



**TEX-ABOTA**  
The Texas Chapters of ABOTA

## **Santa Fe 2024 Speakers**



**Mike Bassett** – (Dallas)

***The Man in the Ditch***

Mike is a civil litigation attorney who has practiced law for nearly 4 decades in Dallas. He will candidly share with us his story of how he made poor decisions that completely changed his life. He was arrested by the FBI, pled guilty to criminal charges in federal court, and was sentenced to spend time in a half-way house. His rehabilitation and return to the practice of law is the topic of his presentation and of his book, Man in the Ditch. His story reminds us that our darkest moments don't define us, but have the power to radically change us.



**Dan Cogdell, Rusty Hardin & Dick DeGuerin** (Houston)

***The Paxon Impeachment Trial***

Jennifer Doan will interview three of the lawyers from the trial so we can learn the inside story from both prosecution and defense. Hopefully, they will give us insight into how to try a law suit when every juror is disqualified as a matter of law, when supporters of the Defendant are contacting and pressuring jurors, and when friends of the defendant had recently given the judge \$3.0 million.



**David Chamberlain & Guy Choate** (Austin and San Angelo)

***Legislative update: What can we expect: the unexpected***

David and Guy have become Barnham and Bailey of TEX-ABOTA, each year covering the circus that is the Texas Legislature. Each year after their presentations, attendees shake their heads and say, "Well, it can't get any worse." David and Guy never disappoint.



**La'Verne Edney** – (Jackson, Mississippi)

***Standing on the Shoulders of Giants***

Ms. Edney, President of National ABOTA, will discuss the efforts National ABOTA is making to defend the jury system and preserve judicial independence in these dangerous times.



**Stephen Jones** (Enid, Oklahoma)

***Defending the Most Hated Man in America: United States v. Tim McVeigh, 'Thinking Outside the Box.***

Stephen Jones is a lawyer in the small town of Enid, Oklahoma, but he is by no means a “small-town lawyer.” He has represented such diverse organizations as the Nation of Islam and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, the NAACP and members of the Ku Klux Klan, Vietnam war deserters and Vietnam war protesters, draft evaders, and ex-CIA employees and members of federal law enforcement. He successfully defended Abbie Hoffman on charges of inciting a riot.

Mr. Jones was appointed to defend Timothy McVeigh, indicted for bombing the Federal Courthouse in Oklahoma City. That bomb caused 168 deaths, 500 serious physical injuries, and resulted in 200 buildings being demolished because of structural damage.



**Amber Mostyn** (Houston)

***Why Mental Health Awareness Matters in the Practice of Law***

Ms. Mostyn is a successful personal injury lawyer in Houston. Several years ago, her husband and law partner died by suicide. She bravely tells her story or how mental health issues can affect you, your family, and your firm.



**Stephen Shackelford** (New York) & **Elizabeth Hadaway** (Houston)

***Battling the Big Lie: Dominion's Defamation Case Against Fox News***

Stephen and Elizabeth were on the trial team that secured a record-setting \$787.5 million dollars settlement from Fox News to settle defamation claims arising from Fox's false broadcasts about Dominion Voting Systems in the aftermath of the 2020 election.



**Kathy Snapka** (Corpus Christi) **Hon. Alice Oliver Parrott** (Houston) **Hon. Gina Benavides** (Corpus Christi)

***Between Two Ferns with Justices Alice Oliver-Parrott and Gina Benavides***

According to Kathy, she hopes she can gain valuable insight on the practice of law to finally, at this late date, make her practice a successful one. Presentation will include how to practice without “coloring outside of the lines.”



**Camille Vasquez** (Orange County, CA)

***The Importance of a Personal Brand in a Court of Law and the Court of Public Opinion***

Camille is a partner in the Los Angeles firm of Brown Rudnik. She was named The American Lawyers’ 2023, “Young Lawyer of the Year.” She has represented well-known personalities including, Ben Affleck, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Jennifer Lopez.

One of her specialties is representing plaintiffs in defamation cases. She gained worldwide fame for her successful representation of actor Johnny Depp in a defamation trial against his ex-wife and actress, Amber Heard, last year. Depp was awarded \$15 million and Heard \$2 million on her counterclaim. Ms. Vasquez’ presentation will center on how in today’s competitive market, all civil trial lawyers must be conscious of and concerned about their “brand.” Ms. Vasquez says one’s brand today is critical in not only in the court room, but in the way a lawyer is perceived by the public.



**Stephen Vladeck** – (Austin, Texas) –

***What’s Really Wrong With the Supreme Court—and How to Fix It***

Professor Vladeck holds the Charles Alan Wright Chair in Federal Courts at the University of Texas School of Law and is a nationally recognized expert on federal courts and constitutional law. He has argued before the Supreme Court and has been CNN’s Supreme Court Analyst since 2013. As the Supreme Court of the United States has become ever more a lightning rod in contemporary public discourse,

criticisms have tended to focus on the Court's ideological bent and the conservative justices' methodological commitments. Vladick contends what sets this Court apart from any of its predecessors isn't its substantive decisions; it's the extent to which the justices are not—and don't believe they ought to be—accountable to the democratically elected branches of government. Once we view the current Court through the lens of accountability (and the lack thereof), we also see a clearer and less partisan path toward potential reforms—reforms that would better strike the balance between judicial independence and judicial accountability.



**Judge Patricia Whalen** (Vermont)

***First They Came for the Judges***

Hon. Patricia Whalen has been a judge for more than 20 years. She presided over a family court in the United States and served as an international judge in the War Crimes Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the fall of Kabul, the Taliban set out to remove or kill women judges. Judge Whelan was part of a team that rescued and evacuated 252 women judges and their families from Afghanistan.