

## *Legal foundation honors Gallego with Legislative Hero Award*

By MARK GLOVER

ALPINE - State Representative Pete Gallego received the first annual Legislative Hero Award from the Texas Access to Justice Foundation here last Saturday.

"I couldn't think of a more appropriate recipient of this award," said Dick Tate, chairman of the Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Inc. who presented the award. "Representative Gallego possesses a strategic political mind, a quick thinker, and has been a true champion of the cause."

Whether it be a case of domestic abuse, insurmountable odds on a home foreclosure, or taking care of our vets, Pete Gallego has always been there."

The brief ceremony took place in the Alpine office of Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid where Amanda Chisholm and Julie Balovich serve as attorneys. The non-profit organization offers free legal services for eligible low-income persons and has 12 other offices throughout Texas.

Former Texas Supreme Court Justice Debra Hankinson said the state rep was "committed to fairness and justice" and was a "good public policy maker because he cares."

"The state would be a better place if we had more Pete Gallegos," she said.

Most of the board directors for Rio Grande Legal Aid made the trip from various points in Texas to Alpine for the award ceremony.

"Whether you are rich or poor - everyone should have an advocate on their behalf when they stand before a judge," Gallego said, wearing dark jeans and pointy-toed cowboy boots. "A term my parents made sure I understood growing up was 'fairness.'"



*Representative Pete P. Gallego is awarded the Texas Access to Justice Legislative Hero Award for his contributions to improving access to justice in Texas. From left, Dick Tate, board chair for the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, Gallego, and Former Supreme Court Justice Deborah Hankinson and vice chair for the Texas Access to Justice Foundation.*

Gallego is the son of Pete A. and Elena Gallego of Alpine. He has served the people of the 74<sup>th</sup> district since 1990. He has been on the board of Rio Grande Legal Aid since 2000 and has served as chairman.

Rio Grande Legal Aid specializes in border issues, children's rights, civil rights, disaster assistance, domestic violence, environmental justice, employment, fair housing, homelessness and a number of other specific areas of law.

The Alpine office serves Brewster, Presidio, Jeff Davis and three other surrounding counties. Their El Paso office is the only other west Texas location.

In 2009, the Alpine office represented 38 mothers of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Eldorado, helping reunite them with their children after they were separated in the aftermath of a Texas Child Protective Services-led raid on their religious compound.