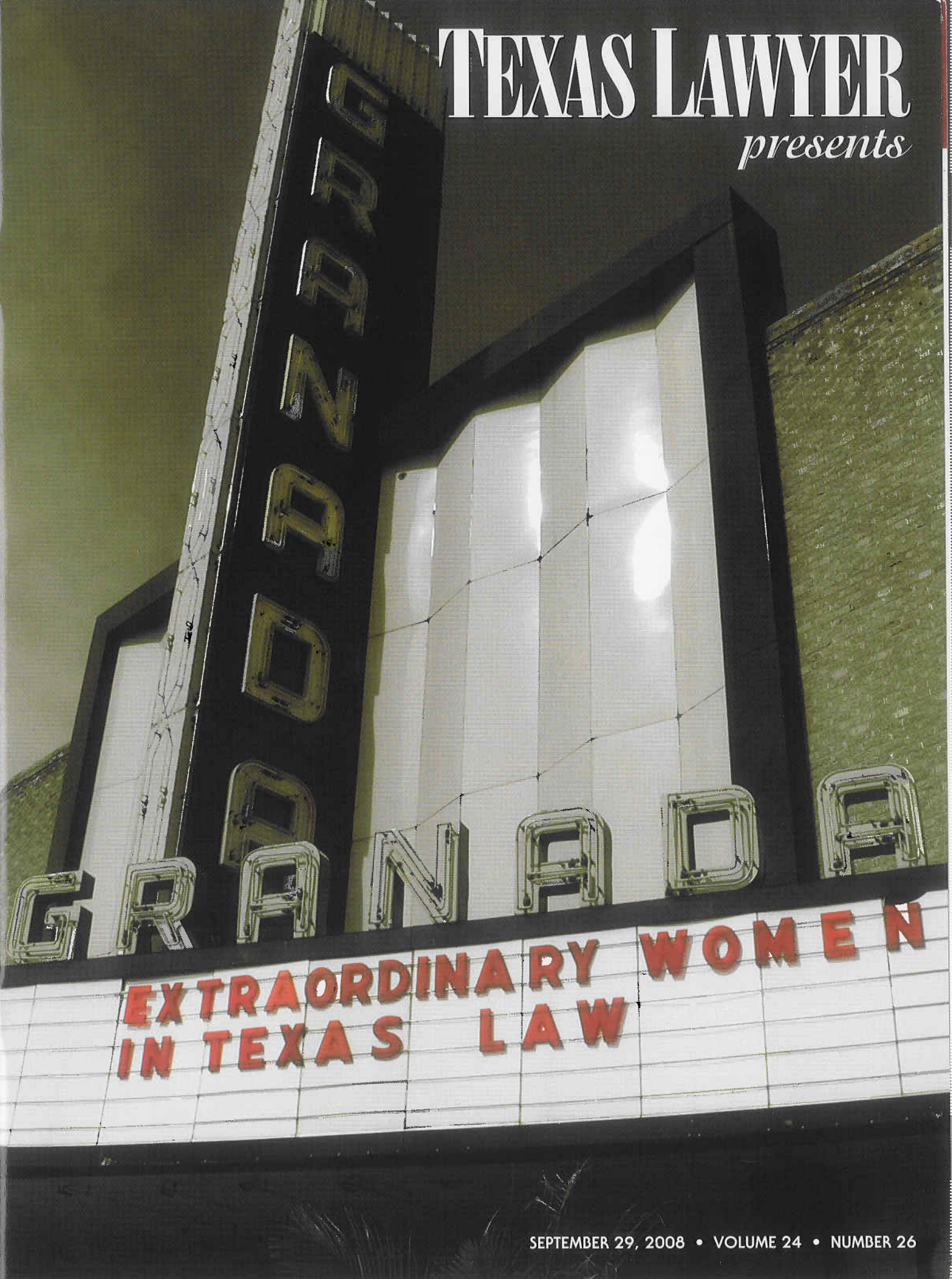


# TEXAS LAWYER

*presents*



**EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN  
IN TEXAS LAW**



# From the Editor

Dear Readers:

Hortense Sparks Ward, Sarah T. Hughes, Barbara Jordan — these and countless other storied women have pioneered the legal profession in the Lone Star State and mentored others in the ways of justice, ethics and advocacy. They also helped pave the way for the 30 women profiled in *Extraordinary Women in Texas Law*, a special magazine from *Texas Lawyer*.

With 22,783 women practicing law in the state, according to the State Bar of Texas, the *Texas Lawyer* editorial department knew this project wouldn't be easy. We started the six-month process by posting a nomination form on the *Texas Lawyer* Web site. We asked readers to nominate women licensed to practice law in Texas who have had an impact in the state on firms, government, nonprofits, academia and/or the corporate world within the past five years (judges were not eligible).

We read each of the nearly 500 nominations we received, and they blew us away. "Like every female lawyer, she's had to swim upstream against the good ole' boy network's current — enduring her fair share of 'sweeties' and 'honeys' in a system that often makes it difficult for women to rise to the top," one nominator wrote. "I would not be the attorney I am today" without her, an associate wrote about the partner who'd mentored her. "Her compassion for us as clients is far beyond that I have ever experienced," a nominator wrote about his counsel. "She isn't the most famous woman lawyer in Texas, and she sure as hell hasn't made the most money, but she has made a difference in more ways than I can count," another nominator wrote about his lawyer-wife.

We sliced and diced and culled and carved, and the result is *Extraordinary Women in Texas Law*. The 30 attorneys profiled in these pages lead in good times and in bad; achieve results or put everything on the line trying; and influence and shape the legal debate in our state.

We trust you will enjoy *Extraordinary Women in Texas Law*, and we congratulate the amazing lawyers who appear in these pages. Special thanks to award-winning freelancer Bill Jeffreys of Houston, who helped write these pieces.

*Colleen Bridget McGushin*

Colleen Bridget McGushin  
Editor in Chief  
*Texas Lawyer*

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# Laura Lee Prather

Partner  
Sedgwick, Detert, Moran & Arnold  
Austin  
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For Laura Lee Prather, knowledge is power. A respected media lawyer with a client list that reads like an industry who's who, she's also an adjunct media law professor at the University of Texas. And Prather has been a tireless advocate of laws and legislation involving control of and access to information.

Since 2005, Prather has been at the forefront of proposed legislation to protect sources who have given information in confidence to journalists. Commonly known as a "shield law" — a term Prather doesn't like because it smacks of privilege — the goal of the legislation would be to protect journalists from having to routinely give up information and sources to prosecutors and attorneys.

She describes the legislation as a protection for sources rather than journalists and one that would encourage people to report crime rather than remain silent. "In order for people to feel comfortable to report wrongdoings — even within prosecutors' offices — they need to feel like there is some sort of protection for them," she says.

Some 36 states and the District of Columbia have similar laws on the books, she says, and Texas was nearly one of them — twice.

When shield legislation was introduced in 2005, Prather, a 1991 University of Texas School of Law graduate, was not involved until late in the

game. When that effort failed to pass, she says, she launched a "more concentrated effort" to get ready for 2007.

She drafted, lobbied and spearheaded the grassroots organizing of print and broadcast media to lend support for what became the Texas Free Flow of Information Act (S.B. 966). "It passed resoundingly out of the Senate and out of the House committee, but it got killed on a point of order, on a technicality," she says.

Nevertheless, Prather hasn't given up and is preparing to take up the cause yet again when the Texas Legislature reconvenes in 2009. She knows she'll face the same critics again, but she remains hopeful the legislation finally will become law.

Meanwhile, Prather is involved in drafting federal legislation with the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, along with U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and state Comptroller of Public Accounts Susan Combs. The goal also is disclosure: to boost the public's access to federal spending records. She became involved in the effort through her position as vice president of the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas; she'll serve as president next year. The legislation, which is in committee, will "make the use of government funds more readily available to the public so they know how their taxpayer money is being spent," she says.