



## **Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Receives a Capital Case Litigation Grant from the Department of Justice**

*Texas criminal defense attorneys and prosecutors will receive specialized death penalty training.*

Austin, TX September 9, 2011 – The Court of Criminal Appeals in Texas has been awarded a Department of Justice, Capital Case Litigation Initiative, grant in the amount of \$249,840. The award will support capital-case training for both criminal defense attorneys who represent indigent defendants and prosecutors.

With Texas' death-row population among the highest of all states and leading the nation in executions, the grant award will address the need to standardize the capital-case education and training of both prosecutors and defense attorneys who represent indigent defendants. The current system in Texas presents a number of challenges.

The training requirements for appointment to defend capital defendants include twenty hours of specialized instruction every two years. All elected prosecutors with felony jurisdiction have authority to represent the State in capital murder cases, and each office has its own policy in selecting capital prosecution teams.

“We are optimistic that this training will ensure that prosecutors and defense attorneys alike will continue to have the training needed for capital cases,” said Judge Barbara Hervey, chair of the Court's grant committee.

The Court's commitment to legal education includes administering the Judicial and Court Personnel Training Fund, which provides funding for continuing legal education and technical assistance projects for judges, court personnel, prosecuting attorneys, and criminal defense attorneys who regularly represent indigent defendants. With the Court facing a 19 % reduction in this fund, the Capital Case Litigation Initiative grant is a welcome resource during these challenging economic times. It promises to have a substantial impact on capital litigation throughout the state of Texas.

### **About the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals**

The Court of Criminal Appeals is Texas' highest court for criminal cases. The Court consists of a Presiding Judge and eight Judges. They are elected by the voters of the entire state, and they hold their offices for terms of six years.

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