graduation? None of it matters in the formula," Chesney added. "Yet these are the very things I'd advise an applicant to value."

As dean of a top national program that makes a claim to be the best of all the public law schools, Chesney acknowledges that Texas Law is in an enviable position, making it easier to criticize rankings. For schools that struggle to get their graduates past the bar exam or into their first job, the consumer-protection focus on the rankings makes more sense.

Still, Chesney wishes people pay at least as much attention to the measures of success he says truly matter: "World-class outcomes for our students, unsurpassed return on investment no matter their career direction, and the lifelong relationships they'll form while here."

NOT ANY JOBS—THE BEST JOBS

Rankings measure the quantity of job outcomes, not quality or desirability. A successful outcome is one tailored to an individual graduate's needs and wishes, and not a one-size-fits-all-cookie-cutter approach designed to produce one kind of lawyer, in one kind of role. Texas Law is thriving in both quantity and quality.

Texas Law recently reported the Class of 2024 employment number: 98% total employment, a school record. Some of the specifics are particularly eye-popping. For graduates who go into private practice, which nears two-thirds of the class, their median starting salary is $225,000 a year. Only a small number of law schools can make such a claim. "Texas Law graduates aren't just getting *any* jobs in the private sector; they're getting the jobs that are most desired and difficult to get," notes Angélica Salinas Evans '95, the school's dean for career services.

In the same vein, more than 15% of recent graduates have secured one of the most sought-after judicial clerkships in the country, including 50 federal clerkships. That ranks Texas Law #7 in the country for federal placements, alongside UVA, Michigan, and Stanford, and ahead of Harvard and Duke. The school has had clerks on the U.S. Supreme Court for the two of the last three terms, one each for Justices Sotomayor and Thomas.

Finally, the school's public service career outcomes stand out among peers in part because Texas Law offers the most robust postgraduate fellowship program in the state and one of the most generous Loan Repayment Forgiveness Programs in the country. The ability of the school to thrive simultaneously in all three true outcomes for law careers—private law, public service and public interest, and clerkships—"speaks volumes about the school's commitment to prioritizing student success," says Salinas Evans.

BUT NO ONE SHOULD BE CAPTIVATED BY THE RANKINGS IN THE FIRST PLACE

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

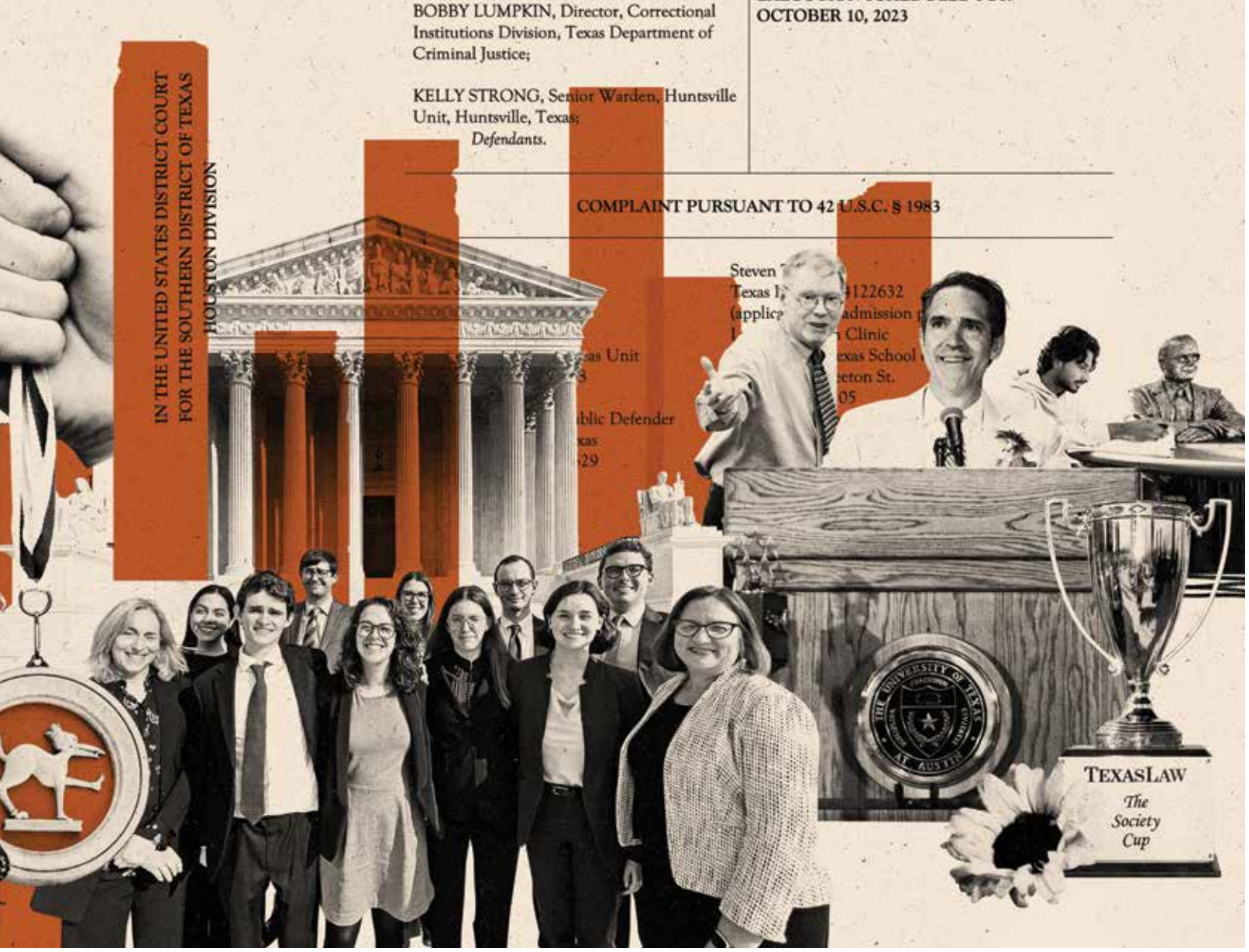
Those accomplishments are impressive, and more so when one considers the cost. Regardless of their ultimate career path, and even with a sizable number of graduates pursuing highly attractive but less remunerative public interest and public service positions, Texas Law graduates enjoy one of the best salary-to-debt ratios of any law school in the country, about 1.8-to-1.

That's due to tuition rates that remain far below the school's national competitors. Columbia and Cornell both charge north of $80,000 a year, while Yale, Chicago, NYU, and Penn are all north of $75,000. Of course, those are private schools. What about other public flagships? UVA is $74,000, Michigan is $73,000, and the resident tuition for the top UC schools are $61,000 and $63,000 for UCLA and Berkeley, respectively.

In contrast: Texas Law's in-state tuition this school year is $38,000, less than half of Columbia and Cornell. The school's non-resident tuition is just under $57,000, which is still $6,000 less than the in-state tuition at the other public flagships.

With such strong job placement and return on investment, Texas Law has a strong claim to be the best public law school in America, and perhaps—even if only on this measure—simply the best law school, public or private. The rankings don't account for any of this, but an increasing numbers of applicants seem to be taking note.

Texas Law enjoys success at scale, with its Society Program, award-winning professors, top-tier clinics, and boundless professional opportunities for students.



RELATIONSHIPS

Law school is a financial investment in education, but it's also a window of time in which long-term relationships and aspirations are forged. And rankings are a blunt tool that is most ill-attuned to valuing the intangibles that boost quality of life both in law school and after—things such as mentorship, alumni connections, extracurriculars, and livability.

Austin is known as a great place to live. But it's also increasingly expensive. One of Chesney's most ambitious initiatives is the construction of an across-the-street residence hall for law students with below-market rents. The project will bring hundreds of students into closer proximity to each other and the school, creating endless opportunities for students to better connect with each other.

"Reducing the cost of coming here, while expanding opportunities, animates every decision," says Chesney.

EXCELLENCE AT SCALE

One of the extraordinary things about Texas Law—and another thing that no rankings system captures adequately—is the scale of the school's excellence. Texas Law's graduating class usually is more than double (if not three times) the size of other Texas law schools, producing more lawyers in Texas every year by a very large margin. (The number was 412 in 2024, compared to, for example, 213 for Baylor, 140 for Texas A&M, and 190 for SMU, to name three other Texas law schools.) And, yes, a supermajority of them are Texas residents to begin with.

It could be different, of course, if the school simply wished to push its ranking higher. "Imagine if we only enrolled 150 students in our incoming class that had the highest LSATs," says Mathiew Le, the school's dean for admissions and financial aid. "Our median CONTINUED ON 52

recess

TEN THINGS TEXAS LAWYERS ARE ENJOYING OUT OF OFFICE

FOOD

1 Fonda San Miguel

Opened in 1975 and still owned by Tom Gilliland '69, the now-iconic Austin restaurant celebrates the vibrant cuisines of coastal and interior Mexico. Making the case for truly authentic fare, Fonda set a new precedent against the cheesy-greasy Tex-Mex of yesteryear. The verdict nearly 50 years later? It's better than ever. *¡Feliz cumpleaños!*

TV

2 *Chad Powers*

From the Manning-sphere, Austin-born and UT-educated actor Glen Powell plays walk-on QB hopeful Chad Powers in a new eponymous Hulu series. Powell adapted the character from a viral Eli Manning prank at Penn State. Sometimes the long shot gets their day in court—or on the field.

EXHIBIT

3 Live from New York

On view at the Harry Ransom Center, The Lorne Michaels Collection covers his five decades of comedy, from *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* to his long reign over *Saturday Night Live*. Behind-the-scenes glimpses of *30 Rock, Mean Girls, ¡Three Amigos!,* and *Wayne's World* offer compelling evidence of Michaels' cultural impact.

1: COURTESY OF FONDA SAN MIGUEL; 2: DAVIAN-LYNN HOPKINS

SPORTS

4 Women's Basketball

Texas Women's Basketball enters the 2025-26 season having qualified for the Big Dance in 17 of the last 18 years and reaching the Final Four last spring. Working hard for all student-athletes, Professor Mechele Dickerson, UT Austin's Faculty Athletics Representative to the NCAA, will likely be in the stands. *Go Horns Go!*

CULTURE

5 Día de los Muertos

Marigolds, *ofrendas, Pan de Muerto, calaveras,* and *catrinas* abound on the streets of San Antonio each fall, home to one of the nation's largest Día de los Muertos celebrations. The oldest city in Texas and the once-Spanish-capital offers hard evidence that honoring the dead is an outpouring of life.

MUSIC

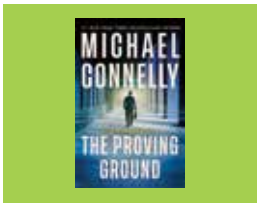
6 The Aftershows

ACL Fest Nights—*aka* the Aftershows—bring headliners into Austin's smaller venues like Antone's and The Continental Club. Think of these intimate October concerts as closing arguments: persuasive, memorable, and sometimes more powerful than the main event's testimony. Case closed—this is live music at its most compelling.

BOOK

7 *The Proving Ground* by Michael Connelly

In the latest installment of *The Lincoln Lawyer,* Mickey Haller represents family members whose lives are destroyed when an AI chat bot tells a 16-year-old boy it's okay to kill his girlfriend. Topical, trendy, and thrilling. What's not to like in Michael Connelly's second—*yes, second*—book of 2025?



PODCAST

8 *The Campus Docket*

Higher education in America is having a moment. From federal defunding to seismic changes in college athletics, Title IX challenges, DEI crackdowns, and debates over academic freedom, Texas Law adjunct professor Scott Schneider and his co-host, Eric Kelderman, unpack the rapid-fire issues confronting colleges and universities.

BOOK

9 *Maybe We'll Make It* by Margo Price

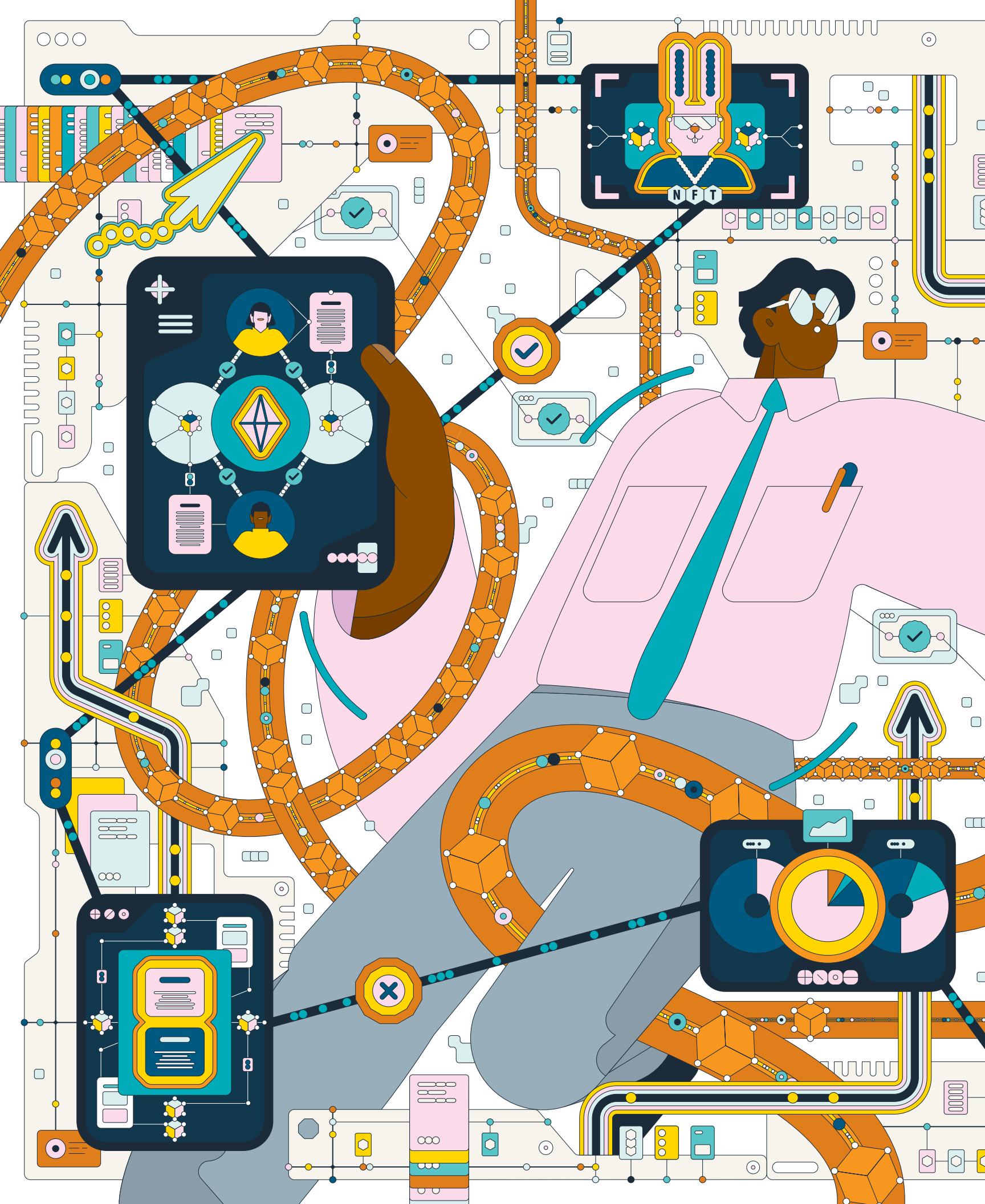
This searingly candid memoir from UT Press details the singer's long road to success with years of busking, salvaged food, and open mics. Price's testimony includes wrenching loss, descent into alcoholism, and the climb to sobriety. It's a statement of resilience that carries the weight of truth from first page to last.

MOVIE

10 *Wicked: For Good*

The much-anticipated *Wicked: For Good* arrives this fall with all the drama of a landmark opinion. Themes of justice, choice, and consequence resonate beyond Oz, inviting the audience to deliberate on what it means to be "good." Final judgment? A spellbinding ruling in favor of emerald-green enchantment.

4: COURTESY OF TEXAS ATHLETICS; 5: ACTION VANCE/UNSPLASH; 9: UT PRESS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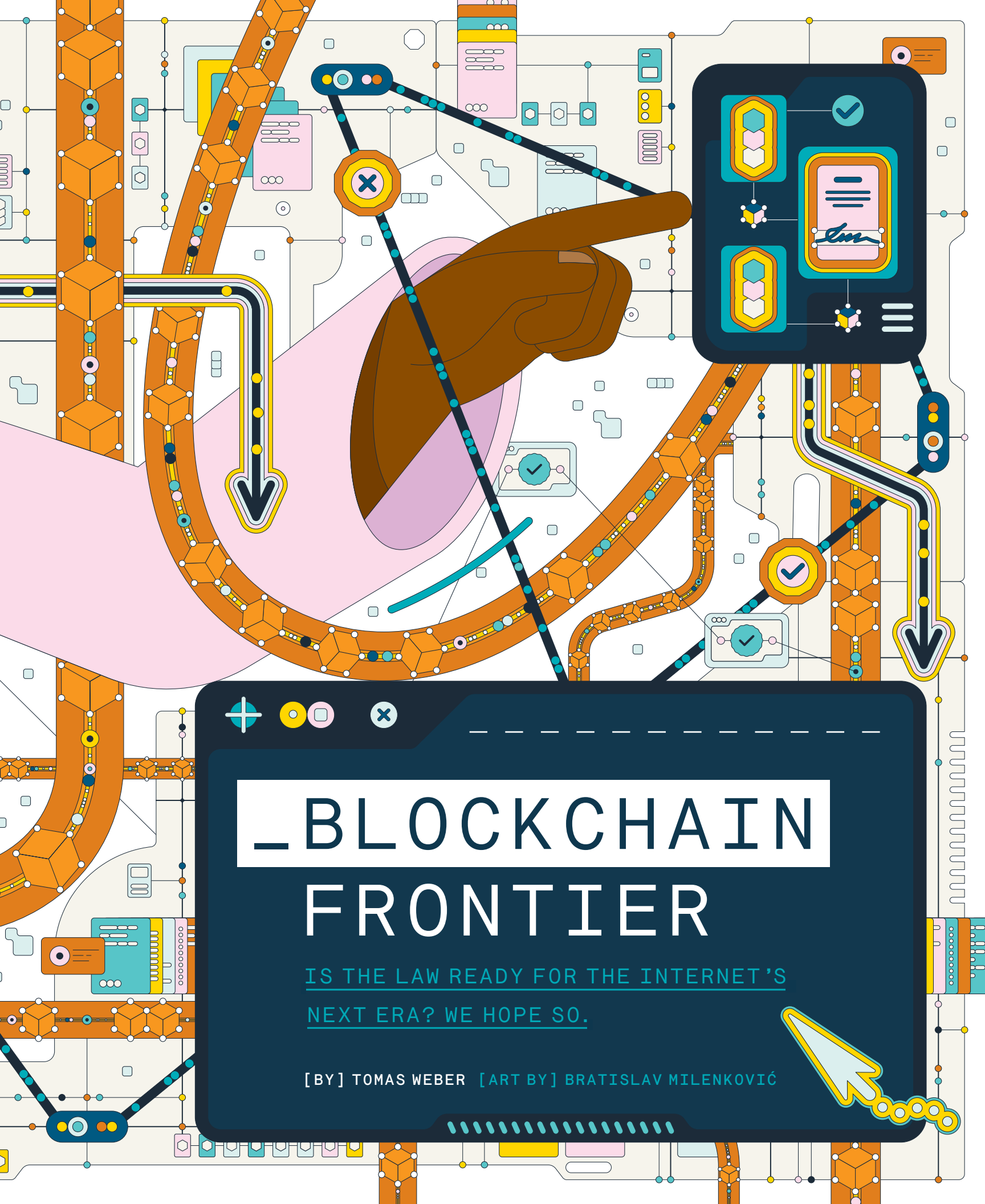


_BLOCKCHAIN FRONTIER

IS THE LAW READY FOR THE INTERNET'S NEXT ERA? WE HOPE SO.

[BY] TOMAS WEBER [ART BY] BRATISLAV MILENKOVIĆ

IN THE SUMMER OF 2022, CRYPTO HOLDERS AROUND THE WORLD OPENED THEIR DIGITAL WALLETS AND FELT A COLLECTIVE GUT PUNCH.

A shadowy band of hackers known as the Lazarus Group—a group the FBI suspects is backed by North Korea and has stolen billions of crypto to date—had made off with hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Ether, a cryptocurrency similar to Bitcoin.

This time, Lazarus' target was Horizon Bridge, a tool for transferring cryptocurrency across different platforms. By compromising the bridge, they were able to siphon off funds mid-transit.

But stealing the Ether was only the first step. The next challenge was figuring out what to do with it.

Cashing out was far too dangerous. Like Bitcoin, every Ether transaction is recorded on a decentralized public ledger called a blockchain—permanent, transparent, and secured by cryptography. A giant notebook that nobody can erase or change, the blockchain provides the underlying infrastructure for cryptocurrencies, digital money that people can trust is real—and hasn't been spent twice—because every transaction is recorded. In recent years, the FBI has gotten increasingly savvy at tracing, and even seizing, stolen crypto via the blockchain itself.

But that's where Tornado Cash came in.

Launched in 2019 by a group of privacy-focused coders, Tornado Cash was built to scramble transaction histories. Its algorithm pools different users' Ether, mixes up the funds and then redistributes them. The anonymizing tool can help protect crypto holders concerned about targeted threats from repressive regimes or kidnappers. But it also thwarts investigators in their attempts to follow the money trail.

The Lazarus Group turned to Tornado Cash to launder their crypto haul. But the U.S. government quickly moved to shut it down. In an unusual step, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Tornado Cash, accusing it of helping to launder the more than $455 million obtained by the state-sponsored hack. Americans were banned from using the tool—including those who might wish to use it for legitimate purposes, such as to safeguard their financial history, which is otherwise publicly visible on the blockchain.

But there was a snag: Tornado Cash wasn't a company or a person. It was code—a fully decentralized application governed by a "Decentralized Autonomous Organization," or DAO, and executed by self-operating smart contracts on the blockchain. It was self-controlling software. No one, it seemed, was in charge.

So who exactly was the U.S. government sanctioning?

T

The question of where the buck stops when it comes to decentralized technology is an increasingly urgent one—not least because the stakes now extend far beyond cybercrime. For many, blockchain still conjures images of scams, speculation and money laundering. But the internet is changing, and the blockchain is becoming mainstream. To its proponents, the technology even heralds the start of a third internet era—Web3—defined by decentralized control and user ownership beyond the control of tech companies.

"In the first era of the internet, you could only read content. Then came social media, where you could create it—but the platforms owned it," says Jordan Hatcher '05, an international technology lawyer and co-founder of The Grid, a Netherlands-based Web3 startup. "But with Web3, you can read and you can write—but you also own."

From finance and logistics to potential applications in the legal field, blockchain's legitimate uses are indeed multiplying. And the appeal is clear. At its core, blockchain offers immutable, verifiable records—a powerful asset in industries built on trust.

In 2020, JPMorgan, the world's biggest bank, launched Onyx (now rebranded as Kinexys), a proprietary blockchain for settling complex payments. The following year, Europe's largest seaport, the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, adopted a blockchain technology for streamlining goods through customs. And Walmart has developed a blockchain for tracking food products in its supply chain from farm to shelf.

Governments on both sides of the aisle are getting involved, too. In 2022, President Biden issued an executive order opening the door to a possible U.S. central bank digital currency. Meanwhile, in May, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill 21, making Texas the second U.S. state—after New Hampshire—to establish a Bitcoin reserve. Two months later, President Trump signed the GENIUS Act, which provides a regulatory framework for stablecoins, a kind of cryptocurrency pegged to stable assets like the U.S. dollar.

Beyond finance and logistics, the blockchain seems set to expand into other corners of everyday life. Instead of handing over sensitive personal information to prove who you are, people could instead carry a secure credential on their phone that could be instantly verified against the blockchain to prove its authenticity, without any personal data ever being shared. The technology could even make it impossible to duplicate or counterfeit tickets for events, such as concerts. "Just

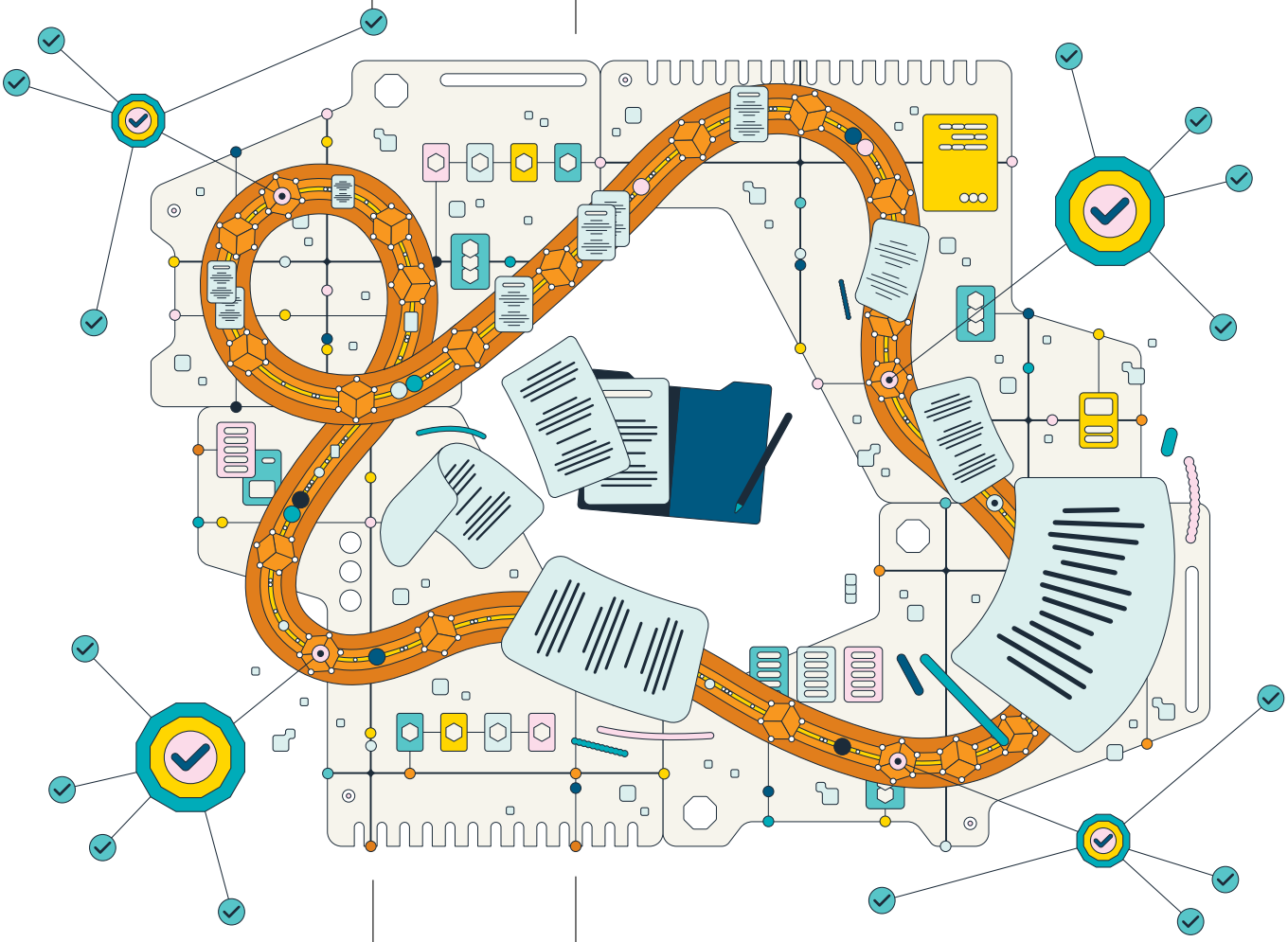
think of any use case where having a record that everybody can agree is factually correct is useful. That," says Hatcher, "is a use case for blockchain."

Infrastructure like Hatcher's The Grid could help pave the way to this future. By making Web3 more navigable, it hopes to enable the shift from niche technology to norm. "The key moment in the adoption of this technology will be when people are using the blockchain a lot, whether to prove your identity online or to make online payments, but without ever realizing it," says Hatcher, who believes that moment is fast approaching.

Web3 is still a digital frontier. A chaotic marketplace of disconnected services, some platforms let users monetize their personal health data, while others offer decentralized financial services in parts of the world with unreliable banking. But without a clear way to sort through all these offerings, navigating Web3 feels like using the internet before Google.

The mission of The Grid, which Hatcher co-founded in 2023, is to build the infrastructure for the decentralized online economy of the future, allowing it to go mainstream at last. "We're kind of like the Yellow Pages for Web3," says Hatcher. "If you're trying to navigate the space and figure out who's building what, where, and why, you need that kind of directory."

Kevin Frazier, the first-ever AI Innovation and Law Fellow at Texas Law, agrees that Web3 still lacks the underlying framework that will allow it to go big.



"Imagine we're at the beginning of the twentieth century and the car had just been invented. I'm on horseback, and I ask you: 'Would you rather race me in a car or on a horse?' Maybe you say: 'I'll hop in the car, no problem.' But back then, we didn't have the roads that could handle cars. We had no stop lights, no norms around how to drive. So the horse would still be a better bet," says Frazier. "That's where we are right now with Web3."

But Web3 has too much potential to stay on the fringes for long. For those savvy enough to find their way through the maze at this early stage, it's already changed the web for the better.

Take Audius, a blockchain-based alternative to Spotify and Apple Music

THE QUESTION OF WHERE THE BUCK STOPS WHEN IT COMES TO DECENTRALIZED TECHNOLOGY IS AN INCREASINGLY URGENT ONE. . . [B]LOCKCHAIN IS BECOMING MAINSTREAM.

which boasts more than 7 million users. Audius connects musicians directly to fans, cutting out corporate intermediaries. Songs aren't hosted on centralized servers but on a distributed, community-run network. Meanwhile, digital assets called non-fungible tokens (NFTs), which function as blockchain-backed certificates of authenticity, are offering artists new ways of monetizing their creations.

"By allowing people to digitally own and control their work," says Hatcher, "the blockchain can empower creators."

F

For legal professionals, too, the Web3 upheaval isn't just a curiosity. It could reshape the profession for the better.

According to Frazier, the area of contracts is particularly ripe for disruption. Smart contracts, written in computer code, stored on the blockchain, and set to automatically execute when certain conditions are met, could change how parties—from individuals to large companies—enter into agreements.

Imagine a contractor promises that a task will be done at a certain time, but then fails to meet the deadline or delivers poor-quality work. With most standard contracts, says Frazier, the parties will find themselves in a gray area.

"Am I going to take you to court because you didn't adhere to the terms of the contract? Are we going to have to go through yet another round of negotiations because the work wasn't up to snuff?" he asks.

A smart contract could reduce the friction. Because the rules are baked into the code, enforcement is automatic.

For example, the smart contract might require proof, such as a sign-off from an independent inspector, to check if the task was properly completed by the deadline. If not, the smart contract could automatically withhold payment or assign a penalty without human input. "It's a way we can reduce the transaction costs of entering into longterm, or perhaps even risky, arrangements with different individuals," says Frazier.

The blockchain could also automate a vast quantity of legal work. Take securities law. "Instead of a team of lawyers specializing in SEC filings, we could have a blockchain-powered pipeline that lets the government ingest financial data in near real time," says Sean Whyte '04, a commercial litigation attorney and principal at Bressler, Amery & Ross who represents Web3 clients.

Does that mean securities lawyers are facing the end of the road? Not quite, says Whyte. "You'll still need them—but a lot of the drudgery will be gone. And I'm not talking about some far-off future. I mean soon."

The technology could also overhaul how courts store and authenticate documents. Some scholars have even suggested using blockchain as a tamper-proof way to upload digital evidence in corruption-prone legal systems.

Yet one obstacle remains: lawyers' inherent caution towards technology.

"Lawyers tend to be risk-averse," says Ashley Carlisle '16, Chief Marketing Officer at HyperDraft, a legal tech company pioneering AI-powered legal automation. "The legal field is generally around 20 years behind," she adds.

Even so, she notes, attitudes towards new technologies are shifting. After an initial period of skepticism toward AI and automation, many now see it as an essential tool for offloading rote tasks such as contract and document review. It remains to be seen whether blockchain technologies will follow a similar path.

"At first, people were worried we were trying to replace them with our AI and automation solutions," says Carlisle, who notes that HyperDraft's tools make legal teams more productive, freeing them up for more in-depth tasks or allowing them to take on more work. "But once attorneys see what we're actually offering, they realize: 'Oh, that's not what this is about.'"

A

And yet the legal implications of Web3 go deeper than tools and workflows. There are signs that Web3 could also force courts and policymakers to adapt core legal concepts to a new world where traditional ways of assigning liability and imposing accountability are obstructed by autonomous software. And some commentators see the Tornado Cash case as a blueprint for what's to come.

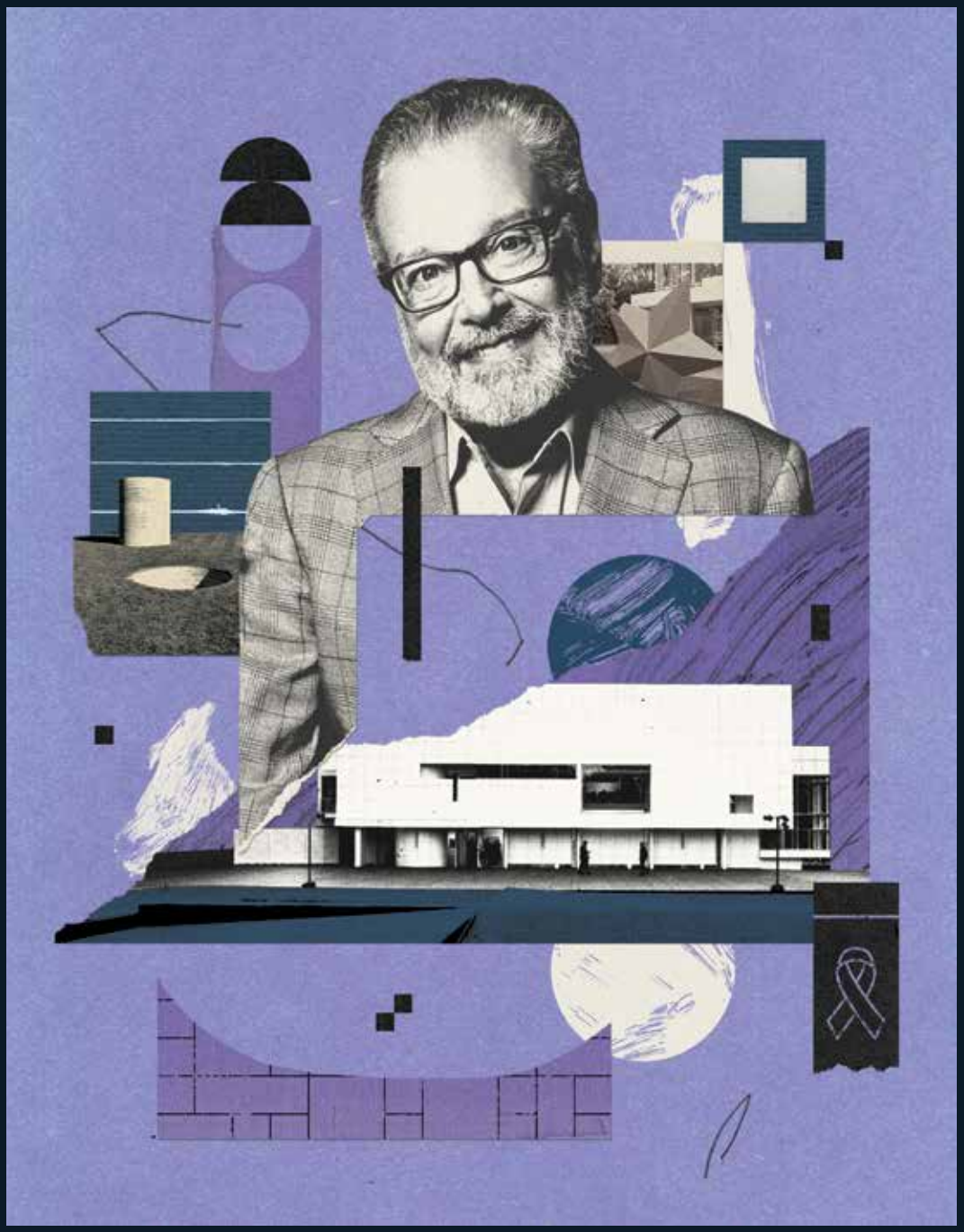
When the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Tornado Cash, it became illegal for U.S. persons to deal in the "property and interests in property" of Tornado Cash. To online-privacy advocates, though, this was nonsensical. Tornado Cash was comprised of self-executing code. The government's move, they said, was akin to outlawing a math formula. And the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit agreed.

Reversing the decision of the Texas district court, a three-judge panel in *Van Loon v. U.S. Department of the Treasury* (2024) found that Tornado Cash's code wasn't "property" under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. OFAC had overreached its statutory authority. Tornado Cash, a collection of self-executing smart contracts, was not a sanctionable entity. The Fifth Circuit remanded the case to the district court. Meanwhile, in response to the appeal court's finding, OFAC removed its sanctions against Tornado Cash.

The decision bodes well for the growth of Web3. "I find it encouraging," says Whyte, who expects a slew of similar cases over the coming years in which courts have to adapt to this new frontier.

"For lawyers, it's going to get really interesting," continues Whyte, who worked at a blockchain consulting company as a general counsel before joining his current CONTINUED ON PAGE 53

closing arguments



Howard Rachofsky ’70 Iconic.

He went from furnishing art for his apartment to building a Richard Meier-designed residence to feature his collection. Howard Rachofsky ’70 and wife, Cindy, are among the world’s foremost art collectors, with over 800 contemporary art pieces reflecting modernity’s minimalism and post-modernist identity. In April, their eponymous home hosted the 25th—and last—TWO x TWO, the iconic Dallas fundraising gala for art and AIDS. The Rachofsky House may be up for sale, but the former hedge fund manager’s influence on art is here to stay.

art by BLAKE CALE

Andrea Meza '15
Speaking truth to power.

SHE'S A FOURTH-GENERATION TEXAN, a tough-as-nails litigator with a storyteller's compassion. As an immigration lawyer, she began to sense that both those who work and those held in detention facilities may have stories of injustice. Today, Andrea Meza '15, is a director with the nonprofit, nonpartisan Government Accountability Project who gives voice to whistleblowers on the frontlines of justice in America.

You're at the center of a high-profile case. I represent Erez Reuveni, a Justice Department lawyer for 15 years who worked across administrations, advocating for each administration's immigration policies. He defended the Muslim Ban of the first Trump administration. In early April, he appeared before a federal judge in the case of Kilmar Ábrego Garcia, a man wrongfully removed to El Salvador under the Alien Enemies Act. Reuveni had to admit to the court that the removal was a mistake, a fact that was in the government's own record.

For telling this truth, he was fired. Reuveni's not a partisan; he's just someone who believes deeply in the rule of law. It can't be okay that if you don't like a judge's order, you ignore it. Our system says when you don't like an order, you appeal.

Representing whistleblowers is more than litigation? We'll concurrently file a legal complaint and seek legal remedies, submit our client's disclosures to Congress or another oversight entity, and also release reports to the media. There's a sprint to get to this "disclosure day." It then becomes a marathon, reacting to legal maneuvers, congressional hearings, and the evolving media landscape. The work is strategic, intense, and persistent.

How did you come to this work? My background is in immigration law. As an attorney [formerly] with RAICES working in detention facilities, you develop relationships with the people who work there. In that work, I encountered Dawn Wooten—a nurse working in a Georgia detention facility—who spoke out about alleged gynecological abuses against detained women.

That's when the Government Accountability Project came on my radar.

Are you driven by a sense of purpose or mission? I like helping people tell their stories. In immigration work, you help people facing immigration enforcement try to mitigate those harms by having their stories heard. Our asylum system requires people to retell their trauma to access legal protection in this country.

That storytelling is the most gratifying thing I do, and it's what I do now with whistleblowers. When my clients tell me, "You helped me put into words what I've been struggling to say," that's my mission.

What does it mean to be a Texan? I *love* being a Texan. There's so much richness and diversity and culture, so many good things about Texas. We've got such a variety in geography and climate and people. And even when our views are so disparate, even when it can feel like people can be driven by hate, when you see something like the flooding in Kerrville, you see how people can come together. There's something about our Texan spirit where, when it comes down to it, we're going to be there for each other. That's something that I want to keep building on through my career and my life.

This interview has been edited for clarity and length. Read more on Meza at law.utexas.edu/magazine.

BY CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS

portrait by CALLIE RICHMOND

Ripple Effect
Ashlie Alaman '09 amplifies a good deed.

BY LIZ ANDERSON HILTON

GIVING BACK COMES NATURALLY TO ALAMAN, PARTLY BECAUSE IT'S JUST WHO SHE IS.

An expert in real estate, energy, and construction law, **Ashlie Alaman** says she is "always looking to learn more."

When she opened the FedEx envelope bearing her name she was stunned. Inside, 13 crisp $100 bills flashed back at her. Ashlie Alaman '09, at the time a front desk clerk working the 6am–3pm shift at a LaQuinta in downtown Dallas, was enrolled in evening classes finishing her undergraduate degree. The mysterious $1,300 came with an unmistakable message: "Go take the LSAT."

Alaman hadn't seriously considered being a lawyer until a trial team staying at the hotel invited her to watch their medical malpractice trial. Alaman was captivated. When the lead lawyer sent the money and note a short time later, the trajectory of Alaman's life changed forever.

Twenty years later, the Texas Law graduate is managing counsel at Oracle Cloud Infrastructure and one of this state's most committed pro bono advocates. Over the course of her career, Alaman has poured herself into serving others, working on behalf of immigrants experiencing violence, helping federal inmates reduce their sentences based on changes in the law, assisting with low-income, pro se divorces, providing both legal services and volunteer leadership with the Human Rights Initiative of North Dallas, and serving refugee families with her church community.

Giving back comes naturally to Alaman, partly because it's just who she is. But also because that first gift of $1,300 set a precedent—emblazoned in her mind an example—of what success means. "Having someone give me the money and believe in me made me realize that I needed to give back," she says.

The ripple effect of giving back is changing lives at Texas Law as Alaman mentors and provides scholarship support for incoming law students who, like her, may be first-generation lawyers. "I value so much the education I got from Texas Law—attending the school was the best decision I ever made—and I just want other people to have the benefit of that." Ripple on.

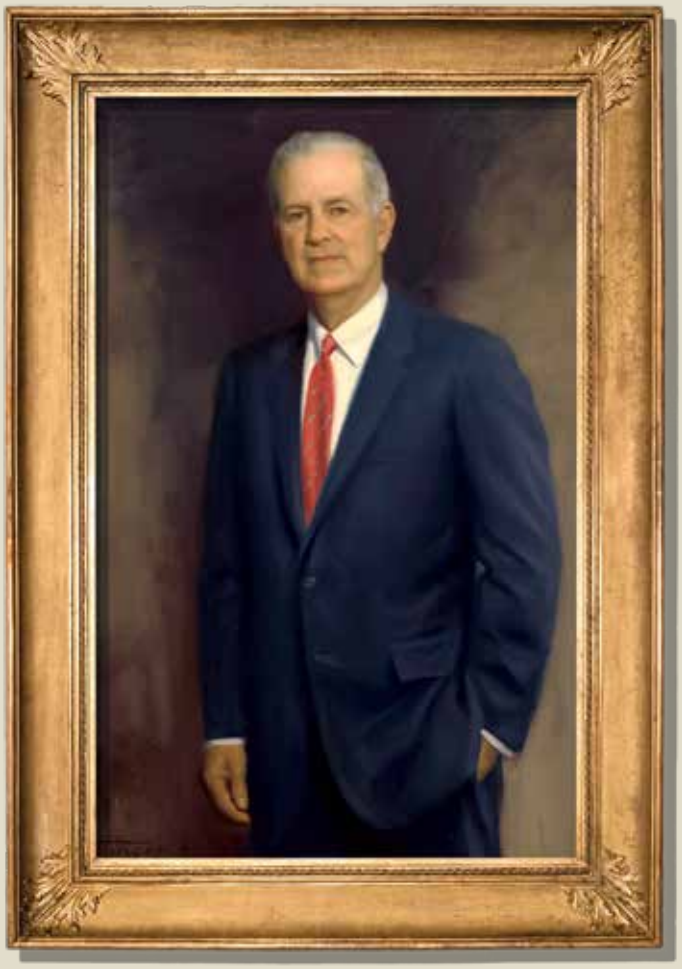
art by MARIO WAGNER

BY
LIZ ANDERSON
HILTON

The Secretary

OVERCOMING GRIEF, HE TOOK HIS TEXAS-BORN PRAGMATISM AND CALM RESOLVE TO WASHINGTON D.C.'S TURBULENT CORRIDORS IN AN UNEXPECTEDLY PUBLIC LIFE.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, just 10 months after he took office as Secretary of State, James A. Baker III '57 found himself in a life-defining role, one that—despite his family's advice to stay away from politics—placed Baker front and center at some of this nation's most consequential moments. ¶ Whether navigating the end of the Cold War for President George H. W. Bush, galvanizing a coalition of countries to oust Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, overseeing President Reagan's supply-side economics policy at the Treasury Department, or leading the legal team for George W. Bush's Florida election battle against Vice President Al Gore, Baker moved between competing and hostile players, much like Jamaal Charles bobbed and weaved through lineman. Always with a keen eye on getting to the goal line, the Secretary is strategic, pragmatic, and driven. ¶ A successful Houston attorney at age 40, Baker landed in politics after losing his first wife, Mary Stuart McHenry, to cancer. Baker chaired the 1970 senate campaign for his good friend, George H.W. Bush, a race Bush lost and one the rare times Baker's influence didn't carry the day. Reportedly, Bush recruited Baker not only because he wanted help, but because he saw the work as a way for Baker to move through his grief. ¶ Today, the think tank to which he lends his name, the Baker Institute for Public Policy, tackles 21st-century issues—everything from Christian Nationalism to the fiscal impact of President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill to what comes after the Israel-Hamas War—with that same integrity and focus evident across the Baker's career. Housed at Rice University, the Baker Institute consistently ranks among the world's most trusted non-partisan think tanks, due in large part to the Secretary's long-esteemed reputation. ¶ Still going strong at age 95, Baker's reputation and unexpectedly public life continue to inspire the next generation of world leaders here at Texas Law and around the globe.



STATE DEPARTMENT PORTRAIT BY NED BITTINGER, 1994

"Framed" features stories behind the portraits, moments, and memorabilia of the Texas Law community.

BY TEXAS LAW STAFF

A Path of Her Own

THE LAW FIRM'S SIGN READ "WOMEN NEED NOT APPLY." A DETERMINED SARAH WEDDINGTON '67 TOOK THAT REBUFF AS A CHALLENGE AND CHANGED HISTORY.

"Hearsay" tells stories, yarns, and legends from The University of Texas School of Law's long and colorful history.

art by RUBY FRESSON

The Best of the Best
Four alums heralded for their impact.

Each year since 1958, the Texas Law Alumni Association has recognized the excellence of alumni who have achieved great things for the profession, their community, and our school. Nominated by peers and selected by the Alumni Association's Executive Committee, the four winners this year—like those receiving awards in previous years—have excelled in very different areas of law.

The Texas Law Alumni Association is one of the largest alumni networks for any law school in the country with over 27,000 living graduates. The Hon. Chari Kelly '02 serves as the current president of the association and the Hon. Rudy Metayer '06 as vice president.

"Each of our awardees exemplifies the values and excellence of the University of Texas School of Law, and their achievements serve to inspire our community and set a high standard for current and future generations of lawyers," says Blair Loocke '06, the association's immediate past president.

Meet the 2025 honorees feted on September 19 in Austin and learn more about their remarkable stories at **law.utexas.edu/alumni**.

HON. HILDA TAGLE KNEBEL '77

The first Hispanic woman to serve as a federal judge in Texas, she's been an inspiration and mentor to generations of Texas lawyers and jurists who came after her. That's why she's the Lifetime Achievement winner.

ELLIOTT FONTENETTE '09

Thousands of Texans enjoy greater access to justice and representation thanks to his innovative, entrepreneurial approach to technology through the Texas Legal Services Center, earning him the Distinguished Alumnus for Community Service award.

TALMAGE BOSTON '78

Not content with his award-winning legal career, Boston found added success as an author and historian, penning widely acclaimed works on law, the American presidency, and baseball. He's this year's Outstanding Alumnus.

PAIGE DUGGINS-CLAY '17

As chief legal analyst at the Intercultural Development Research Association, Duggins-Clay is transforming the landscape for educational equality in Texas and beyond. All in a day's work for this daughter of educators and the Outstanding Young Alumna winner.

art by KATHRYN RATHKE

BY CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS

Signs of Success Student becomes the teacher.

BY CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS

Every law student dreams of the impact they'll make someday. Brianna Terrell '25 doesn't have to wait.

The Aurora, Colorado, native is already an expert on legal protections for Deaf people in the U.S. court system, and now she's making her mark internationally, addressing a conference in Taiwan this past spring on the ways protections for the Deaf in America can serve as a model for other countries.

"Our system is meant to ensure that sign language interpreters are available in state and federal courts," says Terrell. "That right is protected by laws such as the Court Interpreters Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act."

Terrell was invited to present her expertise to an audience of close to 200 Taiwanese Sign Language interpreters, students, and Taiwan Deaf community members at the Taiwanese Sign Language Interpreters Conference, hosted by National Taiwan Normal University. She's optimistic other countries can follow America's lead. "They just need to see that it can be done," she says.

To help her audience put her presentation in perspective, Terrell also had to play the role of law professor.

"I began by explaining the federalist system of the United States and how different levels of courts interact" she says. "I also address shortcomings in the interpreting profession in the U.S. and where there are areas of growth for Taiwan to learn from."

Terrell first began working on legal issues for the Deaf as an undergraduate at the University of Rochester. "I was doing nonprofit work focused on Deaf individuals in the U.S. criminal legal system and the role interpreters play in that process," says Terrell. "And my senior capstone project was a policy analysis of the provision of American Sign Language interpreters in the 7th Judicial District of New York."

She'd chosen Rochester because it was one of the few places where she could double major in Political Science and Deaf Studies and American Sign Language, a distinction that owes to the fact that the city has one of the largest per-capita Deaf populations in America. Just like Austin.

"The two things that brought me to Texas Law were the Texas School for the Deaf being nearby, and Professor Wood," Terrell says.

That's Lucy Wood, the director of Texas Law's Disability Rights Clinic and one of the law school's most popular and admired faculty members. Students have voted her a "Professor of the Year" a whopping five times. "Her mentorship has been invaluable," says Terrell.

It was Wood who nominated Terrell to present at the Taiwan conference. "Brianna's a rock star," says Wood, "and she knows her stuff. Her work is informed, insightful, and strategic."

Terrell considers advocacy for the system to be essential. "Language access in the courts is an imperative that is under-protected and under-studied," she says. "These laws generally exist at a fascinating intersection of disability rights laws and anti-discrimination and national origin laws."

That aspect of her work is the subject of Terrell's first published scholarship. Her article, "Stop the Plea for the LEP: The Necessity of Language Access Under Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure," appears in the June issue of the Texas Hispanic Journal of Law & Policy. "The article provides, to my understanding, the first complete survey of all federal jurisprudence on language determinations under Rule 11," says Terrell.

The busy Terrell is now in Seattle, where she is clerking for Judge Janet Chung on the Washington State Court of Appeals. And after that? "Public defense! With a focus on criminal appeals, I hope."

art by PADDY MILLS

Class Notes

EDITED BY
TEXAS LAW MAGAZINE STAFF

'63

Mickey Klein, a longtime supporter and contributor to various programs and colleges at The University of Texas at Austin, has been awarded the Shirley Bird Perry Longhorn Citizenship Award with his wife, Jeanne BS '67.

'64

Mike Hatchell, appellate counsel at Haynes Boone in Austin, received the 2025 Chief Justice Jack Pope Professionalism Award from the Texas Center for Legal Ethics in recognition of his professionalism and integrity in appellate law.

'68

Henry Radoff has written a book titled *Solo 50*, which tells the story of his own life and 50 years of solo practice. In addition to his legal career in Houston, Radoff, a double Longhorn, has published five other books ranging from novels to true stories.

'75

James Gosdin has been appointed head of direct underwriting at AmTrust Title Insurance Company in Houston. He previously served as senior vice president and chief underwriting counsel for Stewart Title Guaranty Company.

Arthur Nathan has joined as a member at Dykema's Houston office in corporate and partnership transactions. His practice focuses on counseling clients in buying, selling, combining, and dividing businesses, business planning, and taxation.

'76

The Hon. Steven Dankof Sr., a judge with the Montgomery County (Ohio) Common Pleas Court, recently wrote and published *Extreme Cruelty: The Complicity of Judges in the Shame of Wrongful Convictions.*

'77

Robert P. Braubach was appointed by the Czech Republic Minister of Foreign Affairs as honorary consul for San Antonio and South Texas to represent the Czech Republic and promote trade, investment, tourism, and education in South Texas. Braubach's San Antonio-based law firm specializes in international business law, international real estate law, and entity formation.

'78

Lina Ortega, who served four consecutive terms in the Texas House of Representatives, has been named a board member for the El Paso Community Foundation.

Luther "Luke" H. SOULES III '67

Luke Soules received the Texas Bar Foundation's 2025 Outstanding 50 Year Lawyer Award. Soules has practiced as a commercial trial and appellate attorney in San Antonio for 57 years, including 30 years of service on the Supreme Court of Texas' Rules Advisory Committee.

Class Notes

Andrew L. KERR '74

A U.S. Air Force veteran and long-time member at Clark Hill in San Antonio, Andrew Kerr has received the 2025 Texas Bar Foundation's Outstanding 50 Year Lawyer Award. The Outstanding 50 Year Lawyer Award is given to attorneys whose practice has spanned five decades or more, recognizing their dedication to justice and adherence to the principles and traditions of the legal profession.

'80

After a career in business journalism that included positions as editor-in-chief of *Environmental Protection* magazine, energy reporter for Texas Lawyer newspaper, and senior editor at POWER magazine, **Angela Neville** now owns Neville Wildlife Enterprises, handling hunting and grazing leases in Clay County, Texas.

'82

Arleas Upton Kea has been named president and chairman of the board of the Texas Exes, the alumni association of the University of Texas.

The Hon. Debra H. Lehrmann, a senior justice and the Texas Supreme Court's longest-serving woman justice, has been named the 2025 recipient of the Samuel Pessarra Outstanding Jurist Award by the Texas Bar Foundation. The award honors an active or retired federal or state judge with an exceptional reputation for competency, efficiency, and integrity.

'83

Martin Sosland has joined the Dallas office of Vartabedian Hester & Haynes. Sosland, whose practice focuses on bankruptcy and reorganization, joins the firm's corporate restructuring and finance practice.

'85

Del Williams, general counsel of Hillwood, a Perot Company, has been named a Distinguished Alumnus of the University of Texas. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the University of Texas Law School Foundation and has previously served as president of the Texas Exes and the Texas Law Alumni Association.

'86

Carlos J. Contreras III has been named chair of the Community Advisory Council for the Federal Reserve System Board of Governors. He currently serves as the president and CEO of Goodwill Industries of San Antonio.

Kenneth H. "Ken" Goetzke Jr. has a new position as deputy general counsel at the Office of Chief Counsel for NASA Langley Research Center. He was previously the associate chief counsel.

Darren Walker has stepped down as president of the Ford Foundation. Continuing his leadership in nonprofit philanthropy, he has joined The Obama Foundation's board of directors and is serving as president of the National Art Gallery.

'87

George Lee has joined FBFK Law as a shareholder in their Plano, office. Previously with Carrington Coleman, Lee's practice focuses on securities and capital markets, advising fund sponsors, investment managers, and family offices.

Oliver Luck has been appointed to the West Virginia University Board of Governors by Governor Patrick Morrisey. The co-founder of Ten Mile Consulting and chairman of Altius Sports Partners, Luck has held sports-related leadership roles in the NFL, served as a college athletics director, and was the first commissioner and CEO of the XFL.

Steven Stodghill was confirmed as a member of the Public Safety Commission by the Texas Senate. Stodghill, a partner at Winston & Strawn, has served on the PSC since his initial appointment in 2019.

Mark Taylor has joined Kane Russell Coleman Logan as co-director, helping launch the firm's new Austin office. Taylor's practice focuses on bankruptcy and restructuring.

'88

Erleigh Wiley has been reappointed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott to the Crime Victims' Institute Advisory Council. She serves as the criminal district attorney of Kaufman County, an executive board member of the Texas District & County Attorneys Association, and a member of the Kaufman County Juvenile Board.

Doyle Simons has been promoted to non-executive chairman of the board of directors at Fiserv. He was previously the lead independent director.

Francisco Solis has been named president of San Antonio College. He has more than 25 years of service at San Antonio College, including his previous position as the college's interim president.

'91

Nicole Cubbage has been appointed chief of staff to the deputy secretary of commerce at the U.S. Department of Commerce. A double Longhorn, she is a criminal defense attorney who owns the Law Office of Nicole Cubbage in Washington, D.C.

Leslie Hagin founded Lawyers Assisting Lawyers, a 501(c)(3) public charity to educate, destigmatize, and provide free, confidential and independent peer support counseling to legal professionals facing substance use and other mental health challenges. Previously, she was a federal law clerk, partner in private practice, and served as a counsel to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee. Hagin also is a Washington state-certified peer counselor.

'93

Ernie Kohnke retired from practicing law on April 1, 2025. He previously was general counsel for the Americas at Vitol and served on the Market Risk Advisory Committee to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, as well as the board of directors of the Commodity Markets Council.

The Hon. Lisa Lewis won election for justice of the New York Supreme Court Judicial District 2 of the State of New York. Previously a judge for Kings County Civil Court and an attorney for District Council 37, Lewis has more than 25 years of experience in civil, criminal, and family law.

Professor **Lyrissa Lidsky,** the Raymond & Miriam Ehrlich Eminent Scholar Chair in U.S. Constitutional Law at Florida Law, has won the 2025 Harry W. Stonecipher Award for Distinguished Research on Media Law and Policy Law. The award is presented by the policy division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. A member of the Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center's board of advisors, Lidsky was honored for an article she co-authored, "First Amendment Disequilibrium," which was published in the Virginia Law Review.

Joe Profaizer has joined Linklaters in Washington, D.C., as a partner and global co-head of Linklaters' international arbitration practice. He continues to serve as an adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law Center.

Richard Williams has been appointed by U.S. Attorney Ryan Ellison as chief of the criminal division in the Las Cruces Branch Office for the District of New Mexico. He previously served in supervisory roles such as deputy branch chief and section supervisor after joining the office in 2001.

'94

Scott Cole, a veteran trial lawyer and patent litigator, has joined Reichman Jorgensen Lehman & Feldberg as managing partner of its Austin office. Cole's experience includes commercial and intellectual property disputes and past leadership roles at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan and McKool Smith.

'95

Kyle Fox has joined Perkins Coie's mergers & acquisitions and private

Bruce McCANDLESS III '89

A lawyer-turned-writer, Bruce McCandless III has co-authored *Star Bound: A Beginner's Guide to the American Space Program, From Goddard's Rockets to Goldilocks Planets and Everything in Between*. McCandless III has also written a book about the 24-year career of his father, astronaut Bruce McCandless II, and published two novels.

Class Notes

equity practices as a partner working in the firm's Austin office. Fox is part of a three-partner group that made the move to Perkins Coie from Greenberg Traurig.

'96

Christopher D. Bell has joined the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority board of directors for a six-year term. Bell is the deputy general counsel for the Conservation Fund, a nationwide nonprofit organization. He was previously a partner at the law firm Ballard Spahr.

Grant D. Godfrey has joined national litigation law firm mctlaw as an appellate attorney based in the firm's Washington, D.C., office. His practice focuses on complex appeals in federal and state courts.

Daniella Landers took office as the 2025-26 president of the Houston Bar Association at the HBA's annual dinner on May 15. Landers previously served on the HBA board of directors as first vice president, secretary, and for two terms as director.

'97

Tobey Blanton Forney has joined Kean Miller as a partner in the firm's Houston office. She focuses her practice on family, estate, and legacy planning, tax-exempt matters, and probate litigation.

Kristine Huskey has received the Leslie F. and Patricia Bell Faculty Service Award from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law. The award honors outstanding achievement by a faculty member. A clinical professor, Huskey was honored for her work on behalf of veterans, leadership of the clinical program, and committed service as an active member of the faculty.

Katherine Reilly has been appointed acting inspector general of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. She has served in the SEC's Office of Inspector General since 2020.

'99

Laurie Higginbotham celebrated her 25th wedding anniversary with Jamal Alsaffar in May. Higginbotham and her husband are partners at National Trial Law in Austin, representing victims of catastrophic injury, medical malpractice, and gun violence nationwide.

Chris Thiele has joined Baker Botts as a partner in the litigation practice within its environmental, safety, and incident response section. Thiele most recently was the senior vice president and legal counsel for an independent midstream energy infrastructure development company.

'00

Lekha Gopalakrishnan has joined Jackson Walker in Dallas as a partner in the intellectual property practice group. She advises clients on patent prosecution, IP litigation, and technology transactions, with a focus on the healthcare, life sciences, and education sectors.

'01

Chris Dove has joined Beck Redden's appellate practice as of counsel. His work is focused on high stakes commercial disputes, particularly in the energy, financial services, and maritime sectors.

Janice PIERCE '93

An estate planning and probate attorney with Scofield & Scofield in Austin, Janice Pierce was named Texas Law 2025 Mentor of the Year. Pierce was presented with the award at the 2025 Alumni Awards Dinner this September. "Every time I see Janice, she always asks me the same question: 'What do you need from me?' It's a simple phrase, but it perfectly captures who Janice is as a mentor," said mentee Cassidy Winters '27.

Paul DEAN '00

With over 20 years of service at the U.S. Department of State, Paul Dean is the new vice president of NTI's (Nuclear Threat Initiative) global nuclear policy program. In this role, he leads the organization's efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, reduce the risk of nuclear use, and ultimately end the existential threat of nuclear war.

Mandy McCary of McCary & McCary in Marble Falls, Texas, was elected into the Fellows of the Texas Bar Foundation. McCary is a general practitioner focusing on elder law.

Cicely Reid has joined Norton Rose Fulbright as its pro bono counsel based in Houston. She previously served as pro bono coordinator for Disability Rights Texas, as well as in-house counsel and outside conflicts counsel for several large insurance companies.

Jason Ryan has been reappointed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott to the Texas Diabetes Council. He also serves as the executive vice president for CenterPoint Energy.

'03

The Hon. Jason Boatright has been appointed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott to the Risk Management Board. He was previously a justice on the Fifth Court of Appeals and serves as special counsel for Duane Morris.

Diana Pérez Gomez has joined Jackson Walker as a partner in the labor & employment practice group for the firm's Houston office. Gomez, who previously was a shareholder with Chamberlain Hrdlicka, serves on the board of directors for the State Bar of Texas and on the Texas Access to Justice Commission.

Thomas Kelton is currently serving as 2024-25 chair of the intellectual property law section of the State Bar of Texas. Kelton is senior counsel at Fogarty IP, advising businesses on IP strategy.

Daniel E. Mangis has been promoted to chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Cyprus. He was previously the chargé d'affaires ad interim during the temporary absence of Ambassador Julie S. Davis.

'04

Allison Standish Miller, a double Longhorn, has moved her practice to Steptoe in Houston, where she is a partner in the professional liability and commercial litigation groups.

Patricia Rigney, city attorney for the City of Mission and owner of the Rigney Law Firm, has been reappointed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott to the Business Advisory Council within the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

Sarah Stasny has joined the New York office of Proskauer Rose to lead their private equity transactions practice in the U.S. Stasny previously was at Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison.

Leslie Tan has joined Jackson Walker as senior counsel in the labor & employment practice group for the firm's Houston office. She has expertise in labor and employment matters and complex civil litigation with a background in insurance defense.

'05

Manuel Escobar was recognized with the Chair's Award by the Hispanic Lawyers section of the State Bar of Texas for his continued dedication and service. Escobar is a partner at McGinnis Lochridge in Austin.

Kourtney Mueller Merrill has joined Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton as a partner in Washington, D.C. Merrill will work with the firm's intellectual property practice group and life sciences industry team. She was previously a partner at Perkins Coie.

Matt Raley has joined the Houston office of Spencer Fane as of counsel in the litigation and dispute resolution practice group. He was previously a partner at BakerHostetler in Houston.

Keith Smith has been named chief legal officer at the Board of Commissioners, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority. Smith previously served as the executive director of legal services for Kansas City Public Schools.

Class Notes

Jesse Zambrano has created a Legal Eagles pipeline program through the Zambrano Law Firm. The program provides an immersive learning experience to high school and college students aspiring to make their mark in the legal domain, including a mentorship platform, educational resources, networking opportunities, and hands-on legal case experience.

'06

William G. Hagans has been elected 2025–2026 fellows chair of the Texas Bar Foundation after many years of co-chairing the Houston nominating committee. He also will continue to serve on the foundation's board of trustees. Hagans is an attorney at the Hagans law firm in Houston.

Mason Hester, a shareholder in Munsch Hardt Kopf & Harr's Houston office, has been appointed a co-chair of the firm's construction practice.

Benjamin Kelly has rejoined Baker McKenzie as a partner in its intellectual property practice in Dallas. Before his return, he served as senior counsel at Forrest Weldon Law in Dallas.

Philip Wright co-founded the Houston-based private equity firm Allied Industrial Partners, a lower-middle market private equity firm that invests in high-growth industrial companies.

'07

Charles Lee has been appointed senior advisor in the Office of Chair Paul Atkins for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. He previously served in the same role under Acting Chair Mark T. Uyeda.

Kandace WALTER '04

Kandace Walter has received the 2025 State Bar of Texas Star of Achievement Award and the National Conference of Women's Bar Association 2025 Outstanding Member Program Award for the documentary film *A Law Unto Themselves*, for which she served as an executive producer. She is the president of the J.L. Turner Legal Association, director of the Small Business and Trademark Clinic, and an associate clinical professor of law at SMU Dedman School of Law.

Ashley Morgan, an attorney and lobbyist at Erben & Yarbrough in Austin, received the 2025 Lumberjack Pride Award from Stephen F. Austin University.

'08

Siddartha Rao has joined the litigation boutique firm of Hoguet Newman Regal & Kenney in New York City as a partner. Rao's practice is in securities, intellectual property, and other disputes in federal, state, and appellate courts, as well as arbitration forums.

Dwayne Smith, managing partner at Gardner Smith & Vaughan in Fort Worth, received the Professionalism Award from the Tarrant County Bar Association in May 2025.

Leyna Williams is the newest Texas underwriting counsel at First National Title Insurance Company, based in Plano, Texas. She previously worked as an escrow officer, CE instructor, and in-house counsel for a title agency in Houston.

'09

John Donaleski has rejoined White & Case in New York as part of its global project development and finance practice after working at Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe as a partner in energy and infrastructure finance. He advises financial institutions on complex energy and infrastructure projects with a focus on renewables, conventional power, and digital infrastructure.

Brian Dupré has been appointed deputy associate general counsel for program integrity in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Division of the Office of the General Counsel

at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He previously served as chief counsel for Region 1 in Boston.

Rachael Marsh has joined the leadership team of the Edison Electric Institute in Washington, D.C., as chief legal officer. She previously served as vice president of government affairs and managing counsel at Calpine Corporation, as well as partner at Bracewell.

Michael Reeder, a trial attorney and patent litigator, has joined Blank Rome's Houston office as a partner in the intellectual property litigation group and member of the technology industry team. Previously, Reeder was a partner and founding member at Cadwell Clonts Reeder & Thomas.

Michael Riordan has been named a senior attorney at Bradley Arant Boult Cummings in Houston. He focuses his practice on the restructuring of companies in and out of bankruptcy, debtors' and creditors' rights, debtor-in-possession financers, and the acquisition and sale of distressed assets.

'10

Billy Joe McLain has rejoined the Los Angeles office of Hueston Hennigan as counsel to handle civil litigation, trial, and white-collar defense work. He previously served as a federal prosecutor in the Central and Southern District of California for nearly a decade.

Josh Pollick has been appointed co-lead of Orrick's tech & innovation sector after serving in that role for the company's technology companies group. A founding member and former leader of the firm's Santa Monica office, he represents high-growth tech companies, VC firms, and strategic investors.

Mary Elizabeth Wilson has been appointed as the chief of staff and general counsel at the North Carolina Department of Commerce, providing legal support across corporate matters, personnel, contracts, and economic development incentives.

'12

Robert Brown has been promoted to partner at Latham & Watkins. Brown is a member of the firm's privacy & cyber practice and corporate department, where he advises clients on compliance with data privacy and security laws.

George Padis has joined Sbaiti & Company in Dallas as the firm's newest partner. He previously served five years as a deputy civil chief and assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Texas and, prior to that, practiced complex commercial litigation in the Dallas office of Vinson & Elkins.

'13

Joshua Gold has joined Nixon Peabody as counsel in its affordable housing practice in the Washington, D.C., office. Formerly a managing attorney at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's southwest regional office, he has 12 years of experience with programs like Section 8 and Rental Assistance Demonstration.

Elizabeth Henderson has joined the Austin office of Ogletree Deakins as of counsel. She previously served as principal corporate counsel, attorney manager, and co-lead for the U.S. Immigration Attorney Team at Microsoft.

Frankie Shulkin was promoted in January 2025 to partner at Akin in Dallas. Shulkin represents private equity and debt funds, as well as private and public companies, in a wide range of transactional special situations.

Thomas Verity has joined Norton Rose Fulbright as a corporate, M&A, and securities partner in Houston. Verity advises clients in the energy and infrastructure sectors on cross-border mergers and acquisitions, corporate finance transactions, and general corporate and securities matters.

Stephen Yeh has been promoted to partner at Latham & Watkins in Los Angeles. Yeh is a member of the firm's

William PETERSON '08

William Peterson has been named the tenth solicitor general of Texas with the Office of the Attorney General. He was previously a partner in the Houston office of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, where he co-chaired the firm's appellate practice, and clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas of the U.S. Supreme Court. Peterson is also the fifth Texas solicitor general to come from the ranks of Texas Law faculty or alumni.

Class Notes

project development & finance practice and finance department, where he represents financial institutions, corporate investors, sponsors, and developers.

'14

After nearly 10 years with the U.S. Department of Justice's Health Care Fraud Unit, **Aleza Remis** has joined Hicks Thomas in their Houston office as senior counsel.

Alejandra Ávila has been appointed membership co-chair of the Edward Coke Appellate Inn of Court Executive Committee for the 2025-26 term. She is a litigator at Kellogg, Hansen, Todd, Figel & Frederick in Washington, D.C.

'15

Joe Lawlor has been promoted to partner at Orrick in Houston, where he advises clients on mergers and acquisitions, joint venture formations, and project development transactions across the full energy spectrum.

Mark Nawfal has joined GableGotwals' Houston office as of counsel, where his practice will focus on mergers and acquisitions, taxation, and energy law. Nawfal advises multinational companies, private equity funds, and partnerships on a wide range of corporate and transactional matters.

'16

Bailey Watkins has joined Yetter Coleman in Houston as a senior counsel in the Intellectual Property litigation group. She was previously in-house counsel with Dell Technologies. Bailey represents clients in patent, trade secret, and technology-related disputes in federal courts, the International Trade Commission, and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

'17

Patrick Flueckiger has joined Decker Jones in Fort Worth as of counsel, focusing on oil and gas law.

Taylor Raymond has joined Norton Rose Fulbright as senior counsel in the firm's Austin and Dallas offices. She previously worked as a senior associate at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe.

Harris Well has been elected to partner at Reynolds Frizzell in Houston. A trial attorney with the firm since 2017, Well represents clients in energy, real estate and financial industries in business litigation.

'18

Kate Goodrich is now a senior policy advisor and member of Holland & Knight's Government Advocacy team. Goodrich previously was deputy general counsel and policy advisor for the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives and a governmental affairs consultant with Jackson Walker.

Bridget O'Hickey has a new position as counsel at the Civil Division of the Office of the Associate Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice. She previously served as deputy solicitor general at the Florida Office of the Attorney General.

Daniel J. Pope, formerly judicial assistant to the Hon. Fred Biery, chief judge of the Western District of Texas for San Antonio, has been named counsel at Bracewell, where he will advise and defend energy, infrastructure, and industrial clients on environmental permits, transactions, and litigation.

James LLOYD '11

James Lloyd has been appointed deputy policy director to Vice President JD Vance. Before being called to serve in the Trump administration, Lloyd was deputy attorney general for civil litigation in the Texas Attorney General's Office, leading 11 civil litigation divisions. Lloyd is also an Intelligence Officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

'19

Tyler Ames has rejoined McAfee & Taft as a trial lawyer based in Oklahoma City. He previously clerked for the Hon. Timothy D. DeGiusti, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma.

Matthew Richardson has joined the Los Angeles office of Ogletree Deakins as an associate. Richardson specializes in employment law with expertise spanning wage and hour disputes, employment discrimination, wrongful termination, and workplace harassment.

'22

Andrew Coleman has joined BraunHagey & Borden as a litigation attorney in the firm's New York office. Coleman, whose practice will cover complex commercial disputes, recently clerked for the Hon. Brian A. Jackson of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana.

'23

Roshni Mahendru has joined the Austin office of Butler Snow as a member of the commercial litigation group. She was previously a litigation associate at Holland & Knight.

'24

Catherine Cozzolino has joined the general liability litigation practice group at Shook, Hardy & Bacon in Denver as an associate. She previously served as a judicial clerk for the Hon. William W. Hood III of the Colorado Supreme Court.

Brighten S. Kaufman has joined Akin as an associate, where she will advise private fund managers and represent institutional and private investors across various jurisdictions.

Abby Rogers has joined Kane Russell Coleman Logan as an associate in the firm's Austin office. She is part of a team that focuses on bankruptcy, restructuring, and litigation. Rogers previously worked at Ross, Smith & Binford.

FACULTY \ IN MEMORIAM

John J. "Jack" SAMPSON

A legendary professor of family law, Jack Sampson passed away this past June. He retired in 2017 after nearly five full decades in the classroom, serving as a teacher, mentor, and guiding force for generations of Texas Law students. In 1971, he founded one of Texas Law's first clinics, the Children's Rights Clinic, and lent his considerable expertise to modernizing and reforming U.S. and Texas family law, especially advancing laws to support children and parents. His efforts even reached the Hague Convention, extending protections for children globally.

OPINION CONT'D

Taming the Monster

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

because he wanted his own appointee to run the agency.

Finally, the Court is pushing back against allowing federal agencies, acting through their own in-house administrative processes, to decide whether regulated parties have violated the law. This is an important change, but only for situations analogous to those that historically would have required a jury trial. Suffice it to say, that is only some agency proceedings. Regardless, regulators can still enforce the law—they just need to present their case to a jury. It is hard to get too upset over jury-trial rights.

So where does that leave us? Not only are we nowhere near the destruction of the administrative state, but we're moving towards a long-overdue rebalancing. Today's Supreme Court is taking steps to ensure that agency expertise does not become the "monster" that the Court warned about more than half a century ago.

This essay builds on Professor Nielson's article, "Deconstruction (Not Destruction)," published in 2021 by *Dædalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

Power Players

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

In an increasingly dynamic synergy, even as AI requires more electricity, it and other advances in supercomputing are enabling increasingly sophisticated plasma modeling and control systems needed for plasma stability.

"You have the scientific breakthroughs that are a matter of physics driven by our high-performance, supercomputing abilities to model it, simulate it," Drummond said. "All these things have come together in a way that's enormously productive in the last 36 to 48 months."

With increased computing power, fusion energy researchers recently jumped the fundamental hurdle of energy production: energy gain—producing more energy from reactions than goes into starting them. For decades, fusing atoms took too much energy on the front end to make it a viable power source. But in December 2022, scientists at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's National Ignition Facility achieved energy gain from fusion, a feat that former Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm declared "a landmark achievement."

Fusion's Promise

Since the breakthrough, global funding for fusion has increased by about $4.2 billion, much of it from private investment. The potential market has led to a rash of fusion startups and the initial creation of a power plant sup-ply chain. About 45 companies world-wide are developing the technology, and 25 of them are in the United States.

Some of the largest U.S. companies are placing big bets on fusion. Google recently pledged to buy 200 megawatts—enough electricity to power 200,000 homes—from a fusion plant that won't be completed for a decade. And Microsoft has agreed to buy electricity from a fusion plant scheduled for deployment in 2028.

It's easy to see why fusion is so captivating. Apart from producing more energy than fission, fusion reactions also produce no carbon or radioactive waste. Fusion generation, because it is stable, can support highly variable renewables on the grid, a reliability appealing to leaders from both sides of the political divide.

The Department of Energy under both Presidents Biden and Trump has encouraged public-private partnerships with fusion energy companies. During the past legislative session, Texas lawmakers earmarked $350 million in taxpayer-funded grants —more than any other state—for advanced nuclear projects. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott vowed to make Texas "the global leader in advanced nuclear power."

Critical for public acceptance, fusion avoids the safety risks associated with nuclear plants. There's no nuclear waste and no chance of Chernobyl- or Fukushima-style accidents. "You don't have to worry about meltdowns or runaway reactions because if you turn off the fusion, it just stops immediately," explains Dr. Michael Webber, an engineering and policy professor at UT Austin. "It has built-in safety."

Not Yet Cheap

Despite the private and public interest, affordability remains a challenge. Electricity generated from fusion costs an estimated $9,700 per kilowatt hour compared with $1,300 for wind and as little as $950 for combined-cycle natural gas plants.

That isn't likely to change even if fusion achieves commercial development. Projections show fusion reactors will remain as much as five times more costly to build than solar and wind power for years to come.

Proponents argue longevity: fusion plants are expected to remain operational for 50 years, compared with about 20 years for renewable installations, a factor that may help overcome higher initial costs.

Costs could also come down with scaling and time, Drummond said. For transformative technologies to reach market scale, they will require "ecosystem building," a process Drummond describes as coordinating the participation among national laboratories, private companies, financial institutions, regulatory agencies, and political leaders. This systems-thinking approach has become increasingly important as fusion moves from pure research toward commercial deployment.

Coming Together

Fusion's potential scratches the itch of various factions today, from climate goals to energy independence and technological leadership, transcending partisan divisions. "It has industrial applications that might replace fossil fuels in certain hard-to-decarbonize industrial sectors," notes Professor David Spence, who teaches energy, administrative and environmental law. "So, on the left, there might be some enthusiasm for fusion, and President Trump seems to have enthusiasm for it. So perhaps it's one of those rare issues that can unite us."

If it can, the prospects are enticing. With some companies predicting commercial plants as early as 2031, fusion energy could become an $80 billion industry by 2035.

After decades of speculation, perhaps more than just atoms are finally coming together to make nuclear fusion a reality in a power-hungry world.

Measuring What Matters

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

this year wouldn't just be 172," he notes. "It would likely be much higher and would certainly position the law school favorably for a rise in our ranking—but that's not our core goal." And for context he adds, "Yale's median in 2024 was 174 with 204 students."

Ideally, rankings would recognize excellence at scale rather than punishing it. As things stand, Texas Law isn't rewarded for offering great outcomes to two or three times as many students as other schools.

While the hubbub over rankings creates noise, Chesney stays focused on signal.

"My predecessor liked to say that Texas Law is the best place in the world to be a law student," reflects Chesney. "When I became dean, people asked me if we should say something new. Heck no! That truth—it's not just a slogan—is based on the things that we know matter most."

Blockchain Frontier

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

firm. "If you're trying to build a flat hierarchy—where no one person is in charge—how do you decide who's ultimately responsible?"

That concern doesn't appear to trouble prosecutors. Although the U.S. Treasury was unable to uphold its sanctions against the entity itself, in 2023 the Manhattan U.S. attorney charged Tornado Cash's co-founder, Roman Storm, with laundering more than $1 billion in stolen proceeds. At his trial this summer, the jury found Storm guilty only of operating an unlicensed crypto business. They deadlocked on money laundering.

It is a stark reminder that even if blockchain can circumvent some rules of enforcement, governments have many tools at their disposal to hold novel technologies to account.

"I think a lot of these decentralized projects want to have their cake and eat it too," says Whyte. "They want the cohesion and momentum of a corporate structure, with everyone pursuing a shared vision. But when something goes wrong, they claim to be fully decentralized. And governments aren't going to let them get away with that little dance."

Still, Whyte notes, the flight of the blockchain's most committed cyberlibertarians to obscure, privacy-focused platforms like Tornado Cash may be the clearest sign yet that Web3 is set to move from the fringes to the mainstream, fundamentally transforming how ordinary people manage their data, their contracts, their money, and their digital lives.

"The most bullish case," says Whyte, "is that this technology will cause unprecedented, foundational change."

IN MEMORIAM

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William Bagby '68
Darrell Barger '74
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Jonathan Bible '77
Dick Blenden '61
Donald Branson '85
Royce Brown '68
James Bruen '67
Charles Burton '61
Ben Cervin '69
Fleur Christensen '69
Monet Clarke '05
Richard Coons '64
Wynne Creekmore '67
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Alistair Dawson '89
Barbara Deakins '72
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Tom Doyal '75
Stephen Edwards '74
Bill Ellis '66
Christina Falkiewicz '96
John Flowers '58
Marvin Foust '80
Kenneth Furlow '59
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David Hall '70
Mark Hanna '73
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Carlos Higgins '76
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Sam Lane '67
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Richard Linton '61
Mary Ella McBrearty '80
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Jack McClendon '65
Northcott McFaddin '60
Henry McKowen '05
Steve McNamara '90
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Haskell Shelton '67
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Parks Stearns '69
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Hank Still '68
Thomas Stockton '70
Gene Storrs '71
Sharon Talley '82
Rachel Treichler '81
Jane Vorwerk '76
Michael Westergren '70
Michael Whitten '69
Bill Wiley '62
George Wilhite '64
Donald Wilson '65
Howard Wolf '59
Marva Woods '98
Taylor Zimmerman '64

Names recorded during the production of the Fall 2025 issue of *Texas Law Magazine*.

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F1's annual autumn race drives the headlines, but Austin's Circuit of the Americas is home to more than 100 motorsport events—and an estimated 1.2 million visitors—throughout the year, including MotoGP and NASCAR. It's also a leading concert venue and a pit stop for Central Texas tourists. Meanwhile, off the track, **Harry Zimmerman '82** is steering COTA to success as its chief financial officer and general counsel. Get in there, Harry!