

# NEWS



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*For Immediate Release*

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## **HARRIET O'NEILL RECOGNIZED WITH PRO BONO LEADERSHIP AWARD FROM HOUSTON BAR FOUNDATION**

(HOUSTON – March 3, 2011) – The Houston Bar Foundation presented its second James B. Sales Pro Bono Leadership Award to the Honorable Harriet O'Neill at the Foundation's annual luncheon on February 8 at The Houston Club. The award was named for Sales, senior partner at Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P. and the inaugural recipient, in recognition of his outstanding contributions in the area of providing legal services to low-income Texans through a lifetime of commitment and leadership. It is given annually to an individual who embodies those same principles.

Justice O'Neill's judicial career began in 1992, when she was elected to the 152<sup>nd</sup> District Court in Houston. In 1995, Gov. George W. Bush appointed her to the 14<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeals, and she won election to that seat in 1996. In 1998, she was elected to the Supreme Court of Texas and reelected to a second term in 2004. Justice O'Neill retired from the Texas Supreme Court on June 20, 2010 and founded the Law Office of Harriet O'Neill, P.C., in Austin.

While on the bench, Justice O'Neill was a champion for access to justice in Texas. She was a founding member of the Texas Access to Justice Commission and served as the Supreme Court's liaison, working tirelessly to encourage lawyers to provide direct legal services to those who could not afford them. She wrote numerous articles and editorials, narrated videos, wrote letters, and made personal appearances throughout the state and the nation in support of pro bono legal services.

Justice O'Neill spearheaded the creation of the Texas Supreme Court's Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families, to enhance resources for children who are placed under court supervision because of abuse or neglect. The program has become a national model for its effective collaboration and innovation.

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*Established in 1982, the Houston Bar Foundation is the charitable arm of the Houston Bar Association, providing grants for a number of community programs, including the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program (HVLP) and the Juvenile Justice Mock Trial Program. HVLP provides pro bono legal assistance in civil matters to Harris County residents who could not otherwise afford legal representation. The Mock Trial Program provides young teens with a firsthand look at the legal system through classroom instruction and the presentation of mock trials in real Harris County courtrooms.*