



Congratulations to the 2025 Annual Award Recipients



WILLIAM "BILL" WORKMAN

Distinguished Bar Service Non-Lawyer Award

Recognizes non-lawyers who have provided valuable service and contributions to the legal profession over a significant period of time.

William "Bill" Workman was born in upstate New York in 1972 and moved to several states before settling in Farmington, New Mexico, where he obtained degrees in legal assistance and business administration. He started a career as a paralegal with the New Mexico Public Defender Office in the year 2000 and worked providing legal support to the Department's defense attorneys until retiring from the state in 2025 to pursue other activities.



DAVID J. STOUT

Excellence in Well-Being Award

Many individuals have made significant contributions to the improvement of legal professional well-being to include destigmatizing mental health, strengthening resiliency and creating a synergistic approach to work and life. This award was created to recognize an individual or organization that has made an outstanding positive contribution to the New Mexico legal community's well-being.

David J. Stout is a Regents Lecturer at the University of New Mexico School of Law. He primarily teaches in the legal writing and communication program. He also teaches Torts, Evidence, Insurance Law and Professional Responsibility. His most important job at the law school is to coordinate the virtual food pantry for students who don't have enough money for food. Prior to joining the law school faculty on a full-time basis, Professor Stout was a practicing trial lawyer for 28 years specializing in products liability, governmental liability and insurance bad faith. Stout has chaired numerous Supreme Court committees including the Code of Judicial Conduct that rewrote the New Mexico Code of Judicial Conduct and the Code of Professional Conduct Committee. He currently serves as the chair of the Disciplinary Board. Stout owes his life to the State Bar of New Mexico's Lawyer Assistance Program Committee and has been a long-time member of that committee serving as co-chair from 2015-2019. Stout tries to help law students and lawyers struggling with addiction, depression and other conditions that interfere with their professional and personal lives.



LEON HOWARD III

Judge Sarah M. Singleton Distinguished Service Award

Recognizes attorneys who have provided valuable service and contributions to the legal profession, the State Bar of New Mexico, and the public over a significant period of time.

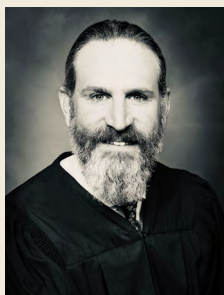
Leon Howard III is the Executive Director of the ACLU of New Mexico and a proud graduate of the University of New Mexico School of Law. Raised in Albuquerque's International District, Leon's path to leadership has been shaped by his lived experience and his unwavering belief in the power of community. For over fifteen years, he has worked to dismantle systemic injustice through civil rights litigation, policy reform, and public education. Leon is widely respected for his grounded, strategic advocacy on behalf of underrepresented communities across the state. He has also contributed his leadership to several boards and committees, including the New Mexico Innocence & Justice Project, the State Bar of New Mexico's Committee on Diversity, the New Mexico Black Lawyers Association, and the UNM Master of Public Policy Advisory Panel. At every step, Leon remains committed to building a more just New Mexico, where the law protects everyone, not just the powerful.

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JUDGE JOSHUA A. ALLISON and GERALD G. DIXON

Justice Pamela B. Minzner Professionalism Award

Recognizes attorneys and/or judges who, over long and distinguished legal careers, have by their ethical and personal conduct exemplified for their fellow attorneys the epitome of professionalism.



Judge Joshua A. Allison was raised in Lincoln, Illinois; a small farm community in the middle of the state that is the only town in the world named for Abraham Lincoln before he became President of the United States. Judge Allison is the proud son of a Presbyterian pastor and a high school English teacher. He worked on a hog farm growing up, and his family vacationed at Ghost Ranch near Abiquiu when he was young. It was on those vacations where Judge Allison developed a love for our high desert.

Judge Allison graduated from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois in 1996 with a degree in History. He came to New Mexico in 2000.

After graduating from University of New Mexico School of Law, Judge Allison clerked for then-Chief Justice Edward L. Chávez of the New Mexico Supreme Court. Following his clerkship, he worked as a civil litigator for ten years before taking the bench in 2019.



Gerald G. "Jerry" Dixon is a founding member of Dixon•Scholl•Carrillo•P.A. and practices in the areas of professional malpractice defense, construction litigation and real estate. He also serves as a mediator and arbitrator. Jerry served as President of the State Bar of New Mexico in 2019 and the New Mexico State Bar Foundation in 2018 and 2024. He was President of the Albuquerque Bar Association in 1994. He has served as a Trustee for the Texas Tech School of Law Foundation since 2005 and for the Texas Tech University Foundation since 2022. Jerry was named Outstanding Attorney by the Albuquerque Bar Association in 2014 and received the 2014 Distinguished Service Award from Texas Tech School of Law. He provides pro bono services through New Mexico Christian Legal Aid. Jerry was a Visiting Professor of Law in 2012 at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, Bulgaria and in 2015 at South-West University in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria.

SONIA M. GIPSON RANKIN

New Award

Justice Pamela B. Minzner Outstanding Women's Advocacy Award

Recognizes attorneys who have provided legal assistance to women who are unrepresented or underserved, or advocated for causes that will benefit and/or further the rights of women within the previous calendar year.



Sonia M. Gipson Rankin is a legal scholar and computer scientist whose work expands access and opportunity for women in law and technology. She draws on her interdisciplinary training to confront systemic barriers, especially those affecting women of color. She serves the legal profession through the New Mexico Supreme Court's Equity and Justice Commission, the State Bar of New Mexico's Committee on Diversity, and the tech sector through a National Academies initiative promoting women of color in STEM. Whether teaching, giving interviews, or engaging broad audiences, she approaches issues of algorithmic bias, kinship care, inclusive leadership and criminal justice reform with clarity, conviction, and care. A dedicated mentor, she supports students through Moms of Law, the Black Law Students Association and other student organizations and has also served her faith community by directing the women's ministry and teaching Sunday School. Her contributions have been recognized with the UNM Women in STEM Award (2022) and the Professor Pamela B. Minzner Award for Excellence & Professionalism (2023) and the Albuquerque Business Journal Women of Influence Award (2018). She and her husband raised their three children in New Mexico.

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NEW MEXICO CHRISTIAN LEGAL AID, INC.

Outstanding Legal Organization Award

Recognizes outstanding or extraordinary law-related organizations or programs that serve the legal profession and the public.

New Mexico Christian Legal Aid, Inc. was founded upon the belief that many of the legal problems of the poor and homeless also involve spiritually related issues. NMCLA was formed in 1998 to provide a unique combination of high-quality legal and spiritual counsel to the poor and homeless. Over 125 NMCLA volunteer attorneys have provided services to approximately

10,000 clients. The legal services are generally provided at local missions and organizations that serve the homeless such as The Rock at Noon Day, Albuquerque Rescue Mission/Steelbridge, Joy Junction, Salvation Army, Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd and several others. Group sessions are also conducted at the program facilities to give instruction on many poverty law topics. The attorneys are trained in poverty law and counseling with one to two CLE programs per year.



EDUARDO RAMIREZ

Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year Award

Awarded to attorneys who have, during the formative stages of their legal careers by their ethical and personal conduct, exemplified for their fellow attorneys the epitome of professionalism by demonstrating a commitment to clients' causes and to public service, enhancing the image of the legal profession.

Eduardo Ramirez is an Assistant Public Defender with the Law Offices of the Public Defender in the Hobbs Office. Eduardo joined the LOPD family in February of 2021 after relocating to New Mexico at the end of 2020. Eduardo earned his law school degree from the University of Colorado Law School, graduating in May 2019. He is the first in his family to not only graduate from college, but also law school. Since as far back as he can remember, Eduardo has always had a passion for helping individuals who are underprivileged and impoverished. Growing up in poverty himself, he saw many people struggle with the criminal justice system and just how important effective representation is. As an adult, Eduardo has learned the importance of self-care, to continue representing clients to the best of his ability. He helps with their criminal case but also makes efforts to better their lives. Eduardo is a zealous advocate, and his goal is to eventually rid the notion of a "public pretender." Luckily, he has amazing mentorship and colleagues down in Hobbs who help him, and he would not be the attorney he is without them. Outside of work, Eduardo enjoys being involved in the community, caring for his various plants, and his lovely Pit Bull, Izabel.

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EVANGELINA F. MERCADO

Robert H. LaFollette Pro Bono Award

Presented to an attorney who has made an exemplary contribution of time and effort, without compensation, to provide legal assistance over his or her career to people who could not afford the assistance of an attorney.

Evangelina Mercado has spent the majority of her legal career assisting the indigent, disadvantaged and victimized. Ms. Mercado grew up in Las Cruces and graduated from New Mexico State University. Thereafter, she graduated from Southern Methodist University Dedman

School of Law. Upon graduation, she was employed by El Paso, Texas County Attorney's Office and 34th Judicial District Attorney's Office in El Paso, Texas. In June 1999, she began working as a staff attorney for the Las Cruces Office of New Mexico Legal Aid. Shortly thereafter, she transitioned into a managerial position and is currently the regional managing attorney for the southern region of New Mexico. Ms. Mercado supervises staff of attorneys in communities throughout the southern region, as well as paralegals/legal assistants and community volunteers. New Mexico Legal Aid provides legal assistance to clients in domestic violence, domestic relations, housing, economic security and consumer protection. Additionally, the office provides in house clinics for pro se divorce and paternity actions. Ms. Mercado has been providing legal services to New Mexican Legal Aid clients for the past 26 years.



JUDGE STAN WHITAKER

Justice Seth D. Montgomery Distinguished Judicial Service Award

Recognizes judges who have distinguished themselves through long and exemplary service on the bench and who have significantly advanced the administration of justice or improved the relations between the bench and the bar.

Judge Stan Whitaker was born in Denver, Colorado. His family moved to Albuquerque in 1962 when his stepfather helped start the Quarters Restaurant on Yale Blvd. Judge Whitaker grew up in Albuquerque, graduating from Sandia High School in 1975. He has been married to his high school sweetheart, Barbra, for 46 years. They have two grown children and one darling granddaughter, (Gigi). He attended the University of Kansas on a track scholarship from 1975 to 1980, graduating with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education. He attended Law School at the University of New Mexico School of Law, earning his Juris Doctorate in 1989. After law school, he worked as an Assistant District Attorney in the Felony Child Abuse/Family Crimes Unit with the Bernalillo County District Attorney's Office from 1993 to 1996. He also worked as a Special Commissioner for Domestic Violence with the Second Judicial District Court from 1996 to 2002. From 2002 to 2006, he worked as Assistant United States Attorney, Firearms/Violent Crimes Division from 2002 to 2006. In June of 2006, he was appointed by Gov. Bill Richardson to the bench as a District Judge with the Second Judicial District Court presiding over Domestic Relations cases and felony criminal matters. He served as the Chief Presiding Judge of the Second Judicial District Court from 2019 to 2022. Judge Whitaker retired from the bench in December of 2024.