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## Symposium Explores Alternatives to Courtroom

**FORT WORTH, Texas** – The latest legal drama series or novel might have you believe the courtroom is the only place to hash out legal battles, but the other – albeit less dramatic – option of settling out of court, through alternative dispute resolution, was the topic of choice at Texas Wesleyan’s most recent law review symposium.

On Friday, Feb. 13, the *Texas Wesleyan Law Review* hosted a symposium on the topic of alternative dispute resolution. Ten speakers presented papers on subjects ranging from arbitration advocacy to mediation in domestic violence situations. An ethics panel focusing on ethical dilemmas faced by mediators and arbitrators concluded the day.

Presenters included Dallas attorney Harriet Miers and Director of the Florida Dispute Resolution Center Sharon Press.

Miers, former White House counsel for President George W. Bush, presented *The Importance of Teaching Problem-Solving in Law School*. She said that law schools can improve the reputation of the legal profession by teaching students to spot issues and propose solutions.

“Law schools need to emphasize that this is new concept law,” Miers said. “It’s not just being a technician and applying rules.”

Miers also talked about the development of alternative dispute resolution, and reminded attendees that it did not always exist as a settlement option. Early in her career, Miers said she worked for a judge who favored settlement, and often pressed lawyers to settle out of court.

“This man was ahead of his time,” Miers said.

Press, who will join Hamline University School of Law as the director of the Dispute Resolution Institute in July, presented *Reflections on Two Decades of ADR in Florida Courts: Lessons Learned for the Future*. Her lunchtime presentation addressed how alternative dispute resolution has developed in Florida since state statutes were broadened in 1987 to grant trial judges the authority to refer any contested civil matter to mediation or arbitration, subject to limited Supreme Court exceptions.

Symposium editor Zach Burt said the day’s presentations and panel provided a great variety of information and knowledge for attendees.

"The law review was honored to have such a collection of experts in the field of mediation, arbitration and collaborative law for our symposium," Burt said. "A lot of issues were discussed and I feel a lot of practical knowledge and advice was delivered to all the symposium attendees."

Symposium presenters included adjunct professor Kay Elliott of Texas Wesleyan School of Law; attorney Sherrie Abney of Dallas; attorney Jeff Poster of Fort Worth; attorney Mike Amis of Dallas; Judge Debra Lehrmann of the 360<sup>th</sup> District Court of Tarrant County; attorney Don Philbin of San Antonio; Professor Michael Green of Texas Wesleyan School of Law; and attorney Larry Maxwell of Dallas. Ethics panelists included attorney Jeff Poster; attorney Chuck Noteboom; attorney Don Philbin; professor Michael Green; attorney Larry Maxwell; and attorney Kim Kovach. The panel was moderated by Texas Wesleyan School of Law professor Frank Elliott.

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