

STATE BAR *of* TEXAS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

January 13, 2009

Texas Legislature Convenes — This week, legislators gather in Austin for the start of the 81st regular session of the Texas Legislature. On Friday, Jan. 16, the first edition of the State Bar's legislative e-newsletter, the *Friday Update*, will be distributed to subscribers. The free service provides summaries of legislation potentially affecting the legal profession and links to relevant bills. The State Bar is prohibited by a U.S. Supreme Court decision and Section 81.034 of the State Bar Act from lobbying on most issues, but works to keep its members informed. If you subscribed to the *Friday Update* during the last session, you will automatically receive the new *Friday Update*. If your email address has changed or you haven't subscribed previously, please visit www.texasbar.com/fridayupdate.

Chief Disciplinary Counsel Departs — Newly elected Travis County District Attorney Rosemary Lehmborg, longtime first assistant to Ronnie Earle, has selected State Bar Chief Disciplinary Counsel John Neal to serve as her first assistant. Neal, who has led the State Bar's disciplinary system since 2005, has extensive prosecutorial experience from his years as district attorney for Young and Stephens counties and as a division chief for the Texas Office of the Attorney General.

New Supreme Court Liaisons — The Supreme Court of Texas has restructured its liaison duties to the State Bar and several bar-related entities. Justice Dale Wainwright, who has been the court's primary liaison to the State Bar in recent years, will serve as liaison to the Commission for Lawyer Discipline, the Board of Disciplinary Appeals, the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee, and the Professional Ethics Committee for the State Bar of Texas. Justice Phil Johnson takes over as liaison to the State Bar; Justice Paul Green becomes liaison to the Texas Young Lawyers Association; and Justice David Medina is the new liaison to the Grievance Oversight Committee.

Leadership SBOT — The Texas Bar Foundation provided each of the 19 members of the State Bar's first leadership class a \$500 stipend to put toward a public service project. The members are working as a group to undertake a statewide project. The leadership class' next session will take place in March. The group will present its final project during the State Bar Annual Meeting, which will take place June 25–26 at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas.

Annual Meeting Registration Begins Feb. 1 — Online registration for the 2009 State Bar Annual Meeting begins Feb. 1. Confirmed speakers include Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin; Morris Dees, co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center; and *New York Times* columnist David Brooks. To register, visit www.texasbar.com/annualmeeting.

Texas Law Center Update — The renovation of the 4th floor is complete. Employees who had been temporarily officing on the 2nd floor staging area started Monday in their new work spaces. The 2nd

floor will be reconfigured to accommodate the Austin office of the Chief Disciplinary Counsel.

Creative Deadlines Approaching — The deadline to enter the State Bar’s YouTube video contest, “Texans on Justice: Ideals That Unite Us,” is March 16. For contest rules, visit www.texasbar.com/justicefortexas. The deadline to enter the *Texas Bar Journal’s* 2009 Short Story Fiction Writing Contest is March 1. For more information, visit www.texasbar.com/tbj.

TexasBar.com Redesign — The Website and IT departments are working on an update to TexasBar.com, including streamlined, more user-friendly navigation; an improved member directory search; and a mobile version for access from cell phones, BlackBerrys, and iPhones. The project is happening on three fronts: re-writing existing web content to improve its relevance and usefulness; redesigning the site; and migrating web applications like attorney profiles, dues payment, and MCLE reporting. The redesigned TexasBar.com should launch in the first half of 2009.

State Bar’s Social Networking Site Wins Award — In November, Texas Bar Circle, the first online social and professional network launched by a bar association, received an Excellence in New Communications Award in the External Communications and Communities Category, Government Division, from the Society for New Communications Research. The award was presented during the society’s gala in Massachusetts. If you haven’t joined Texas Bar Circle, visit www.texasbar.com/circle.

Advertising Review of Websites — Websites are considered to be a form of advertising and need to comply with the lawyer advertising rules. Websites should generally be filed with the Advertising Review Committee unless otherwise exempt under the rules. Application and filing instructions can be found at www.texasbar.com/adreview.

Celebrating Lincoln’s Bicentennial — February marks the 200th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln’s birth. On Feb. 12, the State Bar is co-sponsoring a luncheon in Dallas featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James McPherson. For more information or to order tickets, visit www.dfworld.org. The February issue of the *Texas Bar Journal* will include several articles on Lincoln the lawyer, including contributions from South Texas College of Law Professor Mark Steiner, State Bar President Harper Estes, and Dallas director Talmage Boston.

Smith County Bar Celebrates 75 Years — In December, the State Bar sponsored a table at the 75th anniversary gala of the Smith County Bar Association. President Harper Estes and President-elect Roland Johnson attended the event, which raised \$100,000 for the Smith County Bar Foundation.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the State Bar of Texas is to support the administration of the legal system, assure all citizens equal access to justice, foster high standards of ethical conduct for lawyers, support and provide services to its members, enable its members to better serve their clients and the public, and educate the public about the rule of law and promote diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of law.

