

Supreme Court of Texas

Misc. Docket No. 25-9089

Order Winding Down the Grievance Oversight Committee

Since 1979, the Grievance Oversight Committee has assisted the Court in its constitutional and statutory responsibility to oversee the attorney discipline system. Originally created by statute, the Committee has been governed entirely by Court order since 1991. Broadly stated, the Committee’s charge has been to study and advise the Court on the structure and effectiveness of the disciplinary system.

The Court last reevaluated the Committee’s role in 2011. In Misc. Docket No. 11-9003, the Court concluded “that the duties of the Grievance Oversight Committee should be continued.” A central factor was the Court’s “need[] [for] the assistance and recommendations of a body that is both independent of the State Bar of Texas and a non-participant in the grievance process.” The order clarified the Committee’s continuing responsibilities, such as soliciting feedback from participants in the grievance process, responding to participants’ complaints about the handling of their cases, regularly reviewing the disciplinary rules and recommending changes, and submitting reports to the Court with recommendations for systemic improvement. The Committee has faithfully executed these responsibilities.

In 2017, the 85th Legislature amended the State Bar Act to add new layers of oversight in the attorney discipline system.¹ Two reforms are relevant here. The first is the creation of the nine-member Committee on Disciplinary Rules and Referenda, with five members appointed by the Court and four members appointed by the State Bar. Gov’t Code § 81.0872. The new committee is statutorily charged with regularly reviewing the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct and the Texas Rules of Disciplinary Procedure, reporting to the Court annually on the adequacy of the rules, and overseeing the initial phases of a detailed process for making and amending the rules. *Id.* § 81.0873; *see also id.* §§ 81.0875-.0876.

The second legislative reform is the creation of the ombudsman for the attorney discipline system. *Id.* § 81.0881. Although this new position is funded by the State Bar, the ombudsman “is selected by the members of the supreme court”; “is

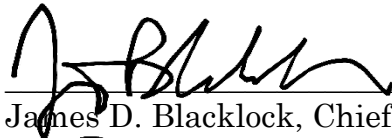
¹ Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 531, § 10, 2017 Tex. Gen. Laws 1427, 1430-33 (codified at Tex. Gov’t Code §§ 81.0871-.0885) (S.B. 302).

independent of the state bar, the board of directors, the commission [for lawyer discipline], and the chief disciplinary counsel”; and “report[s] directly to the supreme court.” *Id.* § 81.0883. The ombudsman is statutorily charged with “review[ing] grievances to determine whether the state bar followed the proper grievance procedures”; receiving and investigating complaints about the system; assisting members of the public with the grievance process and answering their questions; and “at least annually, mak[ing] recommendations to the board of directors and the supreme court for improvements to the system.” *Id.* § 81.0883(a).

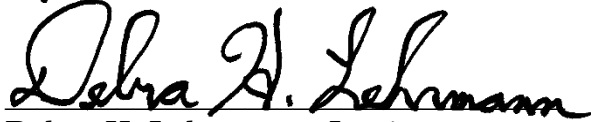
Since the 2017 legislation, the Grievance Oversight Committee has continued to operate under its 2011 charge, in parallel with the Committee on Disciplinary Rules and Referenda and the ombudsman. The Grievance Oversight Committee’s continued operation has helped ensure effective oversight during implementation of the legislative reforms. The Court now finds that the Grievance Oversight Committee has fulfilled its charge from the Court, that its responsibilities have been reallocated and assumed by the Committee on Disciplinary Referenda and the ombudsman, and that its members should be released from further obligation.

The Grievance Oversight Committee is abolished, effective immediately. The Court expresses its deep gratitude for the selfless contributions of time and talent the Committee members have made, on a volunteer basis, for the betterment of the attorney discipline system. The Court reserves the right to reconstitute the Committee in the future at its discretion.

Dated: October 24, 2025.



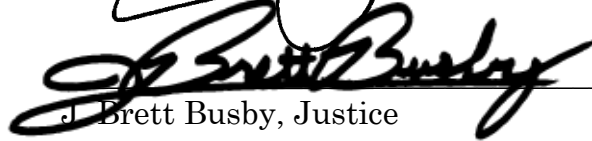
James D. Blacklock, Chief Justice



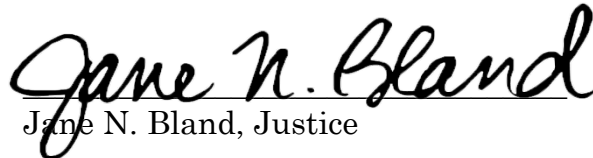
Debra H. Lehmann, Justice



John P. Devine, Justice



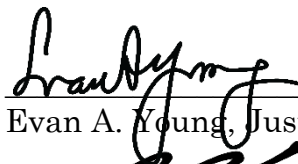
J. Brett Busby, Justice



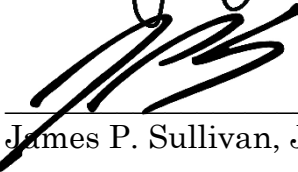
Jane N. Bland, Justice



Rebeca A. Huddle, Justice



Evan A. Young, Justice



James P. Sullivan, Justice