



HARRIS COUNTY CRIMINAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

POST OFFICE BOX 924523

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77292-4523

713-227-2404
Fax 713-869-5051

www.hccla.org

Officers: 2018-2019

President

Doug Murphy

President Elect

Neal A. Davis

Vice President

Mark Thiessen

Secretary

David Ryan

Treasurer

Steven H. Halpert

Past President

Tucker Graves

Board of Directors:

Cordt Akers

Jimmy Ardoin

Staci Biggar

Lori Botello

Kate Ferrell

Justin C. Harris

Gemayel Haynes

Jordan Lewis

W. Troy McKinney

Rand Mintzer

Paul Morgan

Todd Overstreet

Damon Parrish II

Jed Silverman

J. Julio Vela

Joe Vinas

Sarah V. Wood

Past Presidents: 1971-2017

C. Anthony Friloux

Stuart Kinard

George Luquette

Marvin O. Teague

Dick DeGuerin

W.B. House, Jr.

David R. Bires

Woody Densen

Will Gray

Edward A. Mallett

Carolyn Garcia

Jack B. Zimmermann

Clyde Williams

Robert Pelton

Candelario Elizondo

Allen C. Isbell

David Mitcham

Jim E. Lavine

Rick Brass

Mary E. Conn

Kent A. Schaffer

Dan Cogdell

Jim Skelton

George J. Pamham

Garland D. McInnis

Robert A. Moen

Lloyd Oliver

Danny Easterling

Wayne Hill

Richard Frankoff

W. Troy McKinney

Cynthia Henley

Stanley G. Schneider

Wendell A. Odom, Jr.

Robert J. Fickman

Patrick F. McCann

Mark Bennett

JoAnne Musick

Nicole DeBorde

Earl Musick

Christopher L. Tritico

T.B. Todd Dupont II

Carmen Roe

JoAnne Musick

Tucker Graves

June 11, 2018

To the Harris County Commissioners' Court and Citizens of Harris County:

Harris County Commissioner Steve Raddack recently called for an investigation on the Harris County Public Defender Alex Bunin to determine if he wrongfully used his office in assisting the litigants who have successfully sued Harris County for their unlawful bail practices. A federal judge declared the practices unlawful for discriminating against the poor. Harris County so far spent over \$6 million dollars in their unsuccessful defense of these unlawful practices. The call for an investigation by Commissioner Raddack is nothing more than a diversionary tactic and waste of further county resources that will reveal only one thing: Alex Bunin has an independent duty to protect and defend the indigent—an inherent duty of a public defender—even if that duty is at odds with Harris County. This obligation and duty may be offensive to Commissioner Raddack, but spending \$6 million dollars defending illegal bail practices should be offensive to Harris County residents.

In 2010, the Harris County Bar, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission, the Harris County Commissioners, and the Advisory Board of the Public Defenders all came together to support the first ever creation of the Harris County Public Defender's office. The search for the first Harris County Public Defender was the result of a nationwide search for the finest combination of legal acumen, proven ability to build a defender's office, and commitment to providing the best defense for the public possible. All parties unanimously agreed that Alex Bunin was the perfect choice because of his stellar reputation earned by spending a lifetime defending the indigent accused throughout the country.

Harris County has benefitted from the finest criminal defense legal talent ever assembled under one roof since Alex Bunin was hired. Under his leadership, the Harris County Public Defender's Office has had an enormous impact on day to day criminal justice in Houston. The mental health division has significantly lessened the average stay in custody of the mentally ill in our criminal justice system, saving the county money while making the system more humane. The juvenile division has provided a striking contrast of professionalism to the crony system that had been the norm in the juvenile courts. The trial division has fought some of the most difficult cases in our system, including habitual offenders and those accused of sex crimes, with skill, zeal and most importantly, full resources for investigation and mitigation of any punishment. This team approach has already helped influence and improve our appointed counsel system. The appellate division, under his guidance, has helped change the law in our state, and has worked to integrate itself into trials smoothly, another first for our county.

Alex Bunin built the Harris County Public Defender's Office with integrity, hard work, and outstanding leadership. The talented lawyers whom he personally recruited came because of him, and they stay because of him. The Harris County Criminal Lawyers Association supports continuing Alex Bunin as a true "Public Defender" of Harris County.

Respectfully,

Doug Murphy, President