

RENE M. SIGMAN

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713-626-8880

EDUCATION

South Texas College of Law, J.D., Houston, Texas

August 1999 - May 2002

AWARDS & HONORS:

- 2002 Recipient of the South Texas College of Law “Dean’s Outstanding Advocate Award”
- 2001 Recipient of the “Best Advocate” award & Semi-finalist in the National White-Collar Criminal Mock Trial Championship held at Georgetown University.
- 2001 Regional Semi-finalist at the National Trial Competition
- 2001 Quarter-finalist at the William & Mary Moot Court Competition in Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 2001 Recipient of the “Best Team” & “Best Appellate Brief” awards at the Texas Young Lawyers Association State Moot Court Championship competition.
- Director of Public Relations for South Texas College of Law Board of Advocates

Texas A&M University, BBA in Business Management, College Station, Texas

August 1995 - May 1999

- Collegiate Swimmer for Texas A&M University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Rene´ M. Sigman is the Merlin Law Group’s Regional Litigation Manager running the firm’s Texas operation. She is revered as one of the pioneers in first party practice on the policyholder side. She started her career in 2002 at Mostyn Law and quickly excelled as a policyholder attorney obtaining millions of dollars in recovery for her clients over the years. In 2007, she obtained the title of Head of Litigation at Mostyn Law and continued in that position successfully until she joined Merlin Law Group in 2017.

She is licensed in TX, CO, and NY and has personally handled thousands of First Party Litigation cases against insurance carriers over the last 18 years. Over her career, she has represented all types of policyholders, including school districts, municipalities, residential, and commercial businesses on their insurance claims. Additionally, Ms. Sigman is one of the first & few attorneys that has ever tried a first-party hurricane lawsuit in Texas successfully. Her trials have also included Breach of Contract, First Party Bad Faith, and UIM cases against insurance companies, such as USAA and Texas Windstorm Association. Her knowledge and understanding the Texas Insurance Code and laws pertaining to insurance disputes has been instrumental in prevailing as the policyholder’s advocate.

There is no question among her peers and clients that Ms. Sigman is known for her tenacity, dedication, and unbeatable work ethic in handling every case she touches. She holds her clients’ best interest at heart and her passion for bringing justice to her clients has earned her many accolades and awards within her field and among her peers. The cases entrusted to her have generated hundreds of millions of dollars in recovery and settlements and she has extensive experience in handling all facets of discovery, including depositions, hearings, and trials. Over the last decade, her work ethic and respect in the industry has led to several leadership roles and/or appointments in various counties in Texas, including the following matters:

- Plaintiffs’ Co-Liaison Counsel on behalf of Plaintiffs for the consolidated Hurricane Ike Litigation in Harris County, Texas; *In Re: Hurricane Ike Residential Property Claim Litigation*, 2009-23570.
- Plaintiffs’ MDL Liaison Counsel on behalf of Plaintiffs for Geovara Multi-District Hurricane Ike Litigation in Harris County, Texas; *In Re MDL 13 (Hurricane): Geovara Specialty Insurance Company v. Master File*, 2012-38535, Geovara MDL Order (Aug. 03, 2012).
- Plaintiffs’ Steering Committee Counsel on behalf of Plaintiffs for *In Re State Farm Lloyds MDL 13*, 2012-38530.
- Plaintiffs’ Co-Liaison Counsel for *In Re: Ike Litigation* for Hurricane Ike in Galveston County, Texas; *In Re: Ike Litigation Residential and Commercial Property Claims*, 09-CV-0147.

During her appointments to leadership, she was entrusted with negotiating, drafting, meeting, and conferring on Hurricane Ike Litigation on behalf of the Plaintiffs’ bar. In the above matters, she met with opposing counsel and the courts to establish procedure and protocol for the handling thousands of catastrophe weather-related lawsuits from the beginning of litigation through trial. The case management orders created during this process were the foundation for years to come for various

MDL, including the Hidalgo County 2012 hailstorm MDL, Farmers MDL, State Farm MDL, and other consolidated matters throughout Texas and beyond.

In addition to her service as Plaintiffs' liaison counsel in Ike litigation, Ms. Sigman was also the Lead Attorney who took the two-day deposition of the top wind expert for Texas Windstorm Association concerning Bolivar Island Hurricane Ike claims that resulted in TWIA paying hundreds of millions of dollars to resolve those claims and the replacement of top Texas Windstorm officers.

Additionally, in 2014, Rene assisted as an attorney on cases involving Hurricane Sandy. She handled several evidentiary hearings concerning allegations of altered engineering reports used by flood carriers, such as Wright National Flood Insurance, and their hired experts to deny claims for Sandy victims. Most notably, in October 2014, in the United States Eastern District Court of New York, Ms. Sigman cross-examined U.S. Forensic executive, Michael Garove in an evidentiary hearing regarding the alternation of engineering reports. Under cross-examination by Ms. Sigman, Defendant's witness, Michael Garove, testified that he routinely altered third-party engineer reports and their conclusions as a standard practice, procedure, & protocol. This testimony changed the projection of the Sandy cases for years to come and facilitated settlement of the entire Sandy docket for multiple Plaintiff law firms through a neutral review process that was created by FEMA in response to evidence obtained by Ms. Sigman at that hearing. The *In Re Hurricane Sandy* Orders were changed as a result of this testimony to require Defendant insurers to produce all drafts, originals, and red-lined versions of engineer reports for Sandy litigation. Her work on behalf of the policyholder for Hurricane Sandy ultimately led to investigations by government agencies into the alleged fraud and the altering of engineering reports by the insurance industry experts and affiliates.

Ms. Sigman is recognized as one of the best policyholder insurance lawyers in Texas. She has been consistently named to Texas Super Lawyer lists for 9 consecutive years from 2011 to present, an achievement gained through her dedication to her clients' cause and recognition among her peers for outstanding results in consumer protection and insurance.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & AWARDS

- Super Lawyers, Top Woman Attorneys in Texas, & Texas Rising Star List (2011 to present). *Only 2.5% of attorneys in Texas are selected to the Texas Rising Star list.* Super Lawyers "Excellence in Practice" Award (2016 to present). *Only 5% of attorneys in Texas are selected to Super Lawyers.* Top Woman Attorneys in Texas (2018 to present) *seen in Texas Monthly Magazine.*
- Selected to the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System's "Natural Disasters Initial Discovery Protocol Committee" as well as the "2020 Pandemic Discovery Protocol Committee". Ms. Sigman is the only plaintiff attorney from Texas appointed twice to an IAALS national committee. This committee is tasked with the developing procedures & protocols for initial discovery and document exchange in natural disaster & pandemic business interruption cases across the nation. Only three judges and six attorneys nationwide sit on the Pandemic committee. Only two judges and ten lawyers nationwide sit on the Natural Disasters committee.
- Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation; Houston Trial Lawyers Association Board Member 2018.
- Board Member for "Be The Match" Foundation and Family Advisor to Texas Children's Hospital.
- Served several years as an Adjunct Professor of Trial Advocacy at South Texas College.
- Licensed in Texas, Colorado, & New York; United States District Court of the Eastern District, Western District, Southern District, & Northern District of Texas; & Licensed in United States Court of Federal Claims.
- Recognized in the Texas Lawyer, Texas Monthly, Texas Bar Journal, Houston Bar Bulletin, & Bloomberg News.
- Speaker at numerous seminars/CLE events regarding insurance and first party "bad faith" claims, (including topics such as Hurricane Ike, discovery, depositions, choosing a jury, and floods). More recently, the co-chair of the *HarrisMartin Hurricane Harvey Seminar (October 2017)*; Presenter at the *Property Insurance Law Spring CLE Conference "What keeps you up at night?" (March 2018)*; Presenter at the *Texas Association of Public Insurance Adjusters Mid-Year meeting in Houston (March 2018)*; Faculty member of *TTLA Trial Advocacy College of Texas (April 8-11, 2018)*; co-chair of the *HarrisMartin Hurricane Litigation Conference (Miami, FL May 2018)*; Speaker at *NAPLA Annual Meeting "Ethical Claims Adjusting" (June 13-16, 2018)*; Speaker/Presenter/Author at *15th Annual TexasBar Advanced Insurance Law Course (June 28-29, 2018)* "Weather Related Claims & Forces of Nature"; Speaker at *TAPLA Annual Meeting regarding "Trends in Policies & Why You Should Care" (October 2018)*; Presenter of the *Inaugural Mark Kincaid Insurance Law Memorial Lecture/Co-Author at the Texas Bar Advanced Consumer & Commercial Law course (September 2019)*; Speaker/Presenter at *TAPLA Annual Meeting regarding "Ethics & Public Adjusting" (October 2019)*; Speaker at *TAPLA "Water Damage Assessment."* Presenter at the *Texas Association of Public Insurance Adjusters Mid-Year meeting in Houston (March 2020) on Water Damage Assessment;*