



## MY OPINION

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# Eighty Years of Public Service

This year the Texas Young Lawyers Association celebrates its 80th birthday! That's right, the young lawyers are octogenarians. In its 80-year history, TYLA has been frequently recognized as the country's most outstanding young lawyer affiliate for its public service and member service projects, and I believe we have continued that tradition this year. It has truly been an honor to serve as president of this organization and I'm extremely proud of what our board and numerous volunteers have accomplished.

I've written about a number of our projects in this column over the last year, and I want to take the time this month to talk about some that aren't as glamorous as others and certainly don't receive the attention they deserve: TYLA's public service brochures, guides, and pamphlets. These materials are by far the most effective way for TYLA to reach and provide assistance to the largest number of Texans. The impact is immeasurable, and, judging by the number of requests received and the number of downloads from the website, we are meeting a need. Whether it is providing basic information about a particular area of law or educating a citizen about his or her rights, these resources are making a difference. As lawyers of the great state of Texas, we may take for granted the information published in these brochures, guides, and pamphlets. Sometimes we forget that the public isn't aware of its rights. As attorneys, we sometimes forget that the knowledge we've gained in law school is not common knowledge. While these short guides don't provide legal advice, they often contain answers the public is searching for, or, at the very

least, gives a starting point for our fellow Texans in need of legal help.

This year we published the following new brochures, pamphlets, and guides:

- **Consumer Bankruptcy** — Provides an overview of the bankruptcy process, describes the types of consumer bankruptcy, and provides helpful information on locating an attorney, life after bankruptcy, and directions to other third-party resources.

- **Dealing with Dementia** — Includes information about Alzheimer's disease and resources for those with Alzheimer's and those caring for someone with dementia and addresses such topics as guardianships, estate planning and disability planning documents, and long-term and hospice care options.

- **Know Your Rights at Work** — Designed in partnership with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, this guide provides information on rights to equal treatment while at work, rights under the Family Medical Leave Act, rights under Occupational Safety & Health Administration laws, and rights to unemployment benefits.

- **Your Employment Rights** — Designed in partnership with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, this guide provides information to seasonal agricultural workers on such topics as wages, housing, transportation, and other benefits.

- **Introduction to Mechanic's Liens** — A guide to Article XVI, Section 37 of the Texas Constitution and Chapter 53 of the Texas Property Code.

- **Small Business Toolkit** — Provides guidance to small business owners as a consciousness-raising tool focusing on business formation, marketing, and laws

related to loans, employment, taxes, contracts, leases, trade secrets, and strategic alliances.

- **Foreclosures** — Answers basic questions about the foreclosure process and provides helpful information on available resources.

- **Name Changes** — Provides an overview of the process for changing one's name.

- **Expunctions** — Provides an overview of the expunction and non-disclosure processes in Texas.

- **Loves Me, Loves Me Not** — Educates teenagers about healthy dating habits and the misconceptions of what teen dating violence is and encourages teens to seek help if they are ever in an abusive relationship or know someone who is.

And, we've updated and/or translated to Spanish the following brochures, guides, or pamphlets:

- *Seniors and the Law*;
- *Legal Guide for Cancer Patients*;
- *To Will or Not to Will*;
- *Pro Se Divorce Handbook*;
- *Adoption Options*;
- *Special Education Laws & the School Environment*; and
- *TYLA At-A-Glance*.

All of these are, or soon will be, available on TYLA's newly redesigned website ([tyla.org](http://tyla.org)). Should you need multiple copies of a publication, contact TYLA at (800)204-2222, ext. 1529.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as your president. It has been a privilege and an honor. I know TYLA will accomplish just as much, and more, over the next 80 years! ☆