

Sen. Steve Ogden recognized for efforts to improve access to justice

The Texas Access to Justice Commission and Foundation honored Senator Steve Ogden with the Texas Access to Justice Legislative Hero Award for his contributions to improving access to justice in Texas during a special presentation at the Lone Star Legal Aid office in Bryan on Friday, Sept. 24.

Texas Supreme Court Justice Nathan L. Hecht, the court's liaison for access to justice issues, presented the award to Ogden.

Ogden's grasp of the funding gap for Texans in need of help with civil legal issues led to an historic appropriation of funding in the 81st Legislature for civil legal services to poor Texans, an appropriation of more than \$20 million.

Through his leadership efforts, Ogden helped improve access to justice for poor and low-income Texans.

"Times are tough, and funding is scarce for the legal assistance low-income Texans desperately need," Hecht said.

"Lots of people are working hard to keep civil legal services available to those who can least afford them, but no one, and I mean no one, has helped this

worthy cause more than Senator Steve Ogden."

"In order to form a 'more perfect union and establish justice...' as stated in our Constitution, the poor need competent legal help," Ogden said.

"I am proud that the Legislature recognized this last session and I accept this award on its behalf."

The Texas Access to Justice Commission and Foundation launched the Legislative Hero

launched the Legislative Hero Award program in 2010 to recognize legislators who, through their efforts, have significantly advanced access to justice in Texas by assisting with the appropriation of funds and/or other substantive activities related to the provision of legal aid in the state.

"Senator Ogden's leadership made possible legal services for thousands of poor Texans. Those legal services give many a chance to lead a decent and productive life," Harry Reasoner, chair of the Texas Access to Justice Commission, said.

"Protection from domestic violence and child abuse, veterans' medical care and

disability payments, Social Security benefits, and recovery for hurricane victims can all depend on the availability of legal representation."

Legal aid organizations funded by the Texas Access to Justice Foundation help more than 100,000 low-income Texas families each year with their civil legal needs.

Yet, for every person who is helped with legal aid, a qualifying Texan is denied

assistance due to a lack of resources. Currently, only one legal aid lawyer is available to provide assistance for every 10,838 Texans who qualify.

Ogden is currently chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and is a leader in the Texas Senate on budget issues, criminal justice, school finance, higher education funding, child protection and transportation safety.



Senator Steve Ogden is shown with Andrew L. Strong, Texas A&M University System General Counsel; Texas Supreme Court Justice Nathan L. Hecht and Paul E. Furrh, Jr., CEO of Lone Star Legal Aid at the ceremony where Ogden was dubbed a “Legislative Hero”.