

34th Annual Appellate Judicial Reception
Address by the Honorable Gordon Goodman
to HBA Appellate Practice Section
on April 23, 2025 in Houston, TX

Thank you, Justice Gunn, for the very kind introduction. It is an honor to be recognized by the HBA's Appellate Practice Section, and I stand before you on behalf of all the current and past justices of the 1st and 14th courts of appeals in expressing our warm appreciation for the hard work and professionalism of this group's members.

Like many of you, I can vividly remember the time in my own childhood when I decided to become a lawyer and a judge. It was during a sad period for my family when I first noticed and became fascinated with the portrayal of judges in films and books. These fictional judges were almost universally shown to be thoughtful, kind, diligent, and fair. I determined then that these were the attributes that I most admired, and this was the occupation I wanted to fill for my community. I achieved that dream when I was elected to the 1st COA in 2019.

Also, like many of you, judges have played key roles in my personal and professional life including the judge who admitted me to the bar, Judge Robinson, the judge who performed my wedding ceremony, Judge Nobles, the judge who granted my sister's adoption for my nephew, Judge Kennedy, and the judge who administered my oath of office, Judge Overstreet. These upright judges and friends have now passed, and may their memories be for a blessing.

I had the privilege of working with many fine judges on the 1st COA including Chief Justices Radack and Adams, and Justices Lloyd, Higley, Keyes, Hightower, Kelly, Landau, Countiss, Farris, Gunn, Guerra, and Rivas-Molloy. Many of my judicial colleagues are here tonight, and I thank all of you for your hard work and careful analysis of the complicated questions considered by our courts on a daily basis.

I also want to thank my excellent staff attorneys, Christian Southwyck, Salvatore Bianca, and Laura de la Garza, who regularly impressed me with their careful research and elegant writing — they were largely responsible for making my opinions accurate, complete, and convincing.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the need for all lawyers to be courageous in advocating for their clients, however unpopular or oppressed, and for all judges to be rigorous in defending the laws and the constitutions of Texas and the United States. Now, more than ever, the judicial department of our government must be fearless in defending the due process and equal protection guaranteed to all Americans.

Examples of personal bravery among lawyers and judges should be identified, celebrated, and supported, and I applaud the sterling examples set by many of my colleagues on the Court of Criminal Appeals and Texas Supreme Court in recent days. I leave you with my hope and my expectation that in the future you will continue to find Texas judges to be thoughtful, kind, diligent, and fair.