



MY OPINION

BY TERRY TOTTENHAM
PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF TEXAS

Some Reasons to Believe

As I conclude my year as State Bar president, I am grateful for the opportunity to have served our profession. I am especially proud of the successes we have achieved through our programs and initiatives.

Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans

With *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans* (TLTV) — ably chaired by **Dan King, Jo Ann Merica, and Travis Sales** — we helped to establish pro bono legal clinics for military veterans who cannot afford or do not have access to basic civil legal services. TLTV is a collaborative effort of the State Bar and local bar associations, legal aid organizations, and veterans service providers. It represents the very best of what the organized bar can accomplish.

The State Bar has helped support local bar associations and legal aid organizations with establishing veterans clinics in their communities. Each local bar assesses the needs within its community and works with local officials, legal aid organizations, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Texas Veterans Commission representatives, or other veterans groups to plan and publicize the clinics.

The State Bar provides resources, training, and educational materials. (The program builds on the pioneering work of the Houston Bar Association, which has offered weekly legal clinics at a local VA hospital since 2008.) Thanks to a grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, we have been able to distribute “Clinics in a Box” and two helpful resource pamphlets prepared by the Texas Young Lawyers Association under the leadership of **Jennifer Evans Mor-**

ris. To date, 68 Clinics in a Box have been distributed and both pamphlets have gone into multiple printings.

To support attorney volunteer training, we produced a three-hour webcast, *The Basics of Veterans Benefits Law*. To disseminate information to volunteers and veterans, we established a clearinghouse of resources at www.texasbar.com/veterans.

Since the launch of TLTV last summer, more than 30 local bar associations have organized clinics, with regular clinics established in all major metropolitan areas and other areas committed to holding a clinic at least once a year. Attendance has increased steadily.

In November, to commemorate Veterans Day, 20 veterans clinics took place across the state, with more than 600 veterans receiving legal assistance (from basic advice to pro bono referral) from nearly 300 volunteer attorneys. Other state bars are implementing the program. I recently met with Assistant Secretary of the Navy **Juan Garcia**, who expressed hopes of expanding the program nationwide.

Practicing Law and Wellness

The Texas Lawyers’ Assistance Program (TLAP) reports a significant increase in calls from lawyers and judges referencing our Wellness Initiative. Under the able leadership of **Berry Crowley**, we have been able to raise awareness about this crucial issue for our profession and our loved ones through a DVD, local bar visits, and the opportunity to present at more than 50 advanced CLE courses. I am also pleased to hear that both applications and contributions have increased to

the Pat Sheeran and Michael J. Crowley Memorial Trust, which helps struggling lawyers get back on their feet.

Other Initiatives

In addition to programs targeting veterans and wellness issues, we made new resources available to sole and small firm practitioners, government lawyers, and unemployed and underemployed lawyers. Each month, we have presented *Practice Tips in Good Times and in Bad*, a series of free webcasts on law practice management issues and basic skills. We also developed an *Advanced Trial Skills for Government Lawyers Course* for lawyers with the Office of the Texas Attorney General.

The Referendum

Certainly this has been a challenging year for the Texas legal profession. Yet the referendum on proposed changes to our disciplinary rules underscored what a robust and transparent debate we are capable of on issues of importance to the self-governance of the profession. I finish my year in office with renewed confidence not only in the future of our profession, but in the commitment of all Texas lawyers to those we are privileged to serve. Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as president. ✪

*Still at the end of every hard-earned day
People find some reason to believe.*

— Bruce Springsteen
“Reason to Believe”