

The Houston Bar Association Auxiliary honors Kelly Frels with its 2012 Leon Jaworski Award for outstanding service in the community

The Houston Bar Association Auxiliary is pleased to announce the 2012 Leon Jaworski Award recipient, Mr. Kelly Frels. The HBAA established the Leon Jaworski Award twenty-five years ago in order to honor an outstanding lawyer in the community who has given of his or her time and service and whose efforts benefit the great city of Houston and its citizens. Mr. Frels' dedication and commitment to his volunteer efforts is certainly worthy of this, the HBAA's most prestigious honor.

A native Texan, Kelly Frels was born in the community of Lolita, not far from Victoria, Texas. He graduated from Industrial High School as president of his 44-member Class of 1962. After graduation from Texas State University, where he was president of the student body, he went to The University of Texas School of Law where he chaired the Legal Research Board and the Honor Council.

In 1970, he married the Texas State University Assistant Dean of Women, Carmela Madden, and they have been a team ever since. They have two children: Jonathan, who is a public finance lawyer in Houston; and daughter Catherine who works in Washington, DC.

Kelly began his professional life with Bracewell & Patterson, L.L.P. in Houston in 1970. It was a time of social turmoil, when the nation's schools were being desegregated. With a B.S. in Education and educator parents, the representation of school districts and government entities was a natural focus for Kelly. His legal leadership helped to move the Houston Independent School District in Texas into an integrated system. His efforts in Houston developed and established the legal standards for the first comprehensive magnet school system in the country. In 1979, he was chosen the Texas Young Lawyer's Association's Outstanding Young Lawyer.

Kelly was Bracewell & Patterson's Managing Partner from 1995 through June 2001, and served as the Managing Partner of the Houston office through 2003. Among his many contributions to the firm, Kelly was instrumental in developing the firm's widely regarded school and public law practice.

His involvement in representing public school districts led Kelly and five others to organize the School Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, which he later chaired. He also served as the President of the Education Law Association (National Organization on Legal Problems of Education) and has chaired the National School Boards Association Council of School Attorneys. In 2004, Kelly received the inaugural "Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement" from the National School Boards Association's Council of School Attorneys. The superintendents of the Region IV Education Service Center honored him with their Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.

Kelly is involved in the community, having served as a member of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the Greater Houston Partnership and chaired its Government Relations Committee for two years and the Environmental Advisory Committee for an additional two years. In 2002, he chaired the Partnership's Quality of Life Advisory Committee. In 2003, he served as the Chair of the Houston Area Flood Control Task Force. In 2004, Kelly was named a director emeritus of the Greater Houston Partnership. Kelly also served as the President of the Kiwanis Club of Houston in 1987-1988 and as President of the Houston Club in 1999-2000. He was a member of the Business Coalition for Clean Air Steering Committee and the Clean Air Task Force. He also served as a member of the Houston-Galveston Area Council's Air Quality Consensus Group.

Kelly is the chair of the Texas Environmental Research Consortium and the co-chair of the Texas Clean Air Working Group. He serves on the boards of the Houston Independent School District Foundation and the Center for Reform of School Systems. In January 2010, Kelly became the chair of the Center for Houston's Future, the Think Tank of the Region.

Kelly coached youth baseball and softball for a total of eighteen years. In 2003, Kelly's community contributions were recognized when the Houston Chapter of the American Red Cross honored him as an "Everyday Hero."

Kelly has been an equally active leader in the legal profession. In 2004 – 2005, he served as President of the then 75,579 member State Bar of Texas. In 1994-1995, he was the President of the Houston Bar Association and subsequently served as a member of the State Board of Directors. He has been an American Bar Association member since 1970 and represented the State Bar in the ABA House of Delegates for six years, including service as the Texas State Delegate to the ABA House of Delegates. He chaired the Houston Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyer's Program, the State Bar's Lawyer Referral Committee and the State Bar's Katrina/Rita Disaster Task Force. He is a Sustaining Life Fellow in the Houston, Texas and American Bar Foundations. Kelly is the Immediate Past Chair of the Texas Center for Legal Ethics.

Please plan on joining the Houston Bar Association Auxiliary as we honor Mr. Kelly Frels on Tuesday, March 6, 2012 at 11:30 a.m., at The Houston Club. For ticket information to the Houston Bar Association Auxiliary's 25th Leon Jaworski Award's Presentation and Luncheon please contact Ansley Buttram at 713-373-9277 or via email at Ansley@buttramassociates.net