



Texas Generosity Shines **THROUGH A DEEP FREEZE**

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES, TEXANS ALWAYS PULL TOGETHER. There were individual and collective acts of kindness during and after the historic winter storm that plunged most of our state into frigid darkness. Athletes, politicians, and entertainers raised funds. Businesses offered shelter. Plumbers volunteered their services. Organizations washed laundry and distributed food. A Dallas law firm even helped drive nurses, doctors, and shelter workers to and from their jobs. The list of our blessings is long.

The State Bar of Texas and legal service organizations across the state convened to prepare for the long haul. Recovery from a disaster as immense as this winter storm will take months, and it will involve assisting Texans with insurance claims, federal benefit appeals, title curing, and many other legal needs.

The State Bar operates a disaster legal services hotline—**800-504-7030**—that connects low-income Texans, who need help with civil legal problems but are unsure of where to turn, with legal aid providers Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Lone Star Legal Aid, or Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas. These organizations help Texans with basic civil legal needs like those mentioned above as well as debt collection matters, public benefits problems, unemployment appeals, landlord-tenant disputes, and many other matters.

These and other legal service organizations often need volunteer lawyers to take on cases that may seem small in scope but make a giant impact on the lives of those in need. Just before the storm, the bar's Legal Access Division launched a statewide online portal—**pbtx.joinpaladin.com**. This portal couldn't come at a better time. It allows legal service providers to post their needs and aids volunteer lawyers searching for the right opportunities to match their skills.

It is through these and other efforts that the State Bar of Texas upholds its purpose “to foster the role of the legal profession in serving the public” as set out in the State Bar Act.

To assist Texas lawyers, TexasBarCLE created a free webcast: *Dealing with Claims Arising from Freezes, Power Outages, & Broken Pipes*, which offers one hour of MCLE credit. You can find it in the free online courses section of **texasbarcle.com**.

And for lawyers struggling with the effects of any disaster, the State Bar's SOLACE program is available to help. The SOLACE program connects those in the Texas legal community who are experiencing hardship with those willing and able to help. If you need help or are able to offer it, please go to **texasbar.com/solace** to learn more.

We are acutely aware that the winter storm was truly a disaster within a disaster. Our state and nation continue to struggle from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has devastated families and businesses, and continues to exact a toll on our collective mental health.

The Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program's February webinar *How Lawyers Can Recover from Survival Mode* is available for viewing online at **texasbarcle.com**. The webinar provides one hour of free ethics MCLE credit.

As always TLAP's confidential services are available 24/7 to those who call or text **800-343-TLAP**. TLAP has a wealth of resources related to mental health, substance use, and general wellness concerns at **tlaphelps.org**.

We can't say it enough: In this difficult time, we implore you to take care of yourself and each other. Help someone if you can. Ask for help if you need it. Reach out if you aren't sure where to turn. There are brighter days ahead.

Sincerely,

TREY APFFEL

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