

**Local Rules of the 506th District Court
& County Courts at Law of Waller County**

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PURPOSE

The Local Rules of the 506th District Court & County Courts at Law (CCL) of Waller County have as their primary purpose the management of the court dockets in a fair, just, equitable and impartial manner. These rules are designed to be an aid in achieving that goal and to do so in a timely and economical manner.

RULE 1

APPLICATION, JURISDICTION AND ASSIGNMENT OF CASES

RULE 1.1 APPLICATION

These rules apply to all cases, civil and criminal, and family, of which the 506th District Court has exclusive jurisdiction, and concurrent jurisdiction with the County Courts at Law of Waller County, as well as to all cases over which the County Courts at Law of Waller County have exclusive jurisdiction.

RULE 1.2 JURISDICTION

A. Exclusive Jurisdiction Regarding District Court

Exclusive jurisdiction of 506th District Court encompasses matters defined by the constitution, statute or case law as the sole province of the 506th District Court or District Courts in general.

B. Concurrent Jurisdiction with County Courts at Law

Concurrent jurisdiction of the 506th District Court with the Waller County Courts at Law is set forth in Sections 25.0003 and 25.2391-25.2392 of the Texas Government Code, as well as the exclusive jurisdiction of the County Courts at Law.

RULE 1.3 ASSIGNMENT OF CASES

A. Assignment

The District and County Clerks shall assign cases as specifically instructed by the Board of Judges.

B. Assignment of Exclusive Jurisdiction Cases

The District Clerk shall assign cases of exclusive jurisdiction to the District Court. Examples of such cases include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Capital murders;
2. Criminal cases involving official misconduct;
3. Election contest;
4. Suits on behalf of the State of Texas to recover penalties or escheated property; and
5. Cases involving title to land.

C. Assignment of Concurrent Jurisdiction Cases

The District Clerk and County Clerk shall assign the following type cases involving concurrent jurisdiction to the District Court and/or the County Courts at Law as outlined below:

1. Any and all cases arising under the Texas Family Code shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 1;
2. Any and all Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) cases shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 1;
3. Any and all juvenile cases shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 1;
4. Any and all contested probate cases or contested cases under the Texas Estates Code shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 2;
5. In the event the Constitutional County Court of Waller County ceases hearing uncontested probate cases or uncontested cases under the Texas Estates Code, then those cases shall be assigned to County Court at Law No.1;
6. Any and all criminal misdemeanor cases shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 2, except that appeals of misdemeanor cases (generally Class "C" cases and for which an indigent defendant is not entitled to appointment of counsel) from the Justice of the Peace Courts shall be filed with County Court at Law No. 1;
7. Any and all civil cases in which the matter in controversy exceeds \$500 but is less than \$325,000 shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 1 (generally suits on sworn account/credit card collections);
8. Any and all appeals from the Justice of the Peace Courts shall be filed with County Court at Law No. 1;
9. Any and all civil cases in which the matter in controversy equals or exceeds \$325,000 shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 2;
10. Any and all eminent domain cases shall be assigned to County Court at Law No. 2;
11. Any and all cases involving contested appraisals of real estate shall be assigned to County Court at Law 2;
12. Any and all felony cases shall be divided between the 506th District Court and County Court at Law No. 2 as directed by the Judicial Board and in compliance with the jurisdictional requirements of each Court.;
13. Any and all cases involving the collection of delinquent taxes shall be assigned to the 506th District Court;
14. Any and all cases involving real estate title disputes shall be assigned to the 506th District Court; and
15. Cases involving co-defendants or multiple defendants shall be assigned to the same court based upon the lowest cause number assigned to all defendants.

D. Referrals or assignment to Associate Judge

This section of these local rules is to be considered a standing Order regarding the referral or assignment of the Associate Judge of Waller County Texas regarding all Waller County Courts (i.e. 506th District Court, County Court at Law 1, and County Court at Law 2). All pending cases in all the above referenced Courts are hereby referred to the associate Judge of Waller County subject to any and all constitutional and/or statutory limitations. Therefore, the associate Judge of Waller County has the authority to preside over any pending case and cases filed after the date of this Standing Order in accordance with these Local Rules subject to constitutional and/or statutory limitations. Furthermore, in accordance with section 4.8 of these Local Rules and Chapter 201 of the Family Code all pending family law (including juvenile) cases and cases filed after the date of this Standing Order in accordance with these Local Rules are hereby referred to the associate Judge of Waller County pursuant to Chapter 201, Tex. Fam. Code, subject to limitations imposed by that same chapter. THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that the Waller County Associate Judge, the Honorable Judge Brent Huffman, is hereby referred to all pending or future cases of all District and/or County Court at Law Courts including any and all family law (including juvenile) cases and that this Standing Order of Referral shall constitute an Order of Referral for all pending and future cases. Specifically, these Local Rules also constitute the Order of Referral as required by 201.006, Tex. Fam. Code, as to any pending or future cases under Title 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, Tex. Fam. Code.

This Order is to remain in full force and effect until further order of the Court.

RULE 1.4 TRANSFER OF CASES; DOCKET EXCHANGE; BENCH EXCHANGE

A. Transfer

After assignment to a particular court per Rule 1.3 above, a case may be transferred to another court by order of the judge of the court in which the case is pending with the consent of the judge of the court to which it is transferred, as long as the court to which it is being transferred has jurisdiction.

B. Exchange of Cases and Benches

The courts may at any time after assignment to a particular court per Rule 1.3 above, exchange cases and benches with the consent of the judges involved in said exchange to accommodate their dockets or to expedite the court's trials, as permitted by law.

C. Previous Judgment or Filing

Any claim for relief based upon a previous judgment shall be assigned to the court of original judgment. If a case is filed in which there is a substantial identity of parties and causes of action in a previously non-suited case, the later case shall be assigned to the court where the prior case was pending.

D. Consolidation

A motion to consolidate cases shall be heard in the court where the lowest numbered case is pending. If the motion is granted, the consolidated case will be given the number of the lowest numbered case. If the two cases being consolidated are in more than one court, the Board of Judges shall decide which court shall preside over the consolidated cases.

E. Severance

If a severance is granted, the new case will be assigned to the court where the original case is pending; however, a new file date and a new cause number will be assigned to the now severed case.

F. Presiding for another Judge

In all cases where a judge presides for another court, the case shall remain pending in the original court.

G. Removal to District Court

A case that has been assigned to a County Court at Law in error, because the subject matter is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the District Court, will be returned to the District Clerk for reassignment.

H. Default Cases

Default judgments, or other uncontested matters, may be heard by either the 506th District Judge or one of the Judges of the County Courts at Law, if the judge assigned the case is unavailable, subject to the requirements of jurisdiction.

RULE 2

LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE & RULES OF DECORUM

RULE 2.1 POWERS AND DUTIES OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

A. Administrative Judge

Pursuant to Section 74.091 of the Texas Government Code, the Judge of the 506th District Court in Waller County is the Local Administrative District Judge and the Judge of the County Court at Law No. 2 is the Local Administrative County Court At Law Judge.

B. Duties

The Local Administrative District Judge and the Local Administrative County Court at Law Judge will have the duties and responsibilities provided in Rule 9 of the Rules of Judicial Administration, the Regional Administrative Rules and these rules.

RULE 2.2 BOARD OF JUDGES

A. Application

These Rules apply to all cases over which the 506th District Court and County Courts at Law of Waller County, Texas have jurisdiction. Nothing in these rules shall operate to expand the jurisdictional limitation of the courts as defined by statute.

B. Establishment and Administration of Board of Judges

The Board of Judges shall consist of the Judges of the District Courts and the Judges of the County Courts at Law Courts. The board shall meet to discuss and resolve questions that are of common concern to all of the members thereof. The Local Administrative District Judge or any member of the Board of Judges may call meetings of the board as needed. The Local Administrative District Judge shall preside over such meetings; and in his/her absence, a temporary chairperson may be elected by a majority of the quorum. A majority of the quorum of the Board of Judges is required before any action of the Board of Judges may take place.

RULE 2.3 RULES OF DECORUM

The Judges have a duty to maintain order and proper decorum in the courtroom. Both the 506th District Court and the County Courts at Law of Waller County have adopted Rules of Decorum set forth and posted on each of the Courts respective webpages. These rules shall apply to all attorneys and others appearing in the courtrooms of Waller County. The rules may be enforced by contempt or referral to the State Bar of Texas for grievance proceedings, or both, as the judges of the 506th District Court and/or County Courts At Law judges deem proper.

RULE 3

CIVIL CASES

RULE 3.1 GENERAL

All civil cases in which the matter in controversy exceeds \$250,000 and all Family Law cases (including Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) cases) shall be e-filed with the District Clerk's office and assigned amongst the courts as outlined in Rule 1.3 above. All civil cases in which the matter in controversy exceeds \$500 but does not exceed \$250,000, probate cases and cases filed under the Texas Estates Code, and Juvenile cases shall be e-filed with

the County Clerk's office and assigned amongst the courts as outlined in Rule 1.3 above.

RULE 3.2 SERVICE OF PROCESS

Process (including citation and other notices, writs, orders, and other papers issued by the court) may be served anywhere by (1) any sheriff or constable or other person authorized by law, (2) any person authorized by law or by written order of the court who is not less than eighteen years of age, or (3) any person certified under order of the Supreme Court.

RULE 3.3 DISTRICT CLERK & COUNTY CLERK

A. Telephone Requests

The court clerk shall limit response to telephone requests for information to the following:

Whether or not a specific document has been filed (i.e. answer). This does not authorize a fishing expedition.

Existence of case on file.

Return of service and date.

Correct style of case when correct case number is supplied.

If an order has been signed.

Whether or not a jury fee has been paid and date of payment.

B. Pro Se

All pro se parties upon filing any petition or responsive pleading should provide an email address for service via e-file, as well as address and current phone number. Any party unable to provide such information above must file a pleading requesting an exception to this rule.

RULE 3.4 GUARDIANS AND ATTORNEYS AD LITEM

When it is necessary for the court to appoint a guardian ad litem for minor or incompetent parties, or an attorney ad litem for absent parties, independent counsel, not suggested by any of the parties or their counsel, will be appointed. However, the court may appoint an attorney who is already counsel of record for one of the parties if the court finds that no conflict of interest or other circumstances exist which would prevent such attorney from providing adequate representation for such minor, incompetent or absent defendant.

RULE 3.5 DOCKET SETTINGS

A. Setting Requests

Requests for hearings and trials in the 506th District Court and in the County Courts at Law Court shall be made in writing to each respective court through the court coordinator of each respective court, and the attorneys making such request shall serve all counsel and parties appearing pro se with notice of the setting request. The setting request shall be in the form as posted on the Court's webpage for each respective court. If the setting request is approved, the court coordinator will confirm the setting in writing.

B. Docket Control Orders

Each court may generate docket control orders for each civil case pending. Upon approval of a docket control order the parties shall submit a setting request to the Court Coordinator for any trial setting. The 506th District Court and

the County Courts at Law have their own setting request forms that can be obtained from each Court's respective webpage.

C. Calendars

The 506th District Court and the County Courts at Law have set calendars for each calendar year that set forth the availability of the respective courts for trials or other hearings in Waller County. The 506th District Court and the County Courts at Law calendars may be found and viewed on each Court's respective webpage.

RULE 3.6 PRE-TRIAL MOTIONS

A. Pre-Trial Motions (Non-Summary Judgment and Non-Rule 91(a))

Form

Motions and responses shall be in writing and shall be accompanied by a proposed order granting or denying the relief sought. The proposed order shall be a separate instrument.

Response

Responses shall be in writing. Responses shall be filed before the hearing date. Failure to file a response may be considered a representation of no opposition. A reply may be filed at any time after a response is filed prior to the court's ruling.

Certificate of Conference

Opposed motions and responses shall contain a Certificate of Conference indicating that the counsel involved have attempted to resolve the dispute prior to filing of the motion or response, the date of such attempt and the manner of communication of such an attempt, or any other requirement of the court.

Submission Guidelines (See each Court's respective Webpage for any additional detailed instructions)

The following type of matters may be filed by submission without the need for a hearing:

1. All matters that may be submitted by agreement of all parties. On such fully agreed matters, the Court will sign the Order on presentment without a submission period. Such matters must show the signatures of all counsel or pro se parties. The heading of the motion shall state that it is agreed. For example, "Agreed Motion for Extension of Time for Mediation."

2. Matters that are labeled Unopposed, although not agreed, may be submitted to the Court without need of a hearing. By representing a matter as unopposed, counsel is certifying to the Court that opposing counsel is aware of the matter and has no objection to its entry. The Court will sign the Order on presentment after a 3-day submission period. The heading of the motion shall state that it is unopposed. For example, "Unopposed Motion for Substitution of Counsel." As a courtesy, the court clerks may bring motions and requests to the attention of the court coordinators. However, attorneys/parties must not assume this will always be the case. It is ultimately the responsibility of the attorney/party to request that a matter be reviewed by the court by contacting the appropriate court coordinator.

3. In this subsection, "filing" refers to the date of the filing of the Notice of Submission. Other motions and applications that may be submitted to the Court without a hearing, and the time periods required for submission, are as follows:

Continuance: 10-day notice after filing. Immediate submission if agreed or unopposed.

Substitution of Counsel: 3-day notice after filing. If substitution will affect any hearing or trial setting, 10-day notice will be required. If there is signed consent of all parties/attorneys then immediate submission is authorized.

Motion to Withdraw: Without client consent: 10-day notice after filing. With signed client consent: immediate submission.

Motion for Entry of Order: 10-day notice after filing.

Special Exceptions: presentment without hearing: 10-day notice after filing.

Substituted Service: Immediate submission.

Citation by Publication: Immediate submission.

Appointment of Ad Litem: Immediate submission.

Motion for Leave to Designate Responsible Third Party: 10-days after filing.

Nonsuit or Dismissal: Immediate submission. This is predicated on the motion being filed by the party seeking affirmative relief. Counsel is presumed to know whether the opposing side has pleadings on file seeking affirmative relief. Orders submitted indicating the nonsuit disposes of all parties and claims when there are affirmative pleadings on file by another party that is not nonsuiting their claims may result in sanctions or an award of attorney fees against the party submitting the faulty order.

Ex-parte matters: When service has not been accomplished, or prior to an appearance, ex-parte matters may be submitted immediately to the Court for consideration. The Court will determine whether a hearing will then be required and notify the requesting party accordingly.

Default Judgments: 3-days notice after filing of the Motion, with the Motion submitted at any time following 15-days after the answer date. The reason for the delay after answer date is to ensure that all probable methods of delivery of a response have been exhausted. The moving party may use a Notice of Submission or a letter of submission to bring the matter to the Court's attention. Please provide your proposed order along with your Motion for Default Judgment.

Tax Cases and Application for Excess Proceeds.

Other matters: With consent of the Court. Attorneys/pro se parties must not assume that the Court will be notified when a matter that requires the Court's attention is filed with the clerk's office. It is the responsibility of the attorney/pro se party to alert the court coordinator that they have filed a document needing review or action from the Court.

Failure to file a response within the submission time period may be considered a representation of no opposition to the motion or matter. Responses must be in the Clerk's file prior to the submission date or they will not be considered.

Please see Court Quirks on the 506th District Court's and each County Court at Law's Webpage regarding certificates of service on all pleadings. Failure to properly notify opposing counsel of a submitted matter may result in imposition of sanctions and costs on the offending party and counsel.

After consideration of submitted matters the Court may elect to set a hearing on the matter. In that event, the Court Coordinator will attempt to set a mutually acceptable date for the hearing, as soon as practicable. Due to the limited docket days in rural counties, that is not always possible.

B. Pre-Trial Motions (Dismissal of Baseless Causes of Action Rule 91(a) TRCP)

Motion

The motion shall state either that the cause of action should be dismissed on the grounds that it has no basis in law or fact or both. If claim is to dismiss on the grounds that there is no basis in law, the motion shall state the specific law that if the allegations, taken as true, together with inferences reasonably drawn from them, do not entitle the claimant to relief sought. If claim is to dismiss on the grounds that there is no basis in fact, the motion shall state the specific facts that show that no reasonable person could believe the facts that have been plead. The motion shall contain a clear and concise argument for each ground with appropriate citations to authorities relied upon and specific references to the pleadings and evidence that show the Rule 91(a) motion should be granted.

Response

The response shall address the motion in the same numerical order established in the motion for Dismissal of Baseless Causes of Action under Rule 91(a). Any response shall state the specific law and/or facts relied upon, identify any allegations, inferences drawn from and/or specific facts relied upon to defeat the motion, and specify where in the pleadings the allegations, inferences drawn from and/or specific facts are found. The response shall set out a clear and concise argument with appropriate citations to authorities relied upon and specific references to the allegations, inferences drawn from and/or specific facts pled.

Submission Guidelines for Motions for Dismissal of Baseless Causes of Action Rule 91(a) TRCP (See 506th District Court's Webpage for detailed instructions)

Motions for Dismissal of Baseless Causes of Action under Rule 91(a) TRCP may be filed under submission. The Court will follow Rule 91(a) TRCP for submission filings regarding motions for dismissal of baseless causes of action.

Please see Court Quirks on the 506th District Court Webpage regarding certificates of service on all pleadings. Failure to properly notify opposing counsel of a submitted matter may result in imposition of sanctions and costs on the offending party and counsel.

After consideration of submitted matters the Court may elect to set a hearing on the matter. In that event, the Court Coordinator will attempt to set a mutually acceptable date for the hearing, as soon as practicable. Due to the limited docket days in rural counties, that is not always possible.

C. Pre-Trial Motions (Summary Judgment Rule 166(c) TRCP)

Motion

The motion shall state the specific grounds thereof in numerical order and shall state the specific facts relied upon in each ground, identify the source of those facts, and specify where in the summary judgment evidence the facts are found. The motion shall contain a clear and concise argument for each ground with appropriate citations to authorities relied upon and specific references to the summary judgment evidence.

Response

The response shall address the motion in the same numerical order established in the motion for summary judgment. The response shall state the specific facts relied upon, identify the source of those facts, and specify where in the summary judgment evidence the facts are found. The response shall set out a clear and concise argument with appropriate citations to authorities relied upon and specific references to the summary judgment evidence.

Submission Guidelines for Summary Judgment Rule 166(b) TRCP
(See each Court's respective Webpage for detailed instructions)

Motions for Summary Judgment under Rule 166(a) TRCP MUST be filed under submission with the Court. If the Court feels the need for oral argument regarding a Motion for Summary Judgment, the Court on its own motion shall set the Motion for Summary Judgment for oral hearing and will provide notice of the time and date of that hearing.

The clerks of the courts will alert the appropriate court when a motion for summary judgment has been filed, the court will set the matter for hearing by submission and alert the clerk of the date and time the motion for summary judgment has been scheduled for submission. The clerk will then provide notice to all parties of the time and date of the court's consideration of the motion for summary judgment.

Requests for oral hearings on the consideration of summary judgments must be plainly made with a notice to the court clerk accompanying the motion/response/reply.

The granting of an oral hearing on a Motion for Summary Judgment is in the discretion of the trial court.

The Court shall comply with any and all deadline requirements as required by Rule 166(a) TRCP regarding Motions for Summary Judgment.

Failure to file a response within the submission time period may be considered a representation of no opposition to the motion or matter. Responses must be in the Clerk's file prior to the submission date or they will not be considered.

Please see Court Quirks on the 506th District Court and each County Court at Law's Webpage regarding certificates of service on all pleadings. Failure to properly notify opposing counsel of a submitted matter may result in imposition of sanctions and costs on the offending party and counsel.

After consideration of submitted matters, the Court may elect to set a hearing on the matter. In that event, the Court Coordinator will attempt to set a mutually acceptable date for the hearing, as soon as practicable. Due to the limited docket days in rural counties, that is not always possible.

RULE 3.7 ALTERNATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND MEDIATION

A. Alternate Dispute Resolution

In order to encourage the early settlement of disputes and to carry out the responsibilities of the courts as set out in Chapter 154 of the Texas Civil Practices and Remedies Code, appropriate alternative dispute resolution procedures will be encouraged and utilized.

B. Mediation

The courts require mediation in order to facilitate the settlement of disputes and litigation. See each Court's respective webpage for the Court's procedure for the use of mediation in all civil cases. It is in the sound discretion of the trial court whom to use as a mediator and the procedures for same. All cases which have not completed mediation prior to pretrial or trial may be dismissed with prejudice in the discretion of the trial judge.

RULE 3.8 CONTINUANCES

Any motion for continuance of the trial setting shall be presented to the court pursuant to the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure. The proposed order granting or denying such motion shall contain a provision for resetting the case for trial on a specific date and time.

RULE 3.9 SETTLEMENTS

All trial counsel are required to make a bona fide effort to settle cases at the earliest possible date before trial. The court will expect counsel to confer with his/her client and with opposing counsel concerning settlement offers. When an attorney settles or dismisses a case that is set for trial, he shall give notice to the court as soon as possible.

RULE 3.10 JURY CHARGE, DEFINITIONS, INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Each party shall prepare in proper written form and present to the Court prior to trial or the jury selection all jury charge definitions, instructions and questions which are expected to be raised by the pleadings and evidence and upon which the party has an affirmative burden. The charge shall be provided in both written form and via email, flash drive or other electronic form specified by the court.

RULE 3.11 VOIR DIRE

The District and County Clerk in Waller County shall align the Juror Information Cards in numerical order and seat the panel in numerical order. The judge will qualify the panel and accept or reject any excuses. After the final panel is determined, the attorneys must make their decision on whether or not a shuffle will be requested. The Court will recess the panel to give the clerk time to copy the jury cards and to make a new list of names of jurors, either in shuffled order or in numerical order. When the new list is completed and cards copied the clerk will re-seat the jury according to the list and voir dire will begin. The attorneys and judge will be furnished a copy of the list and jury information cards.

Challenges for cause will be made after all parties have completed their voir dire examination of the panel. After all counsel have completed their voir dire examination, the attorneys will be asked to approach the bench. Counsel will be asked in turn for the juror number of the jurors whom they wish to challenge for cause. If, in the opinion of the Court, sufficient evidence has been adduced to support a ruling, the challenge will be granted or denied without further questions. Otherwise, the panel member will be called to the bench for further questioning. The panel member will then be excused immediately or asked to return to their seat. The panel member asked to return to their seat may be excused at a later time.

If any panel member responds to questions during voir dire examination in a manner which makes it clear that they possess such strong opinions that a challenge for cause would clearly be appropriate, and there exists a possibility that further responses may "poison" the entire panel, counsel should diplomatically terminate the inquiry and avoid further inquiries in the presence of the panel. If adverse counsel has a good-faith belief that the panel member can be rehabilitated, it will be pursued on an individual basis after the general voir dire examination.

Counsel will be allowed to tell the panel what their contentions are in order to provide a context for their voir dire examination. Detailed recitations of facts should be reserved for opening statement.

If panel members ask counsel about the existence of insurance or any other specific factual matter, counsel should direct the question to the Court.

RULE 3.12 DISMISSAL DOCKET; INVOLUNTARY DISMISSALS

A. Dismissal Dockets

All cases not brought to trial or otherwise disposed of which have been on file for a time period determined by the Court to be excessive in time, indicating the case is not being prosecuted timely, shall be placed on the dismissal docket by the Court.

B. Notice

When a case has been placed on the dismissal docket, the Court shall promptly send notice of the Court's intention to dismiss for want of prosecution to each attorney of record and pro se party whose address is shown in the clerk's file. A copy of such notice shall be filed with the papers of the cause.

C. Motion to Retain

Unless a written motion to retain has been filed prior to the dismissal date, as set forth in the notice of intention to dismiss, such case shall be dismissed. Notice of the signing of the order of dismissal shall be given as required by Rule 165a of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure. Failure to mail notices as set out above shall not affect any of the periods mentioned in Rule 306 (a) of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure except as provided in that rule.

D. Motion for Reinstatement

A motion for reinstatement after dismissal shall follow the procedure and be governed by the provisions of Rule 165a of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure relating to reinstatement.

E. Failure to Appear at Pretrial or Status Hearing

Any party's failure to appear for a pretrial or status hearing may result in a dismissal of all affirmative relief or claims requested by the nonappearing party for failure to prosecute timely.

RULE 4

FAMILY LAW CASES

RULE 4.1 GENERAL

The filing, assignment, and transfer of cases under the Family Code shall be in accordance with Rule 1 of these rules. All cases filed pursuant to the Family Code, shall be governed by Rule 3 and 4 of these rules.

RULE 4.2 TIME STANDARDS FOR FAMILY LAW CASE DISPOSITION

Contested cases shall be tried or dismissed within 6 months from the appearance date or within 6 months from the expiration of the waiting period provided by the Family Code where such is required, whichever is later. Uncontested cases shall be tried and or dismissed within 3 months from appearance date or within 3 months from the expiration of the waiting period provided by the Family Code where such is required, whichever is later. Cases not concluded within these time periods will be placed on the Dismissal For Want of Prosecution Docket.

RULE 4.3 JUVENILE CASES

The Juvenile Board of Waller County has designated the County Court At Law No. 1 as the Juvenile Court of Waller County and has named the Judge of the County Court At Law No. 1 as the Chairperson of the Juvenile Board of Waller County. Rules for the disposition of juvenile cases will be adopted by the Juvenile Court in conformity with Rule 1 of the Second Administrative Judicial Region of Texas Regional Rules of Administration and Title 3 of the Texas Family Code. These cases shall be filed in the County Clerks' office pursuant to rules established by the Juvenile Judge and County Clerk, copies of these rules may be obtained from the Juvenile Judge.

RULE 4.4 DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES (DFPS) CASES

Disposition of Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) cases shall be in conformity with those provisions set forth in Title 5 of the Texas Family Code. These cases shall be filed with the District Clerk's office and

heard in the County Court At Law No. 1 of Waller County.

RULE 4.5 ATTORNEY GENERAL CASES

Disposition of Attorney General Cases shall be in conformity with the Texas Family Code, but will be heard by the Attorney General Associate Judge appointed by the Second Judicial Region Presiding Judge.

RULE 4.6 POLICIES & PROCEDURE

All policies and procedures involving family law cases including but not limited to Protective Orders, Ex Parte Orders, Temporary Restraining Orders, Certificate of Conference Requirements, Parenting Classes, Discovery, Mediation, Pre-Trial and Trial matters can be found on each County Court At Law's respective webpage. Each County Court At Law Judge's policies and procedures provided on their respective webpage are required to be adhered to and are made apart of and incorporated into these local rules for all intents and purposes.

4.7 CHILD SUPPORT DISBURSEMENT UNIT

All child support payments will be made to State Disbursement Unit.

4.8 FAMILY LAW REFERRALS UNDER CHAPTER 201 OF THE TEXAS FAMILY CODE

This section of these local rules is to be considered a standing Order regarding the referral of the Associate Judge of Waller County Texas regarding all Waller County Courts (i.e. 506th District Court, County Court at Law 1, and County Court at Law 2). All pending family law (including juvenile) cases and cases filed after the date of this Standing Order in accordance with these Local Rules are hereby referred to the associate Judge of Waller County pursuant to Chapter 201, Tex. Fam. Code, subject to limitations imposed by that same chapter. THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that the Waller County Associate Judge, the Honorable Judge Brent Huffman, is hereby referred to all pending or future family law (including juvenile) cases and that this Standing Order of Referral shall constitute the Order of Referral required by 201.006, Tex. Fam. Code, as to any pending or future cases under Title 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, Tex. Fam. Code. This Order is to remain in full force and effect until further order of the Court.

RULE 5

CRIMINAL CASES

RULE 5.1 GRAND JURIES AND ASSIGNMENT OF CASES

A. Grand Juries

The 506th Judicial District Court shall select and impanel the Grand Jury for both the January and July term of court for Waller County. The grand juries in Waller County shall hold all of their meetings in the room designated by the 506th District Judge or in another designated area that complies with Texas law. The Grand Jury shall be impaneled in accordance with Article 19A of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

B. Grand Jury Minute Book

The rules regarding presentment of indictments by a Grand Jury to the 506th District Court are set forth in Articles 20.21 and 20.22 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 20.21 requires that the Foreperson of the Grand Jury shall deliver the indictments to the Judge or District Clerk and that at least nine members of the grand jury must be present when the delivery is made. Article 20.22 requires that the fact of presentment be entered upon the minutes of the court. The "minutes of the court" are contained in the Grand Jury Minute Book. The Grand Jury Minute Book shall remain in the custody of the District Clerk at all times except when the Grand Jury is in session. The Grand Jury Minute Book is not a secret book or document.

When the Grand Jury begins a session, the District Clerk shall have all members present sign the Grand Jury Minute Book as proof of their presence at the session and to make a record of the fact that a quorum was present at the session.

The District Clerk shall then deliver the book to the Secretary of the Grand Jury. When a true bill of indictment is voted in the affirmative by at least nine members of the Grand Jury, the following information shall be entered by the Secretary of the Grand Jury in the Grand Jury Minute Book, and nothing else, to wit:

1. the date of the session;
2. name of the person indicted;
3. offense; and
4. names of the witnesses upon which the indictment is founded.

If the defendant is not in custody or under bond at the time of the presentment of the indictment, upon request of the District Attorney, the entry of the name of the defendant in the book may be delayed until such time as the capias is served and the defendant is placed in custody or under bond, at which time the name of the defendant will be entered in the book by the District Clerk. It is the duty of the District Clerk to verify that the indictments delivered to the clerk conform with the information contained in the Grand Jury Minute Book. If there is a variance, it should be called to the attention of the Secretary, Foreperson and District Attorney immediately.

When a defendant is “no-billed”, meaning that a case was presented to the grand jury regarding an individual and less than nine affirmative votes were given for a true bill of indictment, a **Certificate of No-Bill** shall be signed by the Foreperson certifying that the case was presented to the Grand Jury and that a no-bill was returned. The District Clerk shall handle the certificates as follows:

1. **Defendant Under Arrest:** If the defendant is under arrest, a copy of the certificate shall be delivered to the Sheriff and the defendant immediately.
2. **Defendant Under Bond:** A copy of the certificate shall be delivered to the surety (bondsman) and the defendant immediately.
3. All other certificates shall be held by the clerk under seal, unless ordered released by the 506th District court.

C. Assignment of Cases After Indictment

All felony indicted cases shall be assigned to the 506th District Court or County Court at Law Two as provided in Rule 1.3 above, unless the Judge is disqualified and/or the Judge recuses himself regarding a specific case, at which time the Presiding Judge of the Second Judicial Region shall appoint another judge to hear that case, or the case may be transferred to another Court having jurisdiction if agreed to by the receiving Judge.

D. New Indictments After Assignment

After assignment, the clerk shall assign any new indictment against a defendant to the same court.

E. Re-indictments

The clerk shall assign any re-indictment of the same defendant to the same court in which the prior indictment was assigned.

F. Co-Defendant Indictment

The clerk, after assignment of an indictment to a court shall assign any co-defendant subsequently indicted to the same court in which the first co-defendant's indictment was assigned.

G. Information to the District Clerk

The District Attorney shall note on a non-substantive part of the indictment the following information:

Whether there are other pending, indicted cases on the defendant;

Whether the indictment is a re-indictment and;

The names of any co-defendants not named in the indictment.

The District Attorney shall also furnish the clerk information in writing as to a recommended bond amount.

H. Assignment of Misdemeanor Cases After Information

All misdemeanor cases after information filed shall be assigned to the County Court at Law No.2 unless the County Court at Law No. 2 is disqualified and/or the County Court at Law No.2 recuses itself regarding a specific case, at which time the Presiding Judge of the Second Judicial Region shall appoint another judge to hear that case.

RULE 5.2 BONDS

Bonds will be set on each criminal case in accordance with Chapter 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The court may also, in a proper case, dispense with the requirement of sureties and require only a personal bond or a personal recognizance bond regarding the defendant, with or without conditions.

RULE 5.3 BOND SURRENDER

Sureties requesting a release on their liability on a Bail Bond must complete an Affidavit to Release Surety and present the completed affidavit along with an Order of Surrender to the Court in which the case of the defendant is currently pending.

RULE 5.4 BOND FORFEITURE

Bonds will be forfeited on all defendants who do not appear in court when scheduled or otherwise ordered to appear in court. The name of the defendant will be called three times at the courtroom door by the Bailiff and if there is no answer the bond will be forfeited and a capias issued by the clerk for his arrest. It is the duty of the Clerk of the Court to prepare a Judgment Nisi with the aid of the District Attorney. The Judgment Nisi proceedings will be docketed as a civil matter in the court that ordered the forfeiture and the defendant and his sureties shall be served with citation. After the surety files an answer or defaults, the Clerk of the Court shall notify the proper court coordinator for a trial setting to be docketed. The sureties shall be given forty-five days advance notice of any trial setting.

RULE 5.5 POST CONVICTION PROCEEDINGS

The clerk shall file any motion to revoke probation or any post-conviction application for writ of habeas corpus in the court having granted probation or entered the judgment in the case.

RULE 5.6 ARRAIGNMENT

Defendants shall be arraigned at the earliest possible time after indictment. Presence of the defendant is mandatory at arraignment unless excused by the court or counsel for defendant has filed a written waiver of arraignment prior to the date of the arraignment. At arraignment, a scheduling order shall be entered setting discovery deadlines, dates of pretrial hearing, docket call and trial date.

RULE 5.7 SCHEDULING ORDER

Each court will adopt a scheduling order that shall be delivered to the defendant and counsel at arraignment. The defendant and his counsel and counsel for the state shall sign the scheduling order.

RULE 5.8 DISCOVERY

After a timely request from the defendant, or when otherwise required, the State of Texas is ordered to furnish discovery to the defendant as provided in Article 39.14 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Counsel for defendant shall register for the e-discovery portal(s) with the Waller County District Attorney's office for discovery and accept discovery in that format. The 506th District Court has a Standing Discovery Order for Criminal Cases. The 506th District Court's Standing Discovery Order as posted on 506th District Court's webpage shall apply to all criminal cases tried in the 506th District Court and should counsel desire that additional matters be included, a motion will be required.- Counsel for the State and counsel for the defendant/pro se defendant must be ready to address any outstanding discovery issues at the pretrial hearing.

RULE 5.9 PRETRIAL HEARING

The pretrial hearing shall be held in a timely manner and the pretrial hearing date shall be provided by the Court as part of the scheduling order after all status hearing dates have been exhausted. All matters preliminary to actual trial on the merits must be brought to the attention of the court at the pretrial hearing.

RULE 5.10 DOCKET CALL

The court coordinator shall prepare a list of all cases on the trial docket. The defendant and his counsel shall be present and announce ready or not ready.

RULE 5.11 MOTIONS FOR CONTINUANCE

All motions for continuance, whether filed by the State or the defendant, must comply with the applicable law contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure and must be presented to and considered by the court in accordance with the scheduling order. Except for good cause shown and upon compliance with these rules, the court shall not consider any motion for continuance on the scheduled trial date.

RULE 5.12 STANDING ORDER IN LIMINE

The 506th District Court has a Standing Order in Limine for criminal felony cases. The Standing Order in Limine as posted on the Court's webpage shall apply to all criminal cases tried in the 506th District Court and should counsel desire that additional matters be included, a motion will be required. The County Court at Law No. 2 has a Standing Order in Limine for criminal cases. The Standing Order in Limine as posted on the Court's webpage shall apply to all criminal cases tried in the County Court at Law No. 2 and should counsel desire that additional matters be included, a motion will be required

RULE 5.13 VOIR DIRE

The District and County clerk shall align the Juror Information Cards in numerical order and seat the panel in numerical order. The judge will qualify the panel and accept or reject any excuses. After the final panel is determined, the attorneys must make their decision on whether or not a shuffle will be requested. The court will recess the panel to give the clerk time to copy the jury cards and to make a new list of names of jurors, either in shuffled order or in numerical order. When the new list is completed and cards copied the clerk will re-seat the jury according to the list and voir dire will begin. The attorneys and judge will be furnished a copy of the list and jury information cards.

Challenges for cause will be made after all parties have completed their voir dire examination of the panel. After all counsel have completed their voir dire examination, the attorneys will be asked to approach the bench. Counsel will be asked in turn for the juror number of the jurors whom they wish to challenge for cause. If, in the opinion of the Court, sufficient evidence has been adduced to support a ruling, the challenge will be granted or denied without further

questions. Otherwise, the panel member will be called to the bench for further questioning. The panel member will then be excused immediately or asked to return to their seat. The panel member asked to return to their seat may be excused at a later time.

If any panel member responds to questions during voir dire examination in a manner which makes it clear that they possess such strong opinions that a challenge for cause would clearly be appropriate, and there exists a possibility that further responses may “poison” the entire panel, counsel should diplomatically terminate the inquiry and avoid further inquiries in the presence of the panel. If adverse counsel has a good-faith belief that the panel member can be rehabilitated, it will be pursued on an individual basis after the general voir dire examination.

RULE 5.14 FAIR DEFENSE ACT

The rules adopted by Waller County concerning the Fair Defense Act may be obtained from the Local Administrative District Judge.

RULE 6

CONFLICTING ENGAGEMENTS OF ATTORNEYS

A. Attorney already in trial in another court

When informed that an attorney is presently in trial, the court will determine where and when assigned. This information will be verified upon request of opposing counsel and/or the Court. The case will be placed on “hold” or reset, depending upon when the attorney will be released. If the attorney is not actually in trial as represented by the attorney or his agent, the case will be tried without further notice.

B. Attorney assigned to two courts for the same date

It is the duty of every attorney to call the affected judge’s attention to all dual settings as soon as they are known. Insofar as is practicable, judges should attempt to agree on which case has priority, otherwise the following priorities shall be observed by the judges of the respective courts:

- Criminal cases

- Cases given preference by statute

- Preferentially set cases

- Case set at earliest date

- Case with earliest filing date

- Cases in Metropolitan areas should yield to courts in rural areas

If the conflict cannot be resolved between the two judges, the Local Administrative Judge or the Regional Presiding Judge will resolve the conflict.

C. Designation of Attorney in Charge

Every case shall have an attorney in charge designated.

RULE 7

ASSOCIATE JUDGES

A. Authority of Associate Judges

Pursuant to Texas Government Code § 54A and § 54B the District Court and County Courts at Law establish this rule to govern Associate Judge positions to serve all District and County Courts at Law of Waller County. Currently there is one Associate Judge that serves the 506th District Court, the County Court at Law Court 1, and the County Court at Law Court 2.

B. Approval Required

The appointment of the Associate Judge shall be made by approval by the board of judges (see Rule 2.2 above) consisting of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the elected Judges for the District and County Courts at Law of Waller County.

C. Qualifications

The qualifications for an Associate Judge shall be governed by Texas Government Code § 54A and § 54B. In addition, to qualify for an appointment as an Associate Judge to serve all county District and County Courts at Law in Waller County, a person must possess the following:

1. significant civil and criminal law experience, including knowledge of statutory and constitutional procedure, court trial procedure, the Texas Code of Civil and Criminal Procedure, the Texas Civil, Criminal, Family Law, Property and Estate Codes;
2. the ability to magistrate criminal cases, set bonds on criminal cases, review and execute warrants including blood warrants (save and except for matters that require an elected official to preside over certain matters); to conduct objective hearings; evaluate facts; and apply knowledge of the law to issues arising in both civil and criminal cases; and

D. Compensation

The compensation for an Associate Judge shall be governed by Texas Government Codes § 54A and § 54B.

E. Termination

The termination of an Associate Judge shall be governed by Texas Government Code § 54A and § 54B.

F. Duties and Matters to be Referred to the Associate Judge

The Associate Judge's Duties and matters referred to the Associate Judge shall be determined by approval of the board of judges consisting of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the elected Judges for the

District and County Courts at Law of Waller County. The board of judges consisting of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the elected Judges for the District and County Court at Law of Waller County shall issue a standing order regarding all referrals involving magistrate duties, approving the Associate Judge to entertain and execute warrants including blood warrants and arrest warrants, and presiding over detention hearings regarding juveniles. All other cases and matters to be referred and/or conducted by the Associate Judge shall be by specific case or by specific order specifying the class and type of cases and duties to be referred after approval of the board of judges consisting of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the elected Judges for the District and County Court at Law of Waller County.

G. Powers

The powers of an Associate Judge shall be governed by Texas Government Code § 54A and § 54B.

H. All other Requirements and Limitations

All other requirements and limitations on the Associate Judge pursuant to the Texas Government Code Chapters 54A and 54B shall apply.

RULE 8

ATTORNEY VACATIONS

A. DESIGNATION OF VACATION

Subject to the provisions of subparts B and C of this rule, an attorney may designate not more than four weeks of vacation during a calendar year as vacation, during which that attorney will not be assigned to trial or required to engage in any pretrial proceedings. This rule operates only where lead counsel, as defined by T.R.C.P., is affected, unless the trial court expands coverage to other counsel.

B. SUMMER VACATIONS

Written designation for vacation weeks during June, July, or August must be filed with the Clerk of the Court by May 15. Summer vacations so designated will protect the attorney from trials during those summer weeks, unless an order setting the case for trial was signed before the designation was filed.

C. NON-SUMMER VACATIONS

Written designations for vacations in months other than June, July, or August must be filed with the Clerk of the Court no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the requested vacation period. Non-summer vacation weeks may not run consecutively for more than two weeks at a time. Non-summer vacation weeks so designated will not protect an attorney from a trial by an order signed before the date the designation is filed.

RULE 9

LAWYER'S CREED

The Lawyer's Creed is applicable in all cases tried in the 506th District Court and the County Courts at Law Court in Waller County.

RULE 10

ADOPTION, APPROVAL AND NOTICE

RULE 10.1 ADOPTION

These rules are adopted by the 506th District Court and the County Courts at Law of Waller County for all purposes. All previous rules of the 506th District Court and the County Courts at Law of Waller County are hereby repealed.

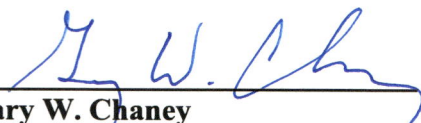
RULE 10.2 APPROVAL

Upon approval by the Judge of the Second Administrative Region and posted on the Office of Court Administration's website, these rules shall become effective immediately, and so long thereafter until amended, repealed or modified. Each numbered or lettered paragraph of these rules shall be considered to be separate and distinct from all other portions hereof, and if any portion should be declared by a higher court to be improper, such declaration will not affect any other portion not so declared to be improper.

RULE 10.3 NOTICE

The 506th District Clerk is directed to furnish a copy of these rules to the Supreme Court of Texas pursuant to Rule 3(a) of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure and to record these Rules in the Civil Minutes of the 506th District Court of Waller County, Texas. The County Clerk is directed to record the Rules in the Civil Minutes of the County Courts at Law of Waller County, Texas.

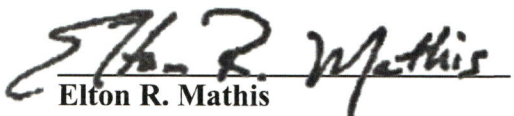
Approved and effective on this the 12th day of October, 2026.



Gary W. Chaney
District Judge
506th Judicial District



Bennett R. Dodson
County Court at Law No. 1 Judge
Waller County, Texas



Elton R. Mathis
County Court at Law No. 2 Judge
Waller County, Texas