

# INTEGRITY and the PROFESSION



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*“I am a lawyer. I am entrusted by the People of Texas to preserve and improve our legal system. . . . I am committed to this Creed for no other reason than it is right.”*

— The Texas Lawyer’s Creed

**A CORE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS IS TO** foster and encourage “high ideals and integrity, learning, competence in public service, and high standards of conduct.” This charge comes from the State Bar Act and is central to work throughout the bar. Fostering integrity and competence is a key way the bar protects its lawyers, the profession, and the public at large.

As members of the bar, we are well aware of this obligation and should do our part to make our profession better. We expect our State Bar leadership to do the same. I sought feedback from bar sections and committees on the top priorities facing Texas lawyers. Attorneys responded with issues that fall under this umbrella, from aggressively pursuing those who practice law without authorization to ensuring attorneys advertise in a responsible manner.

This December *Texas Bar Journal* highlights some of the ways our bar works to uphold these standards. The Advertising Review Committee reviews lawyer advertisements and written solicitations for compliance with the disciplinary rules; the Client-Attorney Assistance Program works to resolve disputes between attorneys and clients before a grievance is filed; and, the Texas Young Lawyers Association has produced (1) a “Thumbnail Guide to Texas Ethics,” explaining frequently violated rules of professional conduct, along with a new pocket guide on malpractice and the grievance system, and (2) a webcast to help attorneys better understand the grievance process. The Attorney Ethics Helpline assists lawyers with questions about the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct and the disciplinary rules as they interplay with our advocacy.

As the landscape of the profession changes, one difference is the increase in attorneys remaining active in practice longer. There are approximately 11,570 active lawyers practicing over the age of 65. This number is expected to grow across the country. With more attorneys practicing beyond the traditional retirement age, some find themselves in the disciplinary system because of declining cognitive abilities or health issues. This topic is one of discussion for bar associations nationwide.

For this reason, the State Bar Task Force on Aging Lawyer Issues, chaired by past-President Terry Tottenham, was created. Last summer, the task force began looking at issues associated with our more senior lawyers. The issues are real, and the task force will study them with an eye on what senior Texas lawyers need and a goal of presenting recommendations to the State Bar Board of Directors.

We, as attorneys, owe a duty to our legal system, to our clients, to one another, and to the judiciary. When we attend to our responsibilities to one another, the other obligations we have fall more easily into place and are satisfied. We owe it to ourselves to face the issue of aging. Each of our legal careers should be filled with these noble tenets until our legal careers come to a close.

**LISA TATUM**  
President, *State Bar of Texas*