

JOSEPH H. HART
Arbitrator-Mediator-Special Judge

Joseph H. Hart is a full time arbitrator, mediator and special (or "private judge").

Prior to establishing his own practice, Judge Hart was senior counsel with Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld L.L.P. in Austin, Texas, where his primary practice was as an arbitrator and mediator.

Before joining Akin Gump Judge Hart served for seventeen years as judge of the 126th District Court of Travis County, Texas. His fellow judges elected him presiding judge of the Travis County District Courts in 1995. After being appointed to the bench, Judge Hart was named in each successive Travis County Bar Association Judicial Evaluation Poll as the top-rated judge.

Judge Hart's practice focuses on international and domestic arbitration, mediation, and other forms of alternative dispute resolution, including summary jury trials and trial by special judge (see, Tex. Civil Practice and Remedies Code, Ch. 151). Areas of alternative dispute resolution practice include business torts; business, commercial and contract law; family law; probate disputes; civil rights; construction; consumer/DTPA; creditor/debtor; eminent domain/condemnation; employment/labor; environmental/mass tort; health; insurance; intellectual property; landlord/tenant; libel/slander/defamation; legal, medical and professional malpractice; oil and gas/energy; personal injury; products liability; real estate; and regulatory/governmental. Additionally, he serves as a judge in mock hearings that are designed to assist parties in the presentation of judicial arguments before the court.

As a judge, he was instrumental in the design and implementation of the alternative dispute resolution systems now in place in the Travis County court system. Prior to his appointment to the bench, Judge Hart engaged in general civil trial and appellate practice before the Texas and U.S. trial, intermediate appellate and Supreme Courts. In the early 1970s he served as a trial attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice Organized Crime Section in the Cleveland, Ohio, Strike Force.

Judge Hart received his B.A. in 1963 and his J.D. in 1966 from the University of Texas. He participated in continuing judicial education at the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada, and with the Texas Center for the Judiciary. His ADR training includes the American Academy of Attorney-Mediators, Inc.; Travis County Dispute Resolution Center; Center for Public Policy Dispute Resolution; SPIDR-Advanced Mediation; Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (International Arbitration); and International Chamber of Commerce. He has been a member of numerous State Bar of Texas committees including the Alternative Dispute Resolution Council and the Court Rules Committee. He is also a member of the American Bar Association. Judge Hart previously served as a member of the statewide Texas Commission on Judicial Efficiency. He has been a speaker and moderator at frequent Bar association and law school continuing legal education seminars and has lectured to classes at the University of Texas School of Law. His publications include "Free Speech on Private Property: When Fundamental Rights Collide," 68 *Texas L. Rev.* (Issue No. 7, June 1990).

Judge Hart is a former president of the Robert W. Calvert Chapter of the American Inns of Court (1992-1993). He was named the Travis County Bar Association Distinguished Lawyer of the Year Award for 2000. From 1983 to 1998 he served as a director of Volunteer Legal Services of Central Texas, which honored him by naming an award in his honor. The Joseph H. Hart Award will be given each year to the law firm that has demonstrated integrity in and commitment to providing legal services to the poor. Judge Hart has been very active over the years in civic matters. He was a founding director of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), which provides volunteer advocates for abused and neglected children in court. In addition, he was a founding director of the Austin Lyric Opera and a former president of the Heritage Society of Austin.

Judge Hart frequently travels out of Austin for arbitrations and mediations in other parts of the country. He may be contacted as follows:

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