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Contact: Abby E. Dozier
Communications Specialist
PH: 817.212.4061

An Old Practice Raises New Questions

FORT WORTH, Texas – From royalty payments to environmental concerns, urban gas drilling is an ongoing topic in north Texas. The *Texas Wesleyan Law Review* tackled the subject from every angle at the Urban Gas Drilling Symposium, April 16-17.

Sponsored by XTO Energy, the symposium featured more than 20 speakers and panelists who addressed various legal, environmental and regulatory issues that surround urban gas drilling. The relevance of urban drilling to legal practitioners in Dallas and Fort Worth encouraged the law review to focus on the topic.

“So many aspects of legal practice in Dallas and Fort Worth are immersed in urban gas drilling issues,” Zach Burt, symposium editor, said. “Oil and gas is an old practice in Texas, but drilling in urban areas is new. As a result, new legal questions have been raised. The timing was right for a good discussion about the legal aspects that are involved.”

More than 50 attorneys from the Dallas-Fort Worth legal communities attended the symposium. Panels addressed the topics of litigation, environmental concerns and city management of urban drilling. A city attorney panel included representatives from Fort Worth, Grand Prairie and Arlington, as well an attorney from a firm representing several smaller municipalities. The discussion presented attendees a rare opportunity to learn about the motivation behind the various regulations put in place for areas around north Texas.

“City regulation affects more than any other aspect of urban gas drilling,” Burt said. “To get that group of attorneys in one room and have the chance to ask them what the motivation behind the regulations was – such as balancing city interests or the economic aspects – was really beneficial.”

Other topics that were covered by presenters at the symposium included taxation, bankruptcy and leasing rights.

“So many businesses and residents of the DFW area are affected by the Barnett Shale,” Burt said. “We wanted to present a broad range of topics that would benefit people across the legal community.”

The symposium was the third hosted by the *Texas Wesleyan Law Review* during the 2008-09 academic year.