

SPEAKER PROFILES

SKYE PERRYMAN



Named one of the *Time 100's 2025 100 Most Influential People In The World*, one of the Most Powerful Women by *Washingtonian Magazine*, as well as one of *The NonProfit Times's Power & Influence Top 50* and their *2025 Influencer of the Year*, Skye Perryman is the President & CEO of Democracy Forward, a nonpartisan, national legal organization that promotes democracy and progress through litigation, regulatory engagement, policy education, and research. Ms. Perryman is known for developing innovative legal strategies, building unique communities and coalitions, and values-based leadership.

Under Ms. Perryman's leadership, Democracy Forward has played a leading role in inspiring courage and in protecting the American people from harmful and unlawful federal executive action, including securing a nationwide order stopping the freeze on funding and essential services, opposing executive actions that undermine diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, protecting due process, blocking the detainment of unaccompanied migrant children, blocking attempts to withhold federal funds for public schools and direct service providers for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, opposing attempts to politicize our nation's non-partisan civil service, and preventing the shut down of media outlets like the Voice of America. The organization has filed hundreds of legal actions this year alone, launched hundreds of investigations, and, through its Democracy2025 initiative, has organized the largest, most successful affirmative litigation effort against executive branch excesses in United States history.

Ms. Perryman's work has been recognized widely for its positive impact on people and communities. She has received numerous awards and recognitions for her commitment to public service and her professional work. Ms. Perryman is a frequent guest lecturer and keynote speaker on matters at the intersection of law and policy. She has testified before the U.S. Congress and other expert bodies and her legal work has been cited by the U.S. Supreme Court as well as state supreme courts. Ms. Perryman appears on both network and cable television and her work and commentary is routinely covered in outlets such as The New York Times, NPR, NBC News, The Washington Post, Texas Monthly, The Houston Chronicle, Teen Vogue, MSNBC and CNN.

Ms. Perryman grew up in Waco, Texas and is a proud product of K-12 public education. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Philosophy *magna cum laude* from Baylor University where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and a Juris Doctor with honors from the Georgetown University Law Center where she served as an Editor for the American Criminal Law Review.



TRIGG TALLEY

For two decades until his retirement last year, Trigg Talley served in various roles as the senior career climate official at the Department of State. He was director of the now defunct State Department climate office; deputy climate envoy under Todd Stern in the three years leading up to Paris; senior representative for climate in the first two years of the first Trump Administration; and as a senior advisor and managing director for climate programs and negotiations in the office of Special Envoy John Kerry.

Through this period he served as the officials-level US head of delegation to the UNFCCC, as well as lead for USG engagement in the IPCC and a number of other climate-focused bodies. In addition, he was responsible for oversight of well over a hundred different State Department climate program activities and contributions to multilateral climate funds. He served on the board of the Green Climate Fund from 2016-2018.

From 2019-2020, Trigg was a visiting fellow at the East West Center in Hawaii working on local sustainability issues and Pacific Island engagement.

This week he will begin an appointment as a professor of practice at the Center for Global Sustainability at UMD, and he is proud to be affiliated with America Is All In, whom he represented at COP-30.

Plenary Speakers



HON. GARY VAN DEAVER

Raised on a small family cattle operation near Clarksville, Texas, in Red River County, Gary learned the importance of a strong work ethic, a love for the land and faith in God from an early age. Traditional values and a commitment to service continue to drive Gary in his daily work on behalf of the families and communities of his district. Inspired by a deep-seated belief in serving others and investing in our rising generations, Gary embarked on a 33-year career as an educator.

After beginning his career as a vocational agriculture teacher, he became a school principal and completed a Doctorate in Educational Administration. He

last served as Superintendent of New Boston Independent School District before his initial election to the Texas House in 2014. Gary and his wife, Pamela, have been married for 41 years. Their two grown daughters carry on the family tradition of public service as a school teacher and criminal prosecutor. The VanDeavers also have two granddaughters and a grandson. Locally, Gary is involved with the Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club, having served as president of both. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Texas FFA, Red River County Farm Bureau, Bogata Rodeo Association and Red River County Fair Association. The VanDeavers are members of the First Baptist Church of New Boston, where Gary serves as a deacon and teaches adult Sunday school.

Throughout his time in the Texas House, Gary has served on the House Committees for Appropriations; Pensions, Investments, and Financial Services; House Administration; and Public Education. Most recently, he served on the House Committee for Higher Education and as Chair of the House Committee on Public Health.

HON. DONNA HOWARD



Representative Donna Howard has served in the Texas House of Representatives since 2006. She currently serves as the Vice-Chair of Article II in the House Appropriations Committee and as Vice Chair of the Higher Education Committee. Rep. Howard also serves as the Chairwoman of the Texas Women’s Health Caucus which is the largest caucus in the country solely focused on advancing women’s health policy.

A native of Austin, Donna earned a Bachelor’s degree in nursing and a Master’s degree in health education from the University of Texas. She worked as a critical care nurse at Brackenridge and Seton hospitals and served as Austin’s first hospital-based Patient Education Coordinator. Donna is a past president of the Texas Nurses Association (District 5) and was a health education instructor at UT.

Donna was elected to the Eanes ISD board in West Austin for the 1996-1999 term. She has served on the boards of Austin Area Interreligious Ministries, Common Cause Texas, Texas Freedom Network, and the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. She now serves as a board member of the Expanding Horizons Foundation, supporting low-income housing and education.

Representative Howard was married to attorney Derek Howard for 40 wonderful years and they proudly raised three children together. Rep. Howard is also a grandmother to seven perfect grandchildren.



BEAMAN FLOYD

Beaman Floyd is a consultant and lobbyist with more than 30 years of experience in public affairs. He owns his own lobby firm, and has worked on behalf of a variety of clients, among them property and casualty insurance companies and trade associations, public education associations, parents' rights groups, local government subdivisions, higher education groups, and religious groups. His activities include legislative strategy and direct lobbying, media relations, grass roots strategy, and academic research. Mr. Floyd has been highly involved in several major policy issues in Texas, including property and casualty insurance reform, catastrophe policy, workers' compensation reform, healthcare, public school finance, and higher education policy. He frequently represents clients in both the print and electronic media, both in Texas and nationally. He is also a regular guest lecturer to college faculty groups, in college classrooms, policy forums, and other political and educational settings. Mr. Floyd works with several organizations to advance the understanding of public affairs advocacy, and is currently working with international officials in emerging democracies to establish ethical lobbying practices. He is a Charter Member of the Professional Advocacy Association of Texas.



LYNN COWLES

As Every Texan's Health and Food Justice Director, Lynn Cowles works to increase food security and access to affordable health care coverage for all Texans, regardless of income, immigration status, employment status, education, primary speaking languages, gender identity, or medical history. She is a Community Health Worker and a subject matter expert on the Affordable Care Act, Texas health programs and policies, health education, and health communications. Lynn joined Every Texan in June 2024 and coordinates with enrollment assisters and advocates around Texas who help community members apply for food and health benefits programs and use those programs to have healthy lives. After receiving her PhD in Humanities Research at UT Austin in 2015, Lynn managed a federally-certified health Navigator program, led statewide advocacy efforts to prevent health insurance agent and broker mishandling of health insurance consumers' personal data, coordinated strategic health partnerships and coalitions across Texas, and initiated a rural enrollment services program that increased enrollment in rural Texas counties more than 100%. For Every Texan, she facilitates the Get Covered Texas coalition, the Children's Health Coverage Coalition, la coalición de Seguro Texas, and the Cover Texas Now coalition.

JAIME PUENTE

Jaime Puente oversees Every Texan's work on education, workforce development and job quality. Before joining Every Texan, Jaime served three sessions as Legislative Director for two members of the Texas House of Representatives, Dr. Alma Allen and Rep. Ann Johnson. He also served for one review cycle at the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission where he worked on the reports for the Department of Licensing and Regulation as well as the Commission on Jail Standards. Jaime, a proud Houstonian, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and History from the University of Houston-Downtown and a Master of Arts degree at the Center for Mexican American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. His Master's thesis used the history of Juarez Lincoln University in Austin, Texas, to discuss the contested implementation of War on Poverty programs established by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.



DIANA FORESTER

Diana Forester joined Texans Care for Children as the Director of Health Policy in 2022. In that role, she spearheads our work with the Texas Legislature, state agencies, and stakeholders to support health equity, improve access to health care for moms and kids, and more. Diana is frequently quoted in the media on maternal health care policy, the health insurance implications of the Public Health Emergency, children's health coverage, and more.

Before joining Texans Care for Children, Diana spent over a decade with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), worked for Chair Lois Kolkhorst on the Texas House Public Health Committee in 2013, served as a case manager at Foundation Communities, and worked in the legislative war room at AT&T headquarters. During her time as HHSC, Diana served in a number of senior roles. Most recently, as a Maternal Health Research Analyst, she was the maternal health lead for Medicaid quality initiatives. In previous positions at HHSC, Diana worked on ACA implementation projects, monitored the Medicaid and CHIP state plan amendments that deal with eligibility, and oversaw the Forms process for all of Access & Eligibility Services, among other responsibilities. Diana has a Masters of Public Health from the Texas A&M University School of Rural Public Health and a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Texas at Austin.

Workshop Speakers



DEIRDRE WALSH

Deirdre Walsh is the founder of the In Good Company Institute, where she helps trusted institutions, including workplaces, congregations, and community organizations, create civic-minded cultures rooted in clarity, trust, and care.

Through IGCI, she partners with leaders to make civic participation feel local, accessible, and aligned with everyday life. Deirdre brings more than twenty years of leadership experience in technology, communications, and organizational culture, including senior roles in global marketing and public affairs. Her work has been recognized by national media and policy institutions, and she has served in advisory and leadership roles with faith based and civic organizations across Texas. She is an active member of St. John's United Methodist Church.

MARJORIE CLIFTON

Marjorie Clifton brings more than two decades of experience in strategic communications, helping organizations navigate complex cultural and policy conversations with integrity and credibility. Her work spans corporations, nonprofits, and federal agencies, with a focus on trust, values, and organizational culture. Marjorie is also a frequent media commentator, appearing on national television and radio. As Managing Partner at IGCI, she leads communications strategy and supports partners across sectors, including faith communities, with practical, nonpartisan civic education designed to meet people where they are.



DIANNE HARDY-GARCIA

Dianne Hardy-Garcia is a prominent community organizer, advocate, and strategist with over three decades of experience advancing social justice and equality at the local, state, and national levels. She currently serves as the Director of Community Engagement and Advocacy at St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin. Additionally, she is a member of the Texas Impact Leadership Council and the Health Justice Action Network.

REV. ANDREW TERRY

The Reverend Andrew Terry serves as Area Missioner in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, connecting rural congregations with their local communities. He works with churches and communities in the Brazos Valley. He also supports Area Missioners doing the same connecting work in other areas of central and east Texas.



REV. ALYSSA STEBBING

The Rev. Alyssa Stebbing currently serves as Rector of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Austin, TX. Since 1989, Alyssa has served in a variety of ministries that support those in poverty, fleeing violence, refugee resettlement (including the Rainbow Coalition for LGBTQIA+ refugees), and in migration ministries. She worked for nine years with Compassion International around the

world and on reservations raising funds for education, food insecurity, and medical needs of children. As a professed Franciscan with the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, her call is to walk with the poor and marginalized, respecting the dignity of every human being.

DR. ELLEN ALEXANDRAKIS

Dr. Ellen Alexandrakis has more than 25 years of experience as an educator, school administrator, and professional learning provider. A United Methodist, 6th generation Texan who lives at the intersection of theology and social justice - specifically, educational equity—this year she started seminary at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.



REV. MARA BIM

Mara Richards Bim is a pastor, a spiritual director, a religion reporter and an award-winning theater artist. Driven by a desire to explore the stories people tell about themselves and others, Mara worked as a theater artist and as the founder of [Cry Havoc Theater Company](#) (2014-2023), traveled across the country to collect interviews on guns in America, and journeyed to the Southern border to interview people on all sides of the immigration conversation. She ministers as the Justice & Advocacy Fellow at [Royal Lane Baptist Church](#) and writes about the intersection of religion and politics for [Baptist News Global](#). She is a member of the Texas Impact Leadership Council.

SHANNON HALBROOK

Shannon Halbrook is the director of our Invest in Texas team, overseeing our fiscal policy research and advocacy. He joined Every Texan in March 2023. Previously, he worked for the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts and the Department of Information Resources as a policy researcher and data analyst, where he gained unique insight into how we can more effectively advocate for state budget and tax policy that invests in the future of every Texan. A Texas native, Shannon lived in Boston for a number of years, where he worked for the National Consumer Law Center. He holds a master's degree from the LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT Austin.



LAURA MUTHER

Laura Muther is the 2025-2026 Hunger Advocacy Fellow with the Lutheran Office of Public Policy - California (LOPP-CA). Laura is an alumna of Valparaiso University, where she served as Chair of the Social Action Leadership Team (SALT), after serving as donor relations co-leader and faith & reflections coordinator. Following her time at Valparaiso University, Laura served a year with the Episcopal Service

Corps in Seattle as a Vendor Program Intern with Real Change news, working with members of Seattle's unhoused and low-income population. She is from the St. Louis area, and enjoys photography and hiking.

KRISTIN ETTER

As the Director of Policy and Legal Services at the Texas Immigration Law Council, Kristin Etter develops strategies and programs to move forward practical immigration reforms for Texas and our nation. Prior to joining Texas Immigration Law Council, Kristin served as the Special Project Director of Operation Lone Star at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid where she developed and implemented the litigation response to Operation Lone Star. With over 20 years of federal and state litigation and policy experience, Kristin frequently shares her expertise on immigration and border issues with state and federal governmental officials, non-governmental organizations and media. In addition to representing thousands of immigrants throughout her legal career, Kristin is also regularly engaged in collaborating with advocacy organizations and policy makers, drafting and analyzing legislation, testifying on legislative issues, and educating immigrant communities, attorneys, judges, students, business and law enforcement groups.



BOBBY WATSON

Bobby Watson graduated Cum Laude from Trinity University class of 2021 with a B.A. in Political Science and minors in Spanish and Russian. Bobby has more than 6 years of non-profit experience. He has been with Texas Impact for nearly 3 years first as a Human Rights Fellow and later as a full-time Policy Advocate. With Texas Impact, Bobby works as a policy analyst focusing on violence prevention, immigration, and climate change. Bobby also manages the Texas Impact project, Vidas Robadas, a gun violence prevention campaign that addresses the various aspects of gun violence through memorial installations and community mobilization.

Texas Impact Staff



BEE MOORHEAD

Bee Moorhead has been Executive Director of Texas Impact and its sister organization, the Texas Impact Foundation, since 2000. Under Bee's leadership, Texas Impact and the Texas Impact Foundation are among the most respected interfaith networks in the country. Bee's policy expertise includes a wide range of issues including health and human services, climate, migration, public budgets, and civic engagement. She has served on numerous state agency

working groups and task forces on topics ranging from nursing homes to hurricane response. She is a credentialed observer to the United Nations climate policy negotiations process. Bee holds a Bachelor of Arts in Costume Design from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Master of Public Affairs from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. She is an adjunct faculty member at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary where she co-leads a senior-level course in Faith and Public Policy. She is a sought-after lecturer and presenter at conferences, religious gatherings, and in a variety of educational settings. Her writing has appeared in major Texas newspapers and denominational publications. Bee is married to Robert Moorhead, a longtime staff member for the PBS series Austin City Limits, the longest-running music program in television history. The Moorheads have three grown children and two grandchildren.

SCOTT ATNIP

Scott Atnip rejoined the Texas Impact staff as Director of Public Witness in 2012 after a stint as a Texas Impact intern in 2002-2003. Scott connects Texans of faith with opportunities to engage in the policy process through Texas Impact programs like Weekly Witness, Rapid Response, Legislative Engagement Groups and Faith in Democracy. He received his B.A. in Political Science from Sam Houston State University and an M.A. of Public Affairs from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas and is a Certified Lay Servant in the United Methodist Church. In his free time, Scott coaches his daughter and son's youth soccer teams.



BECCA EDWARDS

Becca Edwards joins Texas Impact after completing a Masters in Divinity at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She is chair of the Mercy and Justice committee at First United Methodist Church of Austin. Rev. Dr. Edwards was commissioned as a Provisional Deacon in the Capital District of the Rio Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Becca earned a PhD in Wind Science and Engineering at Texas Tech University in 2009. Her research led her to set up wind instruments ahead of landfalling hurricanes along the Gulf coast. She served as a visiting assistant professor of physics at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas for ten years, teaching climate science, earth science, and engineering courses and conducting research in the areas of hydroclimate extremes and air quality. Her current interests include liberation theology, climate justice, hydroclimate extremes, interfaith understanding, and worship. Becca lives in Round Rock with her husband and four children and is always searching for the best day hike/taco combo in Austin. So far it's hard to beat the Taco Deli at the Spyglass trailhead of the Barton Creek Greenbelt.

KYLE RILEY

Kyle Riley is a graduate of the University of Texas with a B.A. in History. Kyle completed his Master of Divinity at Iliff School of Theology in Denver and will officially graduate in May. He will be ordained in the United Church of Christ in February. Kyle works for Texas Impact as a Public Witness Mobilizer, where he advocates for reproductive health care and LGBTQ+ rights across Texas. Kyle frequently preaches at congregations of varying denominations across the state. He lives in Houston, Texas with his fiancée Scout and their two dogs. When he is not working or in school, Kyle loves to take up new hobbies like woodworking, puzzling, crochet, and reading.



GRACE BONILLA

Grace Bonilla is an alumna of Southwestern University and a recent graduate of UT Austin's Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, where she earned a Masters of Latin American Studies with a focus on the Texas Chicano Movement. Specializing in Latino populations, Grace has experience working with Austin nonprofits such as the St. David's Foundation and United Way of Greater Austin. She is excited to be a part of the Texas Impact team and work to facilitate meaningful connections between the members and the faith community.

KAT KARBACH

Kat Karbach joined Texas Impact in October 2022, as the Membership Manager. She brings with her 10 years of experience engaging the community, working with major donors, coordinating volunteers, and planning fundraising events. As Membership Manager, Kat equips and mobilizes Texas Impact members, both individuals and organizations, to live their faith in the public square. Kat holds a B.S in Psychology from Virginia Tech – Go HOKIES. In her free time, Kat enjoys reading and exploring the food and music scene in Austin.



REBECCA MCILWAIN

Rebecca McIlwain serves as manager of Texas Impact's project Houston Faith Votes. For over a decade, Rebecca served in parish ministry in the Ft. Worth and San Angelo Dioceses, focusing on social justice initiatives, adult and youth religious education, and campus ministry. Then, she turned to community organizing where she worked with congregations and schools across West Texas and later Austin to engage members in nonpartisan civic engagement. She

holds a B.S. in Secondary Education – history and political science teaching certification, and an M.A. in Christian Community Development from Regis University in Denver, CO. After raising her three children, Rebecca relocated to Northern California, where she lived and worked at the Zen Monastery Retreat Center. There, she facilitated retreats and provided individual and group coaching on such topics as Mindful Citizenship, Compassionate Parenting, and Joyful Eating. Rebecca loves vegetarian cooking and took on the task of revising and compiling the latest edition of The Zen Monastery Cookbook. She loves being outdoors, preferably playing with her two grandkids or volunteering with the Gulf Coast Master Naturalists, of which she is a member.



DAVID VASSALLO

David Vassallo joined Texas Impact full time in January 2022 after having worked alongside the team during live events for years. David heads up digital communications including, but not limited to, Texas Impact’s social media pages and YouTube channels. Prior to working with Texas Impact, David managed live event production for several companies in and around the Austin area. Now he brings his production prowess and passion for policy to the table in service of expanding the reach of Texas Impact’s works. David is a long-time Austin resident and father of three. Both he and his wife, Colleen, are active in their community and participate in organizing for social justice and mutual aid. David is a musician and producer with a deep passion for experimental composition and synthesizers.

HEATHER MALKAWI

Heather Malkawi joined Texas Impact in 2021, as a seminary intern, then served a year as the Unitarian Universalist Justice Fellow focusing on LGBTQIA2S+, Immigration, and Health & Human Service issues. She served as the liaison between Texas Impact and member organization Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry. She brings over 20+ years in the non-profit social work and insurance industries. Heather is a graduate of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (2024) with a Master of Divinity (MDiv), and her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Michigan (2002). She received the Charles L. King Preaching Award & The Ethel W. Lance Human and Civil Rights Award. Her current interests include interfaith understanding of religious trauma and its effects on individual spirituality. When she is not working, Heather is an active member at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX. She has recently taken up the hobby of knitting/crocheting. Heather was raised in Flint, Michigan (yes that one). She has lived in Chicago and now Austin, Texas, with her two teenage boys.





DANIEL CASTILLO

Daniel Castillo is a Communications Consultant with Texas Impact. Daniel graduated from Bowling Green State University in Ohio where he completed a Bachelor's degree in Media Studies and graphic design. He is a newer staff member to the Texas Impact team and is passionate about design, infographics, and media production. His goal within Texas Impact is using design and media to align our communication with our organization's mission. Daniel spent 10 years at Texas Department of State Health Services as a data analyst and financial planner within the Laboratory & Infectious Disease Services division.

ALEXANDRA LANG

Alexandra is a lifelong Texan dedicated to making her home state a better place. She graduated from Texas Christian University with a double major in Journalism and Political Science. Most recently, she was a producer at Spectrum News, covering Texas and national politics for a statewide audience. Now, she is excited to join the Texas Impact team as a Policy Fellow and work with people of faith to create positive change.



SYDNEY MARMUREK

Sydney holds a B.A. in International Relations and Global Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies from the University of Texas. Specializing in human rights advocacy, she has experience working with various non-profits in Austin and Dallas including Texas Equal Access Fund and American Gateways. She is excited to be a part of the Texas Impact team and work with various faith communities on providing equality for all Texans. In her free time she enjoys doing the NY Times games and going to see live music in Austin.

DYLAN LE

Dylan holds a B.A. in Sociology and a certificate in Spanish from the University of Texas at Austin. As a son of a Vietnamese refugee and having specialized in Latin American Studies during his study abroad at UNAM, Mexico City, his work as a Public Policy Fellow is driven by his passion to promote legislation that protects and supports Texas' diverse communities. Dylan has experience working in various volunteer organizations and is thrilled to be a part of Texas Impact's team. He speaks fluent Spanish, and in his free time enjoys learning other languages, practicing the trombone, and playing with his dogs Opal and Mahler.

