



# Justice Ruby Kless Sondock Jurist-in-Residence Lectureship in Legal Ethics

Speaker

The Honorable  
Nathan L. Hecht

27th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas  
(Retired)

## WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON JUDGE, OURS OR THEIRS? JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE IN A RIVEN CIVITAS

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**Wednesday, April 15, 2026**

4:30PM Central | Program

5:30PM Central | Reception

*In Person and Virtual*

*Approved for 1.0 hour of Texas MCLE credit, of which 1.0 hour is ethics*

John M. O'Quinn Law Building  
Foundation Room

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# Speaker

**Nathan L. Hecht**, 27th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas, served 36 years as a member of the Court, longer than anyone in history. Elected to the Court seven times, he retired at the end of 2024 and is now a partner at the Jackson Walker law firm and a distinguished judicial fellow at NYU School of Law.

Hecht oversaw revisions to the rules of administration, practice, and procedure in Texas courts, and was appointed by the Chief Justice of the United States to the federal Advisory Committee on Civil Rules. He also led in the Court's efforts to assure that Texans living below the poverty level, as well as others with limited means, have access to basic civil legal services.

Hecht was appointed to the district court in 1981 and elected to the court of appeals in 1986. Before taking the bench, he was a partner at the Locke firm in Dallas. He holds a B.A. degree with honors in philosophy from Yale University, and a J.D. degree *cum laude* from the Southern Methodist University School of Law, where he was a Hatton W. Sumners Scholar. He clerked for Judge Roger Robb on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and was a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve Judge Advocate General Corps. He is a past president of the national Conference of Chief Justices, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Life Member of the American Law Institute and a member of Council, and a member of the Texas Philosophical Society.

## About the Sondock Jurist in Residence Program

The **Justice Ruby Kless Sondock** Lectureship in Legal Ethics Jurist In Residence program brings sitting jurists to campus for a day of interaction with students, faculty and the Houston legal community. Each jurist provides a lecture on a legal ethics issue important to the community.

"Through the Sondock Jurist In Residence Program, the Law Center brings outstanding jurists to the campus who will give lectures and meet with UHLC faculty, alumni and students," said Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes.

"These interactions will bring the Law Center community closer to the bench so we can learn from each other. It also will help inspire our students to be the next generation of outstanding jurists. We are very proud to host the Jurist in Residence Program so aptly named after Justice Ruby Kless Sondock who is a role model and trailblazer."

The Jurist In Residence program is named in honor of Sondock, a pioneer in the law who graduated as valedictorian and one of only five women in the UH law school class of 1962. After practicing law for many years, Sondock was appointed to the 234th District Court in 1977, making her the first woman state district judge in Harris County. She was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court in 1982, making her the first woman to serve in a regular session of the court. In 2015, the litigation section of the State Bar of Texas named her a "Texas Legal Legend." In 2019, the Houston Bar Association established the Justice Ruby Kless Sondock Award, which is presented to a woman lawyer or judge for exceptional achievement and leadership in the law.