



Laura Hinojosa

Hidalgo County District Clerk

Sustaining Transparency Through Strategic Planning

The District Clerk Office held its *First Annual Open House* in May in honor of *National County Government Week*. The celebration is designed to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation's counties. The event also correlates with the district clerk's mission to "sustain transparency in all government operations."

The open house commenced with a brief strategic plan presentation which proposes to streamline public services, enhance policies and procedures, harness effective technology and communications, while delivering efficient and responsive government.

Chief elements of the plan include:

- **Revised Mission Statement** to include: "Sustaining transparency in government operations"
- **Statement of Guiding Principles** which highlights 7 values that serve as the foundation of the organization
- **District Clerk Overview** which defines the role of the district clerk office and its services
- **Strategic Plan** which highlights the purpose of the plan and the office's methods/strategies for achieving its goals.

We are confident that through this plan we can build upon the progress we have already made in addition to ensuring the public trust. Our office is committed to working with all stakeholders in refining our plan through pub-

lic participation and collaboration. As a result we hope to achieve government effectiveness and create more opportunities for development.

Our office is extremely appreciative of our staff and our county departments as their collaboration will be instrumental in our strategic efforts. We in turn are committed to promoting accountability and keeping the public informed on the things happening in our office.

To access a copy of the District Clerk Strategic Plan log on to www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/districtclerk. A hard copy can also be accessed upon request when visiting our office.



Legislative Update



Texas Governor Rick Perry signed into law on June 19, 2009, SB 1685, a district court records technology fund bill, which provides for a records archive fee up to \$5 to assist in the preservation and restoration services performed by the district clerk in connection with maintaining a district court records archive. The bill was authored by Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa. A counterpart measure, HB 3312, was also introduced by State Representatives Veronica Gonzales and Armando “Mando” Martinez.

“This bill seeks to aid district clerk offices throughout the state in adhering to the constitutional duties we are expected to fulfill as record managers,” said Laura Hinojosa, Hidalgo County District Clerk. “SB 1685 is definitely a step forward for

district clerks and will allow counties to begin allocating supplemental funding for the maintenance, storage, security and digital conversion of records. I am extremely grateful to our South Texas Legislative Delegation for their time, work and effort in helping to pass this important legislation.”

Laura Hinojosa was instrumental in reviving the technology fund bill, an initiative proposed in legislative sessions past. According to the County & District Clerk Association, district clerk offices have historically been poorly equipped, in both funds and expertise, to care for their respective county’s valuable records and are confident this bill will help address budget challenges to better administer their record preservation programs.

SB 1685 became effective upon the governor’s signature and can be adopted upon approval of county commissioner’s court.

District Clerk Collections Specialist Honored with Collector of the Year

On Wednesday, May 20, 2009, *The Government Collectors Association of Texas* honored Ms. Ana De Luna, District Clerk Collections Specialist, with the *Collector of the Year Award*. This award is presented to the collector selected as having had the greatest impact on collections efforts for their respective city or county in the past year.

“I am extremely proud of Ms. De Luna and the entire Collections Department for their time, work and effort in making the collections program as successful as it is,” said Hinojosa. “I especially want to thank Mr. Arturo Guajardo, Jr., Hidalgo County Clerk, for his leadership and readiness to allow the district clerk’s office to partake in the collection efforts for the county.”


The Collections Department also received the *Excellence in Service Award*, which is presented to programs selected for unselfishly providing assistance to others embodying the elements of dedication, commitment and service to the association and its membership. The association consists of professionals from across the state of Texas responsible for the collection of funds for the governmental entities for which they are employed and is devoted to the education, strategies, techniques and tools for judicial collections.

“I feel very honored and privileged for having received such a prestigious award which reflects the collection efforts our county strives for. I am so thankful for the wonderful supervisory leadership I have and the support of my co-workers. It is through team work that we can achieve our goals,” said De Luna.



County Collections Department, from left to right: Sylvia Gallegos, Sylvia Reyes, Gina Hernandez, Adrian Serna, Ana De Luna, Jason Rohr, Arcilia Morales

Meet the AG Data Gathering Form


ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT
CHILD SUPPORT DIVISION

To: State Case Registry
Fax: 877-924-6872

From: _____
Phone: _____
Date: _____

DATA GATHERING FORM

This form is used for data gathering by counties that do not have TXCSES Web Portal access. Please indicate if the data on this sheet is a new or modified order. The completed information should be sent to the State Case Registry/County Contact Team by fax or mail. TXCSDU P.O. Box 659400, San Antonio, TX 78265

County Name: _____	New or Modified Order (Please circle)
Payments Payable to: County _____ SDU _____	
Court Number: _____ (Court where case was established)	Cause Number: _____
Start Date: _____ (Date original order signed by Judge)	Domestic Violence (DV) (Please write Y for each individual that is a victim of domestic violence)
Custodial Parent: _____	Drivers License No. _____ DV _____
Custodial Parent SSN: _____/_____/_____	Date of Birth _____ Sex: M F
Custodial Parent Address: _____ City _____ Zip _____	
Non-Custodial Parent Name: _____	Drivers License No. _____ DV _____
Non-Custodial Parent SSN: _____/_____/_____	Date of Birth _____ Sex: M F
Non-Custodial Parent Address: _____ City _____ Zip _____	
Employer Name: _____ (if available)	
Employer FEIN: _____	Employer Phone: _____
Employer Address: _____ City _____ Zip _____	

Post Office Box 12017, Austin, Texas 78711-2017 Tel: (512) 460-6000 1-800-253-8014 WEB: www.oag.state.tx.us
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The Attorney General of Texas introduces the Data Gathering Form to the County of Hidalgo. Attorneys are encouraged to complete this form when submitting court ordered payments. Once received at the district clerk office, the data will be entered on TXCSES Web (Texas Child Support Enforcement System), and will create an immediate account for child support payment from the non-custodial parent. By utilizing this form, the amount of time it takes for child support payments to be sent to the custodial parents is greatly reduced. This will also assist the Office of the Attorney General in the following:

- Establishing and enforcing child support orders
- Establishing and enforcing medical support orders
- Reviewing and adjusting child support payments
- Collecting and distributing child support payments
- Assist the parents in obtaining the financial support necessary for the child (s) life/lives.
- Assist attorneys with providing all necessary information to the Attorney General Office.

The Data Gathering Form will be readily available at the district clerk office or can be downloaded off our website at: www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/districtclerk.

Passport Update— Status of Midwife Lawsuit



As a result of the *Castelano v. Clinton et al.*, a class action lawsuit challenging the way the Department of State was processing passport applications of people who were born with the assistance of a midwife or birth attendant, the Department of State has entered into a proposed settlement agreement, implementing new procedures for processing these applications. The court granted preliminary approval of this settlement on July 7, 2009, and a *Final Approval Hearing* is scheduled for August 14, 2009.

Under the new procedures, applicable individuals will get the benefit of an improved review process so that applications will be initially reviewed by a specially trained senior-level employee and in cases where necessary, a three-member panel made up of senior-level specialist. Although not all are expected to get a passport once the settlement is approved, the Department of State does expect some individuals to be approved under the new procedures.

In addition, certain people who were born with the assistance of a midwife or birth attendant and who previously applied for and did not receive a passport, may be entitled to re-apply without paying the application fee. Individuals applying at the district clerk office, however, will still have to pay the \$25 execution fee.

The waived application fee applies to individuals who qualify as class members. A class member is a person who previously filed a passport application in the U.S. between April 8, 2003 and the effective date of the settlement; AND whose birth certificate was filed or registered in Texas by a midwife or birth attendant; AND who either received a letter from the State Department saying their application was “filed without further action,” “abandoned” or “closed”; OR for whom a decision was not issued on their application and the application was filed prior to September 15, 2008. Please note, however, there may be certain reasons why those who meet this criteria may otherwise be disqualified. Log on to www.travel.state.gov for detailed information on qualifying as a class member.

Hinojosa Appointed Chair of CDCAT Legislative Committee

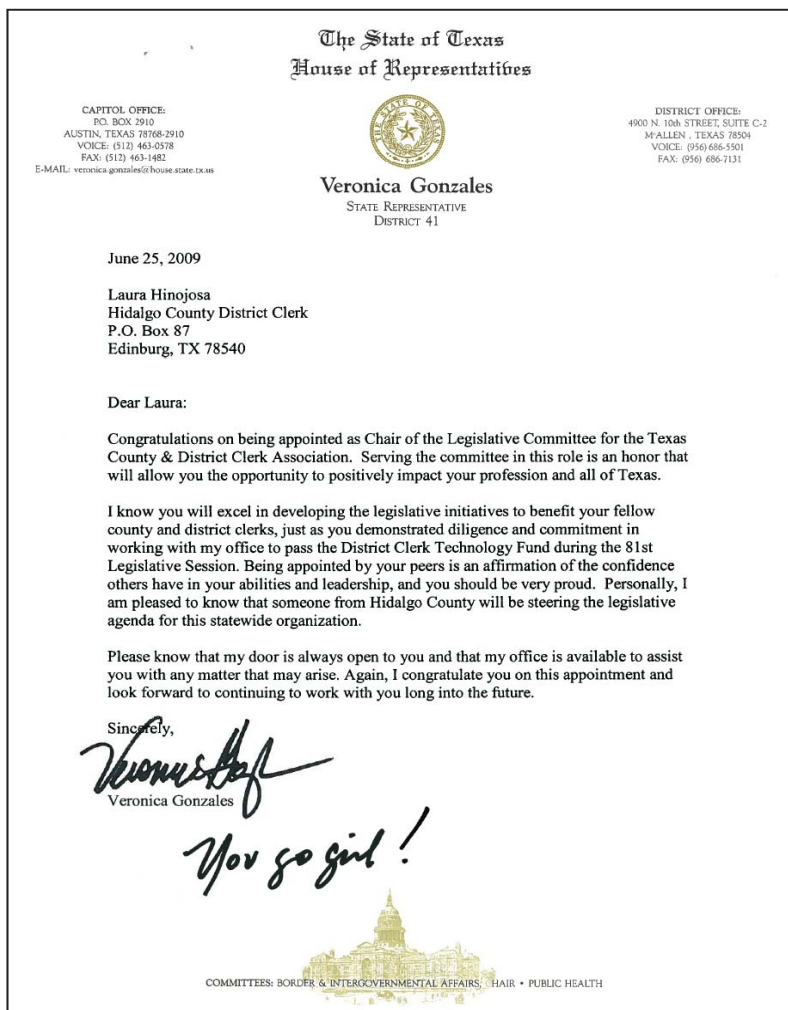
The County & District Clerk Association announced at their South Padre Island state convention on June 18, 2009, the appointment of Laura Hinojosa, Hidalgo County District Clerk, as Chair of the Legislative Committee for the State of Texas.

"I am honored to have been appointed to serve the association in this capacity and I look forward to diligently working with my peers in assessing and implementing sound legislation that represents the values of the association and the County of Hidalgo," said Hinojosa.

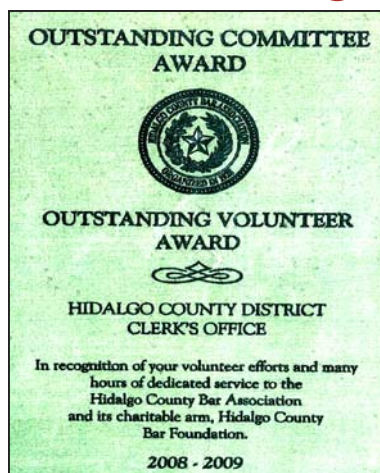
The purpose of the County and District Clerk Association is to promote professional standards, to provide the means for the education of its members regarding the statutory and constitutional duties of the offices of the county clerk and the district clerk, and to participate in the legislative, judicial and executive processes of state government beneficial in the performance of the members' duties.

"As a chair of this committee Mrs. Hinojosa will promote and coordinate the adoption, amendment and maintenance of the constitution and statutes pertaining to the offices of the county clerks and the district clerks keeping in mind the best interest of the association and its members," said Cathy Stuart, President of the Association. "With Mrs. Hinojosa's leadership and with the assistance of her peers the association's legislative efforts are sure to be a success."

Hinojosa will chair the statewide committee along with The Honorable Joy Streater, Comal County Clerk, and The Honorable Bella Rubio, Real County & District Clerk. Hinojosa's appointment expires in June 2011.



Outstanding Volunteer Award



The District Clerk Office was presented with the *Outstanding Volunteer Award* on May 13th at the Hidalgo County Bar Association/Foundation Annual BBQ. This award was presented in recognition of the staff's volunteer efforts and many hours of dedicated service to the association and its charitable arm, the Hidalgo County Bar Foundation.

Specifically, the district clerk office has actively participated in the Community Justice Program, a collaborative effort of the Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid and the bar associations of Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. Through this project, judges, attorneys, court reporters and clerks from our office come together to provide legal services to low-income residents in our community.

Contact Information

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We encourage your honest assessment of our services as we continue to evolve and improve through your valuable input. Our team of outstanding and hardworking individuals is ready to assist you as it is our priority to provide exemplary service while preserving and maintaining the records of the Hidalgo County Judicial System. Please contact our office if you have any questions or require additional information.

You can also visit www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/districtclerk

Office Hours

Monday—Friday

7:30am—5:30pm

District Clerk Office Presents \$3,000 Check to the American Diabetes Association



Edinburg, Texas – The Hidalgo County District Clerk Office presented a check totaling \$3,000 to the American Diabetes Association as part of their *Blues for Bucks Workplace Fundraising Campaign* to benefit local charitable organizations. The program allows department staff to wear jeans every Friday in exchange for a \$5 donation.

“I am very proud that our staff is able to continue to contribute to charitable organizations despite the difficult economic situation,” said Hinojosa. “This goes to show that a little goes a long way.”

The District Clerk’s Office kicked off their charitable efforts in 2008. Recipients are selected every six months at random from a “charitable organizations list” generated by office staff. The organization selected to benefit from the next six months’ contributions is the Upper Valley Humane Society in Edinburg. To date, the office has collected over \$8,000 to benefit local charitable organizations.

ATTENTION: EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 2009

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SB 1685, THE COMMISSIONER’S COURT OF HIDALGO COUNTY HAS DETERMINED THAT A RECORDS ARCHIVE FEE OF \$5.00 IS NEEDED TO PRESERVE AND RESTORE DISTRICT COURT RECORDS.

FILINGS INCLUDE SUITS, INCLUDING A APPEAL FROM AN INFERIOR COURT, OR A CROSS ACTION, COUNTERCLAIM, INTERVENTION, CONTEMPT ACTION, MOTION FOR NEW TRIAL, OR THIRD-PARTY PETITION

