

Legislative Victories

While many have billed the 85th regular legislative session as one of the most divisive in recent memory, Texas Appleseed did not waver in advocating on behalf of Texans—and we won on many fronts. Several outstanding bills were introduced that have been signed into law by Governor Abbott:



HB 674 (Rep. Eric Johnson) prohibits discretionary out-of-school suspensions for Pre-K through 2nd grade students. The bill does not impact removals for extremely disruptive behavior or removals for serious offenses that are required by law, such as assault, drug possession or alcohol/weapons possession. It also permits each school district to

identify student needs and create its own plan to train educators and support students with age-appropriate, research-based methods. This is a remarkable accomplishment that will benefit kids, families, and the overall school climate because children as young as three years old were being sent home for days—often for age-appropriate behavior like “horseplay” and minor offenses like dress code violations.

Tens of thousands of Texans have been booked into jail for nothing more than a fine-only offense. In September, we should see courts take alternative measures when people are unable to pay fines associated with minor offenses like traffic tickets or a city ordinance violation. Two bills related to ending debtors’



prisons were signed into law: **SB 1913 (Sen. Judith Zaffirini)** and **HB 351 (Rep. Terry Canales)**. The nearly identical bills are designed to help Texans resolve tickets without destroying their livelihoods, through alternatives such as payment plans, fee waivers, and community service.

HB 3921 (Rep. Tan Parker) helps prevent financial abuse of the elderly and other vulnerable Texans. The law will remove barriers for financial institutions and securities dealers, allowing



them to hold transactions when financial abuse is suspected. This can help Texans by stopping fraudsters, scammers, and abusers before they get access to the money of their targeted victims.

An estimated 80 percent of low- and moderate-income Texans enter our civil court system without legal representation. **SB 1911 (Sen. Zaffirini)** requires that certain legal self-help information be posted online and in the court clerk’s office, helping to ensure that more people have access to reliable legal information in their time of need. The bill also allows funds from the county court library fund to be used to establish and maintain a self-help center to provide resources to county residents.

All of these bills were successes because of the dedication of many groups of people—legislators and their staffers, engaged community members and stakeholders, Texans who volunteered to tell their stories, other nonprofit advocates, and so many of you who stepped up to make calls and send emails when it was needed most. We’ll continue to provide timely e-mail updates like we did during regular session. If you would like to receive our e-newsletters, sign up at www.TexasAppleseed.org.



Texas Appleseed

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elizabeth Mack, Chair
Locke Lord LLP*

George Butts, Immediate Past Chair
George Butts Law*

Layne Kruse, Chair-Elect
Norton Rose Fulbright*

Neel Lane, Secretary-Treasurer
Norton Rose Fulbright*

Hon. Marilyn Aboussie

Patrick H. Cantilo
Cantilo & Bennett, L.L.P.*

Kent Caperton
Ben Barnes Group*

E. Leon Carter
Carter Scholer Arnett Hamada & Mockler, PLLC*

Ricardo G. Cedillo
Davis, Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc.*

Clinton Cross

Dennis P. Duffy
BakerHostetler*

Allene D. Evans
The University of Texas System*

N. Scott Fletcher
Jones Day*

R. James George, Jr.
George Brothers Kincaid & Horton LLP*

Sean Gorman
Bracewell*

Marcy Hogan Greer
Alexander Dubose Jefferson & Townsend LLP*

Gregory Huffman
Thompson & Knight LLP*

Tommy Jacks
Fish & Richardson P.C.*

Susan Karamanian
George Washington University Law School*

Charles Kelley
Mayer Brown LLP*

Peter M. Kelly
Kelly, Durham & Pittard, L.L.P.*

Thomas Leatherbury
Vinson & Elkins LLP*

Michael Lowenberg
Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP*

Keri McKenzie
Mintz Group*

Gina DeBottis Metts
Retired Executive Director, Special Prosecution Unit*

Hon. Thomas R. Phillips
Baker Botts LLP*

Edmundo O. Ramirez
Ellis, Koeneke & Ramirez, L.L.P.*

Michael Rodriguez
Atlas, Hall & Rodriguez LLP*

David Sharp
Law Offices of David E. Sharp P.L.L.C.*

Melissa B. Shultz
University of North Texas Dallas College of Law*

Courtney Stewart

Allan Van Fleet
McDermott Will & Emery LLP*

Pat Villareal
Jones Day*

Mark Wawro
Susman Godfrey L.L.P.*

Phyllis Young
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP*

Angela C. Zambrano
Sidley Austin LLP*

*Affiliations listed for identification only

New Toolkits and Reports

To help shape our advocacy, we conduct data-driven research, which often uncovers inequity in laws and policies. We then identify solutions for lasting, concrete change. As we learn the scope of the problem through the data, we work to ensure that the very groups affected by illegalities and disparities are informed of their rights and how to protect themselves.

Managing Someone Else's Money

ProtectTheirMoneyTX.org

This toolkit features guides in English and Spanish for financial caregivers in Texas who manage money or property for those unable to do so themselves due to illness, a disability, or other circumstances. The guides help Texans navigate complex systems, such as being an agent under a power of attorney. They also offer tips on how to avoid scams and fraud.

Defending Against a Civil Asset Forfeiture Case

EndForfeitureAbuseTX.org

Individuals who have not been charged with a crime are losing their cash and property to law enforcement. This toolkit provides detailed answers about civil asset forfeiture, videos, sample documents that are customizable, and a checklist for appearing in court.

Pay or Stay

TexasAppleseed.org/publications

Tens of thousands of Texans have spent time in jail for non-jailable offenses simply because they were indigent. *Pay or Stay* features new data and recommendations for creating a better system, some of which we should now see under the new law signed by Gov. Abbott.

Improving Access to Justice in Texas Courts

TexasAppleseed.org/publications

We examined pro se resources available in debt collection cases, and determined that the few resources that do exist are aimed at plaintiffs, leaving defendants of debt claim suits with little to no information on the legal process. A new law will now correct this imbalance.

Raise the Age: 17-Year-Olds in the Criminal Justice System

TexasAppleseed.org/publications

Seventeen-year-olds are automatically prosecuted as adults in Texas' criminal justice system. Data show that the behaviors of 17-year-olds resemble that of 16-year-olds, rather than older youth or adults. The report also highlights how the juvenile justice system is well positioned to include 17-year-olds, where they would receive rehabilitative treatment that they don't have access to in the adult system.

Fair Loans and Family Finances

TexasAppleseed.org/publications



In this report, we find that access to fair loans improved financial stability for low-income Texans. The report examined data from Community Loan Center (CLC) borrowers. The CLC

offers low-cost loans to people who might otherwise use predatory payday or auto title loans. The study saw significant improvements in paying down debt and avoiding financial pitfalls. Borrowers were less likely to receive calls from debt collectors, had fewer bounced checks, and experienced fewer struggles paying for items like groceries.

THE LATEST...

PEOPLE

■ We are excited to welcome two new board members to Texas Appleseed. We thank **Keri McKenzie** and **Phyllis Young** for bringing their creativity, dedication, and insight to our incredible board.

■ We are grateful to **Edward F. Fernandes** and **Dr. Gregory Vincent**, board members who have provided immeasurable leadership

and support in furthering our mission. We thank them for their generous board service.

■ With the departure of Yamanda Wright for cooler weather up north, we are excited to introduce our new Director of Research, **Ellen Stone**. Ellen gathers, verifies, and analyzes data for all of our projects. She holds a Ph.D. in Psychology from The University of Kentucky.

ART AND JUSTICE UNITE AT

I HEART JUSTICE

Texas Appleseed created *I Heart Justice* to help open dialogues about some of the pressing justice issues of our day—all through works of art created by 20 Texas artists. With our AIGA partners, Lewis Carnegie and Page/Dyal Branding & Graphics, we showcased these limited-edition silkscreened posters at an exhibition in April.

SUPPORT OUR WORK & BUY A POSTER

The oversized prints, perfect to fill larger wall spaces, are available for \$75 at our new online store:

www.IHeartJustice.org

All proceeds benefit Texas Appleseed.



We thank our generous event sponsors for making it a fun night

- Page/Dyal
- Lewis Carnegie
- AgavePrint
- Frost Bank
- GSD&M
- Margaret & Frank Krasovec
- Live Oak Brewing Company
- Locke Lord LLP
- Mintz Group
- O-K Paper
- Hon. Thomas & Ms. Lyn Phillips
- Texas Tribune
- The Art Wrangler
- Tito's Handmade Vodka



Save the Date for the

GOOD APPLE DINNER

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2017

FOUR SEASONS IN AUSTIN

Please mark your calendars for the **Good Apple Dinner**—our annual gala is not only fun, it also helps further our mission. **Harriet Miers** is our Good Apple. We are excited to honor this trailblazer who has promoted access to justice and the importance of pro bono work. These outstanding organizations and law firms will receive 2017 Pro Bono Leadership Awards: **Dykema Cox Smith, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Lewis Carnegie, Page/Dyal Branding & Graphics, and Vinson & Elkins LLP.**

INSIDE: Legislative Victories / I Heart Justice Photos & Online Store / New Toolkits & Reports

TEXAS APPEEED
1609 Shoal Creek
Suite 201
Austin, Texas 78701-1022

