

# AUSTIN LAWYER

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE AUSTIN BAR ASSOCIATION

austinbar.org

MARCH 2026 | VOLUME 35, NUMBER 2

## Introducing the William O. Whitehurst Award

The Austin Bar is proud to announce that our award for service in the public sector has been renamed to honor William “Bill” Whitehurst, Jr.

The William O. Whitehurst Award will honor attorneys who have made an impact on the Austin community by providing pro bono legal services; have enhanced access to justice in the community; or have made significant contributions to the profession through public-sector service.

Known as the “Father of IOLTA” (Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts) in Texas, Bill worked with former Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Jack Pope and bar leaders around the state to establish the Texas Access to Justice Foundation in 1984. The 501(c)(3) foundation administers Texas’ IOLTA Program, which disperses interest accrued on funds managed by attorneys for clients to organizations providing legal aid to their communities.

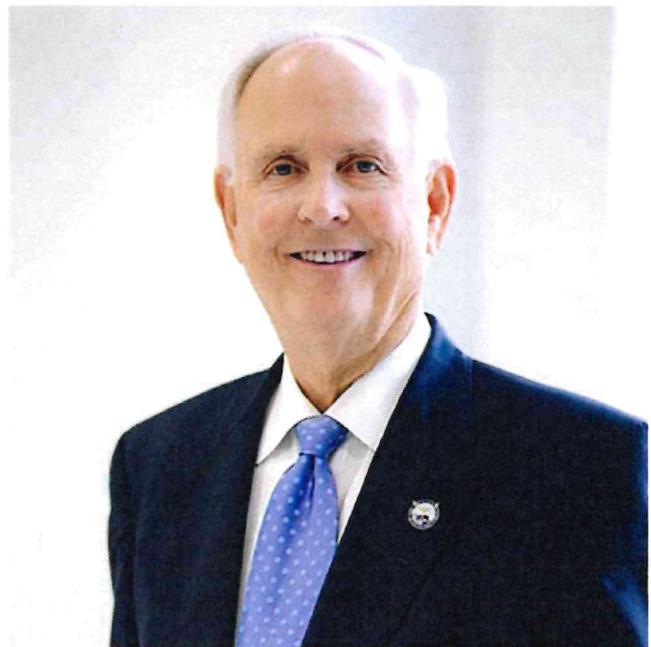
As of 2025, TAJF has granted more than \$1.76 billion to nonprofit organizations in Texas to provide free legal services to low-income Texans. In that same year, TAJF grantees closed more than 117,000 cases, helping more than 304,000 Texans, which include:

- 27,200 victims of domestic violence;
- 10,281 crime victims with civil legal needs;
- 12,363 individuals experiencing homelessness;
- 3,115 adults and children affected by opioid use;
- 6,988 veterans;
- 26,700 individuals with disabilities;
- 22,351 tenants needing emergency rental assistance; and
- 3,600 parents receiving help from parenting helplines.

Lawyers are required to place their IOLTA accounts at banks that pay into them at rates comparable to non-IOLTA accounts. Beyond the basic requirements for a bank to be eligible to hold IOLTA accounts, there are also Prime Partners. These institutions go above and beyond the minimum requirements by paying the higher of 1) 75 percent or more of the federal funds target range established by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) or 2) a minimum of one percent on IOLTA accounts. As of January 2026, the FOMC has established a range of 3.5 to 3.75 percent.

Prime Partners in the Austin area are:

- Capitol Credit Union
- First Lockhart National Bank
- Horizon Bank



Going forward, the Austin Bar’s award for service in the public sector will honor William “Bill” Whitehurst, Jr., known as the Father of IOLTA in Texas.

- Keystone Bank
- Northern Trust
- PlainsCapital Bank
- R Bank, Texas
- Southwestern National Bank
- Texas Capital Bank
- Wells Fargo

Bill Whitehurst has practiced for more than 50 years and served as the president of the State Bar of Texas, chair of the Texas Bar Foundation Board of Trustees, chair of the Texas Bar Foundation Fellows, president of the Texas Trial Lawyers Association, and is co-founder of the national organization Bar Leaders for the Preservation of Legal Services to the Poor.

He has also served as chair of the American Bar Association’s

Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants and was instrumental in establishing the William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law at the University of Texas School of Law.

In 2005, the Austin Bar Association honored Bill with its Distinguished Lawyer Award. He’s also received the J. Chrys Dougherty Legal Services Award and the Texas Bar Foundation’s Outstanding 50-Year Lawyer Award, and TAJF’s Harold Kleinman Award.

Bill and his wife, Stephanie, fund fellowships at Texas Law, called “Whitehurst Public Interest Summer Fellowships,” for law students interested in pursuing careers in public interest. **A**