

Kelly Frels

Retired Partner

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Kelly Frels served as the firm's managing partner from 1995-2001 and as managing partner of the Houston office from 2001-2003.

He has been an attorney for public and private schools, community colleges, universities and other public bodies for more than 45 years. He continues to serve as a mediator in complex education disputes. Kelly was lead attorney for the Houston Independent School District (HISD) in its successful transition from a segregated to an integrated system in the 1970s and 1980s. He assisted HISD in establishing the Houston Community College as a component of HISD and later helped the community college become an independent entity.

His involvement in representing public school districts led him and five others to organize the School Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, which he later chaired. Many consider him the father of Texas school law. He served as president of the Houston Bar Association and the State Bar of Texas.

Credentials

Education

- The University of Texas School of Law, J.D., 1970
- Texas State University, B.S., 1966

Bar Admissions

- Texas

Affiliations

- National School Boards Association, Council of School Attorneys Chair, 1977 – 1978
- Texas Association of School Boards, Council of School Attorneys Chair, 1980 – 1982
- School Law Section State Bar of Texas, Chair, 1977 – 1978
- Education Law Association, President, 1978 – 1979

BL Rankings

- *Best Lawyers*, Education Law, 2008 – 2025
- *Best Lawyers*, Government Relations Practice, 2022 – 2025

ALM Media Properties, LLC

- *Texas Lawyer*, Texas Legal Awards, Lifetime Achievement, 2024

Texas Bar Foundation

- *Outstanding 50 Year Lawyer Award*, 2021

Thomson Reuters

- *Texas Super Lawyers*, 2003 – 2019

School Law Section State Bar of Texas

- *Kelly Frels Lifetime Achievement Award (Inaugural)*, 2012

National School Boards Association

- *Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement*, 2004

Education Law Association

- *McGhehey Award for Lifetime Service*, 1991

Publications & Speeches

- "Advice for Law Practice and Life," Texas Association of School Board's Council of School Attorneys, October 16, 2020.
- "School Law's Evolution: Reflections of a Texas School Lawyer," Education Law Association, 2019.