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**STATEMENT OF LAUREL BELLOWS, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
RE: DEATH SENTENCE OF DUANE BUCK**

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 19, 2013 — The American Bar Association is concerned about the case of Duane Buck, a death-sentenced man in Texas. It is undisputed that the prosecution improperly put the assertion before the jury that he was “dangerous” because he was black, and this assertion sealed Buck’s fate.

In 2000, the Texas attorney general publicly stated that Buck deserved a new sentencing hearing because his death sentence was secured using inappropriate race-based testimony. New research has now confirmed that the Harris County district attorney’s office was three times more likely to seek the death penalty against African-American defendants like Buck, and Harris County juries were twice as likely to sentence African-American defendants like Buck to death. Yet Buck has yet to receive a new sentencing hearing.

Any defendant in these circumstances has the right to be heard regarding whether there was a fair trial. The American Bar Association abhors racial prejudice and discrimination of any kind, and it should go without saying that no one should be executed when there is a substantial issue whether race-based testimony infected the fairness of legal proceedings. As two U.S. Supreme Court justices have written about the case, Buck’s death sentence requires additional judicial review because “our criminal justice system should not tolerate” a death sentence “marred by racial overtones.” The ABA urges that Buck receive a new and fair sentencing hearing free of racial prejudice.

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Please [click here](#) for a biography and photo of Laurel G. Bellows, president of the American Bar Association.

With nearly 400,000 members, the American Bar Association is one of the largest voluntary professional membership organizations in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.

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