

## TEXAS LAWYER

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2024

### TEXAS ATTORNEY OF THE YEAR FINALIST: Warren Harris



Courtesy photo

**Warren Harris, with Bracewell.**

**W**arren Harris, chair of Bracewell's appellate practice, led teams of lawyers that won a number of significant appellate cases over the last year, including one in a highly watched sex trafficking lawsuit against software provider Salesforce.

Because of the 2-1 ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, a 13-year-old girl who was trafficked and her mother can pursue their lawsuit against Salesforce. The appeals court reversed a district court ruling in Illinois,

and rejected a claim by Salesforce that Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act can shield it from civil liability for its work for the defunct website Backpage.

In another win in 2023, Harris led the team that secured a win before the Texas Supreme Court for Apache Corp. in a suit involving purchase and sale agreements along with mineral leases. The court



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ruled unanimously, according to information provided by Bracewell, that Apache's right to continue drilling on a ranch expired on Jan. 1, 2016, and not the day before, with the result that the company may avoid \$180 million in breach of contract claims.

Most recently, Harris successfully defended a \$51 million judgment for the University of Texas in a suit alleging IDEXX Laboratories failed to pay required royalties under a licensing agreement. In June, the Texas Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of UT, reversing a court of appeals judgment and reinstating a judgment for UT that is now valued at more than \$70 million.

It has been a busy time, Harris said, with that trio of recent significant appeals. The Salesforce appeal was particularly challenging, he said, because the law of Section 230 is in flux and the issues are difficult and complex.

It was "really an uphill battle," he said.

Bracewell appellate partner Jeff Oldham, who has worked with Harris since 2008, said Harris is highly skilled and respected in the appellate bar.

"He's a tremendous appellate lawyer. People go to him for his judgment and his experience and he's fabulous as a brief writer, and great on his feet in argument," he said.

Oldham said Harris has mentored many younger lawyers at Bracewell over the years, including him.

"He cares about people's careers and really invests," Oldham said.

Outside the firm, Harris has served in a number of leadership roles with legal organizations. He is the immediate past president of the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers, and a past president of the Houston Bar Association and the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society.

He has been honored with the Gregory S. Coleman Outstanding Appellate Lawyer of Texas Award from the Texas Bar Foundation and the 2023 Karen H. Susman Jurisprudence Award from the Anti-Defamation League Southwest Region. And just this month, the Texas Center for Legal Ethics announced that Harris will receive the 2024 Chief Justice Jack Pope Professionalism Award.

Harris also created the "Taming Texas" civics project, designed to help Texas students learn how the court system works. The program was launched in partnership with the Houston Bar Association and includes a book series.

Harris said things aren't slowing down for him, and his docket is full with continuing and new matters.