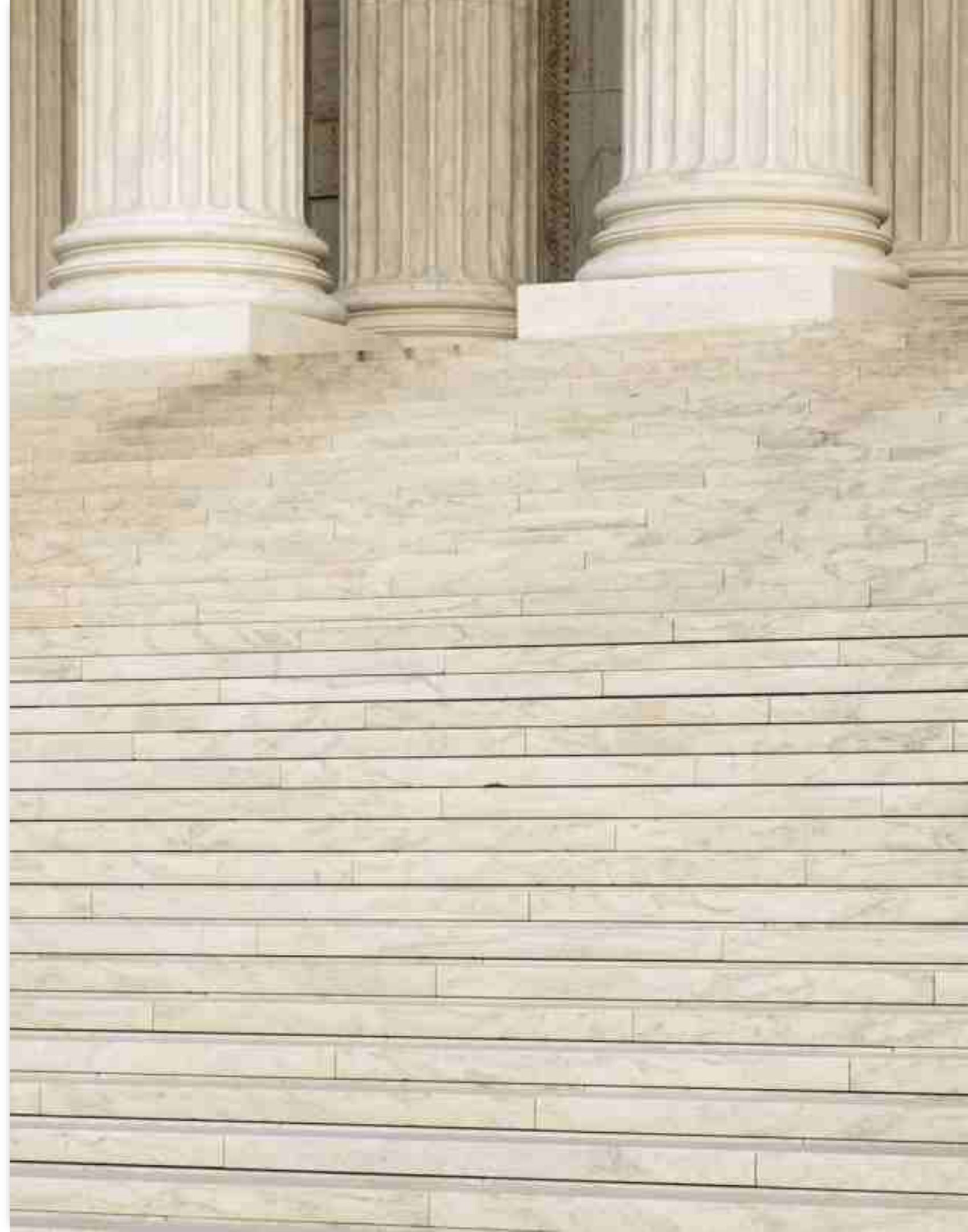


What is a Justice of the Peace?

Hon. Holly Williamson, Harris County 8-1

History of Justices of the Peace

- Over 800 years of history!
- King Richard I (“The Lionheart”) commissioned knights to preserve the peace in unruly areas beginning in 1195.
- Act of 1327 appointed “good and lawful men” to “guard the peace” in every county.
- In the colonies, volunteer justices resolved local conflicts and kept the peace.



Famous Justices of the Peace

- George Washington served as a justice of the peace early on in his career.
- Many have heard of Judge Roy Bean, the “Law West of the Pecos.” Bean was a saloon-keeper and justice of the peace in Val Verde County.





What Does It Take to Be a Justice of the Peace?

Requirements

Live in Texas for at least 12 months and your precinct for at least 6 months

Be a United States citizen

Be at least 18 years old on the first day of the term

Be mentally competent

Cannot be a convicted felon

Training Requirements

80 hours of training your first year

20 hours each additional year

Specific requirements

- Juvenile diversion issues
- Civil law
- Setting bail



Texas Justice Court Training Center

- Funded by grant from the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals under the supervision of the Justices of the Peace and Constables Association of Texas (JPCA)
- Provides training and other educational materials.



Don't Y'all Just Do Weddings?



No! So What Do We Do?

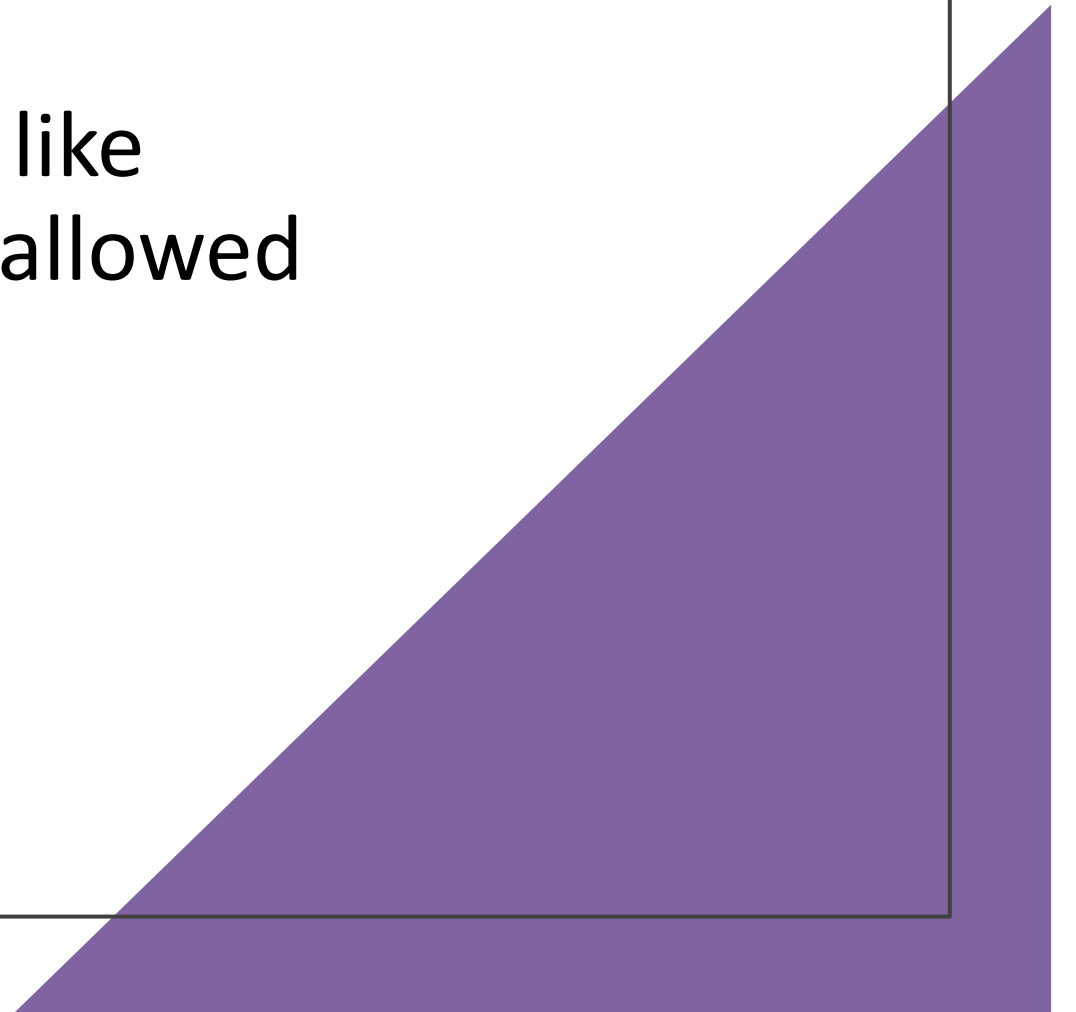


Small Claims Cases

- If someone is suing for up to \$20,000, they can do it in justice court
- What types of cases can that be?
 - Car accidents
 - Debt claim cases (like credit cards)
 - Damage to property

Evictions

- Cases where a person is trying to get back possession of a residence or business
 - Often because rent hasn't been paid
 - Other lease violations like criminal activity or disallowed pets
 - Squatters





Criminal Cases

- Justices of the Peace hear criminal cases where the person can't go to jail as punishment for the crime
- Examples
 - Traffic violations
 - Public intoxication
 - Minor alcohol offenses
 - Disorderly conduct

Truancy Hearings

- Discover why a child is not attending school
- Resolve the issue in a non-adversarial, non-criminal process
- Nothing more relevant to quality of life measures down the line than getting a diploma or GED



Administrative Hearings

Cruelly-Treated Animals

Tow Hearings

Occupational Driver's Licenses

Dangerous Dogs

Public Nuisance

Handgun License

Driver License Suspension

And more!!

Magistrate Duties

- When someone is arrested...
 - Provide them their rights under state law and the U.S. Constitution
 - Appoint an attorney if necessary
 - Set bail in order to secure the release of the accused while ensure their appearance and the safety of the community and any victim

Inquests

- In most counties, a Justice of the Peace must determine the cause and manner of death and fill out the death certificate for any death where there is not an attending physician



How To Be a Good Judge

- 4 Guiding Principles
 - Know Your Job
 - Do Your Job
 - Do **Only** Your Job
 - The Golden Rule

Thank you!

Questions?