



Task Force Is Ensuring **GRIEVANCE PROCESS IS FAIR TO ALL**

WHEN I WAS RUNNING FOR STATE BAR OF TEXAS PRESIDENT-ELECT, many lawyers offered ideas on ways to improve the attorney grievance process. Based on these conversations, last September I asked the State Bar Board of Directors to appoint a task force to study the issues and return with recommendations.

The 21-member Task Force on Public Protection, Grievance Review, and the Client Security Fund has been holding virtual meetings ever since with the goal of ensuring the process remains fair to Texas lawyers while protecting the public. The task force is also studying the Client Security Fund, which provides financial relief to clients whose lawyers have stolen their money or failed to refund an unearned fee, to determine ways it can better serve the public considering the limited resources available to it.

Although the task force has not yet made its recommendations, I want to recognize and applaud the hard work that Chair Michael Fields and the task force members have put in on behalf of Texas lawyers and all Texans. Among other actions, the task force has divided into subcommittees to perform detailed studies on the subjects of grievance reform, client reimbursement, and ensuring the process is fair.

Our disciplinary system is governed by rules promulgated by the Texas Supreme Court, with the oversight of the Commission for Lawyer Discipline and review by the Grievance Oversight Committee and the administrative support and participation of the State Bar board. As part of its research, the task force has heard informative presentations from a number of people involved in the system, and I am grateful for their participation. They include:

- Judge Sue Kurita, chair, Grievance Oversight Committee
- Seana Willing, chief disciplinary counsel
- Stephanie Lowe, ombudsman for attorney discipline
- Ray Cantu, State Bar deputy executive director and staff liaison to the board's Discipline and Client Attorney Assistance Program Committee
- Molly Powers, department director, Client Attorney Assistance Program

The task force also plans to accept public comments as part of its review. Be on the lookout soon for an announcement on how to participate. I look forward to reporting more about the task force's work in the months ahead.

Remember to Vote on Proposed Rule Changes

If you're a Texas lawyer who is active and in good standing with the bar and you're reading this column before 5 p.m. CST on March 4, then you still have time to cast a ballot in the 2021 rules vote if you haven't already. Mailed ballots must be received by the March 4 deadline, so if you haven't voted yet then online voting is recommended.

To vote online, you can either use the digital ballot emailed to you on February 2 or go to texasbar.com, click on "Vote Now," and follow the instructions from there. You can learn more about the proposed rule changes at texasbar.com/rulesvote.

Remember, the right to vote on disciplinary rule changes is a benefit of membership in our unified, mandatory State Bar. Please vote!

LARRY McDOUGAL

President, 2020-2021