



American College of Trial Lawyers

THE TEXAS STATE COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF TRIAL LAWYERS RESPONDS TO THE TEXAS ATTORNEY GENERAL'S PERSONAL ATTACKS ON A TRAVIS COUNTY DISTRICT JUDGE

AUSTIN, TEXAS (March 13, 2024) - The Office of the Attorney General of the State of Texas recently issued a press release accusing a Travis County District Judge of, among other things, “abusing the legal system” and “displaying shocking bias” after she ruled against Attorney General Paxton in a pending lawsuit filed against him by former employees of the Attorney General’s office. The judge ruled that the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure gave the former employees the right to depose Mr. Paxton because he has unique personal knowledge of facts central to the lawsuit against his agency. Mr. Paxton argued that certain circumstances made him exempt from this requirement, and he has appealed the judge’s decision to the Texas Supreme Court. An appeal is the proper way to address such an issue. Attacking the judge in a press release is not. The Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct that govern all lawyers include requirements regarding maintaining the impartiality of a tribunal, maintaining the integrity of the jury system, trial publicity, and prohibits false or reckless attacks on the integrity of judges. The independence of the judiciary and the rule of law are of paramount importance for a free democracy. As the Texas Supreme Court stated when it adopted the Texas Lawyer’s Creed, “Lawyers and judges are equally responsible to protect the dignity and independence of the Court and the profession.”

The American College of Trial Lawyers is an invitation only fellowship of experienced trial lawyers of diverse backgrounds from the United States and Canada. Part of the College’s mission is to seek to improve the standards of trial practice, professionalism, ethics, and the administration of justice, and when necessary to speak out in defense of the judiciary when it is attacked. Judges are bound by a code of judicial ethics that prevents the Travis County Judge from responding to Mr. Paxton or commenting on this or any other case pending before her. When judges cannot publicly defend themselves, it is imperative that attorneys and organizations, such as the American College of Trial Lawyers, fulfill the responsibility the Supreme Court prescribed for us, to “protect the dignity and independence of the Court.” The Texas State Committee of the American College of Trial Lawyers is not a party to Mr. Paxton’s lawsuit and takes no position on the merits of the judge’s ruling. That job falls to the courts of appeal. But the Texas State Committee of the ACTL condemns any public and improper attack on any judge’s integrity, including the Attorney General’s attack on the Travis County District Judge.

About the [American College of Trial Lawyers](#)

The American College of Trial Lawyers comprises the best of the trial bar from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico and is widely considered to be the premier professional trial organization in North America. Founded in 1950, the College is an invitation only fellowship. The College thoroughly investigates each nominee for admission and selects only those who have demonstrated the very highest standards of trial advocacy, ethical conduct, integrity, professionalism and



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collegiality. The College maintains and seeks to improve the standards of trial practice, professionalism, ethics, and the administration of justice through education and public statements on important legal issues relating to its mission. The College strongly supports the independence of the judiciary, trial by jury, respect for the rule of law, access to justice, and fair and just representation of all parties to legal proceedings.

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