

# Judge Dedra Davis Spearheads 'Fresh Start' Initiative to Clear Records and Restore Lives in Texas

*Dedra leads a three-part educational campaign to help citizens expunge dismissed charges, training lawyers and judges to ensure fair access to housing and jobs.*

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-- [Judge Dedra Davis](#) of the 270th



District Court expanded her commitment to justice beyond the bench by launching a comprehensive educational initiative focused on expunctions. While Judge Davis is known for her efficiency in the civil courts, she has identified a critical gap in the legal system: citizens with dismissed charges who are unknowingly haunted by their records.

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You're supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, but when people see a charge... It's human nature to think you did it. Expunction is about giving you your life back.”

*Judge Dedra Davis*

In a recent interview, Judge Davis outlined her three-pronged approach to solving this issue: educating the community, training lawyers, and guiding fellow judges to ensure that "innocent until proven guilty" is a reality for all Texans.

Q: You are very passionate about educating the public on "expunctions." Can you explain what that is and why it is a

major focus for you?

Judge Dedra Davis: I travel all over Texas doing seminars to educate people about expunctions because there is a major misconception about how our records work. When someone is arrested and the charges are eventually dropped or dismissed, people assume that it just disappears. They do not realize that in Texas, the arrest still shows up on your record.

You are supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. However, when employers or landlords see that you were arrested, even if the charge was dropped, it is human nature for them to think you

did it. They treat you differently. They won't give you the job or the apartment because they see a theft charge or an assault charge, even though you were falsely accused.

Q: What impact does this have on the community?

Judge Dedra Davis: It can be devastating. Having that mark on your record can keep you from getting into college or junior college. It can stop you from getting credit, housing, or employment. You might not even know why you aren't getting these opportunities, but it is because this information is still showing up. It leads to depression and a cycle of poverty. My goal with expunctions is basically giving you your life back.

Q: You have mentioned a "three-part" approach to solving this. How does that work?

Judge Dedra Davis: First, I have an outreach component where I go directly to the community. I let citizens know that if they were arrested and the charges were dismissed, they need to check their records and get them expunged. I provide information on what is required so they can even do work on their expungement themselves if they choose, or at least know what to expect from their lawyer.

Second, I educate the lawyers. When I first took the bench, I went back 10 years into the court records to manage the docket and found many expunction cases were still open. Lawyers had started them but never finished them because they didn't fully understand the process. So, I now conduct Continuing Legal Education (CLE) seminars to teach lawyers exactly how to complete an expunction from beginning to end so their clients aren't left in limbo.

Q: And the third part involves your colleagues on the bench?



Judge Dedra Davis: Yes. I realized that some judges, especially those new to the bench, might not fully understand the significance of the expunctions or how to manage them efficiently. In Harris County, when new civil judges come in, I provide judicial training on managing their expunction cases and knowing what to look for.

By training the judges, educating the lawyers, and informing the public, we are ensuring that citizens get their lives back and have the opportunity to be productive members of society.

#### About Judge Dedra Davis

Judge Dedra Davis presides over the 270th District Court in Harris County, Texas. With 40 years of combined legal experience as a paralegal, attorney, and judge, she is dedicated to modernizing the court system and increasing access to justice. For more information, visit [dedradavisforjudge.com](http://dedradavisforjudge.com).

Judge Dedra Davis

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