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A Message from HBA President Bill Kroger - Statement on the State Bar President

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To the Members of the Houston Bar Association:

We began our new bar year with the overriding goal to demonstrate by our positive actions the importance of a volunteer bar association, especially during a difficult time with COVID-19 and concerns about our justice system. We have been busy. In two months, the HBA has:

- Organized and led more than six blood drive events among our members, obtaining more than 250 donations at a time when blood is desperately needed in Houston;
- Worked with the Deans of the Texas law schools and the Texas Supreme Court on formulating alternative plans for the fall bar exams for incoming lawyers;

- After issuing a response to the murder of George Floyd, reset our editions of *The Houston Lawyer* magazine so that the first two editions are dedicated to COVID-19 response and social justice issues;
- Made plans for creating an implicit bias training program for Houston lawyers;
- Worked with the Harris County District Courts on plans to resume grand and petit juries in Harris County;
- Developed comprehensive resources for lawyers and the public on legal and health issues involving COVID-19; and
- Formed a COVID-19 Task Force to coordinate and share resources across all of the bar associations, law schools, and other groups in our community.

While we have plenty on our plate right now, we have unfortunately had a new issue arise out of social media posts by State Bar President Larry McDougal and State Bar Director Steve Fischer. We do not want their wrongful statements to disrupt the important work that we need to do together, but I also don't want our membership to have any uncertainty as to how its Board views these statements.

The social media statements of President McDougal and Director Fischer are wrong, offensive, and divisive. Their language is especially inappropriate for leaders who have been elected to represent all bar members. The State Bar of Texas should and will review their statements and make appropriate decisions on what measures should be taken. To that end, we have strong State Bar directors from our region, including several former Houston Bar Presidents, who will actively participate in the upcoming State Bar meeting on these issues, and advocate for appropriate sanctions.

It is important for the State Bar of Texas to quickly decide these issues and get on with providing the leadership that the public and legal community has a right to expect. In that regard, the Houston Bar Association stands ready to serve and work with the State Bar of Texas as it moves forward.

Bill Kroger
President, Houston Bar Association