

Tom Melsheimer Discusses Civil Jury Trials in Texas

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Dallas Office Managing Partner Tom Melsheimer discusses the state of the civil jury system in a Q&A with *Texas Lawbook*. Co-author of *On The Jury Trial: Principles and Practices For Effective Advocacy*, Tom and Dallas District Judge Craig Smith discuss the importance of juries.

Asked whether the drop in civil jury trials is good or bad development, Tom responds:

It's a terribly bad development. The jury system is the bedrock of our democracy and any erosion of it has the tendency to erode the public's faith in government, including the judicial system. The alternative to jury trials is too often secret arbitration proceedings which can't be effectively reviewed by the courts or known by the general public. There is a place for arbitration in our system of dispute resolution but it should not play a dominant role.

As far as key messages Tom hopes readers take from the book, he points out that trial lawyering is a skill that can be both learned and improved with effort. He also argues that lawyers have an obligation to protect the jury system by making jury trials efficient and intelligent presentations.

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