

FORT WORTH

COURTS

When District Attorney Craig Watkins was searching for someone to help him revamp how the prosecutor's office works, where did he look? No farther than Tarrant County.



Terri Moore, a longtime prosecutor and defense attorney in Tarrant County, is already making waves as first assistant at the Dallas County district attorney's office.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RODGER MALLISON

Dallas prosecution has distinct Cowtown flavor

“I’m here to free the innocent, but I’m also here to convict the guilty.”

Terri Moore, Dallas County first assistant district attorney

By MAX B. BAKER
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Leaning against the wall of Terri Moore's office is a sobering list of names.

- James Giles — 25 yrs
- Billy Smith — 19 yrs
- James Waller — 10 yrs

Thirteen names in all. All innocent men who collectively served 185 years in jail. All eventually exonerated by DNA evidence.

For Moore, the new second-in-command of the Dallas County district attorney's office, it is a daily reminder of the mission she and others

in her office embrace.

“I’m here to free the innocent, but I’m also here to convict the guilty,” said Moore, who was hired last year soon after District Attorney Craig Watkins was elected on promises to restore the public's confidence in an office with a reputation for doing whatever it takes to get a conviction.

“It’s about conviction integrity,” she said.

The Tarrant County influence runs deep in Watkins' office, which also brought in Mike Ware, a top Fort Worth criminal defense attorney; Joe

More on DALLAS on SB



Changing direction

Dallas County District Attorney Craig Watkins has brought lawyers from Tarrant County in to help overhaul the office. The new faces, SB

OBITUARY

Houston reporter fought fraud



Marvin Zindler, whose fight to close a brothel inspired *The Best Little*

JOHNSON COUNTY

Burleson gives tentative OK to red-light cameras

By ELIZABETH CAMPBELL
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You might want to think twice about running red lights in Burleson: The city is considering joining a growing number of communities that are using red-light cameras.

The City Council took the first step last

mid-November, Cowan said.

In 2006, there 157 car wrecks at the targeted intersections. Twenty-one percent of those wrecks were caused by people running red lights.

The cameras will photograph vehicles that run red lights. The vehicle's owner will be mailed a citation for \$75.

If the ordinance is approved, Burleson

Camera locations

if approved, the red-light cameras would be placed along Wilshire Boulevard at five intersections in Burleson.

Dallas: New focus on past and potential exonerations has ruffled some feathers

CONTINUED FROM 1B

Lockhart, a former U.S. attorney in Fort Worth; and Mike Casillas and Myra McIntosh, former Tarrant County prosecutors. Lockhart is the new head of the appellate division, where Casillas also works. McIntosh is a felony prosecutor.

Watkins laughs about any suggestion that a Tarrant County posse is riding to Dallas County's rescue.

"You look at the best and the brightest," Watkins said. "If they come from Dallas County, fine. If they come from Tarrant County, fine."

Gritty history

Even many of Watkins' critics agree: Hiring Moore may be the smartest thing he's done so far.

Watkins, who had never been a prosecutor before, fired about a dozen of the office's top prosecutors, while a handful resigned. The first black district attorney in Texas and the first Democratic Dallas district attorney in two decades, he knew that a lot of people were watching.

Watkins wanted someone "with backbone" to help him but to also come in loyal to his mission. As a graduate of Texas Wesleyan University's law school and an intern in the Tarrant County district attorney's office, he naturally looked toward Fort Worth.

Moore brings a grittier résumé. Before working recently as a defense attorney, she was an assistant U.S. attorney, where she tried the nation's largest Internet child pornography case. She also prosecuted bank robbers and crooked bankers.

Before that, she became almost legendary at the Tarrant County district attorney's office for her tenacity, brash behavior and ability to rap with gang members while prosecuting "ghetto murders." She still gets hate mail from those she convicted.

Moore failed in two at-

tempts to unseat longtime District Attorney Tim Curry. She is considered a potential U.S. attorney by many legal observers.

"She has a great reputation as a prosecutor and a trial lawyer," said Toby Shook, who was chief of the felony trial division and lost the election to Watkins. "It was a good move on his part to get an experienced prosecutor to help him run the office."

Watkins said Moore "adds a little more salt to the seasoning."

"Terri is in your face, cusses like a sailor," Watkins said. "I'm more laid-back, easygoing. I think we kind of balance each other out."

Some actions by Watkins and Moore have a few observers wondering whether the two may identify too much with defense attorneys and whether they are soft on crime.

Dressed in a sharp white linen suit and with an even sharper tongue, Moore said she's never "been accused of being a liberal weenie."

"It's like this. When you see me being all mean, OK, it is being mean to some defendant who murdered. Raped. I mean, hurt somebody," Moore said. She also adds she believes in the death penalty, saying, "Some people need killin'!"

Seeking justice

Moore takes prosecutors' responsibility to seek justice seriously.

As Watkins' first assistant, she welcomed the North Texas Innocence Project, in which law students from Texas Wesleyan, Texas Tech and Southern Methodist universities review about 400 convictions with questionable DNA evidence, going back to the 1970s.

It is an unprecedented step for a prosecutor to give office space to an innocence project. Some district attorneys have little patience for the law students and their professors. Others show outright hostility.



Former Tarrant County attorneys Joe Lockhart, left, Terri Moore and Mike Ware now work for the Dallas County district attorney's office.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RODGER MALLISON

Still, the idea is getting international attention and praise.

"It's clear to me that Craig's office is interested in justice," said Barry Scheck, a New York attorney who created the national Innocence Project. "And not only are we going to find people didn't commit crimes, but we're also going to catch people that did, and that is one of the really important aspects to this whole initiative. That is really just good law enforcement."

While the innocence project deals with major crimes, Moore is reaching down to change how the office prosecutes misdemeanors.

Under Moore, first-time offenders facing nonviolent, low-level drug and theft charges will be asked to take classes, submit to drug testing and do community service instead of spending time in jail. In return, they will have their records wiped clean.

She's also adopted Tarrant County's open-file policy, allowing defense attorneys to see some of the same evidence as prosecutors. Before, defense attorneys pried out information at time-consuming examining trials.

That open-file policy comes with an order that prosecutors be more open-minded and less hostile to defense lawyers.

"They are concerned with being fair and not with trying someone by ambush," said Robert Udashen, president of the Dallas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. "It is easy to win cases when you hide evidence. You want the system to be fair and treat everyone fair-

ly."

'We had a fair office'

Former prosecutors reject Watkins' portrayal of the past. They say that morale is plummeting and that veteran prosecutors resign every day.

"Is there public integrity in the DA's office?" asked Patricia Hogue, a former chief of the child abuse division who was named Prosecutor of the Year in 2004. She was fired by Watkins. Hogue says she was dismissed for being too tough on child abuse cases.

"I came down on the side of kids, and he came down on the side of defendants," she said.

Shook points out that the exonerations Moore touts were done under then-District Attorney Bill Hill using evidence preserved in cases going back 30 years. He also said Moore's open-file policy isn't much more open than one he instituted.

"If there was conviction at all costs, they would have destroyed the evidence," Shook said. "I think we had a fair office, and nobody cared more about justice than the prosecutors who worked there."

Tom D'Amore, who managed nine felony courts, said that during his 19 years he never saw the abuses Watkins mentions; he says those stemmed from earlier administrations. "They've lost a lot of valuable and hardworking people from that office," he said.

But Ware said Watkins' reform agenda — and his own friendship with Moore — convinced him to shut down his practice a few weeks ago.

As a special assistant to Watkins, Ware, former head of TWU's Innocence Project, will continue to work with its students. In Dallas, 13 inmates have been freed, and Watkins suggests that up to 40 percent of the DNA reviews could lead to other exonerations.

Lockhart, Casillas and McIntosh say working at the other end of the Metroplex is different — and exciting.

"It's a new regime with new thoughts," McIntosh said. "I feel like I'm a part of history."

The new faces

Craig Watkins



Age: 39
Education: Texas Wesleyan Law School
Background: Dallas city prosecutor for one year; 13 years in criminal defense, real estate practice and the bail bond business.
Quote: "My philosophy is that we are either going to run scared and walk on eggshells — and still be criticized — or we are going to go boldly and do what is necessary. So, since we are going to be criticized, we may as well do the right thing."

Terri Moore



Age: 48
Education: South Texas College of Law in Houston
Background: 10 years in the Tarrant County district attorney's office; four years in the U.S. attorney's office; six years in criminal defense.

Quote: "The right thing has not been done in Dallas County for a long, long time."

Mike Ware



Age: 53
Education: University of Houston Law School
Background: 23 years of private criminal defense practice; assistant professor at Texas Wesleyan University Law School; director of the school's Innocence Project.

Quote: "As a defense lawyer you are not in power to do justice; you are constantly trying to persuade people who are in power to do justice, and that is what is different about Craig Watkins' attitude and what is different about this undertaking."

Joe Lockhart



Age: 66
Education: University of Texas Law School
Background: 12 years at the Tarrant County district attorney's office; one year with the 2nd Court of Appeals in Fort Worth; 11 years in the U.S. attorney's office; two years in the Nueces County district attorney's office.

Quote: "It is a very satisfying thing to make the system work the way it is supposed to work."

Mike Casillas



Age: 41
Education: University of Texas Law School
Background: 14 years in the Tarrant County district attorney's office, 3 1/2 years in the appellate division.

Quote: "I've gotten the impression that people here don't want to be known for 13 exonerations."

Myra McIntosh



Age: 33
Education: Georgetown University Law School
Background: Five years in the Tarrant County district attorney's office.
Quote: "If the person is guilty, the facts will come out regardless."

Source: Star-Telegram interviews

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"Notice is hereby given that, acting under and pursuant to the Ordinances of the City of Fort Worth, Texas, on the 2nd day of August, 2007, Quicksilver Resources Inc. Will file an application with the city of Fort Worth, Texas to drill, complete and operate Urban Class well for gas upon property located on Buttercup Lane, Tarrant County, Texas, City of Fort Worth, Texas, more particularly known as Tax Tract No.12D3, Tarrant County, Texas. A public informational meeting will be held at the Riverside Community Center, 3700 E Belknap, Fort Worth, TX, Mapsco 80L, August 30, 2007 at 6:30 p.m."

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