

Texas Appleseed

SOWING THE SEEDS OF JUSTICE

Summer 2026

A Love Letter to the Texas Legal Community

By Deborah Fowler, J.D., *Executive Director*

For those who may not yet have heard—Texas Appleseed is celebrating its 30th birthday this year. The same year that Americans were learning how to dance the Macarena and women made “The Rachel” the most requested hairstyle in the nation, a group of 23 Texas lawyers came together with a visionary goal: to create a nonprofit that would ensure every Texan shared in access to opportunity and justice. In their words, they wanted to “further the public interest in the development and application of the law and public policy by courts, agencies, legislative bodies, and others in Texas, and assist in the advancement and improvement of the administration of justice.”

Their dedicated work as founding board members in the years that followed created new opportunities for lawyers interested in pro bono work. Early pro bono in Texas was focused on assisting legal aid organizations in direct representation for those who could not afford to hire their own attorneys in civil cases. For attorneys whose practice did not regularly include court appearances, this could be daunting. Texas Appleseed offered lawyers another option: the ability to contribute important research to pressing public policy issues and assist in finding systemic solutions that would have broad impact across the state. Drafting professionals into partnerships with us as changemakers was foundational for Texas Appleseed, rather than supplemental or accidental. It is part of our DNA.



Thirty years later, it is clear that the Texas legal community—and beyond—committed to the vision in ways our founders could never have predicted. Last year, Texas lawyers contributed the equivalent of \$3.5 million in pro bono services to Appleseed. And today, our pro bono partners have grown to include networks outside of the legal community. Texas Appleseed’s pro bono partners, in unity with the communities we work with and for, have changed Texas in ways big and small over the last three decades. This year—our 30th year—my love letter to the Texas legal community is a celebration of three decades of extraordinary work together—victories won, justice advanced,

and communities changed for the better. Our story is one of persistence and impact, and it is a legacy that belongs to all who have walked with us.

But it’s a story that does not have an ending yet. We stand in a moment of urgent challenges, when the ongoing need for Appleseed’s work is as clear as ever. Texas Appleseed is proud to work

with our pro bono partners and supporters to tackle today’s systemic barriers, to drive change, and to build toward the future we all want: a strong Texas where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

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www.TexasAppleseed.org

During Even-Numbered Years, the Capitol is Still Abuzz

The Texas Legislature meets every two years on odd years. So, for even-numbered years like 2026, what does Texas Appleseed's advocacy look like? Well, the "interim" is a key period of time when policymakers are conducting investigations into various statewide policies, and Texas Appleseed is working to strengthen and build new relationships with legislators.

The Speaker of the Texas House and the Lieutenant Governor both send interim charges to the committees for each body. These interim charges are meant to produce reports, information, and sometimes bill language for the Legislature to act on during the regular session, January through May of 2027. Many of the interim charges are what are called monitoring charges, assessing the impact of legislation passed in 2025. Between the two bodies, the Texas House and the Texas Senate, there are over 250 interim charges. Most have little to do with



what Texas Appleseed works on, but there are 28 that we are actively tracking. We will provide testimony in hearings for most of those 28 charges, and there will be significant work pulling together clear data-based recommendations to the committees.

The other important part of legislative work is relationship-building. Texas Appleseed is continually making efforts to reach out to offices and provide useful information about issues they may be considering. Sometimes that will mean providing information and testimony at interim hearings, collecting district-specific information and data, or having lunch with the legislator or their staff to brainstorm ideas for future legislation.

Back to School, New Rules Focuses on School Discipline



Our new guide—*Back to School, New Rules*—aims to help Texas parents and guardians advocate for their child as they navigate Texas' new school discipline landscape. The booklet was created to inform families about HB 6 from the 2025 legislative session, which became law. Our booklet is also available in print. Find it online as part of our overall guide here: www.texasappleseed.org/know-your-rights-school-discipline-2026.

Dates to Remember

September 1: Application deadline for our Law School Access Program (LSAT prep course)
www.texasappleseed.org/law-school-access-program

November 18: Good Apple Dinner gala
www.texasappleseed.org/good-apple-dinner

December 1: Application deadline for the Emerging Leaders Council
www.texasappleseed.org/emerging-leaders-council



A Birthday Opportunity for You

Texas Appleseed is proud to be celebrating our 30th birthday this year. Since 1996, our staff attorneys and policy experts have worked to strengthen the systems Texans rely on every day. And we couldn't have done it without you. You know that these systems shape whether children stay in school, whether families remain housed, and whether communities recover after disasters.

Texas Appleseed was founded by a group of attorneys who sought to leverage pro bono to build a Texas where everyone can thrive. In the three decades since then we have achieved hundreds of policy wins, impacting millions of Texans. "Helping to harness the strength and talent of the professional and legal community with Texas Appleseed has

been the highlight of my legal career," said Michael Lowenberg, a founding board member.

This year, we have set out to raise \$1.5 million to drive new solutions in the years to come. We hope that you will consider making a birthday donation!

"For 30 years, Texas Appleseed has shown what is possible when rigorous research, lived experience, and collaborative leadership come together," Board President Ann Marie Painter said. "As we mark this milestone, we are deeply committed to building on that legacy and meeting the challenges ahead."

Visit www.texasappleseed.org/30th-anniversary to view the distinguished members of the 30th Anniversary Committee and to make your donation. Or, scan the cake QR code below for details.



More Ways to Give

Texas Appleseed welcomes many ways to support this work and invest in a stronger future for Texas. In addition to making a birthday gift, you may also consider donating appreciated **stock**, making a **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)** from your IRA, or including Texas Appleseed in your **estate plans**. Please reach out if you would like additional information about any of these opportunities.

Photo Drop

Check out some of the events we've held and places we've visited the last few months.



Texas Appleseed's birthday party in Austin



Texas Appleseed's birthday party in Houston



School discipline
"Know Your Rights"
event in Bastrop for
parents, with Bastrop
County Cares and
other partners

Texas Appleseed BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Fireside chat discussion on education justice



Tabling at the Young Leaders Strong City Summit in Dallas



Joined by friends and the filmmakers at the Austin screening of the documentary film, *Breaking Silence*

Ann Marie Painter, *President*
Haynes Boone*

Laranda Walker, *Vice President*
Susman Godfrey L.L.P.*

Margaret H. Allen, *Secretary-Treasurer*
Sidley Austin LLP*

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Cantilo & Bennett, L.L.P.*

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Kent Caperton, PC*

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Davis, Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc.*

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Estes Thorne Ewing & Payne*

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Stout Risius Ross, LLC*

Sadik Huseny
Latham & Watkins LLP*

Tommy Jacks
Fish & Richardson P.C.*

Susan Karamanian
Charles Kelley
Mayer Brown LLP*

Hon. Peter M. Kelly
Kelly Walkins McPheeters LLP*

Layne Kruse
Norton Rose Fulbright*

Kat Li
Kirkland & Ellis LLP*

Michael Lowenberg
Elizabeth Mack
Troutman Pepper Locke*

Jadd Masso
Clark Hill PLC*

Daniel S. Mayerfeld
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP*

Keri McKenzie
Eric L. Muñoz
Womble Bond Dickinson*

Christopher M. Odell
Arnold & Porter*

Deidra Perry
University of Houston*

Allissa A.R. Pollard
Arnold & Porter*

Hilary L. Preston
Vinson & Elkins LLP*

Amy (Saberian) Prueger
Clark Hill PLC*

Michael Rodriguez
Atlas, Hall & Rodriguez LLP*

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

Ann Hebert Stephens
Shell USA, Inc.*

Eric Taube
Leslie Thorne
Haynes Boone*

Megan Utz
PricewaterhouseCoopers*

Allan Van Fleet
Van Fleet LP*

Justin K. Wood
Schulman, Lopez, Hoffer & Adelstein, LLP*

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The Car Insurance Tightrope in Texas

For many Texans, maintaining car insurance is akin to balancing on a tightrope, and in our state, drivers must maintain a basic level of liability insurance.

In a joint report between Texas Appleseed and United Way of Greater Houston, we share insights from a focus group in Harris County, revealing how drivers are navigating an increasingly expensive car insurance market.

Most participants in the focus group had car insurance and paid, on average, \$238 per month per car, or \$2,856 per year.

Those with both car insurance and a car payment reported spending, on average, approximately 13% of their monthly household expenses on car payments and 10% of their monthly household expenses on car insurance. Generally, 2% of a monthly budget is the target amount for affordable car insurance. On average, focus group participants paid five times that target amount, indicating that their car insurance is extremely unaffordable.

Access additional findings and read the full report by visiting www.texasappleseed.org/car-insurance-tightrope-texas.

We will examine this issue in other regions of Texas and release future reports, so please visit our website and our social media channels to stay informed.

